The Thirteen

Honore de Balzac

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INTRODUCTION

The *Histoire des Treize* consists—or rather is built up—of three stories: *Ferragus* or the *Rue Soly*, *La Duchesse de Langeais* or *Ne touchez−paz a la hache*, and *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*.

To tell the truth, there is more power than taste throughout the *Histoire des Treize*, and perhaps not very much less unreality than power. Balzac is very much better than Eugene Sue, though Eugene Sue also is better than it is the fashion to think him just now. But he is here, to a certain extent competing with Sue on the latter's own ground. The notion of the “Devorants”—of a secret society of men devoted to each other's interests, entirely free from any moral or legal scruple, possessed of considerable means in wealth, ability, and position, all working together, by fair means or foul, for good ends or bad—is, no doubt, rather seducing to the imagination at all times; and it so happened that it was particularly seducing to the imagination of that time. And its example has been powerful since; it gave us Mr. Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* only, as it were, the other day.

But there is something a little schoolboyish in it; and I do not know that Balzac has succeeded entirely in eliminating this something. The pathos of the death, under persecution, of the innocent Clemence does not entirely make up for the unreasonableness of the whole situation. Nobody can say that the abominable misconduct of Maulincour—who is a hopeless “cad”—is too much punished, though an Englishman may think that Dr. Johnson's receipt of three or four footmen with cudgels, applied repeatedly and unsparingly, would have been better than elaborately prepared accidents and duels, which were too honorable for a Peeping Tom of this kind; and poisonings, which reduced the avengers to the level of their victim. But the imbroglio is of itself stupid; these fathers who cannot be made known to husbands are mere stage properties, and should never be fetched out of the theatrical lumber− room by literature.

La Duchesse de Langeais is, I think, a better story, with more romantic attraction, free from the objections just made to *Ferragus*, and furnished with a powerful, if slightly theatrical catastrophe. It is as good as anything that its author has done of the kind, subject to those general considerations of probability and otherwise which have been already hinted at. For those who are not troubled by any such critical reflections, both, no doubt, will be highly satisfactory.

The third of the series, *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*, in some respects one of Balzac's most brilliant effects, has been looked at askance by many of his English readers. At one time he had the audacity to think of calling it *La Femme aux Yeux Rouges*. To those who consider the story morbid or, one may say, *bizarre*, one word of justification, hardly of apology, may be offered. It was in the scheme of the *Comedie Humaine* to survey social life in its entirety by a minute analysis of its most diverse constituents. It included all the pursuits and passions, was large and patient, and unafraid. And the patience, the curiosity, of the artist which made Cesar Birotteau and his bankrupt ledgers matters of high import to us, which did not shrink from creating a Vautrin and a Lucien de Rubempre, would have been incomplete had it stopped short of a Marquise de San−Real, of a Paquita Valdes. And in the great mass of the *Comedie Humaine*, with its largeness and reality of life, as in life itself; the figure of Paquita justifies its presence.

Considering the *Histoire des Treize* as a whole, it is of engrossing interest. And I must confess I should not think much of any boy who, beginning Balzac with this series, failed to go rather mad over it. I know there was a time when I used to like it best of all, and thought not merely *Eugenie Grandet*, but *Le Pere Goriot* (though not the *Peau de Chagrin*), dull in comparison. Some attention, however, must be paid to two remarkable characters, on whom it is quite clear that Balzac expended a great deal of pains, and one of whom he seems to have "caressed," as the French say, with a curious admixture of dislike and admiration.

The first, Bourignard or Ferragus, is, of course, another, though a somewhat minor example—Collin or Vautrin being the chief—of that strange tendency to take intense interest in criminals, which seems to be a pretty constant eccentricity of many human minds, and which laid an extraordinary grasp on the great French writers of Balzac's time. I must confess, though it may sink me very low in some eyes, that I have never been able to fully appreciate the attractions of crime and criminals, fictitious or real. Certain pleasant and profitable things, no doubt, retain their pleasure and their profit, to some extent, when they are done in the manner which is technically called criminal; but they seem to me to acquire no additional interest by being so. As the criminal of fact is, in the vast majority of cases, an exceedingly commonplace and dull person, the criminal of fiction seems to me only, or usually, to escape these curses by being absolutely improbable and unreal. But I know this is a terrible heresy.

Henri de Marsay is a much more ambitious and a much more interesting figure. In him are combined the attractions of criminality, beauty, brains, success, and, last of all, dandyism. It is a well−known and delightful fact that the most Anglophobe Frenchmen—and Balzac might fairly be classed among them—have always regarded the English dandy with half−jealous, half−awful admiration. Indeed, our novelist, it will be seen, found it necessary to give Marsay English blood. But there is a tradition that this young Don Juan—not such a good fellow as Byron's, nor such a *grand seigneur* as Moliere's—was partly intended to represent Charles de Remusat, who is best known to this generation by very sober and serious philosophical works, and by his part in his mother's correspondence. I do not know that there ever were any imputation on M. de Remusat's morals; but in memoirs of the time, he is, I think, accused of a certain selfishness and *hauteur*, and he certainly made his way, partly by journalism, partly by society, to power very much as Marsay did. But Marsay would certainly not have written *Abelard* and the rest, or have returned to Ministerial rank in our own time. Marsay, in fact, more fortunate than Rubempre, and of a higher stamp and flight than Rastignac, makes with them Balzac's trinity of sketches of the kind of personage whose part, in his day and since, every young Frenchman has aspired to play, and some have played. It cannot be said that "a moral man is Marsay"; it cannot be said that he has the element of good−nature which redeems Rastignac. But he bears a blame and a burden for which we Britons are responsible in part—the Byronic ideal of the guilty hero coming to cross and blacken the old French model of unscrupulous good humor. It is not a very pretty mixture or a very worthy ideal; but I am not so sure that it is not still a pretty common one.

The association of the three stories forming the *Histoire des Treize* is, in book form, original, inasmuch as they filled three out of the four volumes of *Etudes des Moeurs* published in 1834−35, and themselves forming part of the first collection of *Scenes de la Vie Parisienne*. But *Ferragus* had appeared in parts (with titles to each) in the *Revue de Paris* for March and April 1833, and part of *La Duchesse de Langeais* in the *Echo de la Jeune*

France almost contemporaneously. There are divisions in this also. *Ferragus* and *La Duchesse* also appeared without *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or* in 1839, published in one volume by Charpentier, before their absorption at the usual time in the *Comedie*.

George Saintsbury

THE THIRTEEN

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In the Paris of the Empire there were found Thirteen men equally impressed with the same idea, equally endowed with energy enough to keep them true to it, while among themselves they were loyal enough to keep faith even when their interests seemed to clash. They were strong enough to set themselves above all laws; bold enough to shrink from no enterprise; and lucky enough to succeed in nearly everything that they undertook. So profoundly politic were they, that they could dissemble the tie which bound them together. They ran the greatest risks, and kept their failures to themselves. Fear never entered into their calculations; not one of them had trembled before princes, before the executioner's axe, before innocence. They had taken each other as they were, regardless of social prejudices. Criminals they doubtless were, yet none the less were they all remarkable for some one of the virtues which go to the making of great men, and their numbers were filled up only from among picked recruits. Finally, that nothing should be lacking to complete the dark, mysterious romance of their history, nobody to this day knows who they were. The Thirteen once realized all the wildest ideas conjured up by tales of the occult powers of a Manfred, a Faust, or a Melmoth; and to−day the band is broken up or, at any rate, dispersed. Its members have quietly returned beneath the yoke of the Civil Code; much as Morgan, the Achilles of piracy, gave up buccaneering to be a peaceable planter; and, untroubled by qualms of conscience, sat himself down by the fireside to dispose of blood−stained booty acquired by the red light of blazing towns.

After Napoleon's death, the band was dissolved by a chance event which the author is bound for the present to pass over in silence, and its mysterious existence, as curious, it may be, as the darkest novel by Mrs. Radcliffe, came to an end.

It was only lately that the present writer, detecting, as he fancied, a faint desire for celebrity in one of the anonymous heroes to whom the whole band once owed an occult allegiance, received the somewhat singular permission to make public certain of the adventures which befell that band, provided that, while telling the story in his own fashion, he observed certain limits.

The aforesaid leader was still an apparently young man with fair hair and blue eyes, and a soft, thin voice which might seem to indicate a feminine temperament. His face was pale, his ways mysterious. He chatted pleasantly, and told me that he was only just turned of forty. He might have belonged to any one of the upper classes. The name which he gave was probably assumed, and no one answering to his description was known in society. Who is he, do you ask? No one knows.

Perhaps when he made his extraordinary disclosures to the present writer, he wished to see them in some sort reproduced; to enjoy the effect of the sensation on the multitude; to feel as Macpherson might have felt when the name of Ossian, his creation, passed into all languages. And, in truth, that Scottish advocate knew one of the keenest, or, at any rate, one of the rarest sensations in human experience. What was this but the incognito of genius? To write an *Itineraire de Paris a Jerusalem* is to take one's share in the glory of a century, but to give a Homer to one's country—this surely is a usurpation of the rights of God.

The writer is too well acquainted with the laws of narration to be unaware of the nature of the pledge given by this brief preface; but, at the same time, he knows enough of the history of the Thirteen to feel confident that he shall not disappoint any expectations raised by the programme. Tragedies dripping with gore, comedies piled up with horrors, tales of heads taken off in secret have been confided to him. If any reader has not had enough of the ghastly tales served up to the public for some time past, he has only to express his wish; the author is in a position to reveal cold−blooded atrocities and family secrets of a gloomy and astonishing nature. But in preference he has chosen those pleasanter stories in which stormy passions are succeeded by purer scenes, where the beauty and goodness of woman shine out the brighter for the darkness. And, to the honor of the Thirteen, such episodes as these are not wanting. Some day perhaps it may be thought worth while to give their whole history to the world; in which case it might form a pendant to the history of the buccaneers—that race apart so curiously energetic, so attractive in spite of their crimes.

When a writer has a true story to tell, he should scorn to turn it into a sort of puzzle toy, after the manner of those novelists who take their reader for a walk through one cavern after another to show him a dried−up corpse at the end of the fourth volume, and inform him, by way of conclusion, that he has been frightened all along by a

door hidden somewhere or other behind some tapestry; or a dead body, left by inadvertence, under the floor. So the present chronicler, in spite of his objection to prefaces, felt bound to introduce his fragment by a few remarks.

Ferragus, the first episode, is connected by invisible links with the history of the Thirteen, for the power which they acquired in a natural manner provides the apparently supernatural machinery.

Again, although a certain literary coquetry may be permissible to retailers of the marvelous, the sober chronicler is bound to forego such advantage as he may reap from an odd−sounding name, on which many ephemeral successes are founded in these days. Wherefore the present writer gives the following succinct statement of the reasons which induced him to adopt the unlikely sounding title and sub−title.

In accordance with old−established custom, *Ferragus* is a name taken by the head of a guild of *Devorants, id est Devoirants* or journeymen. Every chief on the day of his election chooses a pseudonym and continues a dynasty of *Devorants* precisely as a pope changes his name on his accession to the triple tiara; and as the Church has its Clement XIV., Gregory XII., Julius II., or Alexander VI., so the workmen have their Trempe−la−Soupe IX., Ferragus XXII., Tutanus XIII., or Masche−Fer IV. Who are the *Devorants*, do you ask?

The *Devorants* are one among many tribes of *compagnons* whose origin can be traced to a great mystical association formed among the workmen of Christendom for the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. *Compagnonnage* is still a popular institution in France. Its traditions still exert a power over little enlightened minds, over men so uneducated that they have not learned to break their oaths; and the various organizations might be turned to formidable account even yet if any rough−hewn man of genius arose to make use of them, for his instruments would be, for the most part, almost blind.

Wherever journeymen travel, they find a hostel for *compagnons* which has been in existence in the town from time immemorial. The *obade*, as they call it, is a kind of lodge with a “Mother” in charge, an old, half−gypsy wife who has nothing to lose. She hears all that goes on in the countryside; and, either from fear or from long habit, is devoted to the interests of the tribe boarded and lodged by her. And as a result, this shifting population, subject as it is to an unalterable law of custom, has eyes in every place, and will carry out an order anywhere without asking questions; for the oldest journeyman is still at an age when a man has some beliefs left. What is more, the whole fraternity professes doctrines which, if unfolded never so little, are both true enough and mysterious enough to electrify all the adepts with patriotism; and the *compagnons* are so attached to their rules, that there have been bloody battles between different fraternities on a question of principle. Fortunately, however, for peace and public order; if a *Devorant* is ambitious, he takes to building houses, makes a fortune, and leaves the guild.

A great many curious things might be told of their rivals, the *Compagnons du Devior*, of all the different sects of workmen, their manners and customs and brotherhoods, and of the resemblances between them and the Freemasons; but there, these particulars would be out of place. The author will merely add, that before the Revolution a Trempe−la−Soupe had been known in the King's service, which is to say, that he had the tenure of a place in His Majesty's galleys for one hundred and one years; but even thence he ruled his guild, and was religiously consulted on all matters, and if he escaped from the hulks he met with help, succor, and respect wherever he went. To have a chief in the hulks is one of those misfortunes for which Providence is responsible; but a faithful lodge of *devorants* is bound, as before, to obey a power created by and set above themselves. Their lawful sovereign is in exile for the time being, but none the less is he their king. And now any romantic mystery hanging about the words *Ferragus* and the *devorants* is completely dispelled.

As for the Thirteen, the author feels that, on the strength of the details of this almost fantastic story, he can afford to give away yet another prerogative, though it is one of the greatest on record, and would possibly fetch a high price if brought into a literary auction mart; for the owner might inflict as many volumes on the public as La Contemporaine.[*]

[*] A long series of so−called Memoirs, which appeared about 1830.

The Thirteen were all of them men tempered like Byron's friend Trelawney, the original (so it is said) of *The Corsair*. All of them were fatalists, men of spirit and poetic temperament; all of them were tired of the commonplace life which they led; all felt attracted towards Asiatic pleasures by all the vehement strength of newly awakened and long dormant forces. One of these, chancing to take up *Venice Preserved* for the second time, admired the sublime friendship between Pierre and Jaffir, and fell to musing on the virtues of outlaws, the loyalty of the hulks, the honor of thieves, and the immense power that a few men can wield if they bring their whole minds to bear upon the carrying out of a single will. It struck him that the individual man rose higher than

men. Then he began to think that if a few picked men should band themselves together; and if, to natural wit, and education, and money, they could join a fanaticism hot enough to fuse, as it were, all those separate forces into a single one, then the whole world would be at their feet. From that time forth, with a tremendous power of concentration, they could wield an occult power against which the organization of society would be helpless; a power which would push obstacles aside and defeat the will of others; and the diabolical power of all would be at the service of each. A hostile world apart within the world, admitting none of the ideas, recognizing none of the laws of the world; submitting only to the sense of necessity, obedient only from devotion; acting all as one man in the interests of the comrade who should claim the aid of the rest; a band of buccaneers with carriages and yellow kid gloves; a close confederacy of men of extraordinary power, of amused and cool spectators of an artificial and petty world which they cursed with smiling lips; conscious as they were that they could make all things bend to their caprice, weave ingenious schemes of revenge, and live with the life in thirteen hearts, to say nothing of the unfailing pleasure of facing the world of men with a hidden misanthropy, a sense that they were armed against their kind, and could retire into themselves with one idea which the most remarkable men had not,—all this constituted a religion of pleasure and egoism which made fanatics of the Thirteen. The history of the Society of Jesus was repeated for the Devil's benefit. It was hideous and sublime.

The pact was made; and it lasted, precisely because it seemed impossible. And so it came to pass that in Paris there was a fraternity of thirteen men, each one bound, body and soul, to the rest, and all of them strangers to each other in the sight of the world. But evening found them gathered together like conspirators, and then they had no thoughts apart; riches, like the wealth of the Old Man of the Mountain, they possessed in common; they had their feet in every salon, their hands in every strong box, their elbows in the streets, their heads upon all pillows, they did not scruple to help themselves at their pleasure. No chief commanded them, nobody was strong enough. The liveliest passion, the most urgent need took precedence—that was all. They were thirteen unknown kings; unknown, but with all the power and more than the power of kings; for they were both judges and executioners, they had taken wings that they might traverse the heights and depths of society, scorning to take any place in it, since all was theirs. If the author learns the reason of their abdication, he will communicate it.

And now the author is free to give those episodes in the History of the Thirteen which, by reason of the Parisian flavor of the details or the strangeness of the contrasts, possessed a peculiar attraction for him.

Paris

THE THIRTEEN

I. FERRAGUS, CHIEF OF THE DEVORANTS

By HONORE DE BALZAC

Translated By
Katharine Prescott Wormeley

DEDICATION
To Hector Berlioz.

CHAPTER I. MADAME JULES

Certain streets in Paris are as degraded as a man covered with infamy; also, there are noble streets, streets simply respectable, young streets on the morality of which the public has not yet formed an opinion; also cut−throat streets, streets older than the age of the oldest dowagers, estimable streets, streets always clean, streets always dirty, working, laboring, and mercantile streets. In short, the streets of Paris have every human quality, and impress us, by what we must call their physiognomy, with certain ideas against which we are defenceless. There are, for instance, streets of a bad neighborhood in which you could not be induced to live, and streets where you would willingly take up your abode. Some streets, like the rue Montmartre, have a charming head, and end in a fish's tail. The rue de la Paix is a wide street, a fine street, yet it wakens none of those gracefully noble thoughts which come to an impressible mind in the middle of the rue Royale, and it certainly lacks the majesty which reigns in the Place Vendome.

If you walk the streets of the Ile Saint−Louis, do not seek the reason of the nervous sadness that lays hold upon you save in the solitude of the spot, the gloomy look of the houses, and the great deserted mansions. This island, the ghost of *fermiers−generaux*, is the Venice of Paris. The Place de la Bourse is voluble, busy, degraded; it is never fine except by moonlight at two in the morning. By day it is Paris epitomized; by night it is a dream of Greece. The rue Traversiere−Saint−Honore—is not that a villainous street? Look at the wretched little houses with two windows on a floor, where vice, crime, and misery abound. The narrow streets exposed to the north, where the sun never comes more than three or four times a year, are the cut−throat streets which murder with impunity; the authorities of the present day do not meddle with them; but in former times the Parliament might perhaps have summoned the lieutenant of police and reprimanded him for the state of things; and it would, at least, have issued some decree against such streets, as it once did against the wigs of the Chapter of Beauvais. And yet Monsieur Benoiston de Chateauneuf has proved that the mortality of these streets is double that of others! To sum up such theories by a single example: is not the rue Fromentin both murderous and profligate!

These observations, incomprehensible out of Paris, will doubtless be understood by musing men of thought and poesy and pleasure, who know, while rambling about Paris, how to harvest the mass of floating interests which may be gathered at all hours within her walls; to them Paris is the most delightful and varied of monsters: here, a pretty woman; farther on, a haggard pauper; here, new as the coinage of a new reign; there, in this corner, elegant as a fashionable woman. A monster, moreover, complete! Its garrets, as it were, a head full of knowledge and genius; its first storeys stomachs repleted; its shops, actual feet, where the busy ambulating crowds are moving. Ah! what an ever−active life the monster leads! Hardly has the last vibration of the last carriage coming from a ball ceased at its heart before its arms are moving at the barriers and it shakes itself slowly into motion. Doors open; turning on their hinges like the membrane of some huge lobster, invisibly manipulated by thirty thousand men or women, of whom each individual occupies a space of six square feet, but has a kitchen, a workshop, a bed, children, a garden, little light to see by, but must see all. Imperceptibly, the articulations begin to crack; motion communicates itself; the street speaks. By mid−day, all is alive; the chimneys smoke, the monster eats; then he roars, and his thousand paws begin to ramp. Splendid spectacle! But, O Paris! he who has not admired your gloomy passages, your gleams and flashes of light, your deep and silent *cul−de−sacs*, who has not listened to your murmurings between midnight and two in the morning, knows nothing as yet of your true poesy, nor of your broad and fantastic contrasts.

There are a few amateurs who never go their way heedlessly; who savor their Paris, so to speak; who know its physiognomy so well that they see every wart, and pimple, and redness. To others, Paris is always that monstrous marvel, that amazing assemblage of activities, of schemes, of thoughts; the city of a hundred thousand tales, the head of the universe. But to those few, Paris is sad or gay, ugly or beautiful, living or dead; to them Paris is a creature; every man, every fraction of a house is a lobe of the cellular tissue of that great courtesan whose head and heart and fantastic customs they know so well. These men are lovers of Paris; they lift their noses at such or such a corner of a street, certain that they can see the face of a clock; they tell a friend whose tobacco−pouch is empty, “Go down that passage and turn to the left; there's a tobacconist next door to a confectioner, where there's a pretty girl.” Rambling about Paris is, to these poets, a costly luxury. How can they help spending precious

minutes before the dramas, disasters, faces, and picturesque events which meet us everywhere amid this heaving queen of cities, clothed in posters,—who has, nevertheless, not a single clean corner, so complying is she to the vices of the French nation! Who has not chanced to leave his home early in the morning, intending to go to some extremity of Paris, and found himself unable to get away from the centre of it by the dinner−hour? Such a man will know how to excuse this vagabondizing start upon our tale; which, however, we here sum up in an observation both useful and novel, as far as any observation can be novel in Paris, where there is nothing new,—not even the statue erected yesterday, on which some young gamin has already scribbled his name.

Well, then! there are streets, or ends of streets, there are houses, unknown for the most part to persons of social distinction, to which a woman of that class cannot go without causing cruel and very wounding things to be thought of her. Whether the woman be rich and has a carriage, whether she is on foot, or is disguised, if she enters one of these Parisian defiles at any hour of the day, she compromises her reputation as a virtuous woman. If, by chance, she is there at nine in the evening the conjectures that an observer permits himself to make upon her may prove fearful in their consequences. But if the woman is young and pretty, if she enters a house in one of those streets, if the house has a long, dark, damp, and evil−smelling passage−way, at the end of which flickers the pallid gleam of an oil lamp, and if beneath that gleam appears the horrid face of a withered old woman with fleshless fingers, ah, then! and we say it in the interests of young and pretty women, that woman is lost. She is at the mercy of the first man of her acquaintance who sees her in that Parisian slough. There is more than one street in Paris where such a meeting may lead to a frightful drama, a bloody drama of death and love, a drama of the modern school.

Unhappily, this scene, this modern drama itself, will be comprehended by only a small number of persons; and it is a pity to tell the tale to a public which cannot enter into its local merit. But who can flatter himself that he will ever be understood? We all die unknown— 'tis the saying of women and of authors.

At half−past eight o'clock one evening, in the rue Pagevin, in the days when that street had no wall which did not echo some infamous word, and was, in the direction of the rue Soly, the narrowest and most impassable street in Paris (not excepting the least frequented corner of the most deserted street),—at the beginning of the month of February about thirteen years ago, a young man, by one of those chances which come but once in life, turned the corner of the rue Pagevin to enter the rue des Vieux−Augustins, close to the rue Soly. There, this young man, who lived himself in the rue de Bourbon, saw in a woman near whom he had been unconsciously walking, a vague resemblance to the prettiest woman in Paris; a chaste and delightful person, with whom he was secretly and passionately in love,—a love without hope; she was married. In a moment his heart leaped, an intolerable heat surged from his centre and flowed through all his veins; his back turned cold, the skin of his head crept. He loved, he was young, he knew Paris; and his knowledge did not permit him to be ignorant of all there was of possible infamy in an elegant, rich, young, and beautiful woman walking there, alone, with a furtively criminal step. *She* in that mud! at that hour!

The love that this young man felt for that woman may seem romantic, and all the more so because he was an officer in the Royal Guard. If he had been in the infantry, the affair might have seemed more likely; but, as an officer of rank in the cavalry, he belonged to that French arm which demands rapidity in its conquests and derives as much vanity from its amorous exploits as from its dashing uniform. But the passion of this officer was a true love, and many young hearts will think it noble. He loved this woman because she was virtuous; he loved her virtue, her modest grace, her imposing saintliness, as the dearest treasures of his hidden passion. This woman was indeed worthy to inspire one of those platonic loves which are found, like flowers amid bloody ruins, in the history of the middle−ages; worthy to be the hidden principle of all the actions of a young man's life; a love as high, as pure as the skies when blue; a love without hope and to which men bind themselves because it can never deceive; a love that is prodigal of unchecked enjoyment, especially at an age when the heart is ardent, the imagination keen, and the eyes of a man see very clearly.

Strange, weird, inconceivable effects may be met with at night in Paris. Only those who have amused themselves by watching those effects have any idea how fantastic a woman may appear there at dusk. At times the creature whom you are following, by accident or design, seems to you light and slender; the stockings, if they are white, make you fancy that the legs must be slim and elegant; the figure though wrapped in a shawl, or concealed by a pelisse, defines itself gracefully and seductively among the shadows; anon, the uncertain gleam thrown from a shop−window or a street lamp bestows a fleeting lustre, nearly always deceptive, on the unknown woman, and

fires the imagination, carrying it far beyond the truth. The senses then bestir themselves; everything takes color and animation; the woman appears in an altogether novel aspect; her person becomes beautiful. Behold! she is not a woman, she is a demon, a siren, who is drawing you by magnetic attraction to some respectable house, where the worthy *bourgeoise*, frightened by your threatening step and the clack of your boots, shuts the door in your face without looking at you.

A vacillating gleam, thrown from the shop−window of a shoemaker, suddenly illuminated from the waist down the figure of the woman who was before the young man. Ah! surely, *she* alone had that swaying figure; she alone knew the secret of that chaste gait which innocently set into relief the many beauties of that attractive form. Yes, that was the shawl, and that the velvet bonnet which she wore in the mornings. On her gray silk stockings not a spot, on her shoes not a splash. The shawl held tightly round the bust disclosed, vaguely, its charming lines; and the young man, who had often seen those shoulders at a ball, knew well the treasures that the shawl concealed. By the way a Parisian woman wraps a shawl around her, and the way she lifts her feet in the street, a man of intelligence in such studies can divine the secret of her mysterious errand. There is something, I know not what, of quivering buoyancy in the person, in the gait; the woman seems to weigh less; she steps, or rather, she glides like a star, and floats onward led by a thought which exhales from the folds and motion of her dress. The young man hastened his step, passed the woman, and then turned back to look at her. Pst! she had disappeared into a passage−way, the grated door of which and its bell still rattled and sounded. The young man walked back to the alley and saw the woman reach the farther end, where she began to mount—not without receiving the obsequious bow of an old portress—a winding staircase, the lower steps of which were strongly lighted; she went up buoyantly, eagerly, as though impatient.

“Impatient for what?” said the young man to himself, drawing back to lean against a wooden railing on the other side of the street. He gazed, unhappy man, at the different storeys of the house, with the keen attention of a detective searching for a conspirator.

It was one of those houses of which there are thousands in Paris, ignoble, vulgar, narrow, yellowish in tone, with four storeys and three windows on each floor. The outer blinds of the first floor were closed. Where was she going? The young man fancied he heard the tinkle of a bell on the second floor. As if in answer to it, a light began to move in a room with two windows strongly illuminated, which presently lit up the third window, evidently that of a first room, either the salon or the dining−room of the apartment. Instantly the outline of a woman's bonnet showed vaguely on the window, and a door between the two rooms must have closed, for the first was dark again, while the two other windows resumed their ruddy glow. At this moment a voice said, “Hi, there!” and the young man was conscious of a blow on his shoulder.

“Why don't you pay attention?” said the rough voice of a workman, carrying a plank on his shoulder. The man passed on. He was the voice of Providence saying to the watcher: “What are you meddling with? Think of your own duty; and leave these Parisians to their own affairs.”

The young man crossed his arms; then, as no one beheld him, he suffered tears of rage to flow down his cheeks unchecked. At last the sight of the shadows moving behind the lighted windows gave him such pain that he looked elsewhere and noticed a hackney−coach, standing against a wall in the upper part of the rue des Vieux−Augustins, at a place where there was neither the door of a house, nor the light of a shop−window.

Was it she? Was it not she? Life or death to a lover! This lover waited. He stood there during a century of twenty minutes. After that the woman came down, and he then recognized her as the one whom he secretly loved. Nevertheless, he wanted still to doubt. She went to the hackney−coach, and got into it.

“The house will always be there and I can search it later,” thought the young man, following the carriage at a run, to solve his last doubts; and soon he did so.

The carriage stopped in the rue de Richelieu before a shop for artificial flowers, close to the rue de Menars. The lady got out, entered the shop, sent out the money to pay the coachman, and presently left the shop herself, on foot, after buying a bunch of marabouts. Marabouts for her black hair! The officer beheld her, through the window−panes, placing the feathers to her head to see the effect, and he fancied he could hear the conversation between herself and the shop−woman.

“Oh! madame, nothing is more suitable for brunettes: brunettes have something a little too strongly marked in their lines, and marabouts give them just that *flow* which they lack. Madame la Duchesse de Langeais says they give a woman something vague, Ossianic, and very high−bred.”

"Very good; send them to me at once."

Then the lady turned quickly toward the rue de Menars, and entered her own house. When the door closed on her, the young lover, having lost his hopes, and worse, far worse, his dearest beliefs, walked through the streets like a drunken man, and presently found himself in his own room without knowing how he came there. He flung himself into an arm− chair, put his head in his hands and his feet on the andirons, drying his boots until he burned them. It was an awful moment,—one of those moments in human life when the character is moulded, and the future conduct of the best of men depends on the good or evil fortune of his first action. Providence or fatality?—choose which you will.

This young man belonged to a good family, whose nobility was not very ancient; but there are so few really old families in these days, that all men of rank are ancient without dispute. His grandfather had bought the office of counsellor to the Parliament of Paris, where he afterwards became president. His sons, each provided with a handsome fortune, entered the army, and through their marriages became attached to the court. The Revolution swept the family away; but one old dowager, too obstinate to emigrate, was left; she was put in prison, threatened with death, but was saved by the 9th Thermidor and recovered her property. When the proper time came, about the year 1804, she recalled her grandson to France. Auguste de Maulincour, the only scion of the Carbonnon de Maulincour, was brought up by the good dowager with the triple care of a mother, a woman of rank, and an obstinate dowager. When the Restoration came, the young man, then eighteen years of age, entered the Maison−Rouge, followed the princes to Ghent, was made an officer in the body−guard, left it to serve in the line, but was recalled later to the Royal Guard, where, at twenty− three years of age, he found himself major of a cavalry regiment,—a splendid position, due to his grandmother, who had played her cards well to obtain it, in spite of his youth. This double biography is a compendium of the general and special history, barring variations, of all the noble families who emigrated having debts and property, dowagers and tact.

Madame la Baronne de Maulincour had a friend in the old Vidame de Pamiers, formerly a commander of the Knights of Malta. This was one of those undying friendships founded on sexagenary ties which nothing can weaken, because at the bottom of such intimacies there are certain secrets of the human heart, delightful to guess at when we have the time, insipid to explain in twenty words, and which might make the text of a work in four volumes as amusing as the Doyen de Killerine,— a work about which young men talk and judge without having read it.

Auguste de Maulincour belonged therefore to the faubourg Saint−Germain through his grandmother and the vidame, and it sufficed him to date back two centuries to take the tone and opinions of those who assume to go back to Clovis. This young man, pale, slender, and delicate in appearance, a man of honor and true courage, who would fight a duel for a yes or a no, had never yet fought upon a battle−field, though he wore in his button−hole the cross of the Legion of honor. He was, as you perceive, one of the blunders of the Restoration, perhaps the most excusable of them. The youth of those days was the youth of no epoch. It came between the memories of the Empire and those of the Emigration, between the old traditions of the court and the conscientious education of the *bourgeoisie*; between religion and fancy−balls; between two political faiths, between Louis XVIII., who saw only the present, and Charles X., who looked too far into the future; it was moreover bound to accept the will of the king, though the king was deceiving and tricking it. This unfortunate youth, blind and yet clear−sighted, was counted as nothing by old men jealously keeping the reins of the State in their feeble hands, while the monarchy could have been saved by their retirement and the accession of this Young France, which the old doctrinaires, the *emigres* of the Restoration, still speak of slightingly. Auguste de Maulincour was a victim to the ideas which weighed in those days upon French youth, and we must here explain why.

The Vidame de Pamiers was still, at sixty−seven years of age, a very brilliant man, having seen much and lived much; a good talker, a man of honor and a gallant man, but who held as to women the most detestable opinions; he loved them, and he despised them. *Their* honor! *their* feelings! Ta−ra−ra, rubbish and shams! When he was with them, he believed in them, the ci−devant "monstre"; he never contradicted them, and he made them shine. But among his male friends, when the topic of the sex came up, he laid down the principle that to deceive women, and to carry on several intrigues at once, should be the occupation of those young men who were so misguided as to wish to meddle in the affairs of the State. It is sad to have to sketch so hackneyed a portrait, for has it not figured everywhere and become, literally, as threadbare as that of a grenadier of the Empire? But the vidame had an influence on Monsieur de Maulincour's destiny which obliges us to preserve his portrait; he

lectured the young man after his fashion, and did his best to convert him to the doctrines of the great age of gallantry.

The dowager, a tender−hearted, pious woman, sitting between God and her vidame, a model of grace and sweetness, but gifted with that well−bred persistency which triumphs in the long run, had longed to preserve for her grandson the beautiful illusions of life, and had therefore brought him up in the highest principles; she instilled into him her own delicacy of feeling and made him, to outward appearance, a timid man, if not a fool. The sensibilities of the young fellow, preserved pure, were not worn by contact without; he remained so chaste, so scrupulous, that he was keenly offended by actions and maxims to which the world attached no consequence. Ashamed of this susceptibility, he forced himself to conceal it under a false hardihood; but he suffered in secret, all the while scoffing with others at the things he reverenced.

It came to pass that he was deceived; because, in accordance with a not uncommon whim of destiny, he, a man of gentle melancholy, and spiritual in love, encountered in the object of his first passion a woman who held in horror all German sentimentalism. The young man, in consequence, distrusted himself, became dreamy, absorbed in his griefs, complaining of not being understood. Then, as we desire all the more violently the things we find difficult to obtain, he continued to adore women with that ingenuous tenderness and feline delicacy the secret of which belongs to women themselves, who may, perhaps, prefer to keep the monopoly of it. In point of fact, though women of the world complain of the way men love them, they have little liking themselves for those whose soul is half feminine. Their own superiority consists in making men believe they are their inferiors in love; therefore they will readily leave a lover if he is inexperienced enough to rob them of those fears with which they seek to deck themselves, those delightful tortures of feigned jealousy, those troubles of hope betrayed, those futile expectations,—in short, the whole procession of their feminine miseries. They hold Sir Charles Grandison in horror. What can be more contrary to their nature than a tranquil, perfect love? They want emotions; happiness without storms is not happiness to them. Women with souls that are strong enough to bring infinitude into love are angelic exceptions; they are among women what noble geniuses are among men. Their great passions are rare as masterpieces. Below the level of such love come compromises, conventions, passing and contemptible irritations, as in all things petty and perishable.

Amid the hidden disasters of his heart, and while he was still seeking the woman who could comprehend him (a search which, let us remark in passing, is one of the amorous follies of our epoch), Auguste met, in the rank of society that was farthest from his own, in the secondary sphere of money, where banking holds the first place, a perfect being, one of those women who have I know not what about them that is saintly and sacred,—women who inspire such reverence that love has need of the help of a long familiarity to declare itself.

Auguste then gave himself up wholly to the delights of the deepest and most moving of passions, to a love that was purely adoring. Innumerable repressed desires there were, shadows of passion so vague yet so profound, so fugitive and yet so actual, that one scarcely knows to what we may compare them. They are like perfumes, or clouds, or rays of the sun, or shadows, or whatever there is in nature that shines for a moment and disappears, that springs to life and dies, leaving in the heart long echoes of emotion. When the soul is young enough to nurture melancholy and far−off hope, to find in woman more than a woman, is it not the greatest happiness that can befall a man when he loves enough to feel more joy in touching a gloved hand, or a lock of hair, in listening to a word, in casting a single look, than in all the ardor of possession given by happy love? Thus it is that rejected persons, those rebuffed by fate, the ugly and unfortunate, lovers unrevealed, women and timid men, alone know the treasures contained in the voice of the beloved. Taking their source and their element from the soul itself, the vibrations of the air, charged with passion, put our hearts so powerfully into communion, carrying thought between them so lucidly, and being, above all, so incapable of falsehood, that a single inflection of a voice is often a revelation. What enchantments the intonations of a tender voice can bestow upon the heart of a poet! What ideas they awaken! What freshness they shed there! Love is in the voice before the glance avows it. Auguste, poet after the manner of lovers (there are poets who feel, and poets who express; the first are the happiest), Auguste had tasted all these early joys, so vast, so fecund. SHE possessed the most winning organ that the most artful woman of the world could have desired in order to deceive at her ease; *she* had that silvery voice which is soft to the ear, and ringing only for the heart which it stirs and troubles, caresses and subjugates.

And this woman went by night to the rue Soly through the rue Pagevin! and her furtive apparition in an infamous house had just destroyed the grandest of passions! The vidame's logic triumphed.

"If she is betraying her husband we will avenge ourselves," said Auguste.

There was still faith in that "if." The philosophic doubt of Descartes is a politeness with which we should always honor virtue. Ten o'clock sounded. The Baron de Maulincour remembered that this woman was going to a ball that evening at a house to which he had access. He dressed, went there, and searched for her through all the salons. The mistress of the house, Madame de Nucingen, seeing him thus occupied, said:—

"You are looking for Madame Jules; but she has not yet come."

"Good evening, dear," said a voice.

Auguste and Madame de Nucingen turned round. Madame Jules had arrived, dressed in white, looking simple and noble, wearing in her hair the marabouts the young baron had seen her choose in the flower−shop. That voice of love now pierced his heart. Had he won the slightest right to be jealous of her he would have petrified her then and there by saying the words, "Rue Soly!" But if he, an alien to her life, had said those words in her ear a thousand times, Madame Jules would have asked him in astonishment what he meant. He looked at her stupidly.

For those sarcastic persons who scoff at all things it may be a great amusement to detect the secret of a woman, to know that her chastity is a lie, that her calm face hides some anxious thought, that under that pure brow is a dreadful drama. But there are other souls to whom the sight is saddening; and many of those who laugh in public, when withdrawn into themselves and alone with their conscience, curse the world while they despise the woman. Such was the case with Auguste de Maulincour, as he stood there in presence of Madame Jules. Singular situation! There was no other relation between them than that which social life establishes between persons who exchange a few words seven or eight times in the course of a winter, and yet he was calling her to account on behalf of a happiness unknown to her; he was judging her, without letting her know of his accusation.

Many young men find themselves thus in despair at having broken forever with a woman adored in secret, condemned and despised in secret. There are many hidden monologues told to the walls of some solitary lodging; storms roused and calmed without ever leaving the depths of hearts; amazing scenes of the moral world, for which a painter is wanted. Madame Jules sat down, leaving her husband to make a turn around the salon. After she was seated she seemed uneasy, and, while talking with her neighbor, she kept a furtive eye on Monsieur Jules Desmarets, her husband, a broker chiefly employed by the Baron de Nucingen. The following is the history of their home life.

Monsieur Desmarets was, five years before his marriage, in a broker's office, with no other means than the meagre salary of a clerk. But he was a man to whom misfortune had early taught the truths of life, and he followed the strait path with the tenacity of an insect making for its nest; he was one of those dogged young men who feign death before an obstacle and wear out everybody's patience with their own beetle− like perseverance. Thus, young as he was, he had all the republican virtue of poor peoples; he was sober, saving of his time, an enemy to pleasure. He waited. Nature had given him the immense advantage of an agreeable exterior. His calm, pure brow, the shape of his placid, but expressive face, his simple manners,—all revealed in him a laborious and resigned existence, that lofty personal dignity which is imposing to others, and the secret nobility of heart which can meet all events. His modesty inspired a sort of respect in those who knew him. Solitary in the midst of Paris, he knew the social world only by glimpses during the brief moments which he spent in his patron's salon on holidays.

There were passions in this young man, as in most of the men who live in that way, of amazing profundity,—passions too vast to be drawn into petty incidents. His want of means compelled him to lead an ascetic life, and he conquered his fancies by hard work. After paling all day over figures, he found his recreation in striving obstinately to acquire that wide general knowledge so necessary in these days to every man who wants to make his mark, whether in society, or in commerce, at the bar, or in politics or literature. The only peril these fine souls have to fear comes from their own uprightness. They see some poor girl; they love her; they marry her, and wear out their lives in a struggle between poverty and love. The noblest ambition is quenched perforce by the household account−book. Jules Desmarets went headlong into this peril.

He met one evening at his patron's house a girl of the rarest beauty. Unfortunate men who are deprived of affection, and who consume the finest hours of youth in work and study, alone know the rapid ravages that passion makes in their lonely, misconceived hearts. They are so certain of loving truly, all their forces are concentrated so quickly on the object of their love, that they receive, while beside her, the most delightful sensations, when, as often happens, they inspire none at all. Nothing is more flattering to a woman's egotism than

to divine this passion, apparently immovable, and these emotions so deep that they have needed a great length of time to reach the human surface. These poor men, anchorites in the midst of Paris, have all the enjoyments of anchorites; and may sometimes succumb to temptations. But, more often deceived, betrayed, and misunderstood, they are rarely able to gather the sweet fruits of a love which, to them, is like a flower dropped from heaven.

One smile from his wife, a single inflection of her voice sufficed to make Jules Desmarets conceive a passion which was boundless. Happily, the concentrated fire of that secret passion revealed itself artlessly to the woman who inspired it. These two beings then loved each other religiously. To express all in a word, they clasped hands without shame before the eyes of the world and went their way like two children, brother and sister, passing serenely through a crowd where all made way for them and admired them.

The young girl was in one of those unfortunate positions which human selfishness entails upon children. She had no civil status; her name of “Clemence” and her age were recorded only by a notary public. As for her fortune, that was small indeed. Jules Desmarets was a happy man on hearing these particulars. If Clemence had belonged to an opulent family, he might have despaired of obtaining her; but she was only the poor child of love, the fruit of some terrible adulterous passion; and they were married. Then began for Jules Desmarets a series of fortunate events. Every one envied his happiness; and henceforth talked only of his luck, without recalling either his virtues or his courage.

Some days after their marriage, the mother of Clemence, who passed in society for her godmother, told Jules Desmarets to buy the office and good−will of a broker, promising to provide him with the necessary capital. In those days, such offices could still be bought at a modest price. That evening, in the salon as it happened of his patron, a wealthy capitalist proposed, on the recommendation of the mother, a very advantageous transaction for Jules Desmarets, and the next day the happy clerk was able to buy out his patron. In four years Desmarets became one of the most prosperous men in his business; new clients increased the number his predecessor had left to him; he inspired confidence in all; and it was impossible for him not to feel, by the way business came to him, that some hidden influence, due to his mother−in−law, or to Providence, was secretly protecting him.

At the end of the third year Clemence lost her godmother. By that time Monsieur Jules (so called to distinguish him from an elder brother, whom he had set up as a notary in Paris) possessed an income from invested property of two hundred thousand francs. There was not in all Paris another instance of the domestic happiness enjoyed by this couple. For five years their exceptional love had been troubled by only one event,—a calumny for which Monsieur Jules exacted vengeance. One of his former comrades attributed to Madame Jules the fortune of her husband, explaining that it came from a high protection dearly paid for. The man who uttered the calumny was killed in the duel that followed it.

The profound passion of this couple, which survived marriage, obtained a great success in society, though some women were annoyed by it. The charming household was respected; everybody feted it. Monsieur and Madame Jules were sincerely liked, perhaps because there is nothing more delightful to see than happy people; but they never stayed long at any festivity. They slipped away early, as impatient to regain their nest as wandering pigeons. This nest was a large and beautiful mansion in the rue de Menars, where a true feeling for art tempered the luxury which the financial world continues, traditionally, to display. Here the happy pair received their society magnificently, although the obligations of social life suited them but little.

Nevertheless, Jules submitted to the demands of the world, knowing that, sooner or later, a family has need of it; but he and his wife felt themselves, in its midst, like green−house plants in a tempest. With a delicacy that was very natural, Jules had concealed from his wife the calumny and the death of the calumniator. Madame Jules, herself, was inclined, through her sensitive and artistic nature, to desire luxury. In spite of the terrible lesson of the duel, some imprudent women whispered to each other that Madame Jules must sometimes be pressed for money. They often found her more elegantly dressed in her own home than when she went into society. She loved to adorn herself to please her husband, wishing to show him that to her he was more than any social life. A true love, a pure love, above all, a happy love! Jules, always a lover, and more in love as time went by, was happy in all things beside his wife, even in her caprices; in fact, he would have been uneasy if she had none, thinking it a symptom of some illness.

Auguste de Maulincour had the personal misfortune of running against this passion, and falling in love with the wife beyond recovery. Nevertheless, though he carried in his heart so intense a love, he was not ridiculous; he complied with all the demands of society, and of military manners and customs. And yet his face wore constantly,

even though he might be drinking a glass of champagne, that dreamy look, that air of silently despising life, that nebulous expression which belongs, though for other reasons, to *blases* men,—men dissatisfied with hollow lives. To love without hope, to be disgusted with life, constitute, in these days, a social position. The enterprise of winning the heart of a sovereign might give, perhaps, more hope than a love rashly conceived for a happy woman. Therefore Maulincour had sufficient reason to be grave and gloomy. A queen has the vanity of her power; the height of her elevation protects her. But a pious *bourgeoise* is like a hedgehog, or an oyster, in its rough wrappings.

At this moment the young officer was beside his unconscious mistress, who certainly was unaware that she was doubly faithless. Madame Jules was seated, in a naive attitude, like the least artful woman in existence, soft and gentle, full of a majestic serenity. What an abyss is human nature! Before beginning a conversation, the baron looked alternately at the wife and at the husband. How many were the reflections he made! He recomposed the "Night Thoughts" of Young in a second. And yet the music was sounding through the salons, the light was pouring from a thousand candles. It was a banker's ball,—one of those insolent festivals by means of which the world of solid gold endeavored to sneer at the gold−embossed salons where the faubourg Saint−Germain met and laughed, not foreseeing the day when the bank would invade the Luxembourg and take its seat upon the throne. The conspirators were now dancing, indifferent to coming bankruptcies, whether of Power or of the Bank. The gilded salons of the Baron de Nucingen were gay with that peculiar animation that the world of Paris, apparently joyous at any rate, gives to its fetes. There, men of talent communicate their wit to fools, and fools communicate that air of enjoyment that characterizes them. By means of this exchange all is liveliness. But a ball in Paris always resembles fireworks to a certain extent; wit, coquetry, and pleasure sparkle and go out like rockets. The next day all present have forgotten their wit, their coquetry, their pleasure.

"Ah!" thought Auguste, by way of conclusion, "women are what the vidame says they are. Certainly all those dancing here are less irreproachable actually than Madame Jules appears to be, and yet Madame Jules went to the rue Soly!"

The rue Soly was like an illness to him; the very word shrivelled his heart.

"Madame, do you ever dance?" he said to her.

"This is the third time you have asked me that question this winter," she answered, smiling.

"But perhaps you have never answered it."

"That is true."

"I knew very well that you were false, like other women."

Madame Jules continued to smile.

"Listen, monsieur," she said; "if I told you the real reason, you would think it ridiculous. I do not think it false to abstain from telling things that the world would laugh at."

"All secrets demand, in order to be told, a friendship of which I am no doubt unworthy, madame. But you cannot have any but noble secrets; do you think me capable of jesting on noble things?"

"Yes," she said, "you, like all the rest, laugh at our purest sentiments; you calumniate them. Besides, I have no secrets. I have the right to love my husband in the face of all the world, and I say so,—I am proud of it; and if you laugh at me when I tell you that I dance only with him, I shall have a bad opinion of your heart."

"Have you never danced since your marriage with any one but your husband?"

"Never. His arm is the only one on which I have leaned; I have never felt the touch of another man."

"Has your physician never felt your pulse?"

"Now you are laughing at me."

"No, madame, I admire you, because I comprehend you. But you let a man hear your voice, you let yourself be seen, you—in short, you permit our eyes to admire you—"

"Ah!" she said, interrupting him, "that is one of my griefs. Yes, I wish it were possible for a married woman to live secluded with her husband, as a mistress lives with her lover, for then—"

"Then why were you, two hours ago, on foot, disguised, in the rue Soly?"

"The rue Soly, where is that?"

And her pure voice gave no sign of any emotion; no feature of her face quivered; she did not blush; she remained calm.

"What! you did not go up to the second floor of a house in the rue des Vieux−Augustins at the corner of the

rue Soly? You did not have a hackney−coach waiting near by? You did not return in it to the flower−shop in the rue Richelieu, where you bought the feathers that are now in your hair?"

"I did not leave my house this evening."

As she uttered that lie she was smiling and imperturbable; she played with her fan; but if any one had passed a hand down her back they would, perhaps, have found it moist. At that instant Auguste remembered the instructions of the vidame.

"Then it was some one who strangely resembled you," he said, with a credulous air.

"Monsieur," she replied, "if you are capable of following a woman and detecting her secrets, you will allow me to say that it is a wrong, a very wrong thing, and I do you the honor to say that I disbelieve you."

The baron turned away, placed himself before the fireplace and seemed thoughtful. He bent his head; but his eyes were covertly fixed on Madame Jules, who, not remembering the reflections in the mirror, cast two or three glances at him that were full of terror. Presently she made a sign to her husband and rising took his arm to walk about the salon. As she passed before Monsieur de Maulincour, who at that moment was speaking to a friend, he said in a loud voice, as if in reply to a remark: "That woman will certainly not sleep quietly this night." Madame Jules stopped, gave him an imposing look which expressed contempt, and continued her way, unaware that another look, if surprised by her husband, might endanger not only her happiness but the lives of two men. Auguste, frantic with anger, which he tried to smother in the depths of his soul, presently left the house, swearing to penetrate to the heart of the mystery. Before leaving, he sought Madame Jules, to look at her again; but she had disappeared.

What a drama cast into that young head so eminently romantic, like all who have not known love in the wide extent which they give to it. He adored Madame Jules under a new aspect; he loved her now with the fury of jealousy and the frenzied anguish of hope. Unfaithful to her husband, the woman became common. Auguste could now give himself up to the joys of successful love, and his imagination opened to him a career of pleasures. Yes, he had lost the angel, but he had found the most delightful of demons. He went to bed, building castles in the air, excusing Madame Jules by some romantic fiction in which he did not believe. He resolved to devote himself wholly, from that day forth, to a search for the causes, motives, and keynote of this mystery. It was a tale to read, or better still, a drama to be played, in which he had a part.

CHAPTER II. FERRAGUS

A fine thing is the task of a spy, when performed for one's own benefit and in the interests of a passion. Is it not giving ourselves the pleasure of a thief and a rascal while continuing honest men? But there is another side to it; we must resign ourselves to boil with anger, to roar with impatience, to freeze our feet in the mud, to be numbed, and roasted, and torn by false hopes. We must go, on the faith of a mere indication, to a vague object, miss our end, curse our luck, improvise to ourselves elegies, dithyrambics, exclaim idiotically before inoffensive pedestrians who observe us, knock over old apple−women and their baskets, run hither and thither, stand on guard beneath a window, make a thousand suppositions. But, after all, it is a chase, a hunt; a hunt in Paris, a hunt with all its chances, minus dogs and guns and the tally−ho! Nothing compares with it but the life of gamblers. But it needs a heart big with love and vengeance to ambush itself in Paris, like a tiger waiting to spring upon its prey, and to enjoy the chances and contingencies of Paris, by adding one special interest to the many that abound there. But for this we need a many−sided soul—for must we not live in a thousand passions, a thousand sentiments?

Auguste de Maulincour flung himself into this ardent existence passionately, for he felt all its pleasures and all its misery. He went disguised about Paris, watching at the corners of the rue Pagevin and the rue des Vieux−Augustins. He hurried like a hunter from the rue de Menars to the rue Soly, and back from the rue Soly to the rue de Menars, without obtaining either the vengeance or the knowledge which would punish or reward such cares, such efforts, such wiles. But he had not yet reached that impatience which wrings our very entrails and makes us sweat; he roamed in hope, believing that Madame Jules would only refrain for a few days from revisiting the place where she knew she had been detected. He devoted the first days therefore, to a careful study of the secrets of the street. A novice at such work, he dared not question either the porter or the shoemaker of the house to which Madame Jules had gone; but he managed to obtain a post of observation in a house directly opposite to the mysterious apartment. He studied the ground, trying to reconcile the conflicting demands of prudence, impatience, love, and secrecy.

Early in the month of March, while busy with plans by which he expected to strike a decisive blow, he left his post about four in the afternoon, after one of those patient watches from which he had learned nothing. He was on his way to his own house whither a matter relating to his military service called him, when he was overtaken in the rue Coquilliere by one of those heavy showers which instantly flood the gutters, while each drop of rain rings loudly in the puddles of the roadway. A pedestrian under these circumstances is forced to stop short and take refuge in a shop or cafe if he is rich enough to pay for the forced hospitality, or, if in poorer circumstances, under a *porte−cochere*, that haven of paupers or shabbily dressed persons. Why have none of our painters ever attempted to reproduce the physiognomies of a swarm of Parisians, grouped, under stress of weather, in the damp *porte−cochere* of a building? First, there's the musing philosophical pedestrian, who observes with interest all he sees,—whether it be the stripes made by the rain on the gray background of the atmosphere (a species of chasing not unlike the capricious threads of spun glass), or the whirl of white water which the wind is driving like a luminous dust along the roofs, or the fitful disgorgements of the gutter−pipes, sparkling and foaming; in short, the thousand nothings to be admired and studied with delight by loungers, in spite of the porter's broom which pretends to be sweeping out the gateway. Then there's the talkative refugee, who complains and converses with the porter while he rests on his broom like a grenadier on his musket; or the pauper wayfarer, curled against the wall indifferent to the condition of his rags, long used, alas, to contact with the streets; or the learned pedestrian who studies, spells, and reads the posters on the walls without finishing them; or the smiling pedestrian who makes fun of others to whom some street fatality has happened, who laughs at the muddy women, and makes grimaces at those of either sex who are looking from the windows; and the silent being who gazes from floor to floor; and the working−man, armed with a satchel or a paper bundle, who is estimating the rain as a profit or loss; and the good−natured fugitive, who arrives like a shot exclaiming, “Ah! what weather, messieurs, what weather!” and bows to every one; and, finally, the true *bourgeois* of Paris, with his unfailing umbrella, an expert in showers, who foresaw this particular one, but would come out in spite of his wife; this one takes a seat in the porter's chair. According to individual character, each member of this fortuitous society contemplates the skies, and departs, skipping to avoid the mud,—because he is in a hurry, or because he sees other citizens walking along in spite of

wind and slush, or because, the archway being damp and mortally catarrhal, the bed's edge, as the proverb says, is better than the sheets. Each one has his motive. No one is left but the prudent pedestrian, the man who, before he sets forth, makes sure of a scrap of blue sky through the rifting clouds.

Monsieur de Maulincour took refuge, as we have said, with a whole family of fugitives, under the porch of an old house, the court−yard of which looked like the flue of a chimney. The sides of its plastered, nitrified, and mouldy walls were so covered with pipes and conduits from all the many floors of its four elevations, that it might have been said to resemble at that moment the *cascatelles* of Saint−Cloud. Water flowed everywhere; it boiled, it leaped, it murmured; it was black, white, blue, and green; it shrieked, it bubbled under the broom of the portress, a toothless old woman used to storms, who seemed to bless them as she swept into the street a mass of scraps an intelligent inventory of which would have revealed the lives and habits of every dweller in the house,—bits of printed cottons, tea−leaves, artificial flower−petals faded and worthless, vegetable parings, papers, scraps of metal. At every sweep of her broom the old woman bared the soul of the gutter, that black fissure on which a porter's mind is ever bent. The poor lover examined this scene, like a thousand others which our heaving Paris presents daily; but he examined it mechanically, as a man absorbed in thought, when, happening to look up, he found himself all but nose to nose with a man who had just entered the gateway.

In appearance this man was a beggar, but not the Parisian beggar,— that creation without a name in human language; no, this man formed another type, while presenting on the outside all the ideas suggested by the word “beggar.” He was not marked by those original Parisian characteristics which strike us so forcibly in the paupers whom Charlet was fond of representing, with his rare luck in observation,— coarse faces reeking of mud, hoarse voices, reddened and bulbous noses, mouths devoid of teeth but menacing; humble yet terrible beings, in whom a profound intelligence shining in their eyes seems like a contradiction. Some of these bold vagabonds have blotched, cracked, veiny skins; their foreheads are covered with wrinkles, their hair scanty and dirty, like a wig thrown on a dust−heap. All are gay in their degradation, and degraded in their joys; all are marked with the stamp of debauchery, casting their silence as a reproach; their very attitude revealing fearful thoughts. Placed between crime and beggary they have no compunctions, and circle prudently around the scaffold without mounting it, innocent in the midst of crime, and vicious in their innocence. They often cause a laugh, but they always cause reflection. One represents to you civilization stunted, repressed; he comprehends everything, the honor of the galleys, patriotism, virtue, the malice of a vulgar crime, or the fine astuteness of elegant wickedness. Another is resigned, a perfect mimer, but stupid. All have slight yearnings after order and work, but they are pushed back into their mire by society, which makes no inquiry as to what there may be of great men, poets, intrepid souls, and splendid organizations among these vagrants, these gypsies of Paris; a people eminently good and eminently evil—like all the masses who suffer—accustomed to endure unspeakable woes, and whom a fatal power holds ever down to the level of the mire. They all have a dream, a hope, a happiness,—cards, lottery, or wine.

There was nothing of all this in the personage who now leaned carelessly against the wall in front of Monsieur de Maulincour, like some fantastic idea drawn by an artist on the back of a canvas the front of which is turned to the wall. This tall, spare man, whose leaden visage expressed some deep but chilling thought, dried up all pity in the hearts of those who looked at him by the scowling look and the sarcastic attitude which announced an intention of treating every man as an equal. His face was of a dirty white, and his wrinkled skull, denuded of hair, bore a vague resemblance to a block of granite. A few gray locks on either side of his head fell straight to the collar of his greasy coat, which was buttoned to the chin. He resembled both Voltaire and Don Quixote; he was, apparently, scoffing but melancholy, full of disdain and philosophy, but half−crazy. He seemed to have no shirt. His beard was long. A rusty black cravat, much worn and ragged, exposed a protuberant neck deeply furrowed, with veins as thick as cords. A large brown circle like a bruise was strongly marked beneath his eyes, He seemed to be at least sixty years old. His hands were white and clean. His boots were trodden down at the heels, and full of holes. A pair of blue trousers, mended in various places, were covered with a species of fluff which made them offensive to the eye. Whether it was that his damp clothes exhaled a fetid odor, or that he had in his normal condition the “poor smell” which belongs to Parisian tenements, just as offices, sacristies, and hospitals have their own peculiar and rancid fetidness, of which no words can give the least idea, or whether some other reason affected them, those in the vicinity of this man immediately moved away and left him alone. He cast upon them and also upon the officer a calm, expressionless look, the celebrated look of Monsieur de Talleyrand, a dull, wan glance, without warmth, a species of impenetrable veil, beneath which a strong soul hides profound emotions and

close estimation of men and things and events. Not a fold of his face quivered. His mouth and forehead were impassible; but his eyes moved and lowered themselves with a noble, almost tragic slowness. There was, in fact, a whole drama in the motion of those withered eyelids.

The aspect of this stoical figure gave rise in Monsieur de Maulincour to one of those vagabond reveries which begin with a common question and end by comprising a world of thought. The storm was past. Monsieur de Maulincour presently saw no more of the man than the tail of his coat as it brushed the gate−post, but as he turned to leave his own place he noticed at his feet a letter which must have fallen from the unknown beggar when he took, as the baron had seen him take, a handkerchief from his pocket. The young man picked it up, and read, involuntarily, the address: “To Monsieur Ferragusse, Rue des Grands−Augustains, corner of rue Soly.”

The letter bore no postmark, and the address prevented Monsieur de Maulincour from following the beggar and returning it; for there are few passions that will not fail in rectitude in the long run. The baron had a presentiment of the opportunity afforded by this windfall. He determined to keep the letter, which would give him the right to enter the mysterious house to return it to the strange man, not doubting that he lived there. Suspicions, vague as the first faint gleams of daylight, made him fancy relations between this man and Madame Jules. A jealous lover supposes everything; and it is by supposing everything and selecting the most probable of their conjectures that judges, spies, lovers, and observers get at the truth they are looking for.

“Is the letter for him? Is it from Madame Jules?”

His restless imagination tossed a thousand such questions to him; but when he read the first words of the letter he smiled. Here it is, textually, in all the simplicity of its artless phrases and its miserable orthography,—a letter to which it would be impossible to add anything, or to take anything away, unless it were the letter itself. But we have yielded to the necessity of punctuating it. In the original there were neither commas nor stops of any kind, not even notes of exclamation,—a fact which tends to undervalue the system of notes and dashes by which modern authors have endeavored to depict the great disasters of all the passions:—

Henry,—Among the manny sacrifisis I imposed upon myself for your sake was that of not giving you anny news of me; but an iresistible voise now compells me to let you know the wrong you have done me. I know beforehand that your soul hardened in vise will not pitty me. Your heart is deaf to feeling. Is it deaf to the cries of nature? But what matter? I must tell you to what a dredful point you are gilty, and the horror of the position to which you have brought me. Henry, you knew what I sufered from my first wrong−doing, and yet you plunged me into the same misery, and then abbandoned me to my dispair and sufering. Yes, I will say it, the belif I had that you loved me and esteemed me gave me corage to bare my fate. But now, what have I left? Have you not made me loose all that was dear to me, all that held me to life; parents, frends, onor, reputation,—all, I have sacrifised all to you, and nothing is left me but shame, oprobrum, and—I say this without blushing—poverty. Nothing was wanting to my misfortunes but the sertainty of your contempt and hatred; and now I have them I find the corage that my project requires. My decision is made; the onor of my famly commands it. I must put an end to my suferins. Make no remarks upon my conduct, Henry; it is orful, I know, but my condition obliges me. Without help, without suport, without one frend to comfort me, can I live? No. Fate has desided for me. So in two days, Henry, two days, Ida will have seased to be worthy of your regard. Oh, Henry! oh, my frend! for I can never change to you, promise me to forgive me for what I am going to do. Do not forget that you have driven me to it; it is your work, and you must judge it. May heven not punish you for all your crimes. I ask your pardon on my knees, for I feel nothing is wanting to my

misery but the sorow of knowing you unhappy. In spite of the poverty I am in I shall refuse all help from you. If you had loved me I would have taken all from your friendship; but a benfit given by pitty *my soul refussis*. I would be baser to take it than he who offered it. I have one favor to ask of you. I don't know how long I must stay at Madame Meynardie's; be genrous enough not to come there. Your last two vissits did me a harm I cannot get ofer. I cannot enter into particlers about that conduct of yours. You hate me,—you said so; that word is writen on my heart, and freeses it with fear. Alas! it is now, when I need all my corage, all my strength, that my faculties abandon me. Henry, my frend, before I put a barrier forever between us, give me a last pruf of your esteem. Write me, answer me, say you respect me still, though you have seased to love me. My eyes are worthy still to look into yours, but I do not ask an interfew; I fear my weakness and my love. But for pitty's sake write me a line at once; it will give me the corage I need to meet my trubbles. Farewell, orther of all my woes, but the only frend my heart has chosen and will never forget.

Ida.

This life of a young girl, with its love betrayed, its fatal joys, its pangs, its miseries, and its horrible resignation, summed up in a few words, this humble poem, essentially Parisian, written on dirty paper, influenced for a passing moment Monsieur de Maulincour. He asked himself whether this Ida might not be some poor relation of Madame Jules, and that strange rendezvous, which he had witnessed by chance, the mere necessity of a charitable effort. But could that old pauper have seduced this Ida? There was something impossible in the very idea. Wandering in this labyrinth of reflections, which crossed, recrossed, and obliterated one another, the baron reached the rue Pagevin, and saw a hackney−coach standing at the end of the rue des Vieux−Augustins where it enters the rue Montmartre. All waiting hackney−coaches now had an interest for him.

“Can she be there?” he thought to himself, and his heart beat fast with a hot and feverish throbbing.

He pushed the little door with the bell, but he lowered his head as he did so, obeying a sense of shame, for a voice said to him secretly:—

“Why are you putting your foot into this mystery?”

He went up a few steps, and found himself face to face with the old portress.

“Monsieur Ferragus?” he said.

“Don't know him.”

“Doesn't Monsieur Ferragus live here?”

“Haven't such a name in the house.”

“But, my good woman—”

“I'm not your good woman, monsieur, I'm the portress.”

“But, madame,” persisted the baron, “I have a letter for Monsieur Ferragus.”

“Ah! if monsieur has a letter,” she said, changing her tone, “that's another matter. Will you let me see it—that letter?”

Auguste showed the folded letter. The old woman shook her head with a doubtful air, hesitated, seemed to wish to leave the lodge and inform the mysterious Ferragus of his unexpected visitor, but finally said:—

“Very good; go up, monsieur. I suppose you know the way?”

Without replying to this remark, which he thought might be a trap, the young officer ran lightly up the stairway, and rang loudly at the door of the second floor. His lover's instinct told him, “She is there.”

The beggar of the porch, Ferragus, the “orther” of Ida's woes, opened the door himself. He appeared in a flowered dressing−gown, white flannel trousers, his feet in embroidered slippers, and his face washed clean of stains. Madame Jules, whose head projected beyond the casing of the door in the next room, turned pale and dropped into a chair.

“What is the matter, madame?” cried the officer, springing toward her.

But Ferragus stretched forth an arm and flung the intruder back with so sharp a thrust that Auguste fancied he had received a blow with an iron bar full on his chest.

“Back! monsieur,” said the man. “What do you want there? For five or six days you have been roaming about the neighborhood. Are you a spy?”

“Are you Monsieur Ferragus?” said the baron.

“No, monsieur.”

“Nevertheless,” continued Auguste, “it is to you that I must return this paper which you dropped in the gateway beneath which we both took refuge from the rain.”

While speaking and offering the letter to the man, Auguste did not refrain from casting an eye around the room where Ferragus received him. It was very well arranged, though simply. A fire burned on the hearth; and near it was a table with food upon it, which was served more sumptuously than agreed with the apparent conditions of the man and the poorness of his lodging. On a sofa in the next room, which he could see through the doorway, lay a heap of gold, and he heard a sound which could be no other than that of a woman weeping.

“The paper belongs to me; I am much obliged to you,” said the mysterious man, turning away as if to make the baron understand that he must go.

Too curious himself to take much note of the deep examination of which he was himself the object, Auguste did not see the half−magnetic glance with which this strange being seemed to pierce him; had he encountered that basilisk eye he might have felt the danger that encompassed him. Too passionately excited to think of himself, Auguste bowed, went down the stairs, and returned home, striving to find a meaning in the connection of these three persons,—Ida, Ferragus, and Madame Jules; an occupation equivalent to that of trying to arrange the many−cornered bits of a Chinese puzzle without possessing the key to the game. But Madame Jules had seen him, Madame Jules went there, Madame Jules had lied to him. Maulincour determined to go and see her the next day. She could not refuse his visit, for he was now her accomplice; he was hands and feet in the mysterious affair, and she knew it. Already he felt himself a sultan, and thought of demanding from Madame Jules, imperiously, all her secrets.

In those days Paris was seized with a building−fever. If Paris is a monster, it is certainly a most mania−ridden monster. It becomes enamored of a thousand fancies: sometimes it has a mania for building, like a great seigneur who loves a trowel; soon it abandons the trowel and becomes all military; it arrays itself from head to foot as a national guard, and drills and smokes; suddenly, it abandons military manoeuvres and flings away cigars; it is commercial, care−worn, falls into bankruptcy, sells its furniture on the place de Chatelet, files its schedule; but a few days later, lo! it has arranged its affairs and is giving fetes and dances. One day it eats barley−sugar by the mouthful, by the handful; yesterday it bought “papier Weymen”; to−day the monster's teeth ache, and it applies to its walls an alexipharmatic to mitigate their dampness; to−morrow it will lay in a provision of pectoral paste. It has its manias for the month, for the season, for the year, like its manias of a day.

So, at the moment of which we speak, all the world was building or pulling down something,—people hardly knew what as yet. There were very few streets in which high scaffoldings on long poles could not be seen, fastened from floor to floor with transverse blocks inserted into holes in the walls on which the planks were laid,—a frail construction, shaken by the brick−layers, but held together by ropes, white with plaster, and insecurely protected from the wheels of carriages by the breastwork of planks which the law requires round all such buildings. There is something maritime in these masts, and ladders, and cordage, even in the shouts of the masons. About a dozen yards from the hotel Maulincour, one of these ephemeral barriers was erected before a house which was then being built of blocks of free−stone. The day after the event we have just related, at the moment when the Baron de Maulincour was passing this scaffolding in his cabriolet on his way to see Madame Jules, a stone, two feet square, which was being raised to the upper storey of this building, got loose from the ropes and fell, crushing the baron's servant who was behind the cabriolet. A cry of horror shook both the scaffold and the masons; one of them, apparently unable to keep his grasp on a pole, was in danger of death, and seemed to have been touched by the stone as it passed him.

A crowd collected rapidly; the masons came down the ladders swearing and insisting that Monsieur de Maulincour's cabriolet had been driven against the boarding and so had shaken their crane. Two inches more and the stone would have fallen on the baron's head. The groom was dead, the carriage shattered. 'Twas an event for

the whole neighborhood, the newspapers told of it. Monsieur de Maulincour, certain that he had not touched the boarding, complained; the case went to court. Inquiry being made, it was shown that a small boy, armed with a lath, had mounted guard and called to all foot−passengers to keep away. The affair ended there. Monsieur de Maulincour obtained no redress. He had lost his servant, and was confined to his bed for some days, for the back of the carriage when shattered had bruised him severely, and the nervous shock of the sudden surprise gave him a fever. He did not, therefore, go to see Madame Jules.

Ten days after this event, he left the house for the first time, in his repaired cabriolet, when, as he drove down the rue de Bourgogne and was close to the sewer opposite to the Chamber of Deputies, the axle−tree broke in two, and the baron was driving so rapidly that the breakage would have caused the two wheels to come together with force enough to break his head, had it not been for the resistance of the leather hood. Nevertheless, he was badly wounded in the side. For the second time in ten days he was carried home in a fainting condition to his terrified grandmother. This second accident gave him a feeling of distrust; he thought, though vaguely, of Ferragus and Madame Jules. To throw light on these suspicions he had the broken axle brought to his room and sent for his carriage−maker. The man examined the axle and the fracture, and proved two things: First, the axle was not made in his workshop; he furnished none that did not bear the initials of his name on the iron. But he could not explain by what means this axle had been substituted for the other. Secondly, the breakage of the suspicious axle was caused by a hollow space having been blown in it and a straw very cleverly inserted.

“Eh! Monsieur le baron, whoever did that was malicious!” he said; “any one would swear, to look at it, that the axle was sound.”

Monsieur de Maulincour begged the carriage−maker to say nothing of the affair; but he felt himself warned. These two attempts at murder were planned with an ability which denoted the enmity of intelligent minds.

“It is war to the death,” he said to himself, as he tossed in his bed, —“a war of savages, skulking in ambush, of trickery and treachery, declared in the name of Madame Jules. What sort of man is this to whom she belongs? What species of power does this Ferragus wield?”

Monsieur de Maulincour, though a soldier and brave man, could not repress a shudder. In the midst of many thoughts that now assailed him, there was one against which he felt he had neither defence nor courage: might not poison be employed ere long by his secret enemies? Under the influence of fears, which his momentary weakness and fever and low diet increased, he sent for an old woman long attached to the service of his grandmother, whose affection for himself was one of those semi−maternal sentiments which are the sublime of the commonplace. Without confiding in her wholly, he charged her to buy secretly and daily, in different localities, the food he needed; telling her to keep it under lock and key and bring it to him herself, not allowing any one, no matter who, to approach her while preparing it. He took the most minute precautions to protect himself against that form of death. He was ill in his bed and alone, and he had therefore the leisure to think of his own security,—the one necessity clear−sighted enough to enable human egotism to forget nothing!

But the unfortunate man had poisoned his own life by this dread, and, in spite of himself, suspicion dyed all his hours with its gloomy tints. These two lessons of attempted assassination did teach him, however, the value of one of the virtues most necessary to a public man; he saw the wise dissimulation that must be practised in dealing with the great interests of life. To be silent about our own secret is nothing; but to be silent from the start, to forget a fact as Ali Pacha did for thirty years in order to be sure of a vengeance waited for for thirty years, is a fine study in a land where there are few men who can keep their own counsel for thirty days. Monsieur de Maulincour literally lived only through Madame Jules. He was perpetually absorbed in a sober examination into the means he ought to employ to triumph in this mysterious struggle with these mysterious persons. His secret passion for that woman grew by reason of all these obstacles. Madame Jules was ever there, erect, in the midst of his thoughts, in the centre of his heart, more seductive by her presumable vices than by the positive virtues for which he had made her his idol.

At last, anxious to reconnoitre the position of the enemy, he thought he might without danger initiate the vidame into the secrets of his situation. The old commander loved Auguste as a father loves his wife's children; he was shrewd, dexterous, and very diplomatic. He listened to the baron, shook his head, and they both held counsel. The worthy vidame did not share his young friend's confidence when Auguste declared that in the time in which they now lived, the police and the government were able to lay bare all mysteries, and that if it were absolutely necessary to have recourse to those powers, he should find them most powerful auxiliaries.

The old man replied, gravely: “The police, my dear boy, is the most incompetent thing on this earth, and government the feeblest in all matters concerning individuals. Neither the police nor the government can read hearts. What we might reasonably ask of them is to search for the causes of an act. But the police and the government are both eminently unfitted for that; they lack, essentially, the personal interest which reveals all to him who wants to know all. No human power can prevent an assassin or a poisoner from reaching the heart of a prince or the stomach of an honest man. Passions are the best police.”

The vidame strongly advised the baron to go to Italy, and from Italy to Greece, from Greece to Syria, from Syria to Asia, and not to return until his secret enemies were convinced of his repentance, and would so make tacit peace with him. But if he did not take that course, then the vidame advised him to stay in the house, and even in his own room, where he would be safe from the attempts of this man Ferragus, and not to leave it until he could be certain of crushing him.

“We should never touch an enemy until we can be sure of taking his head off,” he said, gravely.

The old man, however, promised his favorite to employ all the astuteness with which Heaven had provided him (without compromising any one) in reconnoitring the enemy's ground, and laying his plans for future victory. The Commander had in his service a retired Figaro, the wiliest monkey that ever walked in human form; in earlier days as clever as a devil, working his body like a galley−slave, alert as a thief, sly as a woman, but now fallen into the decadence of genius for want of practice since the new constitution of Parisian society, which has reformed even the valets of comedy. This Scapin emeritus was attached to his master as to a superior being; but the shrewd old vidame added a good round sum yearly to the wages of his former provost of gallantry, which strengthened the ties of natural affection by the bonds of self−interest, and obtained for the old gentleman as much care as the most loving mistress could bestow on a sick friend. It was this pearl of the old−fashioned comedy−valets, relic of the last century, auxiliary incorruptible from lack of passions to satisfy, on whom the old vidame and Monsieur de Maulincour now relied.

“Monsieur le baron will spoil all,” said the great man in livery, when called into counsel. “Monsieur should eat, drink, and sleep in peace. I take the whole matter upon myself.”

Accordingly, eight days after the conference, when Monsieur de Maulincour, perfectly restored to health, was breakfasting with his grandmother and the vidame, Justin entered to make his report. As soon as the dowager had returned to her own apartments he said, with that mock modesty which men of talent are so apt to affect:—

“Ferragus is not the name of the enemy who is pursuing Monsieur le baron. This man—this devil, rather—is called Gratien, Henri, Victor, Jean−Joseph Bourignard. The Sieur Gratien Bourignard is a former ship−builder, once very rich, and, above all, one of the handsomest men of his day in Paris,—a Lovelace, capable of seducing Grandison. My information stops short there. He has been a simple workman; and the Companions of the Order of the Devorants did, at one time, elect him as their chief, under the title of Ferragus XXIII. The police ought to know that, if the police were instituted to know anything. The man has moved from the rue des Vieux−Augustins, and now roosts rue Joquelet, where Madame Jules Desmarets goes frequently to see him; sometimes her husband, on his way to the Bourse, drives her as far as the rue Vivienne, or she drives her husband to the Bourse. Monsieur le vidame knows about these things too well to want me to tell him if it is the husband who takes the wife, or the wife who takes the husband; but Madame Jules is so pretty, I'd bet on her. All that I have told you is positive. Bourignard often plays at number 129. Saving your presence, monsieur, he's a rogue who loves women, and he has his little ways like a man of condition. As for the rest, he wins sometimes, disguises himself like an actor, paints his face to look like anything he chooses, and lives, I may say, the most original life in the world. I don't doubt he has a good many lodgings, for most of the time he manages to evade what Monsieur le vidame calls 'parliamentary investigations.' If monsieur wishes, he could be disposed of honorably, seeing what his habits are. It is always easy to get rid of a man who loves women. However, this capitalist talks about moving again. Have Monsieur le vidame and Monsieur le baron any other commands to give me?”

“Justin, I am satisfied with you; don't go any farther in the matter without my orders, but keep a close watch here, so that Monsieur le baron may have nothing to fear.”

“My dear boy,” continued the vidame, when they were alone, “go back to your old life, and forget Madame Jules.”

“No, no,” said Auguste; “I will never yield to Gratien Bourignard. I will have him bound hand and foot, and Madame Jules also.”

That evening the Baron Auguste de Maulincour, recently promoted to higher rank in the company of the Body−Guard of the king, went to a ball given by Madame la Duchesse de Berry at the Elysee−Bourbon. There, certainly, no danger could lurk for him; and yet, before he left the palace, he had an affair of honor on his hands,—an affair it was impossible to settle except by a duel.

His adversary, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, considered that he had strong reasons to complain of Monsieur de Maulincour, who had given some ground for it during his former intimacy with Monsieur de Ronquerolles' sister, the Comtesse de Serizy. That lady, the one who detested German sentimentality, was all the more exacting in the matter of prudery. By one of those inexplicable fatalities, Auguste now uttered a harmless jest which Madame de Serizy took amiss, and her brother resented it. The discussion took place in the corner of a room, in a low voice. In good society, adversaries never raise their voices. The next day the faubourg Saint−Germain and the Chateau talked over the affair. Madame de Serizy was warmly defended, and all the blame was laid on Maulincour. August personages interfered. Seconds of the highest distinction were imposed on Messieurs de Maulincour and de Ronquerolles and every precaution was taken on the ground that no one should be killed.

When Auguste found himself face to face with his antagonist, a man of pleasure, to whom no one could possibly deny sentiments of the highest honor, he felt it was impossible to believe him the instrument of Ferragus, chief of the Devorants; and yet he was compelled, as it were, by an inexplicable presentiment, to question the marquis.

“Messieurs,” he said to the seconds, “I certainly do not refuse to meet the fire of Monsieur de Ronquerolles; but before doing so, I here declare that I was to blame, and I offer him whatever excuses he may desire, and publicly if he wishes it; because when the matter concerns a woman, nothing, I think, can degrade a man of honor. I therefore appeal to his generosity and good sense; is there not something rather silly in fighting without a cause?”

Monsieur de Ronquerolles would not allow of this way of ending the affair, and then the baron, his suspicions revived, walked up to him.

“Well, then! Monsieur le marquis,” he said, “pledge me, in presence of these gentlemen, your word as a gentleman that you have no other reason for vengeance than that you have chosen to put forward.”

“Monsieur, that is a question you have no right to ask.”

So saying, Monsieur de Ronquerolles took his place. It was agreed, in advance, that the adversaries were to be satisfied with one exchange of shots. Monsieur de Ronquerolles, in spite of the great distance determined by the seconds, which seemed to make the death of either party problematical, if not impossible, brought down the baron. The ball went through the latter's body just below the heart, but fortunately without doing vital injury.

“You aimed too well, monsieur,” said the baron, “to be avenging only a paltry quarrel.”

And he fainted. Monsieur de Ronquerolles, who believed him to be a dead man, smiled sardonically as he heard those words.

After a fortnight, during which time the dowager and the vidame gave him those cares of old age the secret of which is in the hands of long experience only, the baron began to return to life. But one morning his grandmother dealt him a crushing blow, by revealing anxieties to which, in her last days, she was now subjected. She showed him a letter signed F, in which the history of her grandson's secret espionage was recounted step by step. The letter accused Monsieur de Maulincour of actions that were unworthy of a man of honor. He had, it said, placed an old woman at the stand of hackney−coaches in the rue de Menars; an old spy, who pretended to sell water from her cask to the coachmen, but who was really there to watch the actions of Madame Jules Desmarets. He had spied upon the daily life of a most inoffensive man, in order to detect his secrets,—secrets on which depended the lives of three persons. He had brought upon himself a relentless struggle, in which, although he had escaped with life three times, he must inevitably succumb, because his death had been sworn and would be compassed if all human means were employed upon it. Monsieur de Maulincour could no longer escape his fate by even promising to respect the mysterious life of these three persons, because it was impossible to believe the word of a gentleman who had fallen to the level of a police−spy; and for what reason? Merely to trouble the respectable life of an innocent woman and a harmless old man.

The letter itself was nothing to Auguste in comparison to the tender reproaches of his grandmother. To lack respect to a woman! to spy upon her actions without a right to do so! Ought a man ever to spy upon a woman whom he loved?—in short, she poured out a torrent of those excellent reasons which prove nothing; and they put

the young baron, for the first time in his life, into one of those great human furies in which are born, and from which issue the most vital actions of a man's life.

“Since it is war to the knife,” he said in conclusion, “I shall kill my enemy by any means that I can lay hold of.”

The vidame went immediately, at Auguste's request, to the chief of the private police of Paris, and without bringing Madame Jules' name or person into the narrative, although they were really the gist of it, he made the official aware of the fears of the family of Maulincour about this mysterious person who was bold enough to swear the death of an officer of the Guards, in defiance of the law and the police. The chief pushed up his green spectacles in amazement, blew his nose several times, and offered snuff to the vidame, who, to save his dignity, pretended not to use tobacco, although his own nose was discolored with it. Then the chief took notes and promised, Vidocq and his spies aiding, to send in a report within a few days to the Maulincour family, assuring them meantime that there were no secrets for the police of Paris.

A few days after this the police official called to see the vidame at the Hotel de Maulincour, where he found the young baron quite recovered from his last wound. He gave them in bureaucratic style his thanks for the indications they had afforded him, and told them that Bourignard was a convict, condemned to twenty years' hard labor, who had miraculously escaped from a gang which was being transported from Bicetre to Toulon. For thirteen years the police had been endeavoring to recapture him, knowing that he had boldly returned to Paris; but so far this convict had escaped the most active search, although he was known to be mixed up in many nefarious deeds. However, the man, whose life was full of very curious incidents, would certainly be captured now in one or other of his several domiciles and delivered up to justice. The bureaucrat ended his report by saying to Monsieur de Maulincour that if he attached enough importance to the matter to wish to witness the capture of Bourignard, he might come the next day at eight in the morning to a house in the rue Sainte−Foi, of which he gave him the number. Monsieur de Maulincour excused himself from going personally in search of certainty,—trusting, with the sacred respect inspired by the police of Paris, in the capability of the authorities.

Three days later, hearing nothing, and seeing nothing in the newspapers about the projected arrest, which was certainly of enough importance to have furnished an article, Monsieur de Maulincour was beginning to feel anxieties which were presently allayed by the following letter:—

> Monsieur le Baron,—I have the honor to announce to you that you need have no further uneasiness touching the affair in question. The man named Gratien Bourignard, otherwise called Ferragus, died yesterday, at his lodgings, rue Joquelet No. 7. The suspicions we naturally conceived as to the identity of the dead body have been completely set at rest by the facts. The physician of the Prefecture of police was despatched by us to assist the physician of the arrondissement, and the chief of the detective police made all the necessary verifications to obtain absolute certainty. Moreover, the character of the persons who signed the certificate of death, and the affidavits of those who took care of the said Bourignard in his last illness, among others that of the worthy vicar of the church of the Bonne−Nouvelle (to whom he made his last confession, for he died a Christian), do not permit us to entertain any sort of doubt.
>
> Accept, Monsieur le baron, etc., etc.

Monsieur de Maulincour, the dowager, and the vidame breathed again with joy unspeakable. The good old woman kissed her grandson leaving a tear upon his cheek, and went away to thank God in prayer. The dear soul, who was making a novena for Auguste's safety, believed her prayers were answered.

“Well,” said the vidame, “now you had better show yourself at the ball you were speaking of. I oppose no further objections.”

CHAPTER III. THE WIFE ACCUSED

Monsieur de Maulincour was all the more anxious to go to this ball because he knew that Madame Jules would be present. The fete was given by the Prefect of the Seine, in whose salons the two social worlds of Paris met as on neutral ground. Auguste passed through the rooms without finding the woman who now exercised so mighty an influence on his fate. He entered an empty boudoir where card−tables were placed awaiting players; and sitting down on a divan he gave himself up to the most contradictory thoughts about her. A man presently took the young officer by the arm, and looking up the baron was stupefied to behold the pauper of the rue Coquilliere, the Ferragus of Ida, the lodger in the rue Soly, the Bourignard of Justin, the convict of the police, and the dead man of the day before.

"Monsieur, not a sound, not a word," said Bourignard, whose voice he recognized. The man was elegantly dressed; he wore the order of the Golden−Fleece, and a medal on his coat. "Monsieur," he continued, and his voice was sibilant like that of a hyena, "you increase my efforts against you by having recourse to the police. You will perish, monsieur; it has now become necessary. Do you love Madame Jules? Are you beloved by her? By what right do you trouble her peaceful life, and blacken her virtue?"

Some one entered the card−room. Ferragus rose to go.

"Do you know this man?" asked Monsieur de Maulincour of the new−comer, seizing Ferragus by the collar. But Ferragus quickly disengaged himself, took Monsieur de Maulincour by the hair, and shook his head rapidly.

"Must you have lead in it to make it steady?" he said.

"I do not know him personally," replied Henri de Marsay, the spectator of this scene, "but I know that he is Monsieur de Funcal, a rich Portuguese."

Monsieur de Funcal had disappeared. The baron followed but without being able to overtake him until he reached the peristyle, where he saw Ferragus, who looked at him with a jeering laugh from a brilliant equipage which was driven away at high speed.

"Monsieur," said Auguste, re−entering the salon and addressing de Marsay, whom he knew, "I entreat you to tell me where Monsieur de Funcal lives."

"I do not know; but some one here can no doubt tell you."

The baron, having questioned the prefect, ascertained that the Comte de Funcal lived at the Portuguese embassy. At this moment, while he still felt the icy fingers of that strange man in his hair, he saw Madame Jules in all her dazzling beauty, fresh, gracious, artless, resplendent with the sanctity of womanhood which had won his love. This creature, now infernal to him, excited no emotion in his soul but that of hatred; and this hatred shone in a savage, terrible look from his eyes. He watched for a moment when he could speak to her unheard, and then he said:—

"Madame, your *bravi* have missed me three times."

"What do you mean, monsieur?" she said, flushing. "I know that you have had several unfortunate accidents lately, which I have greatly regretted; but how could I have had anything to do with them?"

"You knew that *bravi* were employed against me by that man of the rue Soly?"

"Monsieur!"

"Madame, I now call you to account, not for my happiness only, but for my blood—"

At this instant Jules Desmarets approached them.

"What are you saying to my wife, monsieur?"

"Make that inquiry at my own house, monsieur, if you are curious," said Maulincour, moving away, and leaving Madame Jules in an almost fainting condition.

There are few women who have not found themselves, once at least in their lives, *a propos* of some undeniable fact, confronted with a direct, sharp, uncompromising question,—one of those questions pitilessly asked by husbands, the mere apprehension of which gives a chill, while the actual words enter the heart like the blade of a dagger. It is from such crises that the maxim has come, "All women lie." Falsehood, kindly falsehood, venial falsehood, sublime falsehood, horrible falsehood,—but always the necessity to lie. This necessity admitted, ought they not to know how to lie well? French women do it admirably. Our manners and customs teach them

deception! Besides, women are so naively saucy, so pretty, graceful, and withal so true in lying,—they recognize so fully the utility of doing so in order to avoid in social life the violent shocks which happiness might not resist,—that lying is seen to be as necessary to their lives as the cotton−wool in which they put away their jewels. Falsehood becomes to them the foundation of speech; truth is exceptional; they tell it, if they are virtuous, by caprice or by calculation. According to individual character, some women laugh when they lie; others weep; others are grave; some grow angry. After beginning life by feigning indifference to the homage that deeply flatters them, they often end by lying to themselves. Who has not admired their apparent superiority to everything at the very moment when they are trembling for the secret treasures of their love? Who has never studied their ease, their readiness, their freedom of mind in the greatest embarrassments of life? In them, nothing is put on. Deception comes as the snow from heaven. And then, with what art they discover the truth in others! With what shrewdness they employ a direct logic in answer to some passionate question which has revealed to them the secret of the heart of a man who was guileless enough to proceed by questioning! To question a woman! why, that is delivering one's self up to her; does she not learn in that way all that we seek to hide from her? Does she not know also how to be dumb, through speaking? What men are daring enough to struggle with the Parisian woman?—a woman who knows how to hold herself above all dagger thrusts, saying: “You are very inquisitive; what is it to you? Why do you wish to know? Ah! you are jealous! And suppose I do not choose to answer you?”—in short, a woman who possesses the hundred and thirty−seven methods of saying *No*, and incommensurable variations of the word *Yes*. Is not a treatise on the words *yes* and *no*, a fine diplomatic, philosophic, logographic, and moral work, still waiting to be written? But to accomplish this work, which we may also call diabolic, isn't an androgynous genius necessary? For that reason, probably, it will never be attempted. And besides, of all unpublished works isn't it the best known and the best practised among women? Have you studied the behavior, the pose, the *disinvoltura* of a falsehood? Examine it.

Madame Desmarets was seated in the right−hand corner of her carriage, her husband in the left. Having forced herself to recover from her emotion in the ballroom, she now affected a calm demeanor. Her husband had then said nothing to her, and he still said nothing. Jules looked out of the carriage window at the black walls of the silent houses before which they passed; but suddenly, as if driven by a determining thought, when turning the corner of a street he examined his wife, who appeared to be cold in spite of the fur−lined pelisse in which she was wrapped. He thought she seemed pensive, and perhaps she really was so. Of all communicable things, reflection and gravity are the most contagious.

“What could Monsieur de Maulincour have said to affect you so keenly?” said Jules; “and why does he wish me to go to his house and find out?”

“He can tell you nothing in his house that I cannot tell you here,” she replied.

Then, with that feminine craft which always slightly degrades virtue, Madame Jules waited for another question. Her husband turned his face back to the houses, and continued his study of their walls. Another question would imply suspicion, distrust. To suspect a woman is a crime in love. Jules had already killed a man for doubting his wife. Clemence did not know all there was of true passion, of loyal reflection, in her husband's silence; just as Jules was ignorant of the generous drama that was wringing the heart of his Clemence.

The carriage rolled on through a silent Paris, bearing the couple,— two lovers who adored each other, and who, gently leaning on the same silken cushion, were being parted by an abyss. In these elegant coupes returning from a ball between midnight and two in the morning, how many curious and singular scenes must pass,—meaning those coupes with lanterns, which light both the street and the carriage, those with their windows unshaded; in short, legitimate coupes, in which couples can quarrel without caring for the eyes of pedestrians, because the civil code gives a right to provoke, or beat, or kiss, a wife in a carriage or elsewhere, anywhere, everywhere! How many secrets must be revealed in this way to nocturnal pedestrians,—to those young fellows who have gone to a ball in a carriage, but are obliged, for whatever cause it may be, to return on foot. It was the first time that Jules and Clemence had been together thus,—each in a corner; usually the husband pressed close to his wife.

“It is very cold,” remarked Madame Jules.

But her husband did not hear her; he was studying the signs above the shop windows.

“Clemence,” he said at last, “forgive me the question I am about to ask you.”

He came closer, took her by the waist, and drew her to him.

“My God, it is coming!” thought the poor woman. “Well,” she said aloud, anticipating the question, “you want to know what Monsieur de Maulincour said to me. I will tell you, Jules; but not without fear. Good God! how is it possible that you and I should have secrets from one another? For the last few moments I have seen you struggling between a conviction of our love and vague fears. But that conviction is clear within us, is it not? And these doubts and fears, do they not seem to you dark and unnatural? Why not stay in that clear light of love you cannot doubt? When I have told you all, you will still desire to know more; and yet I myself do not know what the extraordinary words of that man meant. What I fear is that this may lead to some fatal affair between you. I would rather that we both forget this unpleasant moment. But, in any case, swear to me that you will let this singular adventure explain itself naturally. Here are the facts. Monsieur de Maulincour declared to me that the three accidents you have heard mentioned—the falling of a stone on his servant, the breaking down of his cabriolet, and his duel about Madame de Serizy— were the result of some plot I had laid against him. He also threatened to reveal to you the cause of my desire to destroy him. Can you imagine what all this means? My emotion came from the sight of his face convulsed with madness, his haggard eyes, and also his words, broken by some violent inward emotion. I thought him mad. That is all that took place. Now, I should be less than a woman if I had not perceived that for over a year I have become, as they call it, the passion of Monsieur de Maulincour. He has never seen me except at a ball; and our intercourse has been most insignificant,—merely that which every one shares at a ball. Perhaps he wants to disunite us, so that he may find me at some future time alone and unprotected. There, see! already you are frowning! Oh, how cordially I hate society! We were so happy without him; why take any notice of him? Jules, I entreat you, forget all this! To−morrow we shall, no doubt, hear that Monsieur de Maulincour has gone mad.”

“What a singular affair!” thought Jules, as the carriage stopped under the peristyle of their house. He gave his arm to his wife and together they went up to their apartments.

To develop this history in all its truth of detail, and to follow its course through many windings, it is necessary here to divulge some of love's secrets, to glide beneath the ceilings of a marriage chamber, not shamelessly, but like Trilby, frightening neither Dougal nor Jeannie, alarming no one,—being as chaste as our noble French language requires, and as bold as the pencil of Gerard in his picture of Daphnis and Chloe.

The bedroom of Madame Jules was a sacred plot. Herself, her husband, and her maid alone entered it. Opulence has glorious privileges, and the most enviable are those which enable the development of sentiments to their fullest extent,—fertilizing them by the accomplishment of even their caprices, and surrounding them with a brilliancy that enlarges them, with refinements that purify them, with a thousand delicacies that make them still more alluring. If you hate dinners on the grass, and meals ill−served, if you feel a pleasure in seeing a damask cloth that is dazzlingly white, a silver−gilt dinner service, and porcelain of exquisite purity, lighted by transparent candles, where miracles of cookery are served under silver covers bearing coats of arms, you must, to be consistent, leave the garrets at the tops of the houses, and the grisettes in the streets, abandon garrets, grisettes, umbrellas, and overshoes to men who pay for their dinners with tickets; and you must also comprehend Love to be a principle which develops in all its grace only on Savonnerie carpets, beneath the opal gleams of an alabaster lamp, between guarded walls silk−hung, before gilded hearths in chambers deadened to all outward sounds by shutters and billowy curtains. Mirrors must be there to show the play of form and repeat the woman we would multiply as love itself multiplies and magnifies her; next low divans, and a bed which, like a secret, is divined, not shown. In this coquettish chamber are fur− lined slippers for pretty feet, wax−candles under glass with muslin draperies, by which to read at all hours of the night, and flowers, not those oppressive to the head, and linen, the fineness of which might have satisfied Anne of Austria.

Madame Jules had realized this charming programme, but that was nothing. All women of taste can do as much, though there is always in the arrangement of these details a stamp of personality which gives to this decoration or that detail a character that cannot be imitated. To−day, more than ever, reigns the fanaticism of individuality. The more our laws tend to an impossible equality, the more we shall get away from it in our manners and customs. Thus, rich people are beginning, in France, to become more exclusive in their tastes and their belongings, than they have been for the last thirty years. Madame Jules knew very well how to carry out this programme; and everything about her was arranged in harmony with a luxury that suits so well with love. Love in a cottage, or “Fifteen hundred francs and my Sophy,” is the dream of starvelings to whom black bread suffices in their present state; but when love really comes, they grow fastidious and end by craving the luxuries of

gastronomy. Love holds toil and poverty in horror. It would rather die than merely live on from hand to mouth.

Many women, returning from a ball, impatient for their beds, throw off their gowns, their faded flowers, their bouquets, the fragrance of which has now departed. They leave their little shoes beneath a chair, the white strings trailing; they take out their combs and let their hair roll down as it will. Little they care if their husbands see the puffs, the hairpins, the artful props which supported the elegant edifices of the hair, and the garlands or the jewels that adorned it. No more mysteries! all is over for the husband; no more painting or decoration for him. The corset—half the time it is a corset of a reparative kind—lies where it is thrown, if the maid is too sleepy to take it away with her. The whalebone bustle, the oiled−silk protections round the sleeves, the pads, the hair bought from a coiffeur, all the false woman is there, scattered about in open sight. *Disjecta membra poetae,* the artificial poesy, so much admired by those for whom it is conceived and elaborated, the fragments of a pretty woman, litter every corner of the room. To the love of a yawning husband, the actual presents herself, also yawning, in a dishabille without elegance, and a tumbled night−cap, that of last night and that of to−morrow night also,—“For really, monsieur, if you want a pretty cap to rumple every night, increase my pin−money.”

There's life as it is! A woman makes herself old and unpleasing to her husband; but dainty and elegant and adorned for others, for the rival of all husbands,—for that world which calumniates and tears to shreds her sex.

Inspired by true love, for Love has, like other creations, its instinct of preservation, Madame Jules did very differently; she found in the constant blessing of her love the necessary impulse to fulfil all those minute personal cares which ought never to be relaxed, because they perpetuate love. Besides, such personal cares and duties proceed from a personal dignity which becomes all women, and are among the sweetest of flatteries, for is it not respecting in themselves the man they love?

So Madame Jules denied to her husband all access to her dressing−room, where she left the accessories of her toilet, and whence she issued mysteriously adorned for the mysterious fetes of her heart. Entering their chamber, which was always graceful and elegant, Jules found a woman coquettishly wrapped in a charming *peignoir,* her hair simply wound in heavy coils around her head; a woman always more simple, more beautiful there than she was before the world; a woman just refreshed in water, whose only artifice consisted in being whiter than her muslins, sweeter than all perfumes, more seductive than any siren, always loving and therefore always loved. This admirable understanding of a wife's business was the secret of Josephine's charm for Napoleon, as in former times it was that of Caesonia for Caius Caligula, of Diane de Poitiers for Henri II. If it was largely productive to women of seven or eight lustres what a weapon is it in the hands of young women! A husband gathers with delight the rewards of his fidelity.

Returning home after the conversation which had chilled her with fear, and still gave her the keenest anxiety, Madame Jules took particular pains with her toilet for the night. She wanted to make herself, and she did make herself enchanting. She belted the cambric of her dressing−gown round her waist, defining the lines of her bust; she allowed her hair to fall upon her beautifully modelled shoulders. A perfumed bath had given her a delightful fragrance, and her little bare feet were in velvet slippers. Strong in a sense of her advantages she came in stepping softly, and put her hands over her husband's eyes. She thought him pensive; he was standing in his dressing−gown before the fire, his elbow on the mantel and one foot on the fender. She said in his ear, warming it with her breath, and nibbling the tip of it with her teeth:—

“What are you thinking about, monsieur?”

Then she pressed him in her arms as if to tear him away from all evil thoughts. The woman who loves has a full knowledge of her power; the more virtuous she is, the more effectual her coquetry.

“About you,” he answered.

“Only about me?”

“Yes.”

“Ah! that's a very doubtful 'yes.'“

They went to bed. As she fell asleep, Madame Jules said to herself:—

“Monsieur de Maulincour will certainly cause some evil. Jules' mind is preoccupied, disturbed; he is nursing thoughts he does not tell me.”

It was three in the morning when Madame Jules was awakened by a presentiment which struck her heart as she slept. She had a sense both physical and moral of her husband's absence. She did not feel the arm Jules passed beneath her head,—that arm in which she had slept, peacefully and happy, for five years; an arm she had never

wearied. A voice said to her, “Jules suffers, Jules is weeping.” She raised her head, and then sat up; felt that her husband's place was cold, and saw him sitting before the fire, his feet on the fender, his head resting against the back of an arm−chair. Tears were on his cheeks. The poor woman threw herself hastily from her bed and sprang at a bound to her husband's knees.

“Jules! what is it? Are you ill? Speak, tell me! Speak to me, if you love me!” and she poured out a hundred words expressing the deepest tenderness.

Jules knelt at her feet, kissed her hands and knees, and answered with fresh tears:—

“Dear Clemence, I am most unhappy! It is not loving to distrust the one we love. I adore you and suspect you. The words that man said to me to−night have struck to my heart; they stay there in spite of myself, and confound me. There is some mystery here. In short, and I blush to say it, your explanations do not satisfy me. My reason casts gleams into my soul which my love rejects. It is an awful combat. Could I stay there, holding your head, and suspecting thoughts within it to me unknown? Oh! I believe in you, I believe in you!” he cried, seeing her smile sadly and open her mouth as if to speak. “Say nothing; do not reproach me. Besides, could you say anything I have not said myself for the last three hours? Yes, for three hours, I have been here, watching you as you slept, so beautiful! admiring that pure, peaceful brow. Yes, yes! you have always told me your thoughts, have you not? I alone am in that soul. While I look at you, while my eyes can plunge into yours I see all plainly. Your life is as pure as your glance is clear. No, there is no secret behind those transparent eyes.” He rose and kissed their lids. “Let me avow to you, dearest soul,” he said, “that for the last five years each day has increased my happiness, through the knowledge that you are all mine, and that no natural affection even can take any of your love. Having no sister, no father, no mother, no companion, I am neither above nor below any living being in your heart; I am alone there. Clemence, repeat to me those sweet things of the spirit you have so often said to me; do not blame me; comfort me, I am so unhappy. I have an odious suspicion on my conscience, and you have nothing in your heart to sear it. My beloved, tell me, could I stay there beside you? Could two heads united as ours have been lie on the same pillow when one was suffering and the other tranquil? What are you thinking of?” he cried abruptly, observing that Clemence was anxious, confused, and seemed unable to restrain her tears.

“I am thinking of my mother,” she answered, in a grave voice. “You will never know, Jules, what I suffer in remembering my mother's dying farewell, said in a voice sweeter than all music, and in feeling the solemn touch of her icy hand at a moment when you overwhelm me with those assurances of your precious love.”

She raised her husband, strained him to her with a nervous force greater than that of men, and kissed his hair, covering it with tears.

“Ah! I would be hacked in pieces for you! Tell me that I make you happy; that I am to you the most beautiful of women—a thousand women to you. Oh! you are loved as no other man ever was or will be. I don't know the meaning of those words 'duty,' 'virtue.' Jules, I love you for yourself; I am happy in loving you; I shall love you more and more to my dying day. I have pride in my love; I feel it is my destiny to have one sole emotion in my life. What I shall tell you now is dreadful, I know—but I am glad to have no child; I do not wish for any. I feel I am more wife than mother. Well, then, can you fear? Listen to me, my own beloved, promise to forget, not this hour of mingled tenderness and doubt, but the words of that madman. Jules, you *must*. Promise me not to see him, not to go to him. I have a deep conviction that if you set one foot in that maze we shall both roll down a precipice where I shall perish—but with your name upon my lips, your heart in my heart. Why hold me so high in that heart and yet so low in reality? What! you who give credit to so many as to money, can you not give me the charity of faith? And on the first occasion in our lives when you might prove to me your boundless trust, do you cast me from my throne in your heart? Between a madman and me, it is the madman whom you choose to believe? oh, Jules!” She stopped, threw back the hair that fell about her brow and neck, and then, in a heart−rending tone, she added: “I have said too much; one word should suffice. If your soul and your forehead still keep this cloud, however light it be, I tell you now that I shall die of it.”

She could not repress a shudder, and turned pale.

“Oh! I will kill that man,” thought Jules, as he lifted his wife in his arms and carried her to her bed.

“Let us sleep in peace, my angel,” he said. “I have forgotten all, I swear it!”

Clemence fell asleep to the music of those sweet words, softly repeated. Jules, as he watched her sleeping, said in his heart:—

“She is right; when love is so pure, suspicion blights it. To that young soul, that tender flower, a blight—yes, a

blight means death."

When a cloud comes between two beings filled with affection for each other and whose lives are in absolute unison, that cloud, though it may disperse, leaves in those souls a trace of its passage. Either love gains a stronger life, as the earth after rain, or the shock still echoes like distant thunder through a cloudless sky. It is impossible to recover absolutely the former life; love will either increase or diminish.

At breakfast, Monsieur and Madame Jules showed to each other those particular attentions in which there is always something of affectation. There were glances of forced gaiety, which seemed the efforts of persons endeavoring to deceive themselves. Jules had involuntary doubts, his wife had positive fears. Still, sure of each other, they had slept. Was this strained condition the effect of a want of faith, or was it only a memory of their nocturnal scene? They did not know themselves. But they loved each other so purely that the impression of that scene, both cruel and beneficent, could not fail to leave its traces in their souls; both were eager to make those traces disappear, each striving to be the first to return to the other, and thus they could not fail to think of the cause of their first variance. To loving souls, this is not grief; pain is still far−off; but it is a sort of mourning, which is difficult to depict. If there are, indeed, relations between colors and the emotions of the soul, if, as Locke's blind man said, scarlet produces on the sight the effect produced upon the hearing by a blast of trumpets, it is permissible to compare this reaction of melancholy to mourning tones of gray.

But even so, love saddened, love in which remains a true sentiment of its happiness, momentarily troubled though it be, gives enjoyments derived from pain and pleasure both, which are all novel. Jules studied his wife's voice; he watched her glances with the freshness of feeling that inspired him in the earliest days of his passion for her. The memory of five absolutely happy years, her beauty, the candor of her love, quickly effaced in her husband's mind the last vestiges of an intolerable pain.

The day was Sunday,—a day on which there was no Bourse and no business to be done. The reunited pair passed the whole day together, getting farther into each other's hearts than they ever yet had done, like two children who in a moment of fear, hold each other closely and cling together, united by an instinct. There are in this life of two−in−one completely happy days, the gift of chance, ephemeral flowers, born neither of yesterday nor belonging to the morrow. Jules and Clemence now enjoyed this day as though they forboded it to be the last of their loving life. What name shall we give to that mysterious power which hastens the steps of travellers before the storm is visible; which makes the life and beauty of the dying so resplendent, and fills the parting soul with joyous projects for days before death comes; which tells the midnight student to fill his lamp when it shines brightest; and makes the mother fear the thoughtful look cast upon her infant by an observing man? We all are affected by this influence in the great catastrophes of life; but it has never yet been named or studied; it is something more than presentiment, but not as yet clear vision.

All went well till the following day. On Monday, Jules Desmarets, obliged to go to the Bourse on his usual business, asked his wife, as usual, if she would take advantage of his carriage and let him drive her anywhere.

"No," she said, "the day is too unpleasant to go out."

It was raining in torrents. At half−past two o'clock Monsieur Desmarets reached the Treasury. At four o'clock, as he left the Bourse, he came face to face with Monsieur de Maulincour, who was waiting for him with the nervous pertinacity of hatred and vengeance.

"Monsieur," he said, taking Monsieur Desmarets by the arm, "I have important information to give you. Listen to me. I am too loyal a man to have recourse to anonymous letters with which to trouble your peace of mind; I prefer to speak to you in person. Believe me, if my very life were not concerned, I should not meddle with the private affairs of any household, even if I thought I had the right to do so."

"If what you have to say to me concerns Madame Desmarets," replied Jules, "I request you to be silent, monsieur."

"If I am silent, monsieur, you may before long see Madame Jules on the prisoner's bench at the court of assizes beside a convict. Now, do you wish me to be silent?"

Jules turned pale; but his noble face instantly resumed its calmness, though it was now a false calmness. Drawing the baron under one of the temporary sheds of the Bourse, near which they were standing, he said to him in a voice which concealed his intense inward emotion:—

"Monsieur, I will listen to you; but there will be a duel to the death between us if—"

"Oh, to that I consent!" cried Monsieur de Maulincour. "I have the greatest esteem for your character. You

speak of death. You are unaware that your wife may have assisted in poisoning me last Saturday night. Yes, monsieur, since then some extraordinary evil has developed in me. My hair appears to distil an inward fever and a deadly languor through my skull; I know who clutched my hair at that ball."

Monsieur de Maulincour then related, without omitting a single fact, his platonic love for Madame Jules, and the details of the affair in the rue Soly which began this narrative. Any one would have listened to him with attention; but Madame Jules' husband had good reason to be more amazed than any other human being. Here his character displayed itself; he was more amazed than overcome. Made a judge, and the judge of an adored woman, he found in his soul the equity of a judge as well as the inflexibility. A lover still, he thought less of his own shattered life than of his wife's life; he listened, not to his own anguish, but to some far−off voice that cried to him, "Clemence cannot lie! Why should she betray you?"

"Monsieur," said the baron, as he ended, "being absolutely certain of having recognized in Monsieur de Funcal the same Ferragus whom the police declared dead, I have put upon his traces an intelligent man. As I returned that night I remembered, by a fortunate chance, the name of Madame Meynardie, mentioned in that letter of Ida, the presumed mistress of my persecutor. Supplied with this clue, my emissary will soon get to the bottom of this horrible affair; for he is far more able to discover the truth than the police themselves."

"Monsieur," replied Desmarets, "I know not how to thank you for this confidence. You say that you can obtain proofs and witnesses; I shall await them. I shall seek the truth of this strange affair courageously; but you must permit me to doubt everything until the evidence of the facts you state is proved to me. In any case you shall have satisfaction, for, as you will certainly understand, we both require it."

Jules returned home.

"What is the matter, Jules?" asked his wife, when she saw him. "You look so pale you frighten me!"

"The day is cold," he answered, walking with slow steps across the room where all things spoke to him of love and happiness,—that room so calm and peaceful where a deadly storm was gathering.

"Did you go out to−day?" he asked, as though mechanically.

He was impelled to ask the question by the last of a myriad of thoughts which had gathered themselves together into a lucid meditation, though jealousy was actively prompting them.

"No," she answered, in a tone that was falsely candid.

At that instant Jules saw through the open door of the dressing−room the velvet bonnet which his wife wore in the mornings; on it were drops of rain. Jules was a passionate man, but he was also full of delicacy. It was repugnant to him to bring his wife face to face with a lie. When such a situation occurs, all has come to an end forever between certain beings. And yet those drops of rain were like a flash tearing through his brain.

He left the room, went down to the porter's lodge, and said to the porter, after making sure that they were alone:—

"Fouguereau, a hundred crowns if you tell me the truth; dismissal if you deceive me; and nothing at all if you ever speak of my question and your answer."

He stopped to examine the man's face, leading him under the window. Then he continued:—

"Did madame go out this morning?"

"Madame went out at a quarter to three, and I think I saw her come in about half an hour ago."

"That is true, upon your honor?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You will have the money; but if you speak of this, remember, you will lose all."

Jules returned to his wife.

"Clemence," he said, "I find I must put my accounts in order. Do not be offended at the inquiry I am going to make. Have I not given you forty thousand francs since the beginning of the year?"

"More," she said,—"forty−seven."

"Have you spent them?"

"Nearly," she replied. "In the first place, I had to pay several of our last year's bills—"

"I shall never find out anything in this way," thought Jules. "I am not taking the best course."

At this moment Jules' own valet entered the room with a letter for his master, who opened it indifferently, but as soon as his eyes had lighted on the signature he read it eagerly. The letter was as follows:—

Monsieur,—For the sake of your peace of mind as well as ours, I

take the course of writing you this letter without possessing the advantage of being known to you; but my position, my age, and the fear of some misfortune compel me to entreat you to show indulgence in the trying circumstances under which our afflicted family is placed. Monsieur Auguste de Maulincour has for the last few days shown signs of mental derangement, and we fear that he may trouble your happiness by fancies which he confided to Monsieur le Vidame de Pamiers and myself during his first attack of frenzy. We think it right, therefore, to warn you of his malady, which is, we hope, curable; but it will have such serious and important effects on the honor of our family and the career of my grandson that we must rely, monsieur, on your entire discretion.

If Monsieur le Vidame or I could have gone to see you we would not have written. But I make no doubt that you will regard this prayer of a mother, who begs you to destroy this letter.

Accept the assurance of my perfect consideration.

Baronne de Maulincour, *nee* de Rieux.

"Oh! what torture!" cried Jules.

"What is it? what is in your mind?" asked his wife, exhibiting the deepest anxiety.

"I have come," he answered, slowly, as he threw her the letter, "to ask myself whether it can be you who have sent me that to avert my suspicions. Judge, therefore, what I suffer."

"Unhappy man!" said Madame Jules, letting fall the paper. "I pity him; though he has done me great harm."

"Are you aware that he has spoken to me?"

"Oh! have you been to see him, in spite of your promise?" she cried in terror.

"Clemence, our love is in danger of perishing; we stand outside of the ordinary rules of life; let us lay aside all petty considerations in presence of this great peril. Explain to me why you went out this morning. Women think they have the right to tell us little falsehoods. Sometimes they like to hide a pleasure they are preparing for us. Just now you said a word to me, by mistake, no doubt, a no for a yes."

He went into the dressing−room and brought out the bonnet.

"See," he said, "your bonnet has betrayed you; these spots are raindrops. You must, therefore, have gone out in a street cab, and these drops fell upon it as you went to find one, or as you entered or left the house where you went. But a woman can leave her own home for many innocent purposes, even after she has told her husband that she did not mean to go out. There are so many reasons for changing our plans! Caprices, whims, are they not your right? Women are not required to be consistent with themselves. You had forgotten something,—a service to render, a visit, some kind action. But nothing hinders a woman from telling her husband what she does. Can we ever blush on the breast of a friend? It is not a jealous husband who speaks to you, my Clemence; it is your lover, your friend, your brother." He flung himself passionately at her feet. "Speak, not to justify yourself, but to calm my horrible sufferings. I know that you went out. Well—what did you do? where did you go?"

"Yes, I went out, Jules," she answered in a strained voice, though her face was calm. "But ask me nothing more. Wait; have confidence; without which you will lay up for yourself terrible remorse. Jules, my Jules, trust is the virtue of love. I owe to you that I am at this moment too troubled to answer you: but I am not a false woman; I love you, and you know it."

"In the midst of all that can shake the faith of man and rouse his jealousy, for I see I am not first in your heart, I am no longer thine own self—well, Clemence, even so, I prefer to believe you, to believe that voice, to believe those eyes. If you deceive me, you deserve—"

"Ten thousand deaths!" she cried, interrupting him.

"I have never hidden a thought from you, but you—"

"Hush!" she said, "our happiness depends upon our mutual silence."

"Ha! I *will* know all!" he exclaimed, with sudden violence.

At that moment the cries of a woman were heard,—the yelping of a shrill little voice came from the

antechamber.

“I tell you I will go in!” it cried. “Yes, I shall go in; I will see her! I shall see her!”

Jules and Clemence both ran to the salon as the door from the antechamber was violently burst open. A young woman entered hastily, followed by two servants, who said to their master:—

“Monsieur, this person would come in in spite of us. We told her that madame was not at home. She answered that she knew very well madame had been out, but she saw her come in. She threatened to stay at the door of the house till she could speak to madame.”

“You can go,” said Monsieur Desmarets to the two men. “What do you want, mademoiselle?” he added, turning to the strange woman.

This “demoiselle” was the type of a woman who is never to be met with except in Paris. She is made in Paris, like the mud, like the pavement, like the water of the Seine, such as it becomes in Paris before human industry filters it ten times ere it enters the cut−glass decanters and sparkles pure and bright from the filth it has been. She is therefore a being who is truly original. Depicted scores of times by the painter's brush, the pencil of the caricaturist, the charcoal of the etcher, she still escapes analysis, because she cannot be caught and rendered in all her moods, like Nature, like this fantastic Paris itself. She holds to vice by one thread only, and she breaks away from it at a thousand other points of the social circumference. Besides, she lets only one trait of her character be known, and that the only one which renders her blamable; her noble virtues are hidden; she prefers to glory in her naive libertinism. Most incompletely rendered in dramas and tales where she is put upon the scene with all her poesy, she is nowhere really true but in her garret; elsewhere she is invariably calumniated or over−praised. Rich, she deteriorates; poor, she is misunderstood. She has too many vices, and too many good qualities; she is too near to pathetic asphyxiation or to a dissolute laugh; too beautiful and too hideous. She personifies Paris, to which, in the long run, she supplies the toothless portresses, washerwomen, street−sweepers, beggars, occasionally insolent countesses, admired actresses, applauded singers; she has even given, in the olden time, two quasi−queens to the monarchy. Who can grasp such a Proteus? She is all woman, less than woman, more than woman. From this vast portrait the painter of manners and morals can take but a feature here and there; the *ensemble* is infinite.

She was a grisette of Paris; a grisette in all her glory; a grisette in a hackney−coach,—happy, young, handsome, fresh, but a grisette; a grisette with claws, scissors, impudent as a Spanish woman, snarling as a prudish English woman proclaiming her conjugal rights, coquettish as a great lady, though more frank, and ready for everything; a perfect *lionne* in her way; issuing from the little apartment of which she had dreamed so often, with its red−calico curtains, its Utrecht velvet furniture, its tea−table, the cabinet of china with painted designs, the sofa, the little moquette carpet, the alabaster clock and candlesticks (under glass cases), the yellow bedroom, the eider−down quilt,—in short, all the domestic joys of a grisette's life; and in addition, the woman−of−all−work (a former grisette herself, now the owner of a moustache), theatre−parties, unlimited bonbons, silk dresses, bonnets to spoil,—in fact, all the felicities coveted by the grisette heart except a carriage, which only enters her imagination as a marshal's baton into the dreams of a soldier. Yes, this grisette had all these things in return for a true affection, or in spite of a true affection, as some others obtain it for an hour a day,—a sort of tax carelessly paid under the claws of an old man.

The young woman who now entered the presence of Monsieur and Madame Jules had a pair of feet so little covered by her shoes that only a slim black line was visible between the carpet and her white stockings. This peculiar foot−gear, which Parisian caricaturists have well−rendered, is a special attribute of the grisette of Paris; but she is even more distinctive to the eyes of an observer by the care with which her garments are made to adhere to her form, which they clearly define. On this occasion she was trigly dressed in a green gown, with a white chemisette, which allowed the beauty of her bust to be seen; her shawl, of Ternaux cashmere, had fallen from her shoulders, and was held by its two corners, which were twisted round her wrists. She had a delicate face, rosy cheeks, a white skin, sparkling gray eyes, a round, very promising forehead, hair carefully smoothed beneath her little bonnet, and heavy curls upon her neck.

“My name is Ida,” she said, “and if that's Madame Jules to whom I have the advantage of speaking, I've come to tell her all I have in my heart against her. It is very wrong, when a woman is set up and in her furniture, as you are here, to come and take from a poor girl a man with whom I'm as good as married, morally, and who did talk of making it right by marrying me before the municipality. There's plenty of handsome young men in the world—ain't there, monsieur?—to take your fancy, without going after a man of middle age, who makes my

happiness. Yah! I haven't got a fine hotel like this, but I've got my love, I have. I hate handsome men and money; I'm all heart, and—”

Madame Jules turned to her husband.

“You will allow me, monsieur, to hear no more of all this,” she said, retreating to her bedroom.

“If the lady lives with you, I've made a mess of it; but I can't help that,” resumed Ida. “Why does she come after Monsieur Ferragus every day?”

“You are mistaken, mademoiselle,” said Jules, stupefied; “my wife is incapable—”

“Ha! so you're married, you two,” said the grisette showing some surprise. “Then it's very wrong, monsieur,—isn't it?—for a woman who has the happiness of being married in legal marriage to have relations with a man like Henri—”

“Henri! who is Henri?” said Jules, taking Ida by the arm and pulling her into an adjoining room that his wife might hear no more.

“Why, Monsieur Ferragus.”

“But he is dead,” said Jules.

“Nonsense; I went to Franconi's with him last night, and he brought me home—as he ought. Besides, your wife can tell you about him; didn't she go there this very afternoon at three o'clock? I know she did, for I waited in the street, and saw her,—all because that good−natured fellow, Monsieur Justin, whom you know perhaps,—a little old man with jewelry who wears corsets,—told me that Madame Jules was my rival. That name, monsieur, sounds mighty like a feigned one; but if it is yours, excuse me. But this I say, if Madame Jules was a court duchess, Henri is rich enough to satisfy all her fancies, and it is my business to protect my property; I've a right to, for I love him, that I do. He is my *first* inclination; my happiness and all my future fate depends on it. I fear nothing, monsieur; I am honest; I never lied, or stole the property of any living soul, no matter who. If an empress was my rival, I'd go straight to her, empress as she was; because all pretty women are equals, monsieur—”

“Enough! enough!” said Jules. “Where do you live?”

“Rue de la Corderie−du−Temple, number 14, monsieur,—Ida Gruget, corset−maker, at your service,—for we make lots of corsets for men.”

“Where does the man whom you call Ferragus live?”

“Monsieur,” she said, pursing up her lips, “in the first place, he's not a man; he is a rich monsieur, much richer, perhaps, than you are. But why do you ask me his address when your wife knows it? He told me not to give it. Am I obliged to answer you? I'm not, thank God, in a confessional or a police−court; I'm responsible only to myself.”

“If I were to offer you ten thousand francs to tell me where Monsieur Ferragus lives, how then?”

“Ha! n, o, *no*, my little friend, and that ends the matter,” she said, emphasizing this singular reply with a popular gesture. “There's no sum in the world could make me tell you. I have the honor to bid you good−day. How do I get out of here?”

Jules, horror−struck, allowed her to go without further notice. The whole world seemed to crumble beneath his feet, and above him the heavens were falling with a crash.

“Monsieur is served,” said his valet.

The valet and the footman waited in the dining−room a quarter of an hour without seeing master or mistress.

“Madame will not dine to−day,” said the waiting−maid, coming in.

“What's the matter, Josephine?” asked the valet.

“I don't know,” she answered. “Madame is crying, and is going to bed. Monsieur has no doubt got some love−affair on hand, and it has been discovered at a very bad time. I wouldn't answer for madame's life. Men are so clumsy; they'll make you scenes without any precaution.”

“That's not so,” said the valet, in a low voice. “On the contrary, madame is the one who—you understand? What times does monsieur have to go after pleasures, he, who hasn't slept out of madame's room for five years, who goes to his study at ten and never leaves it till breakfast, at twelve. His life is all known, it is regular; whereas madame goes out nearly every day at three o'clock, Heaven knows where.”

“And monsieur too,” said the maid, taking her mistress's part.

“Yes, but he goes straight to the Bourse. I told him three times that dinner was ready,” continued the valet, after a pause. “You might as well talk to a post.”

Monsieur Jules entered the dining−room.

“Where is madame?” he said.

“Madame is going to bed; her head aches,” replied the maid, assuming an air of importance.

Monsieur Jules then said to the footmen composedly: “You can take away; I shall go and sit with madame.”

He went to his wife's room and found her weeping, but endeavoring to smother her sobs with her handkerchief.

“Why do you weep?” said Jules; “you need expect no violence and no reproaches from me. Why should I avenge myself? If you have not been faithful to my love, it is that you were never worthy of it.”

“Not worthy?” The words were repeated amid her sobs and the accent in which they were said would have moved any other man than Jules.

“To kill you, I must love more than perhaps I do love you,” he continued. “But I should never have the courage; I would rather kill myself, leaving you to your—happiness, and with—whom!—”

He did not end his sentence.

“Kill yourself!” she cried, flinging herself at his feet and clasping them.

But he, wishing to escape the embrace, tried to shake her off, dragging her in so doing toward the bed.

“Let me alone,” he said.

“No, no, Jules!” she cried. “If you love me no longer I shall die. Do you wish to know all?”

“Yes.”

He took her, grasped her violently, and sat down on the edge of the bed, holding her between his legs. Then, looking at that beautiful face now red as fire and furrowed with tears,—

“Speak,” he said.

Her sobs began again.

“No; it is a secret of life and death. If I tell it, I—No, I cannot. Have mercy, Jules!”

“You have betrayed me—”

“Ah! Jules, you think so now, but soon you will know all.”

“But this Ferragus, this convict whom you go to see, a man enriched by crime, if he does not belong to you, if you do not belong to him—”

“Oh, Jules!”

“Speak! Is he your mysterious benefactor?—the man to whom we owe our fortune, as persons have said already?”

“Who said that?”

“A man whom I killed in a duel.”

“Oh, God! one death already!”

“If he is not your protector, if he does not give you money, if it is you, on the contrary, who carry money to him, tell me, is he your brother?”

“What if he were?” she said.

Monsieur Desmarets crossed his arms.

“Why should that have been concealed from me?” he said. “Then you and your mother have both deceived me? Besides, does a woman go to see her brother every day, or nearly every day?”

His wife had fainted at his feet.

“Dead,” he said. “And suppose I am mistaken?”

He sprang to the bell−rope; called Josephine, and lifted Clemence to the bed.

“I shall die of this,” said Madame Jules, recovering consciousness.

“Josephine,” cried Monsieur Desmarets. “Send for Monsieur Desplein; send also to my brother and ask him to come here immediately.”

“Why your brother?” asked Clemence.

But Jules had already left the room.

CHAPTER IV. WHERE GO TO DIE?

For the first time in five years Madame Jules slept alone in her bed, and was compelled to admit a physician into that sacred chamber. These in themselves were two keen pangs. Desplein found Madame Jules very ill. Never was a violent emotion more untimely. He would say nothing definite, and postponed till the morrow giving any opinion, after leaving a few directions, which were not executed, the emotions of the heart causing all bodily cares to be forgotten.

When morning dawned, Clemence had not yet slept. Her mind was absorbed in the low murmur of a conversation which lasted several hours between the brothers; but the thickness of the walls allowed no word which could betray the object of this long conference to reach her ears. Monsieur Desmarets, the notary, went away at last. The stillness of the night, and the singular activity of the senses given by powerful emotion, enabled Clemence to distinguish the scratching of a pen and the involuntary movements of a person engaged in writing. Those who are habitually up at night, and who observe the different acoustic effects produced in absolute silence, know that a slight echo can be readily perceived in the very places where louder but more equable and continued murmurs are not distinct. At four o'clock the sound ceased. Clemence rose, anxious and trembling. Then, with bare feet and without a wrapper, forgetting her illness and her moist condition, the poor woman opened the door softly without noise and looked into the next room. She saw her husband sitting, with a pen in his hand, asleep in his arm−chair. The candles had burned to the sockets. She slowly advanced and read on an envelope, already sealed, the words, “This is my will.”

She knelt down as if before an open grave and kissed her husband's hand. He woke instantly.

“Jules, my friend, they grant some days to criminals condemned to death,” she said, looking at him with eyes that blazed with fever and with love. “Your innocent wife asks only two. Leave me free for two days, and—wait! After that, I shall die happy—at least, you will regret me.”

“Clemence, I grant them.”

Then, as she kissed her husband's hands in the tender transport of her heart, Jules, under the spell of that cry of innocence, took her in his arms and kissed her forehead, though ashamed to feel himself still under subjection to the power of that noble beauty.

On the morrow, after taking a few hours' rest, Jules entered his wife's room, obeying mechanically his invariable custom of not leaving the house without a word to her. Clemence was sleeping. A ray of light passing through a chink in the upper blind of a window fell across the face of the dejected woman. Already suffering had impaired her forehead and the freshness of her lips. A lover's eye could not fail to notice the appearance of dark blotches, and a sickly pallor in place of the uniform tone of the cheeks and the pure ivory whiteness of the skin,—two points at which the sentiments of her noble soul were artlessly wont to show themselves.

“She suffers,” thought Jules. “Poor Clemence! May God protect us!”

He kissed her very softly on the forehead. She woke, saw her husband, and remembered all. Unable to speak, she took his hand, her eyes filling with tears.

“I am innocent,” she said, ending her dream.

“You will not go out to−day, will you?” asked Jules.

“No, I feel too weak to leave my bed.”

“If you should change your mind, wait till I return,” said Jules.

Then he went down to the porter's lodge.

“Fouguereau, you will watch the door yourself to−day. I wish to know exactly who comes to the house, and who leaves it.”

Then he threw himself into a hackney−coach, and was driven to the hotel de Maulincour, where he asked for the baron.

“Monsieur is ill,” they told him.

Jules insisted on entering, and gave his name. If he could not see the baron, he wished to see the vidame or the dowager. He waited some time in the salon, where Madame de Maulincour finally came to him and told him that her grandson was much too ill to receive him.

“I know, madame, the nature of his illness from the letter you did me the honor to write, and I beg you to believe—”

“A letter to you, monsieur, written by me!” cried the dowager, interrupting him. “I have written you no letter. What was I made to say in that letter, monsieur?”

“Madame,” replied Jules, “intending to see Monsieur de Maulincour to−day, I thought it best to preserve the letter in spite of its injunction to destroy it. There it is.”

Madame de Maulincour put on her spectacles, and the moment she cast her eyes on the paper she showed the utmost surprise.

“Monsieur,” she said, “my writing is so perfectly imitated that, if the matter were not so recent, I might be deceived myself. My grandson is ill, it is true; but his reason has never for a moment been affected. We are the puppets of some evil−minded person or persons; and yet I cannot imagine the object of a trick like this. You shall see my grandson, monsieur, and you will at once perceive that he is perfectly sound in mind.”

She rang the bell, and sent to ask if the baron felt able to receive Monsieur Desmarets. The servant returned with an affirmative answer. Jules went to the baron's room, where he found him in an arm−chair near the fire. Too feeble to move, the unfortunate man merely bowed his head with a melancholy gesture. The Vidame de Pamiers was sitting with him.

“Monsieur le baron,” said Jules, “I have something to say which makes it desirable that I should see you alone.”

“Monsieur,” replied Auguste, “Monsieur le vidame knows about this affair; you can speak fearlessly before him.”

“Monsieur le baron,” said Jules, in a grave voice, “you have troubled and well−nigh destroyed my happiness without having any right to do so. Until the moment when we can see clearly which of us should demand, or grant, reparation to the other, you are bound to help me in following the dark and mysterious path into which you have flung me. I have now come to ascertain from you the present residence of the extraordinary being who exercises such a baneful effect on your life and mine. On my return home yesterday, after listening to your avowals, I received that letter.”

Jules gave him the forged letter.

“This Ferragus, this Bourignard, or this Monsieur de Funcal, is a demon!” cried Maulincour, after having read it. “Oh, what a frightful maze I put my foot into when I meddled in this matter! Where am I going? I did wrong, monsieur,” he continued, looking at Jules; “but death is the greatest of all expiations, and my death is now approaching. You can ask me whatever you like; I am at your orders.”

“Monsieur, you know, of course, where this man is living, and I must know it if it costs me all my fortune to penetrate this mystery. In presence of so cruel an enemy every moment is precious.”

“Justin shall tell you all,” replied the baron.

At these words the vidame fidgeted on his chair. Auguste rang the bell.

“Justin is not in the house!” cried the vidame, in a hasty manner that told much.

“Well, then,” said Auguste, excitedly, “the other servants must know where he is; send a man on horseback to fetch him. Your valet is in Paris, isn't he? He can be found.”

The vidame was visibly distressed.

“Justin can't come, my dear boy,” said the old man; “he is dead. I wanted to conceal the accident from you, but—”

“Dead!” cried Monsieur de Maulincour,—“dead! When and how?”

“Last night. He had been supping with some old friends, and, I dare say, was drunk; his friends—no doubt they were drunk, too—left him lying in the street, and a heavy vehicle ran over him.”

“The convict did not miss *him*; at the first stroke he killed,” said Auguste. “He has had less luck with me; it has taken four blows to put me out of the way.”

Jules was gloomy and thoughtful.

“Am I to know nothing, then?” he cried, after a long pause. “Your valet seems to have been justly punished. Did he not exceed your orders in calumniating Madame Desmarets to a person named Ida, whose jealousy he roused in order to turn her vindictiveness upon us?”

“Ah, monsieur! in my anger I informed him about Madame Jules,” said Auguste.

"Monsieur!" cried the husband, keenly irritated.

"Oh, monsieur!" replied the baron, claiming silence by a gesture, "I am prepared for all. You cannot tell me anything my own conscience has not already told me. I am now expecting the most celebrated of all professors of toxicology, in order to learn my fate. If I am destined to intolerable suffering, my resolution is taken. I shall blow my brains out."

"You talk like a child!" cried the vidame, horrified by the coolness with which the baron said these words. "Your grandmother would die of grief."

"Then, monsieur," said Jules, "am I to understand that there exist no means of discovering in what part of Paris this extraordinary man resides?"

"I think, monsieur," said the old vidame, "from what I have heard poor Justin say, that Monsieur de Funcal lives at either the Portuguese or the Brazilian embassy. Monsieur de Funcal is a nobleman belonging to both those countries. As for the convict, he is dead and buried. Your persecutor, whoever he is, seems to me so powerful that it would be well to take no decisive measures until you are sure of some way of confounding and crushing him. Act prudently and with caution, my dear monsieur. Had Monsieur de Maulincour followed my advice, nothing of all this would have happened."

Jules coldly but politely withdrew. He was now at a total loss to know how to reach Ferragus. As he passed into his own house, the porter told him that Madame had just been out to throw a letter into the post box at the head of the rue de Menars. Jules felt humiliated by this proof of the insight with which the porter espoused his cause, and the cleverness by which he guessed the way to serve him. The eagerness of servants, and their shrewdness in compromising masters who compromised themselves, was known to him, and he fully appreciated the danger of having them as accomplices, no matter for what purpose. But he could not think of his personal dignity until the moment when he found himself thus suddenly degraded. What a triumph for the slave who could not raise himself to his master, to compel his master to come down to his level! Jules was harsh and hard to him. Another fault. But he suffered so deeply! His life till then so upright, so pure, was becoming crafty; he was to scheme and lie. Clemence was scheming and lying. This to him was a moment of horrible disgust. Lost in a flood of bitter feelings, Jules stood motionless at the door of his house. Yielding to despair, he thought of fleeing, of leaving France forever, carrying with him the illusions of uncertainty. Then, again, not doubting that the letter Clemence had just posted was addressed to Ferragus, his mind searched for a means of obtaining the answer that mysterious being was certain to send. Then his thoughts began to analyze the singular good fortune of his life since his marriage, and he asked himself whether the calumny for which he had taken such signal vengeance was not a truth. Finally, reverting to the coming answer, he said to himself:—

"But this man, so profoundly capable, so logical in his every act, who sees and foresees, who calculates, and even divines, our very thoughts, is he likely to make an answer? Will he not employ some other means more in keeping with his power? He may send his answer by some beggar; or in a carton brought by an honest man, who does not suspect what he brings; or in some parcel of shoes, which a shop−girl may innocently deliver to my wife. If Clemence and he have agreed upon such means—"

He distrusted all things; his mind ran over vast tracts and shoreless oceans of conjecture. Then, after floating for a time among a thousand contradictory ideas, he felt he was strongest in his own house, and he resolved to watch it as the ant−lion watches his sandy labyrinth.

"Fouguereau," he said to the porter, "I am not at home to any one who comes to see me. If any one calls to see madame, or brings her anything, ring twice. Bring all letters addressed here to me, no matter for whom they are intended."

"Thus," thought he, as he entered his study, which was in the entresol, "I forestall the schemes of this Ferragus. If he sends some one to ask for me so as to find out if Clemence is alone, at least I shall not be tricked like a fool."

He stood by the window of his study, which looked upon the street, and then a final scheme, inspired by jealousy, came into his mind. He resolved to send his head−clerk in his own carriage to the Bourse with a letter to another broker, explaining his sales and purchases and requesting him to do his business for that day. He postponed his more delicate transactions till the morrow, indifferent to the fall or rise of stocks or the debts of all Europe. High privilege of love!—it crushes all things, all interests fall before it: altar, throne, consols!

At half−past three, just the hour at which the Bourse is in full blast of reports, monthly settlements, premiums,

etc., Fouguereau entered the study, quite radiant with his news.

“Monsieur, an old woman has come, but very cautiously; I think she's a sly one. She asked for monsieur, and seemed much annoyed when I told her he was out; then she gave me a letter for madame, and here it is.”

Fevered with anxiety, Jules opened the letter; then he dropped into a chair, exhausted. The letter was mere nonsense throughout, and needed a key. It was virtually in cipher.

“Go away, Fouguereau.” The porter left him. “It is a mystery deeper than the sea below the plummet line! Ah! it must be love; love only is so sagacious, so inventive as this. Ah! I shall kill her.”

At this moment an idea flashed through his brain with such force that he felt almost physically illuminated by it. In the days of his toilsome poverty before his marriage, Jules had made for himself a true friend. The extreme delicacy with which he had managed the susceptibilities of a man both poor and modest; the respect with which he had surrounded him; the ingenious cleverness he had employed to nobly compel him to share his opulence without permitting it to make him blush, increased their friendship. Jacquet continued faithful to Desmarets in spite of his wealth.

Jacquet, a nobly upright man, a toiler, austere in his morals, had slowly made his way in that particular ministry which develops both honesty and knavery at the same time. A clerk in the ministry of Foreign Affairs, he had charge of the most delicate division of its archives. Jacquet in that office was like a glow−worm, casting his light upon those secret correspondences, deciphering and classifying despatches. Ranking higher than a mere *bourgeois*, his position at the ministry was superior to that of the other subalterns. He lived obscurely, glad to feel that such obscurity sheltered him from reverses and disappointments, and was satisfied to humbly pay in the lowest coin his debt to the country. Thanks to Jules, his position had been much ameliorated by a worthy marriage. An unrecognized patriot, a minister in actual fact, he contented himself with groaning in his chimney−corner at the course of the government. In his own home, Jacquet was an easy−going king,—an umbrella−man, as they say, who hired a carriage for his wife which he never entered himself. In short, to end this sketch of a philosopher unknown to himself, he had never suspected and never in all his life would suspect the advantages he might have drawn from his position,—that of having for his intimate friend a broker, and of knowing every morning all the secrets of the State. This man, sublime after the manner of that nameless soldier who died in saving Napoleon by a “qui vive,” lived at the ministry.

In ten minutes Jules was in his friend's office. Jacquet gave him a chair, laid aside methodically his green silk eye−shade, rubbed his hands, picked up his snuff−box, rose, stretched himself till his shoulder−blades cracked, swelled out his chest, and said:—

“What brings you here, Monsieur Desmarets? What do you want with me?”

“Jacquet, I want you to decipher a secret,—a secret of life and death.”

“It doesn't concern politics?”

“If it did, I shouldn't come to you for information,” said Jules. “No, it is a family matter, about which I require you to be absolutely silent.”

“Claude−Joseph Jacquet, dumb by profession. Don't you know me by this time?” he said, laughing. “Discretion is my lot.”

Jules showed him the letter.

“You must read me this letter, addressed to my wife.”

“The deuce! the deuce! a bad business!” said Jacquet, examining the letter as a usurer examines a note to be negotiated. “Ha! that's a gridiron letter! Wait a minute.”

He left Jules alone for a moment, but returned immediately.

“Easy enough to read, my friend! It is written on the gridiron plan, used by the Portuguese minister under Monsieur de Choiseul, at the time of the dismissal of the Jesuits. Here, see!”

Jacquet placed upon the writing a piece of paper cut out in regular squares, like the paper laces which confectioners wrap round their sugarplums; and Jules then read with perfect ease the words that were visible in the interstices. They were as follows:—

“Don't be uneasy, my dear Clemence; our happiness cannot again be
troubled; and your husband will soon lay aside his suspicions.
However ill you may be, you must have the courage to come here
to−morrow; find strength in your love for me. Mine for you has

induced me to submit to a cruel operation, and I cannot leave my bed. I have had the actual cautery applied to my back, and it was necessary to burn it in a long time; you understand me? But I thought of you, and I did not suffer.

"To baffle Maulincour (who will not persecute us much longer), I have left the protecting roof of the embassy, and am now safe from all inquiry in the rue des Enfants−Rouges, number 12, with an old woman, Madame Etienne Gruget, mother of that Ida, who shall pay dear for her folly. Come to−morrow, at nine in the morning. I am in a room which is reached only by an interior staircase. Ask for Monsieur Camuset. Adieu; I kiss your forehead, my darling."

Jacquet looked at Jules with a sort of honest terror, the sign of a true compassion, as he made his favorite exclamation in two separate and distinct tones,—

"The deuce! the deuce!"

"That seems clear to you, doesn't it?" said Jules. "Well, in the depths of my heart there is a voice that pleads for my wife, and makes itself heard above the pangs of jealousy. I must endure the worst of all agony until to−morrow; but to−morrow, between nine and ten I shall know all; I shall be happy or wretched for all my life. Think of me then, Jacquet."

"I shall be at your house to−morrow at eight o'clock. We will go together; I'll wait for you, if you like, in the street. You may run some danger, and you ought to have near you some devoted person who'll understand a mere sign, and whom you can safely trust. Count on me."

"Even to help me in killing some one?"

"The deuce! the deuce!" said Jacquet, repeating, as it were, the same musical note. "I have two children and a wife."

Jules pressed his friend's hand and went away; but returned immediately.

"I forgot the letter," he said. "But that's not all, I must reseal it."

"The deuce! the deuce! you opened it without saving the seal; however, it is still possible to restore it. Leave it with me and I'll bring it to you *secundum scripturam*."

"At what time?"

"Half−past five."

"If I am not yet in, give it to the porter and tell him to send it up to madame."

"Do you want me to−morrow?"

"No. Adieu."

Jules drove at once to the place de la Rotonde du Temple, where he left his cabriolet and went on foot to the rue des Enfants−Rouges. He found the house of Madame Etienne Gruget and examined it. There, the mystery on which depended the fate of so many persons would be cleared up; there, at this moment, was Ferragus, and to Ferragus all the threads of this strange plot led. The Gordian knot of the drama, already so bloody, was surely in a meeting between Madame Jules, her husband, and that man; and a blade able to cut the closest of such knots would not be wanting.

The house was one of those which belong to the class called *cabajoutis*. This significant name is given by the populace of Paris to houses which are built, as it were, piecemeal. They are nearly always composed of buildings originally separate but afterwards united according to the fancy of the various proprietors who successively enlarge them; or else they are houses begun, left unfinished, again built upon, and completed,—unfortunate structures which have passed, like certain peoples, under many dynasties of capricious masters. Neither the floors nor the windows have an *ensemble*,—to borrow one of the most picturesque terms of the art of painting; all is discord, even the external decoration. The *cabajoutis* is to Parisian architecture what the *capharnaum* is to the apartment,—a poke−hole, where the most heterogeneous articles are flung pell−mell.

"Madame Etienne?" asked Jules of the portress.

This portress had her lodge under the main entrance, in a sort of chicken coop, or wooden house on rollers, not unlike those sentry−boxes which the police have lately set up by the stands of hackney−coaches.

"Hein?" said the portress, without laying down the stocking she was knitting.

In Paris the various component parts which make up the physiognomy of any given portion of the monstrous city, are admirably in keeping with its general character. Thus porter, concierge, or Suisse, whatever name may be given to that essential muscle of the Parisian monster, is always in conformity with the neighborhood of which he is a part; in fact, he is often an epitome of it. The lazy porter of the faubourg Saint−Germain, with lace on every seam of his coat, dabbles in stocks; he of the Chaussee d'Antin takes his ease, reads the money−articles in the newspapers, and has a business of his own in the faubourg Montmartre. The portress in the quarter of prostitution was formerly a prostitute; in the Marais, she has morals, is cross−grained, and full of crotchets.

On seeing Monsieur Jules this particular portress, holding her knitting in one hand, took a knife and stirred the half−extinguished peat in her foot−warmer; then she said:—

“You want Madame Etienne; do you mean Madame Etienne Gruget?”

“Yes,” said Jules, assuming a vexed air.

“Who makes trimmings?”

“Yes.”

“Well, then, monsieur,” she said, issuing from her cage, and laying her hand on Jules' arm and leading him to the end of a long passage−way, vaulted like a cellar, “go up the second staircase at the end of the court−yard—where you will see the windows with the pots of pinks; that's where Madame Etienne lives.”

“Thank you, madame. Do you think she is alone?”

“Why shouldn't she be alone? she's a widow.”

Jules hastened up a dark stairway, the steps of which were knobby with hardened mud left by the feet of those who came and went. On the second floor he saw three doors but no signs of pinks. Fortunately, on one of the doors, the oiliest and darkest of the three, he read these words, chalked on a panel: “Ida will come to−night at nine o'clock.”

“This is the place,” thought Jules.

He pulled an old bellrope, black with age, and heard the smothered sound of a cracked bell and the barking of an asthmatic little dog. By the way the sounds echoed from the interior he knew that the rooms were encumbered with articles which left no space for reverberation,— a characteristic feature of the homes of workmen and humble households, where space and air are always lacking.

Jules looked out mechanically for the pinks, and found them on the outer sill of a sash window between two filthy drain−pipes. So here were flowers; here, a garden, two yards long and six inches wide; here, a wheat−ear; here, a whole life epitomized; but here, too, all the miseries of that life. A ray of light falling from heaven as if by special favor on those puny flowers and the vigorous wheat−ear brought out in full relief the dust, the grease, and that nameless color, peculiar to Parisian squalor, made of dirt, which crusted and spotted the damp walls, the worm−eaten balusters, the disjointed window−casings, and the door originally red. Presently the cough of an old woman, and a heavy female step, shuffling painfully in list slippers, announced the coming of the mother of Ida Gruget. The creature opened the door and came out upon the landing, looked up, and said:—

“Ah! is this Monsieur Bocquillon? Why, no? But perhaps you're his brother. What can I do for you? Come in, monsieur.”

Jules followed her into the first room, where he saw, huddled together, cages, household utensils, ovens, furniture, little earthenware dishes full of food or water for the dog and the cats, a wooden clock, bed−quilts, engravings of Eisen, heaps of old iron, all these things mingled and massed together in a way that produced a most grotesque effect,—a true Parisian dusthole, in which were not lacking a few old numbers of the “Constitutionel.”

Jules, impelled by a sense of prudence, paid no attention to the widow's invitation when she said civilly, showing him an inner room:—

“Come in here, monsieur, and warm yourself.”

Fearing to be overheard by Ferragus, Jules asked himself whether it were not wisest to conclude the arrangement he had come to make with the old woman in the crowded antechamber. A hen, which descended cackling from a loft, roused him from this inward meditation. He came to a resolution, and followed Ida's mother into the inner room, whither they were accompanied by the wheezy pug, a personage otherwise mute, who jumped upon a stool. Madame Gruget showed the assumption of semi−pauperism when she invited her visitor to warm himself. Her fire−pot contained, or rather concealed two bits of sticks, which lay apart: the grating was on

the ground, its handle in the ashes. The mantel−shelf, adorned with a little wax Jesus under a shade of squares of glass held together with blue paper, was piled with wools, bobbins, and tools used in the making of gimps and trimmings. Jules examined everything in the room with a curiosity that was full of interest, and showed, in spite of himself, an inward satisfaction.

“Well, monsieur, tell me, do you want to buy any of my things?” said the old woman, seating herself in a cane arm−chair, which appeared to be her headquarters. In it she kept her handkerchief, snuffbox, knitting, half−peeled vegetables, spectacles, calendar, a bit of livery gold lace just begun, a greasy pack of cards, and two volumes of novels, all stuck into the hollow of the back. This article of furniture, in which the old creature was floating down the river of life, was not unlike the encyclopedic bag which a woman carries with her when she travels; in which may be found a compendium of her household belongings, from the portrait of her husband to *eau de Melisse* for faintness, sugarplums for the children, and English court−plaster in case of cuts.

Jules studied all. He looked attentively at Madame Gruget's yellow visage, at her gray eyes without either brows or lashes, her toothless mouth, her wrinkles marked in black, her rusty cap, her still more rusty ruffles, her cotton petticoat full of holes, her worn−out slippers, her disabled fire−pot, her table heaped with dishes and silks and work begun or finished, in wool or cotton, in the midst of which stood a bottle of wine. Then he said to himself: “This old woman has some passion, some strong liking or vice; I can make her do my will.”

“Madame,” he said aloud, with a private sign of intelligence, “I have come to order some livery trimmings.” Then he lowered his voice. “I know,” he continued, “that you have a lodger who has taken the name of Camuset.” The old woman looked at him suddenly, but without any sign of astonishment. “Now, tell me, can we come to an understanding? This is a question which means fortune for you.”

“Monsieur,” she replied, “speak out, and don't be afraid. There's no one here. But if I had any one above, it would be impossible for him to hear you.”

“Ha! the sly old creature, she answers like a Norman,” thought Jules, “We shall agree. Do not give yourself the trouble to tell falsehoods, madame,” he resumed, “In the first place, let me tell you that I mean no harm either to you or to your lodger who is suffering from cautery, or to your daughter Ida, a stay−maker, the friend of Ferragus. You see, I know all your affairs. Do not be uneasy; I am not a detective policeman, nor do I desire anything that can hurt your conscience. A young lady will come here to−morrow−morning at half−past nine o'clock, to talk with this lover of your daughter. I want to be where I can see all and hear all, without being seen or heard by them. If you will furnish me with the means of doing so, I will reward that service with the gift of two thousand francs and a yearly stipend of six hundred. My notary shall prepare a deed before you this evening, and I will give him the money to hold; he will pay the two thousand to you to−morrow after the conference at which I desire to be present, as you will then have given proofs of your good faith.”

“Will it injure my daughter, my good monsieur?” she asked, casting a cat−like glance of doubt and uneasiness upon him.

“In no way, madame. But, in any case, it seems to me that your daughter does not treat you well. A girl who is loved by so rich a man as Ferragus ought to make you more comfortable than you seem to be.”

“Ah, my dear monsieur, just think, not so much as one poor ticket to the Ambigu, or the Gaiete, where she can go as much as she likes. It's shameful! A girl for whom I sold my silver forks and spoons! and now I eat, at my age, with German metal,—and all to pay for her apprenticeship, and give her a trade, where she could coin money if she chose. As for that, she's like me, clever as a witch; I must do her that justice. But, I will say, she might give me her old silk gowns,—I, who am so fond of wearing silk. But no! Monsieur, she dines at the Cadran−Bleu at fifty francs a head, and rolls in her carriage as if she were a princess, and despises her mother for a Colin−Lampon. Heavens and earth! what heedless young ones we've brought into the world; we have nothing to boast of there. A mother, monsieur, can't be anything else but a good mother; and I've concealed that girl's ways, and kept her in my bosom, to take the bread out of my mouth and cram everything into her own. Well, well! and now she comes and fondles one a little, and says, 'How d'ye do, mother?' And that's all the duty she thinks of paying. But she'll have children one of these days, and then she'll find out what it is to have such baggage,—which one can't help loving all the same.”

“Do you mean that she does nothing for you?”

“Ah, nothing? No, monsieur, I didn't say that; if she did nothing, that would be a little too much. She gives me my rent and thirty−six francs a month. But, monsieur, at my age,—and I'm fifty−two years old, with eyes that feel

the strain at night,—ought I to be working in this way? Besides, why won't she have me to live with her? I should shame her, should I? Then let her say so. Faith, one ought to be buried out of the way of such dogs of children, who forget you before they've even shut the door."

She pulled her handkerchief from her pocket, and with it a lottery ticket that dropped on the floor; but she hastily picked it up, saying, "Hi! that's the receipt for my taxes."

Jules at once perceived the reason of the sagacious parsimony of which the mother complained; and he was the more certain that the widow Gruget would agree to the proposed bargain.

"Well, then, madame," he said, "accept what I offer you."

"Did you say two thousand francs in ready money, and six hundred annuity, monsieur?"

"Madame, I've changed my mind; I will promise you only three hundred annuity. This way seems more to my own interests. But I will give you five thousand francs in ready money. Wouldn't you like that as well?"

"Bless me, yes, monsieur!"

"You'll get more comfort out of it; and you can go to the Ambigu and Franconi's at your ease in a coach."

"As for Franconi, I don't like that, for they don't talk there. Monsieur, if I accept, it is because it will be very advantageous for my child. I sha'n't be a drag on her any longer. Poor little thing! I'm glad she has her pleasures, after all. Ah, monsieur, youth must be amused! And so, if you assure me that no harm will come to anybody—"

"Not to anybody," replied Jules. "But now, how will you manage it?"

"Well, monsieur, if I give Monsieur Ferragus a little tea made of poppy−heads to−night, he'll sleep sound, the dear man; and he needs it, too, because of his sufferings, for he does suffer, I can tell you, and more's the pity. But I'd like to know what a healthy man like him wants to burn his back for, just to get rid of a tic douleureux which troubles him once in two years. However, to come back to our business. I have my neighbor's key; her lodging is just above mine, and in it there's a room adjoining the one where Monsieur Ferragus is, with only a partition between them. My neighbor is away in the country for ten days. Therefore, if I make a hole to−night while Monsieur Ferragus is sound asleep, you can see and hear them to−morrow at your ease. I'm on good terms with a locksmith,—a very friendly man, who talks like an angel, and he'll do the work for me and say nothing about it."

"Then here's a hundred francs for him. Come to−night to Monsieur Desmaret's office; he's a notary, and here's his address. At nine o'clock the deed will be ready, but—silence!"

"Enough, monsieur; as you say—silence! Au revoir, monsieur."

Jules went home, almost calmed by the certainty that he should know the truth on the morrow. As he entered the house, the porter gave him the letter properly resealed.

"How do you feel now?" he said to his wife, in spite of the coldness that separated them.

"Pretty well, Jules," she answered in a coaxing voice, "do come and dine beside me."

"Very good," he said, giving her the letter. "Here is something Fouguereau gave me for you."

Clemence, who was very pale, colored high when she saw the letter, and that sudden redness was a fresh blow to her husband.

"Is that joy," he said, laughing, "or the effect of expectation?"

"Oh, of many things!" she said, examining the seal.

"I leave you now for a few moments."

He went down to his study, and wrote to his brother, giving him directions about the payment to the widow Gruget. When he returned, he found his dinner served on a little table by his wife's bedside, and Josephine ready to wait on him.

"If I were up how I should like to serve you myself," said Clemence, when Josephine had left them. "Oh, yes, on my knees!" she added, passing her white hands through her husband's hair. "Dear, noble heart, you were very kind and gracious to me just now. You did me more good by showing me such confidence than all the doctors on earth could do me with their prescriptions. That feminine delicacy of yours—for you do know how to love like a woman—well, it has shed a balm into my heart which has almost cured me. There's truce between us, Jules; lower your head, that I may kiss it."

Jules could not deny himself the pleasure of that embrace. But it was not without a feeling of remorse in his heart; he felt himself small before this woman whom he was still tempted to think innocent. A sort of melancholy joy possessed him. A tender hope shone on her features in spite of their grieved expression. They both were equally unhappy in deceiving each other; another caress, and, unable to resist their suffering, all would then have

been avowed.

“To−morrow evening, Clemence.”

“No, no; to−morrow morning, by twelve o'clock, you will know all, and you'll kneel down before your wife—Oh, no! you shall not be humiliated; you are all forgiven now; you have done no wrong. Listen, Jules; yesterday you did crush me—harshly; but perhaps my life would not have been complete without that agony; it may be a shadow that will make our coming days celestial.”

“You lay a spell upon me,” cried Jules; “you fill me with remorse.”

“Poor love! destiny is stronger than we, and I am not the accomplice of mine. I shall go out to−morrow.”

“At what hour?” asked Jules.

“At half−past nine.”

“Clemence,” he said, “take every precaution; consult Doctor Desplein and old Haudry.”

“I shall consult nothing but my heart and my courage.”

“I shall leave you free; you will not see me till twelve o'clock.”

“Won't you keep me company this evening? I feel so much better.”

After attending to some business, Jules returned to his wife,— recalled by her invincible attraction. His passion was stronger than his anguish.

The next day, at nine o'clock Jules left home, hurried to the rue des Enfants−Rouges, went upstairs, and rang the bell of the widow Gruget's lodgings.

“Ah! you've kept your word, as true as the dawn. Come in, monsieur,” said the old woman when she saw him. “I've made you a cup of coffee with cream,” she added, when the door was closed. “Oh! real cream; I saw it milked myself at the dairy we have in this very street.”

“Thank you, no, madame, nothing. Take me at once—”

“Very good, monsieur. Follow me, this way.”

She led him up into the room above her own, where she showed him, triumphantly, an opening about the size of a two−franc piece, made during the night, in a place, which, in each room, was above a wardrobe. In order to look through it, Jules was forced to maintain himself in rather a fatiguing attitude, by standing on a step−ladder which the widow had been careful to place there.

“There's a gentleman with him,” she whispered, as she retired.

Jules then beheld a man employed in dressing a number of wounds on the shoulders of Ferragus, whose head he recognized from the description given to him by Monsieur de Maulincour.

“When do you think those wounds will heal?” asked Ferragus.

“I don't know,” said the other man. “The doctors say those wounds will require seven or eight more dressings.”

“Well, then, good−bye until to−night,” said Ferragus, holding out his hand to the man, who had just replaced the bandage.

“Yes, to−night,” said the other, pressing his hand cordially. “I wish I could see you past your sufferings.”

“To−morrow Monsieur de Funcal's papers will be delivered to us, and Henri Bourignard will be dead forever,” said Ferragus. “Those fatal marks which have cost us so dear no longer exist. I shall become once more a social being, a man among men, and more of a man than the sailor whom the fishes are eating. God knows it is not for my own sake I have made myself a Portuguese count!”

“Poor Gratien!—you, the wisest of us all, our beloved brother, the Benjamin of the band; as you very well know.”

“Adieu; keep an eye on Maulincour.”

“You can rest easy on that score.”

“Ho! stay, marquis,” cried the convict.

“What is it?”

“Ida is capable of everything after the scene of last night. If she should throw herself into the river, I would not fish her out. She knows the secret of my name, and she'll keep it better there. But still, look after her; for she is, in her way, a good girl.”

“Very well.”

The stranger departed. Ten minutes later Jules heard, with a feverish shudder, the rustle of a silk gown, and

almost recognized by their sound the steps of his wife.

“Well, father,” said Clemence, “my poor father, are you better? What courage you have shown!”

“Come here, my child,” replied Ferragus, holding out his hand to her.

Clemence held her forehead to him and he kissed it.

“Now tell me, what is the matter, my little girl? What are these new troubles?”

“Troubles, father! it concerns the life or death of the daughter you have loved so much. Indeed you must, as I wrote you yesterday, you *must* find a way to see my poor Jules to−day. If you knew how good he has been to me, in spite of all suspicions apparently so legitimate. Father, my love is my very life. Would you see me die? Ah! I have suffered so much that my life, I feel it! is in danger.”

“And all because of the curiosity of that miserable Parisian?” cried Ferragus. “I'd burn Paris down if I lost you, my daughter. Ha! you may know what a lover is, but you don't yet know what a father can do.”

“Father, you frighten me when you look at me in that way. Don't weigh such different feelings in the same scales. I had a husband before I knew that my father was living—”

“If your husband was the first to lay kisses on your forehead, I was the first to drop tears upon it,” replied Ferragus. “But don't feel frightened, Clemence, speak to me frankly. I love you enough to rejoice in the knowledge that you are happy, though I, your father, may have little place in your heart, while you fill the whole of mine.”

“Ah! what good such words do me! You make me love you more and more, though I seem to rob something from my Jules. But, my kind father, think what his sufferings are. What may I tell him to−day?”

“My child, do you think I waited for your letter to save you from this threatened danger? Do you know what will become of those who venture to touch your happiness, or come between us? Have you never been aware that a second providence was guarding your life? Twelve men of power and intellect form a phalanx round your love and your existence,— ready to do all things to protect you. Think of your father, who has risked death to meet you in the public promenades, or see you asleep in your little bed in your mother's home, during the night−time. Could such a father, to whom your innocent caresses give strength to live when a man of honor ought to have died to escape his infamy, could *I*, in short, I who breathe through your lips, and see with your eyes, and feel with your heart, could I fail to defend with the claws of a lion and the soul of a father, my only blessing, my life, my daughter? Since the death of that angel, your mother, I have dreamed but of one thing,—the happiness of pressing you to my heart in the face of the whole earth, of burying the convict,—” He paused a moment, and then added: ”—of giving you a father, a father who could press without shame your husband's hand, who could live without fear in both your hearts, who could say to all the world, 'This is my daughter,'—in short, to be a happy father.”

“Oh, father! father!”

“After infinite difficulty, after searching the whole globe,” continued Ferragus, “my friends have found me the skin of a dead man in which to take my place once more in social life. A few days hence, I shall be Monsieur de Funcal, a Portuguese count. Ah! my dear child, there are few men of my age who would have had the patience to learn Portuguese and English, which were spoken fluently by that devil of a sailor, who was drowned at sea.”

“But, my dear father—”

“All has been foreseen, and prepared. A few days hence, his Majesty John VI., King of Portugal will be my accomplice. My child, you must have a little patience where your father has had so much. But ah! what would I not do to reward your devotion for the last three years,— coming religiously to comfort your old father, at the risk of your own peace!”

“Father!” cried Clemence, taking his hands and kissing them.

“Come, my child, have courage still; keep my fatal secret a few days longer, till the end is reached. Jules is not an ordinary man, I know; but are we sure that his lofty character and his noble love may not impel him to dislike the daughter of a—”

“Oh!” cried Clemence, “you have read my heart; I have no other fear than that. The very thought turns me to ice,” she added, in a heart−rending tone. “But, father, think that I have promised him the truth in two hours.”

“If so, my daughter, tell him to go to the Portuguese embassy and see the Comte de Funcal, your father. I will be there.”

“But Monsieur de Maulincour has told him of Ferragus. Oh, father, what torture, to deceive, deceive, deceive!”

"Need you say that to me? But only a few days more, and no living man will be able to expose me. Besides, Monsieur de Maulincour is beyond the faculty of remembering. Come, dry your tears, my silly child, and think—"

At this instant a terrible cry rang from the room in which Jules Desmarets was stationed.

The clamor was heard by Madame Jules and Ferragus through the opening of the wall, and struck them with terror.

"Go and see what it means, Clemence," said her father.

Clemence ran rapidly down the little staircase, found the door into Madame Gruget's apartment wide open, heard the cries which echoed from the upper floor, went up the stairs, guided by the noise of sobs, and caught these words before she entered the fatal chamber:—

"You, monsieur, you, with your horrid inventions,—you are the cause of her death!"

"Hush, miserable woman!" replied Jules, putting his handkerchief on the mouth of the old woman, who began at once to cry out, "Murder! help!"

At this instant Clemence entered, saw her husband, uttered a cry, and fled away.

"Who will save my child?" cried the widow Gruget. "You have murdered her."

"How?" asked Jules, mechanically, for he was horror−struck at being seen by his wife.

"Read that," said the old woman, giving him a letter. "Can money or annuities console me for that?"

Farewell, mother! I bequeeth you what I have. I beg your pardon for my forlts, and the last greef to which I put you by ending my life in the river. Henry, who I love more than myself, says I have made his misfortune, and as he has drifen me away, and I have lost all my hops of merrying him, I am going to droun myself. I shall go abov Neuilly, so that they can't put me in the Morg. If Henry does not hate me anny more after I am ded, ask him to berry a pore girl whose hart beet for him only, and to forgif me, for I did rong to meddle in what didn't consern me. Tak care of his wounds. How much he sufered, pore fellow! I shall have as much corage to kill myself as he had to burn his bak. Carry home the corsets I have finished. And pray God for your daughter.

Ida.

"Take this letter to Monsieur de Funcal, who is upstairs," said Jules. "He alone can save your daughter, if there is still time."

So saying he disappeared, running like a man who has committed a crime. His legs trembled. The hot blood poured into his swelling heart in torrents greater than at any other moment of his life, and left it again with untold violence. Conflicting thoughts struggled in his mind, and yet one thought predominated,—he had not been loyal to the being he loved most. It was impossible for him to argue with his conscience, whose voice, rising high with conviction, came like an echo of those inward cries of his love during the cruel hours of doubt he had lately lived through.

He spent the greater part of the day wandering about Paris, for he dared not go home. This man of integrity and honor feared to meet the spotless brow of the woman he had misjudged. We estimate wrongdoing in proportion to the purity of our conscience; the deed which is scarcely a fault in some hearts, takes the proportions of a crime in certain unsullied souls. The slightest stain on the white garment of a virgin makes it a thing ignoble as the rags of a mendicant. Between the two the difference lies in the misfortune of the one, the wrong−doing of the other. God never measures repentance; he never apportions it. As much is needed to efface a spot as to obliterate the crimes of a lifetime. These reflections fell with all their weight on Jules; passions, like human laws, will not pardon, and their reasoning is more just; for are they not based upon a conscience of their own as infallible as an instinct?

Jules finally came home pale, despondent, crushed beneath a sense of his wrong−doing, and yet expressing in spite of himself the joy his wife's innocence had given him. He entered her room all throbbing with emotion; she was in bed with a high fever. He took her hand, kissed it, and covered it with tears.

"Dear angel," he said, when they were alone, "it is repentance."

“And for what?” she answered.

As she made that reply, she laid her head back upon the pillow, closed her eyes, and remained motionless, keeping the secret of her sufferings that she might not frighten her husband,—the tenderness of a mother, the delicacy of an angel! All the woman was in her answer.

The silence lasted long. Jules, thinking her asleep, went to question Josephine as to her mistress's condition.

“Madame came home half−dead, monsieur. We sent at once for Monsieur Haudry.”

“Did he come? What did he say?”

“He said nothing, monsieur. He did not seem satisfied; gave orders that no one should go near madame except the nurse, and said he should come back this evening.”

Jules returned softly to his wife's room and sat down in a chair before the bed. There he remained, motionless, with his eyes fixed on those of Clemence. When she raised her eyelids she saw him, and through those lids passed a tender glance, full of passionate love, free from reproach and bitterness,—a look which fell like a flame of fire upon the heart of that husband, nobly absolved and forever loved by the being whom he had killed. The presentiment of death struck both their minds with equal force. Their looks were blended in one anguish, as their hearts had long been blended in one love, felt equally by both, and shared equally. No questions were uttered; a horrible certainty was there,—in the wife an absolute generosity; in the husband an awful remorse; then, in both souls the same vision of the end, the same conviction of fatality.

There came a moment when, thinking his wife asleep, Jules kissed her softly on the forehead; then after long contemplation of that cherished face, he said:—

“Oh God! leave me this angel still a little while that I may blot out my wrong by love and adoration. As a daughter, she is sublime; as a wife, what word can express her?”

Clemence raised her eyes; they were full of tears.

“You pain me,” she said, in a feeble voice.

It was getting late; Doctor Haudry came, and requested the husband to withdraw during his visit. When the doctor left the sick−room Jules asked him no question; one gesture was enough.

“Call in consultation any physician in whom you place confidence; I may be wrong.”

“Doctor, tell me the truth. I am a man, and I can bear it. Besides, I have the deepest interest in knowing it; I have certain affairs to settle.”

“Madame Jules is dying,” said the physician. “There is some moral malady which has made great progress, and it has complicated her physical condition, which was already dangerous, and made still more so by her great imprudence. To walk about barefooted at night! to go out when I forbade it! on foot yesterday in the rain, to−day in a carriage! She must have meant to kill herself. But still, my judgment is not final; she has youth, and a most amazing nervous strength. It may be best to risk all to win all by employing some violent reagent. But I will not take upon myself to order it; nor will I advise it; in consultation I shall oppose it.”

Jules returned to his wife. For eleven days and eleven nights he remained beside her bed, taking no sleep during the day when he laid his head upon the foot of the bed. No man ever pushed the jealousy of care and the craving for devotion to such an extreme as he. He could not endure that the slightest service should be done by others for his wife. There were days of uncertainty, false hopes, now a little better, then a crisis,—in short, all the horrible mutations of death as it wavers, hesitates, and finally strikes. Madame Jules always found strength to smile at her husband. She pitied him, knowing that soon he would be alone. It was a double death,—that of life, that of love; but life grew feebler, and love grew mightier. One frightful night there was, when Clemence passed through that delirium which precedes the death of youth. She talked of her happy love, she talked of her father; she related her mother's revelations on her death−bed, and the obligations that mother had laid upon her. She struggled, not for life, but for her love which she could not leave.

“Grant, O God!” she said, “that he may not know I want him to die with me.”

Jules, unable to bear the scene, was at that moment in the adjoining room, and did not hear the prayer, which he would doubtless have fulfilled.

When this crisis was over, Madame Jules recovered some strength. The next day she was beautiful and tranquil; hope seemed to come to her; she adorned herself, as the dying often do. Then she asked to be alone all day, and sent away her husband with one of those entreaties made so earnestly that they are granted as we grant the prayer of a little child.

Jules, indeed, had need of this day. He went to Monsieur de Maulincour to demand the satisfaction agreed upon between them. It was not without great difficulty that he succeeded in reaching the presence of the author of these misfortunes; but the vidame, when he learned that the visit related to an affair of honor, obeyed the precepts of his whole life, and himself took Jules into the baron's chamber.

Monsieur Desmarets looked about him in search of his antagonist.

"Yes! that is really he," said the vidame, motioning to a man who was sitting in an arm−chair beside the fire.

"Who is it? Jules?" said the dying man in a broken voice.

Auguste had lost the only faculty that makes us live—memory. Jules Desmarets recoiled with horror at this sight. He could not even recognize the elegant young man in that thing without—as Bossuet said—a name in any language. It was, in truth, a corpse with whitened hair, its bones scarce covered with a wrinkled, blighted, withered skin,—a corpse with white eyes motionless, mouth hideously gaping, like those of idiots or vicious men killed by excesses. No trace of intelligence remained upon that brow, nor in any feature; nor was there in that flabby flesh either color or the faintest appearance of circulating blood. Here was a shrunken, withered creature brought to the state of those monsters we see preserved in museums, floating in alchohol. Jules fancied that he saw above that face the terrible head of Ferragus, and his own anger was silenced by such a vengeance. The husband found pity in his heart for the vacant wreck of what was once a man.

"The duel has taken place," said the vidame.

"But he has killed many," answered Jules, sorrowfully.

"And many dear ones," added the old man. "His grandmother is dying; and I shall follow her soon into the grave."

On the morrow of this day, Madame Jules grew worse from hour to hour. She used a moment's strength to take a letter from beneath her pillow, and gave it eagerly to her husband with a sign that was easy to understand,—she wished to give him, in a kiss, her last breath. He took it, and she died. Jules fell half−dead himself and was taken to his brother's house. There, as he deplored in tears his absence of the day before, his brother told him that this separation was eagerly desired by Clemence, who wished to spare him the sight of the religious paraphernalia, so terrible to tender imaginations, which the Church displays when conferring the last sacraments upon the dying.

"You could not have borne it," said his brother. "I could hardly bear the sight myself, and all the servants wept. Clemence was like a saint. She gathered strength to bid us all good−bye, and that voice, heard for the last time, rent our hearts. When she asked pardon for the pain she might unwillingly have caused her servants, there were cries and sobs and—"

"Enough! enough!" said Jules.

He wanted to be alone, that he might read the last words of the woman whom all had loved, and who had passed away like a flower.

"My beloved, this is my last will. Why should we not make wills for the treasures of our hearts, as for our worldly property? Was not my love my property, my all? I mean here to dispose of my love: it was the only fortune of your Clemence, and it is all that she can leave you in dying. Jules, you love me still, and I die happy. The doctors may explain my death as they think best; I alone know the true cause. I shall tell it to you, whatever pain it may cause you. I cannot carry with me, in a heart all yours, a secret which you do not share, although I die the victim of an enforced silence.

"Jules, I was nurtured and brought up in the deepest solitude, far from the vices and the falsehoods of the world, by the loving woman whom you knew. Society did justice to her conventional charm, for that is what pleases society; but I knew secretly her precious soul, I could cherish the mother who made my childhood a joy without bitterness, and I knew why I cherished her. Was not that to love doubly? Yes, I loved her, I feared her, I respected

her; yet nothing oppressed my heart, neither fear nor respect. I was all in all to her; she was all in all to me. For nineteen happy years, without a care, my soul, solitary amid the world which muttered round me, reflected only her pure image; my heart beat for her and through her. I was scrupulously pious; I found pleasure in being innocent before God. My mother cultivated all noble and self−respecting sentiments in me. Ah! it gives me happiness to tell you, Jules, that I now know I was indeed a young girl, and that I came to you virgin in heart.

"When I left that absolute solitude, when, for the first time, I braided my hair and crowned it with almond blossoms, when I added, with delight, a few satin knots to my white dress, thinking of the world I was to see, and which I was curious to see—Jules, that innocent and modest coquetry was done for you! Yes, as I entered the world, I saw *you* first of all. Your face, I remarked it; it stood out from the rest; your person pleased me; your voice, your manners all inspired me with pleasant presentiments. When you came up, when you spoke to me, the color on your forehead, the tremble in your voice,—that moment gave me memories with which I throb as I now write to you, as I now, for the last time, think of them. Our love was at first the keenest of sympathies, but it was soon discovered by each of us and then, as speedily, shared; just as, in after times, we have both equally felt and shared innumerable happinesses. From that moment my mother was only second in my heart. Next, I was yours, all yours. There is my life, and all my life, dear husband.

"And here is what remains for me to tell you. One evening, a few days before my mother's death, she revealed to me the secret of her life,—not without burning tears. I have loved you better since the day I learned from the priest as he absolved my mother that there are passions condemned by the world and by the Church. But surely God will not be severe when they are the sins of souls as tender as that of my mother; only, that dear woman could never bring herself to repent. She loved much, Jules; she was all love. So I have prayed daily for her, but never judged her.

"That night I learned the cause of her deep maternal tenderness; then I also learned that there was in Paris a man whose life and whose love centred on me; that your fortune was his doing, and that he loved you. I learned also that he was exiled from society and bore a tarnished name; but that he was more unhappy for me, for us, than for himself. My mother was all his comfort; she was dying, and I promised to take her place. With all the ardor of a soul whose feelings had never been perverted, I saw only the happiness of softening the bitterness of my mother's last moments, and I pledged myself to continue her work of secret charity,—the charity of the heart. The first time that I saw my father was beside the bed where my mother had just expired. When he raised his tearful eyes, it was to see in me a revival of his dead hopes. I had sworn, not to tell a lie, but to keep silence; and that silence what woman could have broken it?

"There is my fault, Jules,—a fault which I expiate by death. I

doubted you. But fear is so natural to a woman; above all, a woman who knows what it is that she may lose. I trembled for our love. My father's secret seemed to me the death of my happiness; and the more I loved, the more I feared. I dared not avow this feeling to my father; it would have wounded him, and in his situation a wound was agony. But, without a word from me, he shared my fears. That fatherly heart trembled for my happiness as much as I trembled for myself; but it dared not speak, obeying the same delicacy that kept me mute. Yes, Jules, I believed that you could not love the daughter of Gratien Bourignard as you loved your Clemence. Without that terror could I have kept back anything from you,—you who live in every fold of my heart?

"The day when that odious, unfortunate young officer spoke to you, I was forced to lie. That day, for the second time in my life, I knew what pain was; that pain has steadily increased until this moment, when I speak with you for the last time. What matters now my father's position? You know all. I could, by the help of my love, have conquered my illness and borne its sufferings; but I cannot stifle the voice of doubt. Is it not probable that my origin would affect the purity of your love and weaken it, diminish it? That fear nothing has been able to quench in me. There, Jules, is the cause of my death. I cannot live fearing a word, a look,—a word you may never say, a look you may never give; but, I cannot help it, I fear them. I die beloved; there is my consolation.

"I have known, for the last three years, that my father and his friends have well−nigh moved the world to deceive the world. That I might have a station in life, they have bought a dead man, a reputation, a fortune, so that a living man might live again, restored; and all this for you, for us. We were never to have known of it. Well, my death will save my father from that falsehood, for he will not survive me.

"Farewell, Jules, my heart is all here. To show you my love in its agony of fear, is not that bequeathing my whole soul to you? I could never have the strength to speak to you; I have only enough to write. I have just confessed to God the sins of my life. I have promised to fill my mind with the King of Heaven only; but I must confess to him who is, for me, the whole of earth. Alas! shall I not be pardoned for this last sigh between the life that was and the life that shall be? Farewell, my Jules, my loved one! I go to God, with whom is Love without a cloud, to whom you will follow me. There, before his throne, united forever, we may love each other throughout the ages. This hope alone can comfort me. If I am worthy of being there at once, I will follow you through life. My soul shall bear your company; it will wrap you about, for *you* must stay here still,—ah! here below. Lead a holy life that you may the more surely come to me. You can do such good upon this earth! Is it not an angel's mission for the suffering soul to shed happiness about him,—to give to others that which he has not? I bequeath you to the Unhappy. Their smiles, their tears, are the only ones of which I cannot be jealous. We shall find a charm in

sweet beneficence. Can we not live together still if you would join my name—your Clemence—in these good works?

"After loving as we have loved, there is naught but God, Jules. God does not lie; God never betrays. Adore him only, I charge you! Lead those who suffer up to him; comfort the sorrowing members of his Church. Farewell, dear soul that I have filled! I know you; you will never love again. I may die happy in the thought that makes all women happy. Yes, my grave will be your heart. After this childhood I have just related, has not my life flowed on within that heart? Dead, you will never drive me forth. I am proud of that rare life! You will know me only in the flower of my youth; I leave you regrets without disillusions. Jules, it is a happy death.

"You, who have so fully understood me, may I ask one thing more of you,—superfluous request, perhaps, the fulfilment of a woman's fancy, the prayer of a jealousy we all must feel,—I pray you to burn all that especially belonged to *us*, destroy our chamber, annihilate all that is a memory of our happiness.

"Once more, farewell,—the last farewell! It is all love, and so will be my parting thought, my parting breath."

When Jules had read that letter there came into his heart one of those wild frenzies of which it is impossible to describe the awful anguish. All sorrows are individual; their effects are not subjected to any fixed rule. Certain men will stop their ears to hear nothing; some women close their eyes hoping never to see again; great and splendid souls are met with who fling themselves into sorrow as into an abyss. In the matter of despair, all is true.

CHAPTER V. CONCLUSION

Jules escaped from his brother's house and returned home, wishing to pass the night beside his wife, and see till the last moment that celestial creature. As he walked along with an indifference to life known only to those who have reached the last degree of wretchedness, he thought of how, in India, the law ordained that widows should die; he longed to die. He was not yet crushed; the fever of his grief was still upon him. He reached his home and went up into the sacred chamber; he saw his Clemence on the bed of death, beautiful, like a saint, her hair smoothly laid upon her forehead, her hands joined, her body wrapped already in its shroud. Tapers were lighted, a priest was praying, Josephine kneeling in a corner, wept, and, near the bed, were two men. One was Ferragus. He stood erect, motionless, gazing at his daughter with dry eyes; his head you might have taken for bronze: he did not see Jules.

The other man was Jacquet,—Jacquet, to whom Madame Jules had been ever kind. Jacquet felt for her one of those respectful friendships which rejoice the untroubled heart; a gentle passion; love without its desires and its storms. He had come to pay his debt of tears, to bid a long adieu to the wife of his friend, to kiss, for the first time, the icy brow of the woman he had tacitly made his sister.

All was silence. Here death was neither terrible as in the churches, nor pompous as it makes its way along the streets; no, it was death in the home, a tender death; here were pomps of the heart, tears drawn from the eyes of all. Jules sat down beside Jacquet and pressed his hand; then, without uttering a word, all these persons remained as they were till morning.

When daylight paled the tapers, Jacquet, foreseeing the painful scenes which would then take place, drew Jules away into another room. At this moment the husband looked at the father, and Ferragus looked at Jules. The two sorrows arraigned each other, measured each other, and comprehended each other in that look. A flash of fury shone for an instant in the eyes of Ferragus.

“You killed her,” thought he.

“Why was I distrusted?” seemed the answer of the husband.

The scene was one that might have passed between two tigers recognizing the futility of a struggle and, after a moment's hesitation, turning away, without even a roar.

“Jacquet,” said Jules, “have you attended to everything?”

“Yes, to everything,” replied his friend, “but a man had forestalled me who had ordered and paid for all.”

“He tears his daughter from me!” cried the husband, with the violence of despair.

Jules rushed back to his wife's room; but the father was there no longer. Clemence had now been placed in a leaden coffin, and workmen were employed in soldering the cover. Jules returned, horrified by the sight; the sound of the hammers the men were using made him mechanically burst into tears.

“Jacquet,” he said, “out of this dreadful night one idea has come to me, only one, but one I must make a reality at any price. I cannot let Clemence stay in any cemetery in Paris. I wish to burn her,—to gather her ashes and keep her with me. Say nothing of this, but manage on my behalf to have it done. I am going to *her* chamber, where I shall stay until the time has come to go. You alone may come in there to tell me what you have done. Go, and spare nothing.”

During the morning, Madame Jules, after lying in a mortuary chapel at the door of her house, was taken to Saint−Roch. The church was hung with black throughout. The sort of luxury thus displayed had drawn a crowd; for in Paris all things are sights, even true grief. There are people who stand at their windows to see how a son deplores a mother as he follows her body; there are others who hire commodious seats to see how a head is made to fall. No people in the world have such insatiate eyes as the Parisians. On this occasion, inquisitive minds were particularly surprised to see the six lateral chapels at Saint− Roch also hung in black. Two men in mourning were listening to a mortuary mass said in each chapel. In the chancel no other persons but Monsieur Desmarets, the notary, and Jacquet were present; the servants of the household were outside the screen. To church loungers there was something inexplicable in so much pomp and so few mourners. But Jules had been determined that no indifferent persons should be present at the ceremony.

High mass was celebrated with the sombre magnificence of funeral services. Beside the ministers in ordinary

of Saint−Roch, thirteen priests from other parishes were present. Perhaps never did the *Dies irae* produce upon Christians, assembled by chance, by curiosity, and thirsting for emotions, an effect so profound, so nervously glacial as that now caused by this hymn when the eight voices of the precentors, accompanied by the voices of the priests and the choir−boys, intoned it alternately. From the six lateral chapels twelve other childish voices rose shrilly in grief, mingling with the choir voices lamentably. From all parts of the church this mourning issued; cries of anguish responded to the cries of fear. That terrible music was the voice of sorrows hidden from the world, of secret friendships weeping for the dead. Never, in any human religion, have the terrors of the soul, violently torn from the body and stormily shaken in presence of the fulminating majesty of God, been rendered with such force. Before that clamor of clamors all artists and their most passionate compositions must bow humiliated. No, nothing can stand beside that hymn, which sums all human passions, gives them a galvanic life beyond the coffin, and leaves them, palpitating still, before the living and avenging God. These cries of childhood, mingling with the tones of older voices, including thus in the Song of Death all human life and its developments, recalling the sufferings of the cradle, swelling to the griefs of other ages in the stronger male voices and the quavering of the priests,—all this strident harmony, big with lightning and thunderbolts, does it not speak with equal force to the daring imagination, the coldest heart, nay, to philosophers themselves? As we hear it, we think God speaks; the vaulted arches of no church are mere material; they have a voice, they tremble, they scatter fear by the might of their echoes. We think we see unnumbered dead arising and holding out their hands. It is no more a father, a wife, a child,— humanity itself is rising from its dust.

It is impossible to judge of the catholic, apostolic, and Roman faith, unless the soul has known that deepest grief of mourning for a loved one lying beneath the pall; unless it has felt the emotions that fill the heart, uttered by that Hymn of Despair, by those cries that crush the mind, by that sacred fear augmenting strophe by strophe, ascending heavenward, which terrifies, belittles, and elevates the soul, and leaves within our minds, as the last sound ceases, a consciousness of immortality. We have met and struggled with the vast idea of the Infinite. After that, all is silent in the church. No word is said; sceptics themselves *know not what they are feeling*. Spanish genius alone was able to bring this untold majesty to untold griefs.

When the solemn ceremony was over, twelve men came from the six chapels and stood around the coffin to hear the song of hope which the Church intones for the Christian soul before the human form is buried. Then, each man entered alone a mourning−coach; Jacquet and Monsieur Desmarets took the thirteenth; the servants followed on foot. An hour later, they were at the summit of that cemetery popularly called Pere−Lachaise. The unknown twelve men stood in a circle round the grave, where the coffin had been laid in presence of a crowd of loiterers gathered from all parts of this public garden. After a few short prayers the priest threw a handful of earth on the remains of this woman, and the grave−diggers, having asked for their fee, made haste to fill the grave in order to dig another.

Here this history seems to end; but perhaps it would be incomplete if, after giving a rapid sketch of Parisian life, and following certain of its capricious undulations, the effects of death were omitted. Death in Paris is unlike death in any other capital; few persons know the trials of true grief in its struggle with civilization, and the government of Paris. Perhaps, also, Monsieur Jules and Ferragus XXIII. may have proved sufficiently interesting to make a few words on their after life not entirely out of place. Besides, some persons like to be told all, and wish, as one of our cleverest critics has remarked, to know by what chemical process oil was made to burn in Aladdin's lamp.

Jacquet, being a government employee, naturally applied to the authorities for permission to exhume the body of Madame Jules and burn it. He went to see the prefect of police, under whose protection the dead sleep. That functionary demanded a petition. The blank was brought that gives to sorrow its proper administrative form; it was necessary to employ the bureaucratic jargon to express the wishes of a man so crushed that words, perhaps, were lacking to him, and it was also necessary to coldly and briefly repeat on the margin the nature of the request, which was done in these words: “The petitioner respectfully asks for the incineration of his wife.”

When the official charged with making the report to the Councillor of State and prefect of police read that marginal note, explaining the object of the petition, and couched, as requested, in the plainest terms, he said:—

“This is a serious matter! my report cannot be ready under eight days.”

Jules, to whom Jacquet was obliged to speak of this delay, comprehended the words that Ferragus had said in his hearing, “I'll burn Paris!” Nothing seemed to him now more natural than to annihilate that receptacle of

monstrous things.

"But," he said to Jacquet, "you must go to the minister of the Interior, and get your minister to speak to him."

Jacquet went to the minister of the Interior, and asked an audience; it was granted, but the time appointed was two weeks later. Jacquet was a persistent man. He travelled from bureau to bureau, and finally reached the private secretary of the minister of the Interior, to whom he had made the private secretary of his own minister say a word. These high protectors aiding, he obtained for the morrow a second interview, in which, being armed with a line from the autocrat of Foreign affairs to the pacha of the Interior, Jacquet hoped to carry the matter by assault. He was ready with reasons, and answers to peremptory questions,—in short, he was armed at all points; but he failed.

"This matter does not concern me," said the minister; "it belongs to the prefect of police. Besides, there is no law giving a husband any legal right to the body of his wife, nor to fathers those of their children. The matter is serious. There are questions of public utility involved which will have to be examined. The interests of the city of Paris might suffer. Therefore if the matter depended on me, which it does not, I could not decide *hic et nunc*; I should require a report."

A *report* is to the present system of administration what limbo or hades is to Christianity. Jacquet knew very well the mania for "reports"; he had not waited until this occasion to groan at that bureaucratic absurdity. He knew that since the invasion into public business of the *Report* (an administrative revolution consummated in 1804) there was never known a single minister who would take upon himself to have an opinion or to decide the slightest matter, unless that opinion or matter had been winnowed, sifted, and plucked to bits by the paper−spoilers, quill−drivers, and splendid intellects of his particular bureau. Jacquet—he was one of those who are worthy of Plutarch as biographer—saw that he had made a mistake in his management of the affair, and had, in fact, rendered it impossible by trying to proceed legally. The thing he should have done was to have taken Madame Jules to one of Desmaret's estates in the country; and there, under the good−natured authority of some village mayor to have gratified the sorrowful longing of his friend. Law, constitutional and administrative, begets nothing; it is a barren monster for peoples, for kings, and for private interests. But the peoples decipher no principles but those that are writ in blood, and the evils of legality will always be pacific; it flattens a nation down, that is all. Jacquet, a man of modern liberty, returned home reflecting on the benefits of arbitrary power.

When he went with his report to Jules, he found it necessary to deceive him, for the unhappy man was in a high fever, unable to leave his bed. The minister of the Interior mentioned, at a ministerial dinner that same evening, the singular fancy of a Parisian in wishing to burn his wife after the manner of the Romans. The clubs of Paris took up the subject, and talked for a while of the burials of antiquity. Ancient things were just then becoming a fashion, and some persons declared that it would be a fine thing to re−establish, for distinguished persons, the funeral pyre. This opinion had its defenders and its detractors. Some said that there were too many such personages, and the price of wood would be enormously increased by such a custom; moreover, it would be absurd to see our ancestors in their urns in the procession at Longchamps. And if the urns were valuable, they were likely some day to be sold at auction, full of respectable ashes, or seized by creditors,—a race of men who respected nothing. The other side made answer that our ancestors were much safer in urns than at Pere−Lachaise, for before very long the city of Paris would be compelled to order a Saint−Bartholomew against its dead, who were invading the neighboring country, and threatening to invade the territory of Brie. It was, in short, one of those futile but witty discussions which sometimes cause deep and painful wounds. Happily for Jules, he knew nothing of the conversations, the witty speeches, and arguments which his sorrow had furnished to the tongues of Paris.

The prefect of police was indignant that Monsieur Jacquet had appealed to a minister to avoid the wise delays of the commissioners of the public highways; for the exhumation of Madame Jules was a question belonging to that department. The police bureau was doing its best to reply promptly to the petition; one appeal was quite sufficient to set the office in motion, and once in motion matters would go far. But as for the administration, that might take the case before the Council of state,—a machine very difficult indeed to move.

After the second day Jacquet was obliged to tell his friend that he must renounce his desire, because, in a city where the number of tears shed on black draperies is tariffed, where the laws recognize seven classes of funerals, where the scrap of ground to hold the dead is sold at its weight in silver, where grief is worked for what it is worth, where the prayers of the Church are costly, and the vestry claim payment for extra voices in the *Dies*

irae,—all attempt to get out of the rut prescribed by the authorities for sorrow is useless and impossible.

"It would have been to me," said Jules, "a comfort in my misery. I meant to have died away from here, and I hoped to hold her in my arms in a distant grave. I did not know that bureaucracy could send its claws into our very coffins."

He now wished to see if room had been left for him beside his wife. The two friends went to the cemetery. When they reached it they found (as at the doors of museums, galleries, and coach−offices) *ciceroni*, who proposed to guide them through the labyrinth of Pere−Lachaise. Neither Jules nor Jacquet could have found the spot where Clemence lay. Ah, frightful anguish! They went to the lodge to consult the porter of the cemetery. The dead have a porter, and there are hours when the dead are "not receiving." It is necessary to upset all the rules and regulations of the upper and lower police to obtain permission to weep at night, in silence and solitude, over the grave where a loved one lies. There's a rule for summer and a rule for winter about this.

Certainly, of all the porters in Paris, the porter of Pere−Lachaise is the luckiest. In the first place, he has no gate−cord to pull; then, instead of a lodge, he has a house,—an establishment which is not quite ministerial, although a vast number of persons come under his administration, and a good many employees. And this governor of the dead has a salary, with emoluments, and acts under powers of which none complain; he plays despot at his ease. His lodge is not a place of business, though it has departments where the book−keeping of receipts, expenses, and profits, is carried on. The man is not a *suisse*, nor a concierge, nor actually a porter. The gate which admits the dead stands wide open; and though there are monuments and buildings to be cared for, he is not a care−taker. In short, he is an indefinable anomaly, an authority which participates in all, and yet is nothing,—an authority placed, like the dead on whom it is based, outside of all. Nevertheless, this exceptional man grows out of the city of Paris,—that chimerical creation like the ship which is its emblem, that creature of reason moving on a thousand paws which are seldom unanimous in motion.

This guardian of the cemetery may be called a concierge who has reached the condition of a functionary, not soluble by dissolution! His place is far from being a sinecure. He does not allow any one to be buried without a permit; he must count his dead. He points out to you in this vast field the six feet square of earth where you will one day put all you love, or all you hate, a mistress, or a cousin. Yes, remember this: all the feelings and emotions of Paris come to end here, at this porter's lodge, where they are administrationized. This man has registers in which his dead are booked; they are in their graves, and also on his records. He has under him keepers, gardeners, grave−diggers, and their assistants. He is a personage. Mourning hearts do not speak to him at first. He does not appear at all except in serious cases, such as one corpse mistaken for another, a murdered body, an exhumation, a dead man coming to life. The bust of the reigning king is in his hall; possibly he keeps the late royal, imperial, and quasi−royal busts in some cupboard,—a sort of little Pere−Lachaise all ready for revolutions. In short, he is a public man, an excellent man, good husband and good father,—epitaph apart. But so many diverse sentiments have passed before him on biers; he has seen so many tears, true and false; he has beheld sorrow under so many aspects and on so many faces; he has heard such endless thousands of eternal woes,—that to him sorrow has come to be nothing more than a stone an inch thick, four feet long, and twenty−four inches wide. As for regrets, they are the annoyances of his office; he neither breakfasts nor dines without first wiping off the rain of an inconsolable affliction. He is kind and tender to other feelings; he will weep over a stage−hero, over Monsieur Germeuil in the "Auberge des Adrets," the man with the butter−colored breeches, murdered by Macaire; but his heart is ossified in the matter of real dead men. Dead men are ciphers, numbers, to him; it is his business to organize death. Yet he does meet, three times in a century, perhaps, with an occasion when his part becomes sublime, and then he *is* sublime through every hour of his day,—in times of pestilence.

When Jacquet approached him this absolute monarch was evidently out of temper.

"I told you," he was saying, "to water the flowers from the rue Massena to the place Regnault de Saint−Jean−d'Angely. You paid no attention to me! *Sac−a−papier*! suppose the relations should take it into their heads to come here to−day because the weather is fine, what would they say to me? They'd shriek as if they were burned; they'd say horrid things of us, and calumniate us—"

"Monsieur," said Jacquet, "we want to know where Madame Jules is buried."

"Madame Jules *who*?" he asked. "We've had three Madame Jules within the last week. Ah," he said, interrupting himself, "here comes the funeral of Monsieur le Baron de Maulincour! A fine procession, that! He has soon followed his grandmother. Some families, when they begin to go, rattle down like a wager. Lots of bad

blood in Parisians."

"Monsieur," said Jacquet, touching him on the arm, "the person I spoke of is Madame Jules Desmarets, the wife of the broker of that name."

"Ah, I know!" he replied, looking at Jacquet. "Wasn't it a funeral with thirteen mourning coaches, and only one mourner in the twelve first? It was so droll we all noticed it—"

"Monsieur, take care, Monsieur Desmarets is with me; he might hear you, and what you say is not seemly."

"I beg pardon, monsieur! you are quite right. Excuse me, I took you for heirs. Monsieur," he continued, after consulting a plan of the cemetery, "Madame Jules is in the rue Marechal Lefebre, alley No. 4, between Mademoiselle Raucourt, of the Comedie−Francaise, and Monsieur Moreau−Malvin, a butcher, for whom a handsome tomb in white marble has been ordered, which will be one of the finest in the cemetery—"

"Monsieur," said Jacquet, interrupting him, "that does not help us."

"True," said the official, looking round him. "Jean," he cried, to a man whom he saw at a little distance, "conduct these gentlemen to the grave of Madame Jules Desmarets, the broker's wife. You know where it is,—near to Mademoiselle Raucourt, the tomb where there's a bust."

The two friends followed the guide; but they did not reach the steep path which leads to the upper part of the cemetery without having to pass through a score of proposals and requests, made, with honied softness, by the touts of marble−workers, iron−founders, and monumental sculptors.

"If monsieur would like to order *something*, we would do it on the most reasonable terms."

Jacquet was fortunate enough to be able to spare his friend the hearing of these proposals so agonizing to bleeding hearts; and presently they reached the resting−place. When Jules beheld the earth so recently dug, into which the masons had stuck stakes to mark the place for the stone posts required to support the iron railing, he turned, and leaned upon Jacquet's shoulder, raising himself now and again to cast long glances at the clay mound where he was forced to leave the remains of the being in and by whom he still lived.

"How miserably she lies there!" he said.

"But she is not there," said Jacquet, "she is in your memory. Come, let us go; let us leave this odious cemetery, where the dead are adorned like women for a ball."

"Suppose we take her away?"

"Can it be done?"

"All things can be done!" cried Jules. "So, I shall lie there," he added, after a pause. "There is room enough."

Jacquet finally succeeded in getting him to leave the great enclosure, divided like a chessboard by iron railings and elegant compartments, in which were tombs decorated with palms, inscriptions, and tears as cold as the stones on which sorrowing hearts had caused to be carved their regrets and coats of arms. Many good words are there engraved in black letters, epigrams reproving the curious, *concetti*, wittily turned farewells, rendezvous given at which only one side appears, pretentious biographies, glitter, rubbish and tinsel. Here the floriated thyrsus, there a lance−head, farther on Egyptian urns, now and then a few cannon; on all sides the emblems of professions, and every style of art,—Moorish, Greek, Gothic,—friezes, ovules, paintings, vases, guardian−angels, temples, together with innumerable *immortelles*, and dead rose−bushes. It is a forlorn comedy! It is another Paris, with its streets, its signs, its industries, and its lodgings; but a Paris seen through the diminishing end of an opera−glass, a microscopic Paris reduced to the littleness of shadows, spectres, dead men, a human race which no longer has anything great about it, except its vanity. There Jules saw at his feet, in the long valley of the Seine, between the slopes of Vaugirard and Meudon and those of Belleville and Montmartre, the real Paris, wrapped in a misty blue veil produced by smoke, which the sunlight tendered at that moment diaphanous. He glanced with a constrained eye at those forty thousand houses, and said, pointing to the space comprised between the column of the Place Vendome and the gilded cupola of the Invalides:—

"She was wrenched from me there by the fatal curiosity of that world which excites itself and meddles solely for excitement and occupation."

Twelve miles from where they were, on the banks of the Seine, in a modest village lying on the slope of a hill of that long hilly basin the middle of which great Paris stirs like a child in its cradle, a death scene was taking place, far indeed removed from Parisian pomps, with no accompaniment of torches or tapers or mourning−coaches, without prayers of the Church, in short, a death in all simplicity. Here are the facts: The body of a young girl was found early in the morning, stranded on the river−bank in the slime and reeds of the Seine.

Men employed in dredging sand saw it as they were getting into their frail boat on their way to their work.

"*Tiens*! fifty francs earned!" said one of them.

"True," said the other.

They approached the body.

"A handsome girl! We had better go and make our statement."

And the two dredgers, after covering the body with their jackets, went to the house of the village mayor, who was much embarrassed at having to make out the legal papers necessitated by this discovery.

The news of this event spread with the telegraphic rapidity peculiar to regions where social communications have no distractions, where gossip, scandal, calumny, in short, the social tale which feasts the world has no break of continuity from one boundary to another. Before long, persons arriving at the mayor's office released him from all embarrassment. They were able to convert the *proces−verbal* into a mere certificate of death, by recognizing the body as that of the Demoiselle Ida Gruget, corset−maker, living rue de la Corderie−du−Temple, number 14. The judiciary police of Paris arrived, and the mother, bearing her daughter's last letter. Amid the mother's moans, a doctor certified to death by asphyxia, through the injection of black blood into the pulmonary system,—which settled the matter. The inquest over, and the certificates signed, by six o'clock the same evening authority was given to bury the grisette. The rector of the parish, however, refused to receive her into the church or to pray for her. Ida Gruget was therefore wrapped in a shroud by an old peasant− woman, put into a common pine−coffin, and carried to the village cemetery by four men, followed by a few inquisitive peasant−women, who talked about the death with wonder mingled with some pity.

The widow Gruget was charitably taken in by an old lady who prevented her from following the sad procession of her daughter's funeral. A man of triple functions, the bell−ringer, beadle, and grave−digger of the parish, had dug a grave in the half−acre cemetery behind the church,— a church well known, a classic church, with a square tower and pointed roof covered with slate, supported on the outside by strong corner buttresses. Behind the apse of the chancel, lay the cemetery, enclosed with a dilapidated wall,—a little field full of hillocks; no marble monuments, no visitors, but surely in every furrow, tears and true regrets, which were lacking to Ida Gruget. She was cast into a corner full of tall grass and brambles. After the coffin had been laid in this field, so poetic in its simplicity, the grave−digger found himself alone, for night was coming on. While filling the grave, he stopped now and then to gaze over the wall along the road. He was standing thus, resting on his spade, and looking at the Seine, which had brought him the body.

"Poor girl!" cried the voice of a man who suddenly appeared.

"How you made me jump, monsieur," said the grave−digger.

"Was any service held over the body you are burying?"

"No, monsieur. Monsieur le cure wasn't willing. This is the first person buried here who didn't belong to the parish. Everybody knows everybody else in this place. Does monsieur—Why, he's gone!"

Some days had elapsed when a man dressed in black called at the house of Monsieur Jules Desmarets, and without asking to see him carried up to the chamber of his wife a large porphyry vase, on which were inscribed the words:—

INVITA LEGE
CONJUGI MOERENTI
FILIOLAE CINERES
RESTITUIT
AMICIS XII. JUVANTIBUS
MORIBUNDUS PATER.

"What a man!" cried Jules, bursting into tears.

Eight days sufficed the husband to obey all the wishes of his wife, and to arrange his own affairs. He sold his practice to a brother of Martin Falleix, and left Paris while the authorities were still discussing whether it was lawful for a citizen to dispose of the body of his wife.

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Who has not encountered on the boulevards of Paris, at the turn of a street, or beneath the arcades of the Palais−Royal, or in any part of the world where chance may offer him the sight, a being, man or woman, at whose

aspect a thousand confused thoughts spring into his mind? At that sight we are suddenly interested, either by features of some fantastic conformation which reveal an agitated life, or by a singular effect of the whole person, produced by gestures, air, gait, clothes; or by some deep, intense look; or by other inexpressible signs which seize our minds suddenly and forcibly without our being able to explain even to ourselves the cause of our emotion. The next day other thoughts and other images have carried out of sight that passing dream. But if we meet the same personage again, either passing at some fixed hour, like the clerk of a mayor's office, or wandering about the public promenades, like those individuals who seem to be a sort of furniture of the streets of Paris, and who are always to be found in public places, at first representations or noted restaurants,—then this being fastens himself or herself on our memory, and remains there like the first volume of a novel the end of which is lost. We are tempted to question this unknown person, and say, “Who are you?” “Why are you lounging here?” “By what right do you wear that pleated ruffle, that faded waistcoat, and carry that cane with an ivory top; why those blue spectacles; for what reason do you cling to that cravat of a dead and gone fashion?” Among these wandering creations some belong to the species of the Greek Hermae; they say nothing to the soul; *they are there,* and that is all. Why? is known to none. Such figure are a type of those used by sculptors for the four Seasons, for Commerce, for Plenty, etc. Some others—former lawyers, old merchants, elderly generals—move and walk, and yet seem stationary. Like old trees that are half uprooted by the current of a river, they seem never to take part in the torrent of Paris, with its youthful, active crowd. It is impossible to know if their friends have forgotten to bury them, or whether they have escaped out of their coffins. At any rate, they have reached the condition of semi−fossils.

One of these Parisian Melmoths had come within a few days into a neighborhood of sober, quiet people, who, when the weather is fine, are invariably to be found in the space which lies between the south entrance of the Luxembourg and the north entrance of the Observatoire, —a space without a name, the neutral space of Paris. There, Paris is no longer; and there, Paris still lingers. The spot is a mingling of street, square, boulevard, fortification, garden, avenue, high−road, province, and metropolis; certainly, all of that is to be found there, and yet the place is nothing of all that,—it is a desert. Around this spot without a name stand the Foundling hospital, the Bourbe, the Cochin hospital, the Capucines, the hospital La Rochefoucauld, the Deaf and Dumb Asylum, the hospital of the Val−de−Grace; in short, all the vices and all the misfortunes of Paris find their asylum there. And (that nothing may lack in this philanthropic centre) Science there studies the tides and longitudes, Monsieur de Chateaubriand has erected the Marie−Therese Infirmary, and the Carmelites have founded a convent. The great events of life are represented by bells which ring incessantly through this desert,—for the mother giving birth, for the babe that is born, for the vice that succumbs, for the toiler who dies, for the virgin who prays, for the old man shaking with cold, for genius self−deluded. And a few steps off is the cemetery of Mont− Parnasse, where, hour after hour, the sorry funerals of the faubourg Saint−Marceau wend their way. This esplanade, which commands a view of Paris, has been taken possession of by bowl−players; it is, in fact, a sort of bowling green frequented by old gray faces, belonging to kindly, worthy men, who seem to continue the race of our ancestors, whose countenances must only be compared with those of their surroundings.

The man who had become, during the last few days, an inhabitant of this desert region, proved an assiduous attendant at these games of bowls; and must, undoubtedly, be considered the most striking creature of these various groups, who (if it is permissible to liken Parisians to the different orders of zoology) belonged to the genus mollusk. The new−comer kept sympathetic step with the *cochonnet*,—the little bowl which serves as a goal and on which the interest of the game must centre. He leaned against a tree when the *cochonnet* stopped; then, with the same attention that a dog gives to his master's gestures, he looked at the other bowls flying through the air, or rolling along the ground. You might have taken him for the weird and watchful genii of the *cochonnet*. He said nothing; and the bowl−players—the most fanatic men that can be encountered among the sectarians of any faith —had never asked the reason of his dogged silence; in fact, the most observing of them thought him deaf and dumb.

When it happened that the distances between the bowls and the *cochonnet* had to be measured, the cane of this silent being was used as a measure, the players coming up and taking it from the icy hands of the old man and returning it without a word or even a sign of friendliness. The loan of his cane seemed a servitude to which he had negatively consented. When a shower fell, he stayed near the *cochonnet*, the slave of the bowls, and the guardian of the unfinished game. Rain affected him no more than the fine weather did; he was, like the players themselves, an intermediary species between a Parisian who has the lowest intellect of his kind and an animal which has the

highest.

In other respects, pallid and shrunken, indifferent to his own person, vacant in mind, he often came bareheaded, showing his sparse white hair, and his square, yellow, bald skull, like the knee of a beggar seen through his tattered trousers. His mouth was half−open, no ideas were in his glance, no precise object appeared in his movements; he never smiled; he never raised his eyes to heaven, but kept them habitually on the ground, where he seemed to be looking for something. At four o'clock an old woman arrived, to take him Heaven knows where; which she did by towing him along by the arm, as a young girl drags a wilful goat which still wants to browse by the wayside. This old man was a horrible thing to see.

In the afternoon of the day when Jules Desmarets left Paris, his travelling−carriage, in which he was alone, passed rapidly through the rue de l'Est, and came out upon the esplanade of the Observatoire at the moment when the old man, leaning against a tree, had allowed his cane to be taken from his hand amid the noisy vociferations of the players, pacifically irritated. Jules, thinking that he recognized that face, felt an impulse to stop, and at the same instant the carriage came to a standstill; for the postilion, hemmed in by some handcarts, had too much respect for the game to call upon the players to make way for him.

“It is he!” said Jules, beholding in that human wreck, Ferragus XXIII., chief of the Devorants. Then, after a pause, he added, “How he loved her!—Go on, postilion.”

PARIS, February, 1833.

ADDENDUM

Note: Ferragus is the first part of a trilogy. Part two is entitled The Duchesse de Langeais and part three is The Girl with the Golden Eyes. In other addendum references all three stories are usually combined under the title The Thirteen.

The following personages appear in other stories of the Human Comedy.

Bourignard, Gratien−Henri−Victor−Jean−Joseph
The Girl with the Golden Eyes

Desmartes, Jules
Cesar Birotteau

Desmartes, Madame Jules
Cesar Birotteau

Desplein
The Atheist's Mass
Cousin Pons

Lost Illusions
The Government Clerks
Pierrette
A Bachelor's Establishment
The Seamy Side of History
Modeste Mignon
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life
Honorine

Gruget, Madame Etienne
The Government Clerks
A Bachelor's Establishment

Haudry (doctor)
Cesar Birotteau
A Bachelor's Establishment
The Seamy Side of History
Cousin Pons

Langeais, Duchesse Antoinette de
Father Goriot
The Duchesse of Langeais

Marsay, Henri de
The Duchesse of Langeais
The Girl with the Golden Eyes
The Unconscious Humorists
Another Study of Woman
The Lily of the Valley
Father Goriot
Jealousies of a Country Town
Ursule Mirouet
A Marriage Settlement
Lost Illusions
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
Letters of Two Brides
The Ball at Sceaux
Modeste Mignon
The Secrets of a Princess
The Gondreville Mystery
A Daughter of Eve

Maulincour, Baronne de
A Marriage Settlement

Meynardie, Madame
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life

Nucingen, Baronne Delphine de
Father Goriot
Eugenie Grandet
Cesar Birotteau
Melmoth Reconciled
Lost Illusions
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
The Commission in Lunacy
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life
Modeste Mignon
The Firm of Nucingen
Another Study of Woman
A Daughter of Eve
The Member for Arcis

Pamiers, Vidame de
The Duchesse of Langeais
Jealousies of a Country Town

Ronquerolles, Marquis de
The Imaginary Mistress
The Duchess of Langeais
The Girl with the Golden Eyes
The Peasantry
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II. THE DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS By HONORE DE BALZAC

Translated by Ellen Marriage

DEDICATION

To Franz Liszt.

In a Spanish city on an island in the Mediterranean, there stands a convent of the Order of Barefoot Carmelites, where the rule instituted by St. Theresa is still preserved with all the first rigour of the reformation brought about by that illustrious woman. Extraordinary as this may seem, it is none the less true.

Almost every religious house in the Peninsula, or in Europe for that matter, was either destroyed or disorganised by the outbreak of the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars; but as this island was protected through those times by the English fleet, its wealthy convent and peaceable inhabitants were secure from the general trouble and spoliation. The storms of many kinds which shook the first fifteen years of the nineteenth century spent their force before they reached those cliffs at so short a distance from the coast of Andalusia.

If the rumour of the Emperor's name so much as reached the shore of the island, it is doubtful whether the holy women kneeling in the cloisters grasped the reality of his dream−like progress of glory, or the majesty that blazed in flame across kingdom after kingdom during his meteor life.

In the minds of the Roman Catholic world, the convent stood out pre−eminent for a stern discipline which nothing had changed; the purity of its rule had attracted unhappy women from the furthest parts of Europe, women deprived of all human ties, sighing after the long suicide accomplished in the breast of God. No convent, indeed, was so well fitted for that complete detachment of the soul from all earthly things, which is demanded by the religious life, albeit on the continent of Europe there are many convents magnificently adapted to the purpose of their existence. Buried away in the loneliest valleys, hanging in mid−air on the steepest mountainsides, set down on the brink of precipices, in every place man has sought for the poetry of the Infinite, the solemn awe of Silence; in every place man has striven to draw closer to God, seeking Him on mountain peaks, in the depths below the crags, at the cliff's edge; and everywhere man has found God. But nowhere, save on this half−European, half−African ledge of rock could you find so many different harmonies, combining so to raise the soul, that the sharpest pain comes to be like other memories; the strongest impressions are dulled, till the sorrows of life are laid to rest in the depths.

The convent stands on the highest point of the crags at the uttermost end of the island. On the side towards the sea the rock was once rent sheer away in some globe−cataclysm; it rises up a straight wall from the base where the waves gnaw at the stone below high−water mark. Any assault is made impossible by the dangerous reefs that stretch far out to sea, with the sparkling waves of the Mediterranean playing over them. So, only from the sea can you discern the square mass of the convent built conformably to the minute rules laid down as to the shape, height, doors, and windows of monastic buildings. From the side of the town, the church completely hides the solid structure of the cloisters and their roofs, covered with broad slabs of stone impervious to sun or storm or gales of wind.

The church itself, built by the munificence of a Spanish family, is the crowning edifice of the town. Its fine, bold front gives an imposing and picturesque look to the little city in the sea. The sight of such a city, with its close−huddled roofs, arranged for the most part amphitheatre−wise above a picturesque harbour, and crowned by a glorious cathedral front with triple−arched Gothic doorways, belfry towers, and filigree spires, is a spectacle surely in every way the sublimest on earth. Religion towering above daily life, to put men continually in mind of the End and the way, is in truth a thoroughly Spanish conception. But now surround this picture by the Mediterranean, and a burning sky, imagine a few palms here and there, a few stunted evergreen trees mingling their waving leaves with the motionless flowers and foliage of carved stone; look out over the reef with its white fringes of foam in contrast to the sapphire sea; and then turn to the city, with its galleries and terraces whither the townsfolk come to take the air among their flowers of an evening, above the houses and the tops of the trees in their little gardens; add a few sails down in the harbour; and lastly, in the stillness of falling night, listen to the organ music, the chanting of the services, the wonderful sound of bells pealing out over the open sea. There is sound and silence everywhere; oftener still there is silence over all.

The church is divided within into a sombre mysterious nave and narrow aisles. For some reason, probably

because the winds are so high, the architect was unable to build the flying buttresses and intervening chapels which adorn almost all cathedrals, nor are there openings of any kind in the walls which support the weight of the roof. Outside there is simply the heavy wall structure, a solid mass of grey stone further strengthened by huge piers placed at intervals. Inside, the nave and its little side galleries are lighted entirely by the great stained−glass rose−window suspended by a miracle of art above the centre doorway; for upon that side the exposure permits of the display of lacework in stone and of other beauties peculiar to the style improperly called Gothic.

The larger part of the nave and aisles was left for the townsfolk, who came and went and heard mass there. The choir was shut off from the rest of the church by a grating and thick folds of brown curtain, left slightly apart in the middle in such a way that nothing of the choir could be seen from the church except the high altar and the officiating priest. The grating itself was divided up by the pillars which supported the organ loft; and this part of the structure, with its carved wooden columns, completed the line of the arcading in the gallery carried by the shafts in the nave. If any inquisitive person, therefore, had been bold enough to climb upon the narrow balustrade in the gallery to look down into the choir, he could have seen nothing but the tall eight−sided windows of stained glass beyond the high altar.

At the time of the French expedition into Spain to establish Ferdinand VII once more on the throne, a French general came to the island after the taking of Cadiz, ostensibly to require the recognition of the King's Government, really to see the convent and to find some means of entering it. The undertaking was certainly a delicate one; but a man of passionate temper, whose life had been, as it were, but one series of poems in action, a man who all his life long had lived romances instead of writing them, a man pre−eminently a Doer, was sure to be tempted by a deed which seemed to be impossible.

To open the doors of a convent of nuns by lawful means! The metropolitan or the Pope would scarcely have permitted it! And as for force or strategem—might not any indiscretion cost him his position, his whole career as a soldier, and the end in view to boot? The Duc d'Angouleme was still in Spain; and of all the crimes which a man in favour with the Commander−in−Chief might commit, this one alone was certain to find him inexorable. The General had asked for the mission to gratify private motives of curiosity, though never was curiosity more hopeless. This final attempt was a matter of conscience. The Carmelite convent on the island was the only nunnery in Spain which had baffled his search.

As he crossed from the mainland, scarcely an hour's distance, he felt a presentiment that his hopes were to be fulfilled; and afterwards, when as yet he had seen nothing of the convent but its walls, and of the nuns not so much as their robes; while he had merely heard the chanting of the service, there were dim auguries under the walls and in the sound of the voices to justify his frail hope. And, indeed, however faint those so unaccountable presentiments might be, never was human passion more vehemently excited than the General's curiosity at that moment. There are no small events for the heart; the heart exaggerates everything; the heart weighs the fall of a fourteen−year−old Empire and the dropping of a woman's glove in the same scales, and the glove is nearly always the heavier of the two. So here are the facts in all their prosaic simplicity. The facts first, the emotions will follow.

An hour after the General landed on the island, the royal authority was re−established there. Some few Constitutional Spaniards who had found their way thither after the fall of Cadiz were allowed to charter a vessel and sail for London. So there was neither resistance nor reaction. But the change of government could not be effected in the little town without a mass, at which the two divisions under the General's command were obliged to be present. Now, it was upon this mass that the General had built his hopes of gaining some information as to the sisters in the convent; he was quite unaware how absolutely the Carmelites were cut off from the world; but he knew that there might be among them one whom he held dearer than life, dearer than honour.

His hopes were cruelly dashed at once. Mass, it is true, was celebrated in state. In honour of such a solemnity, the curtains which always hid the choir were drawn back to display its riches, its valuable paintings and shrines so bright with gems that they eclipsed the glories of the ex−votos of gold and silver hung up by sailors of the port on the columns in the nave. But all the nuns had taken refuge in the organ−loft. And yet, in spite of this first check, during this very mass of thanksgiving, the most intimately thrilling drama that ever set a man's heart beating opened out widely before him.

The sister who played the organ aroused such intense enthusiasm, that not a single man regretted that he had come to the service. Even the men in the ranks were delighted, and the officers were in ecstasy. As for the General, he was seemingly calm and indifferent. The sensations stirred in him as the sister played one piece after

another belong to the small number of things which it is not lawful to utter; words are powerless to express them; like death, God, eternity, they can only be realised through their one point of contact with humanity. Strangely enough, the organ music seemed to belong to the school of Rossini, the musician who brings most human passion into his art.

Some day his works, by their number and extent, will receive the reverence due to the Homer of music. From among all the scores that we owe to his great genius, the nun seemed to have chosen Moses in Egypt for special study, doubtless because the spirit of sacred music finds therein its supreme expression. Perhaps the soul of the great musician, so gloriously known to Europe, and the soul of this unknown executant had met in the intuitive apprehension of the same poetry. So at least thought two dilettanti officers who must have missed the Theatre Favart in Spain.

At last in the Te Deum no one could fail to discern a French soul in the sudden change that came over the music. Joy for the victory of the Most Christian King evidently stirred this nun's heart to the depths. She was a Frenchwoman beyond mistake. Soon the love of country shone out, breaking forth like shafts of light from the fugue, as the sister introduced variations with all a Parisienne's fastidious taste, and blended vague suggestions of our grandest national airs with her music. A Spaniard's fingers would not have brought this warmth into a graceful tribute paid to the victorious arms of France. The musician's nationality was revealed.

“We find France everywhere, it seems,” said one of the men.

The General had left the church during the Te Deum; he could not listen any longer. The nun's music had been a revelation of a woman loved to frenzy; a woman so carefully hidden from the world's eyes, so deeply buried in the bosom of the Church, that hitherto the most ingenious and persistent efforts made by men who brought great influence and unusual powers to bear upon the search had failed to find her. The suspicion aroused in the General's heart became all but a certainty with the vague reminiscence of a sad, delicious melody, the air of Fleuve du Tage. The woman he loved had played the prelude to the ballad in a boudoir in Paris, how often! and now this nun had chosen the song to express an exile's longing, amid the joy of those that triumphed. Terrible sensation! To hope for the resurrection of a lost love, to find her only to know that she was lost, to catch a mysterious glimpse of her after five years—five years, in which the pent−up passion, chafing in an empty life, had grown the mightier for every fruitless effort to satisfy it!

Who has not known, at least once in his life, what it is to lose some precious thing; and after hunting through his papers, ransacking his memory, and turning his house upside down; after one or two days spent in vain search, and hope, and despair; after a prodigious expenditure of the liveliest irritation of soul, who has not known the ineffable pleasure of finding that all−important nothing which had come to be a king of monomania? Very good. Now, spread that fury of search over five years; put a woman, put a heart, put love in the place of the trifle; transpose the monomania into the key of high passion; and, furthermore, let the seeker be a man of ardent temper, with a lion's heart and a leonine head and mane, a man to inspire awe and fear in those who come in contact with him—realise this, and you may, perhaps, understand why the General walked abruptly out of the church when the first notes of a ballad, which he used to hear with a rapture of delight in a gilt−panelled boudoir, began to vibrate along the aisles of the church in the sea.

The General walked away down the steep street which led to the port, and only stopped when he could not hear the deep notes of the organ. Unable to think of anything but the love which broke out in volcanic eruption, filling his heart with fire, he only knew that the Te Deum was over when the Spanish congregation came pouring out of the church. Feeling that his behaviour and attitude might seem ridiculous, he went back to head the procession, telling the alcalde and the governor that, feeling suddenly faint, he had gone out into the air. Casting about for a plea for prolonging his stay, it at once occurred to him to make the most of this excuse, framed on the spur of the moment. He declined, on a plea of increasing indisposition, to preside at the banquet given by the town to the French officers, betook himself to his bed, and sent a message to the Major−General, to the effect that temporary illness obliged him to leave the Colonel in command of the troops for the time being. This commonplace but very plausible stratagem relieved him of all responsibility for the time necessary to carry out his plans. The General, nothing if not “catholic and monarchical,” took occasion to inform himself of the hours of the services, and manifested the greatest zeal for the performance of his religious duties, piety which caused no remark in Spain.

The very next day, while the division was marching out of the town, the General went to the convent to be

present at vespers. He found an empty church. The townsfolk, devout though they were, had all gone down to the quay to watch the embarkation of the troops. He felt glad to be the only man there. He tramped noisily up the nave, clanking his spurs till the vaulted roof rang with the sound; he coughed, he talked aloud to himself to let the nuns know, and more particularly to let the organist know that if the troops were gone, one Frenchman was left behind. Was this singular warning heard and understood? He thought so. It seemed to him that in the Magnificat the organ made response which was borne to him on the vibrating air. The nun's spirit found wings in music and fled towards him, throbbing with the rhythmical pulse of the sounds. Then, in all its might, the music burst forth and filled the church with warmth. The Song of Joy set apart in the sublime liturgy of Latin Christianity to express the exaltation of the soul in the presence of the glory of the ever−living God, became the utterance of a heart almost terrified by its gladness in the presence of the glory of a mortal love; a love that yet lived, a love that had risen to trouble her even beyond the grave in which the nun is laid, that she may rise again as the bride of Christ.

The organ is in truth the grandest, the most daring, the most magnificent of all instruments invented by human genius. It is a whole orchestra in itself. It can express anything in response to a skilled touch. Surely it is in some sort a pedestal on which the soul poises for a flight forth into space, essaying on her course to draw picture after picture in an endless series, to paint human life, to cross the Infinite that separates heaven from earth? And the longer a dreamer listens to those giant harmonies, the better he realises that nothing save this hundred−voiced choir on earth can fill all the space between kneeling men, and a God hidden by the blinding light of the Sanctuary. The music is the one interpreter strong enough to bear up the prayers of humanity to heaven, prayer in its omnipotent moods, prayer tinged by the melancholy of many different natures, coloured by meditative ecstasy, upspringing with the impulse of repentance—blended with the myriad fancies of every creed. Yes. In those long vaulted aisles the melodies inspired by the sense of things divine are blent with a grandeur unknown before, are decked with new glory and might. Out of the dim daylight, and the deep silence broken by the chanting of the choir in response to the thunder of the organ, a veil is woven for God, and the brightness of His attributes shines through it.

And this wealth of holy things seemed to be flung down like a grain of incense upon the fragile altar raised to Love beneath the eternal throne of a jealous and avenging God. Indeed, in the joy of the nun there was little of that awe and gravity which should harmonise with the solemnities of the Magnificat. She had enriched the music with graceful variations, earthly gladness throbbing through the rhythm of each. In such brilliant quivering notes some great singer might strive to find a voice for her love, her melodies fluttered as a bird flutters about her mate. There were moments when she seemed to leap back into the past, to dally there now with laughter, now with tears. Her changing moods, as it were, ran riot. She was like a woman excited and happy over her lover's return.

But at length, after the swaying fugues of delirium, after the marvellous rendering of a vision of the past, a revulsion swept over the soul that thus found utterance for itself. With a swift transition from the major to the minor, the organist told her hearer of her present lot. She gave the story of long melancholy broodings, of the slow course of her moral malady. How day by day she deadened the senses, how every night cut off one more thought, how her heart was slowly reduced to ashes. The sadness deepened shade after shade through languid modulations, and in a little while the echoes were pouring out a torrent of grief. Then on a sudden, high notes rang out like the voices of angels singing together, as if to tell the lost but not forgotten lover that their spirits now could only meet in heaven. Pathetic hope!

Then followed the Amen. No more Joy, no more tears in the air, no sadness, no regrets. The Amen was the return to God. The final chord was deep, solemn, even terrible; for the last rumblings of the bass sent a shiver through the audience that raised the hair on their heads; the nun shook out her veiling of crepe, and seemed to sink again into the grave from which she had risen for a moment. Slowly the reverberations died away; it seemed as if the church, but now so full of light, had returned to thick darkness.

The General had been caught up and borne swiftly away by this strong−winged spirit; he had followed the course of its flight from beginning to end. He understood to the fullest extent the imagery of that burning symphony; for him the chords reached deep and far. For him, as for the sister, the poem meant future, present, and past. Is not music, and even opera music, a sort of text, which a susceptible or poetic temper, or a sore and stricken heart, may expand as memories shall determine? If a musician must needs have the heart of a poet, must not the listener too be in a manner a poet and a lover to hear all that lies in great music? Religion, love, and music—what are they but a threefold expression of the same fact, of that craving for expansion which stirs in

every noble soul. And these three forms of poetry ascend to God, in whom all passion on earth finds its end. Wherefore the holy human trinity finds a place amid the infinite glories of God; of God, whom we always represent surrounded with the fires of love and seistrons of gold—music and light and harmony. Is not He the Cause and the End of all our strivings?

The French General guessed rightly that here in the desert, on this bare rock in the sea, the nun had seized upon music as an outpouring of the passion that still consumed her. Was this her manner of offering up her love as a sacrifice to God? Or was it Love exultant in triumph over God? The questions were hard to answer. But one thing at least the General could not mistake—in this heart, dead to the world, the fire of passion burned as fiercely as in his own.

Vespers over, he went back to the alcalde with whom he was staying. In the all−absorbing joy which comes in such full measure when a satisfaction sought long and painfully is attained at last, he could see nothing beyond this—he was still loved! In her heart love had grown in loneliness, even as his love had grown stronger as he surmounted one barrier after another which this woman had set between them! The glow of soul came to its natural end. There followed a longing to see her again, to contend with God for her, to snatch her away—a rash scheme, which appealed to a daring nature. He went to bed, when the meal was over, to avoid questions; to be alone and think at his ease; and he lay absorbed by deep thought till day broke.

He rose only to go to mass. He went to the church and knelt close to the screen, with his forehead touching the curtain; he would have torn a hole in it if he had been alone, but his host had come with him out of politeness, and the least imprudence might compromise the whole future of his love, and ruin the new hopes.

The organ sounded, but it was another player, and not the nun of the last two days whose hands touched the keys. It was all colourless and cold for the General. Was the woman he loved prostrated by emotion which wellnigh overcame a strong man's heart? Had she so fully realised and shared an unchanged, longed−for love, that now she lay dying on her bed in her cell? While innumerable thoughts of this kind perplexed his mind, the voice of the woman he worshipped rang out close beside him; he knew its clear resonant soprano. It was her voice, with that faint tremor in it which gave it all the charm that shyness and diffidence gives to a young girl; her voice, distinct from the mass of singing as a prima donna's in the chorus of a finale. It was like a golden or silver thread in dark frieze.

It was she! There could be no mistake. Parisienne now as ever, she had not laid coquetry aside when she threw off worldly adornments for the veil and the Carmelite's coarse serge. She who had affirmed her love last evening in the praise sent up to God, seemed now to say to her lover, “Yes, it is I. I am here. My love is unchanged, but I am beyond the reach of love. You will hear my voice, my soul shall enfold you, and I shall abide here under the brown shroud in the choir from which no power on earth can tear me. You shall never see me more!”

“It is she indeed!” the General said to himself, raising his head. He had leant his face on his hands, unable at first to bear the intolerable emotion that surged like a whirlpool in his heart, when that well−known voice vibrated under the arcading, with the sound of the sea for accompaniment.

Storm was without, and calm within the sanctuary. Still that rich voice poured out all its caressing notes; it fell like balm on the lover's burning heart; it blossomed upon the air—the air that a man would fain breathe more deeply to receive the effluence of a soul breathed forth with love in the words of the prayer. The alcalde coming to join his guest found him in tears during the elevation, while the nun was singing, and brought him back to his house. Surprised to find so much piety in a French military man, the worthy magistrate invited the confessor of the convent to meet his guest. Never had news given the General more pleasure; he paid the ecclesiastic a good deal of attention at supper, and confirmed his Spanish hosts in the high opinion they had formed of his piety by a not wholly disinterested respect. He enquired with gravity how many sisters there were in the convent, and asked for particulars of its endowment and revenues, as if from courtesy he wished to hear the good priest discourse on the subject most interesting to him. He informed himself as to the manner of life led by the holy women. Were they allowed to go out of the convent, or to see visitors?

“Senor,” replied the venerable churchman, “the rule is strict. A woman cannot enter a monastery of the order of St. Bruno without a special permission from His Holiness, and the rule here is equally stringent. No man may enter a convent of Barefoot Carmelites unless he is a priest specially attached to the services of the house by the Archbishop. None of the nuns may leave the convent; though the great Saint, St. Theresa, often left her cell. The Visitor or the Mothers Superior can alone give permission, subject to an authorisation from the Archbishop, for a

nun to see a visitor, and then especially in a case of illness. Now we are one of the principal houses, and consequently we have a Mother Superior here. Among other foreign sisters there is one Frenchwoman, Sister Theresa; she it is who directs the music in the chapel."

"Oh!" said the General, with feigned surprise. "She must have rejoiced over the victory of the House of Bourbon."

"I told them the reason of the mass; they are always a little bit inquisitive."

"But Sister Theresa may have interests in France. Perhaps she would like to send some message or to hear news."

"I do not think so. She would have come to ask me."

"As a fellow−countryman, I should be quite curious to see her," said the General. "If it is possible, if the Lady Superior consents, if——"

"Even at the grating and in the Reverend Mother's presence, an interview would be quite impossible for anybody whatsoever; but, strict as the Mother is, for a deliverer of our holy religion and the throne of his Catholic Majesty, the rule might be relaxed for a moment," said the confessor, blinking. "I will speak about it."

"How old is Sister Theresa?" enquired the lover. He dared not ask any questions of the priest as to the nun's beauty.

"She does not reckon years now," the good man answered, with a simplicity that made the General shudder.

Next day before siesta, the confessor came to inform the French General that Sister Theresa and the Mother consented to receive him at the grating in the parlour before vespers. The General spent the siesta in pacing to and fro along the quay in the noonday heat. Thither the priest came to find him, and brought him to the convent by way of the gallery round the cemetery. Fountains, green trees, and rows of arcading maintained a cool freshness in keeping with the place.

At the further end of the long gallery the priest led the way into a large room divided in two by a grating covered with a brown curtain. In the first, and in some sort of public half of the apartment, where the confessor left the newcomer, a wooden bench ran round the wall, and two or three chairs, also of wood, were placed near the grating. The ceiling consisted of bare unornamented joists and cross−beams of ilex wood. As the two windows were both on the inner side of the grating, and the dark surface of the wood was a bad reflector, the light in the place was so dim that you could scarcely see the great black crucifix, the portrait of Saint Theresa, and a picture of the Madonna which adorned the grey parlour walls. Tumultuous as the General's feelings were, they took something of the melancholy of the place. He grew calm in that homely quiet. A sense of something vast as the tomb took possession of him beneath the chill unceiled roof. Here, as in the grave, was there not eternal silence, deep peace—the sense of the Infinite? And besides this there was the quiet and the fixed thought of the cloister—a thought which you felt like a subtle presence in the air, and in the dim dusk of the room; an all−pervasive thought nowhere definitely expressed, and looming the larger in the imagination; for in the cloister the great saying, "Peace in the Lord," enters the least religious soul as a living force.

The monk's life is scarcely comprehensible. A man seems confessed a weakling in a monastery; he was born to act, to live out a life of work; he is evading a man's destiny in his cell. But what man's strength, blended with pathetic weakness, is implied by a woman's choice of the convent life! A man may have any number of motives for burying himself in a monastery; for him it is the leap over the precipice. A woman has but one motive—she is a woman still; she betrothes herself to a Heavenly Bridegroom. Of the monk you may ask, "Why did you not fight your battle?" But if a woman immures herself in the cloister, is there not always a sublime battle fought first?

At length it seemed to the General that that still room, and the lonely convent in the sea, were full of thoughts of him. Love seldom attains to solemnity; yet surely a love still faithful in the breast of God was something solemn, something more than a man had a right to look for as things are in this nineteenth century?

The infinite grandeur of the situation might well produce an effect upon the General's mind; he had precisely enough elevation of soul to forget politics, honours, Spain, and society in Paris, and to rise to the height of this lofty climax. And what in truth could be more tragic? How much must pass in the souls of these two lovers, brought together in a place of strangers, on a ledge of granite in the sea; yet held apart by an intangible, unsurmountable barrier! Try to imagine the man saying within himself, "Shall I triumph over God in her heart?" when a faint rustling sound made him quiver, and the curtain was drawn aside.

Between him and the light stood a woman. Her face was hidden by the veil that drooped from the folds upon

her head; she was dressed according to the rule of the order in a gown of the colour become proverbial. Her bare feet were hidden; if the General could have seen them, he would have known how appallingly thin she had grown; and yet in spite of the thick folds of her coarse gown, a mere covering and no ornament, he could guess how tears, and prayer, and passion, and loneliness had wasted the woman before him.

An ice−cold hand, belonging, no doubt, to the Mother Superior, held back the curtain. The General gave the enforced witness of their interview a searching glance, and met the dark, inscrutable gaze of an aged recluse. The Mother might have been a century old, but the bright, youthful eyes belied the wrinkles that furrowed her pale face.

“Mme la Duchesse,” he began, his voice shaken with emotion, “does your companion understand French?” The veiled figure bowed her head at the sound of his voice.

“There is no duchess here,” she replied. “It is Sister Theresa whom you see before you. She whom you call my companion is my mother in God, my superior here on earth.”

The words were so meekly spoken by the voice that sounded in other years amid harmonious surroundings of refined luxury, the voice of a queen of fashion in Paris. Such words from the lips that once spoke so lightly and flippantly struck the General dumb with amazement.

“The Holy Mother only speaks Latin and Spanish,” she added.

“I understand neither. Dear Antoinette, make my excuses to her.”

The light fell full upon the nun's figure; a thrill of deep emotion betrayed itself in a faint quiver of her veil as she heard her name softly spoken by the man who had been so hard in the past.

“My brother,” she said, drawing her sleeve under her veil, perhaps to brush tears away, “I am Sister Theresa.”

Then, turning to the Superior, she spoke in Spanish; the General knew enough of the language to understand what she said perfectly well; possibly he could have spoken it had he chosen to do so.

“Dear Mother, the gentleman presents his respects to you, and begs you to pardon him if he cannot pay them himself, but he knows neither of the languages which you speak——”

The aged nun bent her head slowly, with an expression of angelic sweetness, enhanced at the same time by the consciousness of her power and dignity.

“Do you know this gentleman?” she asked, with a keen glance.

“Yes, Mother.”

“Go back to your cell, my daughter!” said the Mother imperiously. The General slipped aside behind the curtain lest the dreadful tumult within him should appear in his face; even in the shadow it seemed to him that he could still see the Superior's piercing eyes. He was afraid of her; she held his little, frail, hardly−won happiness in her hands; and he, who had never quailed under a triple row of guns, now trembled before this nun. The Duchess went towards the door, but she turned back.

“Mother,” she said, with dreadful calmness, “the Frenchman is one of my brothers.”

“Then stay, my daughter,” said the Superior, after a pause.

The piece of admirable Jesuitry told of such love and regret, that a man less strongly constituted might have broken down under the keen delight in the midst of a great and, for him, an entirely novel peril. Oh! how precious words, looks, and gestures became when love must baffle lynx eyes and tiger's claws! Sister Theresa came back.

“You see, my brother, what I have dared to do only to speak to you for a moment of your salvation and of the prayers that my soul puts up for your soul daily. I am committing mortal sin. I have told a lie. How many days of penance must expiate that lie! But I shall endure it for your sake. My brother, you do not know what happiness it is to love in heaven; to feel that you can confess love purified by religion, love transported into the highest heights of all, so that we are permitted to lose sight of all but the soul. If the doctrine and the spirit of the Saint to whom we owe this refuge had not raised me above earth's anguish, and caught me up and set me, far indeed beneath the Sphere wherein she dwells, yet truly above this world, I should not have seen you again. But now I can see you, and hear your voice, and remain calm——”

The General broke in, “But, Antoinette, let me see you, you whom I love passionately, desperately, as you could have wished me to love you.”

“Do not call me Antoinette, I implore you. Memories of the past hurt me. You must see no one here but Sister Theresa, a creature who trusts in the Divine mercy.” She paused for a little, and then added, “You must control yourself, my brother. Our Mother would separate us without pity if there is any worldly passion in your face, or if

you allow the tears to fall from your eyes."

The General bowed his head to regain self−control; when he looked up again he saw her face beyond the grating—the thin, white, but still impassioned face of the nun. All the magic charm of youth that once bloomed there, all the fair contrast of velvet whiteness and the colour of the Bengal rose, had given place to a burning glow, as of a porcelain jar with a faint light shining through it. The wonderful hair in which she took such pride had been shaven; there was a bandage round her forehead and about her face. An ascetic life had left dark traces about the eyes, which still sometimes shot out fevered glances; their ordinary calm expression was but a veil. In a few words, she was but the ghost of her former self.

"Ah! you that have come to be my life, you must come out of this tomb! You were mine; you had no right to give yourself, even to God. Did you not promise me to give up all at the least command from me? You may perhaps think me worthy of that promise now when you hear what I have done for you. I have sought you all through the world. You have been in my thoughts at every moment for five years; my life has been given to you. My friends, very powerful friends, as you know, have helped with all their might to search every convent in France, Italy, Spain, Sicily, and America. Love burned more brightly for every vain search. Again and again I made long journeys with a false hope; I have wasted my life and the heaviest throbbings of my heart in vain under many a dark convent wall. I am not speaking of a faithfulness that knows no bounds, for what is it?—nothing compared with the infinite longings of my love. If your remorse long ago was sincere, you ought not to hesitate to follow me today."

"You forget that I am not free."

"The Duke is dead," he answered quickly.

Sister Theresa flushed red.

"May heaven be open to him!" she cried with a quick rush of feeling. "He was generous to me.—But I did not mean such ties; it was one of my sins that I was ready to break them all without scruple—for you."

"Are you speaking of your vows?" the General asked, frowning. "I did not think that anything weighed heavier with your heart than love. But do not think twice of it, Antoinette; the Holy Father himself shall absolve you of your oath. I will surely go to Rome, I will entreat all the powers of earth; if God could come down from heaven, I would——"

"Do not blaspheme."

"So do not fear the anger of God. Ah! I would far rather hear that you would leave your prison for me; that this very night you would let yourself down into a boat at the foot of the cliffs. And we would go away to be happy somewhere at the world's end, I know not where. And with me at your side, you should come back to life and health under the wings of love."

"You must not talk like this," said Sister Theresa; "you do not know what you are to me now. I love you far better than I ever loved you before. Every day I pray for you; I see you with other eyes. Armand, if you but knew the happiness of giving yourself up, without shame, to a pure friendship which God watches over! You do not know what joy it is to me to pray for heaven's blessing on you. I never pray for myself: God will do with me according to His will; but, at the price of my soul, I wish I could be sure that you are happy here on earth, and that you will be happy hereafter throughout all ages. My eternal life is all that trouble has left me to offer up to you. I am old now with weeping; I am neither young nor fair; and in any case, you could not respect the nun who became a wife; no love, not even motherhood, could give me absolution. . . . What can you say to outweigh the uncounted thoughts that have gathered in my heart during the past five years, thoughts that have changed, and worn, and blighted it? I ought to have given a heart less sorrowful to God."

"What can I say? Dear Antoinette, I will say this, that I love you; that affection, love, a great love, the joy of living in another heart that is ours, utterly and wholly ours, is so rare a thing and so hard to find, that I doubted you, and put you to sharp proof; but now, today, I love you, Antoinette, with all my soul's strength. . . . If you will follow me into solitude, I will hear no voice but yours, I will see no other face."

"Hush, Armand! You are shortening the little time that we may be together here on earth."

"Antoinette, will you come with me?"

"I am never away from you. My life is in your heart, not through the selfish ties of earthly happiness, or vanity, or enjoyment; pale and withered as I am, I live here for you, in the breast of God. As God is just, you shall be happy——"

“Words, words all of it! Pale and withered? How if I want you? How if I cannot be happy without you? Do you still think of nothing but duty with your lover before you? Is he never to come first and above all things else in your heart? In time past you put social success, yourself, heaven knows what, before him; now it is God, it is the welfare of my soul! In Sister Theresa I find the Duchess over again, ignorant of the happiness of love, insensible as ever, beneath the semblance of sensibility. You do not love me; you have never loved me——”

“Oh, my brother——!”

“You do not wish to leave this tomb. You love my soul, do you say? Very well, through you it will be lost forever. I shall make away with myself——”

“Mother!” Sister Theresa called aloud in Spanish, “I have lied to you; this man is my lover!”

The curtain fell at once. The General, in his stupor, scarcely heard the doors within as they clanged.

“Ah! she loves me still!” he cried, understanding all the sublimity of that cry of hers. “She loves me still. She must be carried off. . . .”

The General left the island, returned to headquarters, pleaded ill−health, asked for leave of absence, and forthwith took his departure for France.

And now for the incidents which brought the two personages in this Scene into their present relation to each other.

The thing known in France as the Faubourg Saint−Germain is neither a Quarter, nor a sect, nor an institution, nor anything else that admits of a precise definition. There are great houses in the Place Royale, the Faubourg Saint−Honore, and the Chaussee d'Antin, in any one of which you may breathe the same atmosphere of Faubourg Saint−Germain. So, to begin with, the whole Faubourg is not within the Faubourg. There are men and women born far enough away from its influences who respond to them and take their place in the circle; and again there are others, born within its limits, who may yet be driven forth forever. For the last forty years the manners, and customs, and speech, in a word, the tradition of the Faubourg Saint−Germain, has been to Paris what the Court used to be in other times; it is what the Hotel Saint−Paul was to the fourteenth century; the Louvre to the fifteenth; the Palais, the Hotel Rambouillet, and the Place Royale to the sixteenth; and lastly, as Versailles was to the seventeenth and the eighteenth.

Just as the ordinary workaday Paris will always centre about some point; so, through all periods of history, the Paris of the nobles and the upper classes converges towards some particular spot. It is a periodically recurrent phenomenon which presents ample matter for reflection to those who are fain to observe or describe the various social zones; and possibly an enquiry into the causes that bring about this centralisation may do more than merely justify the probability of this episode; it may be of service to serious interests which some day will be more deeply rooted in the commonwealth, unless, indeed, experience is as meaningless for political parties as it is for youth.

In every age the great nobles, and the rich who always ape the great nobles, build their houses as far as possible from crowded streets. When the Duc d'Uzes built his splendid hotel in the Rue Montmartre in the reign of Louis XIV, and set the fountain at his gates—for which beneficent action, to say nothing of his other virtues, he was held in such veneration that the whole quarter turned out in a body to follow his funeral—when the Duke, I say, chose this site for his house, he did so because that part of Paris was almost deserted in those days. But when the fortifications were pulled down, and the market gardens beyond the line of the boulevards began to fill with houses, then the d'Uzes family left their fine mansion, and in our time it was occupied by a banker. Later still, the noblesse began to find themselves out of their element among shopkeepers, left the Place Royale and the centre of Paris for good, and crossed the river to breathe freely in the Faubourg Saint−Germain, where palaces were reared already about the great hotel built by Louis XIV for the Duc de Maine—the Benjamin among his legitimated offspring. And indeed, for people accustomed to a stately life, can there be more unseemly surroundings than the bustle, the mud, the street cries, the bad smells, and narrow thoroughfares of a populous quarter? The very habits of life in a mercantile or manufacturing district are completely at variance with the lives of nobles. The shopkeeper and artisan are just going to bed when the great world is thinking of dinner; and the noisy stir of life begins among the former when the latter have gone to rest. Their day's calculations never coincide; the one class represents the expenditure, the other the receipts. Consequently their manners and customs are diametrically opposed.

Nothing contemptuous is intended by this statement. An aristocracy is in a manner the intellect of the social

system, as the middle classes and the proletariat may be said to be its organising and working power. It naturally follows that these forces are differently situated; and of their antagonism there is bred a seeming antipathy produced by the performance of different functions, all of them, however, existing for one common end.

Such social dissonances are so inevitably the outcome of any charter of the constitution, that however much a Liberal may be disposed to complain of them, as of treason against those sublime ideas with which the ambitious plebeian is apt to cover his designs, he would none the less think it a preposterous notion that M. le Prince de Montmorency, for instance, should continue to live in the Rue Saint−Martin at the corner of the street which bears that nobleman's name; or that M. le Duc de Fitz−James, descendant of the royal house of Scotland, should have his hotel at the angle of the Rue Marie Stuart and the Rue Montorgueil. Sint ut sunt, aut non sint, the grand words of the Jesuit, might be taken as a motto by the great in all countries. These social differences are patent in all ages; the fact is always accepted by the people; its “reasons of state” are self−evident; it is at once cause and effect, a principle and a law. The common sense of the masses never deserts them until demagogues stir them up to gain ends of their own; that common sense is based on the verities of social order; and the social order is the same everywhere, in Moscow as in London, in Geneva as in Calcutta. Given a certain number of families of unequal fortune in any given space, you will see an aristocracy forming under your eyes; there will be the patricians, the upper classes, and yet other ranks below them. Equality may be a RIGHT, but no power on earth can convert it into FACT. It would be a good thing for France if this idea could be popularised. The benefits of political harmony are obvious to the least intelligent classes. Harmony is, as it were, the poetry of order, and order is a matter of vital importance to the working population. And what is order, reduced to its simplest expression, but the agreement of things among themselves—unity, in short? Architecture, music, and poetry, everything in France, and in France more than in any other country, is based upon this principle; it is written upon the very foundations of her clear accurate language, and a language must always be the most infallible index of national character. In the same way you may note that the French popular airs are those most calculated to strike the imagination, the best−modulated melodies are taken over by the people; clearness of thought, the intellectual simplicity of an idea attracts them; they like the incisive sayings that hold the greatest number of ideas.

France is the one country in the world where a little phrase may bring about a great revolution. Whenever the masses have risen, it has been to bring men, affairs, and principles into agreement.

No nation has a clearer conception of that idea of unity which should permeate the life of an aristocracy; possibly no other nation has so intelligent a comprehension of a political necessity; history will never find her behind the time. France has been led astray many a time, but she is deluded, woman−like, by generous ideas, by a glow of enthusiasm which at first outstrips sober reason.

So, to begin with, the most striking characteristic of the Faubourg is the splendour of its great mansions, its great gardens, and a surrounding quiet in keeping with princely revenues drawn from great estates.

And what is this distance set between a class and a whole metropolis but visible and outward expression of the widely different attitude of mind which must inevitably keep them apart?

The position of the head is well defined in every organism. If by any chance a nation allows its head to fall at its feet, it is pretty sure sooner or later to discover that this is a suicidal measure; and since nations have no desire to perish, they set to work at once to grow a new head. If they lack the strength for this, they perish as Rome perished, and Venice, and so many other states.

This distinction between the upper and lower spheres of social activity, emphasised by differences in their manner of living, necessarily implies that in the highest aristocracy there is real worth and some distinguishing merit. In any state, no matter what form of “government” is affected, so soon as the patrician class fails to maintain that complete superiority which is the condition of its existence, it ceases to be a force, and is pulled down at once by the populace. The people always wish to see money, power, and initiative in their leaders, hands, hearts, and heads; they must be the spokesmen, they must represent the intelligence and the glory of the nation. Nations, like women, love strength in those who rule them; they cannot give love without respect; they refuse utterly to obey those of whom they do not stand in awe. An aristocracy fallen into contempt is a roi faineant, a husband in petticoats; first it ceases to be itself, and then it ceases to be.

And in this way the isolation of the great, the sharply marked distinction in their manner of life, or in a word, the general custom of the patrician caste is at once the sign of a real power, and their destruction so soon as that power is lost. The Faubourg Saint−Germain failed to recognise the conditions of its being, while it would still

have been easy to perpetuate its existence, and therefore was brought low for a time. The Faubourg should have looked the facts fairly in the face, as the English aristocracy did before them; they should have seen that every institution has its climacteric periods, when words lose their old meanings, and ideas reappear in a new guise, and the whole conditions of politics wear a changed aspect, while the underlying realities undergo no essential alteration.

These ideas demand further development which form an essential part of this episode; they are given here both as a succinct statement of the causes, and an explanation of the things which happen in the course of the story.

The stateliness of the castles and palaces where nobles dwell; the luxury of the details; the constantly maintained sumptuousness of the furniture; the “atmosphere” in which the fortunate owner of landed estates (a rich man before he was born) lives and moves easily and without friction; the habit of mind which never descends to calculate the petty workaday gains of existence; the leisure; the higher education attainable at a much earlier age; and lastly, the aristocratic tradition that makes of him a social force, for which his opponents, by dint of study and a strong will and tenacity of vocation, are scarcely a match−all these things should contribute to form a lofty spirit in a man, possessed of such privileges from his youth up; they should stamp his character with that high self−respect, of which the least consequence is a nobleness of heart in harmony with the noble name that he bears. And in some few families all this is realised. There are noble characters here and there in the Faubourg, but they are marked exceptions to a general rule of egoism which has been the ruin of this world within a world. The privileges above enumerated are the birthright of the French noblesse, as of every patrician efflorescence ever formed on the surface of a nation; and will continue to be theirs so long as their existence is based upon real estate, or money; domaine−sol and domaine−argent alike, the only solid bases of an organised society; but such privileges are held upon the understanding that the patricians must continue to justify their existence. There is a sort of moral fief held on a tenure of service rendered to the sovereign, and here in France the people are undoubtedly the sovereigns nowadays. The times are changed, and so are the weapons. The knight−banneret of old wore a coat of chain armour and a hauberk; he could handle a lance well and display his pennon, and no more was required of him; today he is bound to give proof of his intelligence. A stout heart was enough in the days of old; in our days he is required to have a capacious brain−pan. Skill and knowledge and capital—these three points mark out a social triangle on which the scutcheon of power is blazoned; our modern aristocracy must take its stand on these.

A fine theorem is as good as a great name. The Rothschilds, the Fuggers of the nineteenth century, are princes de facto. A great artist is in reality an oligarch; he represents a whole century, and almost always he is a law to others. And the art of words, the high pressure machinery of the writer, the poet's genius, the merchant's steady endurance, the strong will of the statesman who concentrates a thousand dazzling qualities in himself, the general's sword—all these victories, in short, which a single individual will win, that he may tower above the rest of the world, the patrician class is now bound to win and keep exclusively. They must head the new forces as they once headed the material forces; how should they keep the position unless they are worthy of it? How, unless they are the soul and brain of a nation, shall they set its hands moving? How lead a people without the power of command? And what is the marshal's baton without the innate power of the captain in the man who wields it?

The Faubourg Saint−Germain took to playing with batons, and fancied that all the power was in its hands. It inverted the terms of the proposition which called it into existence. And instead of flinging away the insignia which offended the people, and quietly grasping the power, it allowed the bourgeoisie to seize the authority, clung with fatal obstinacy to its shadow, and over and over again forgot the laws which a minority must observe if it would live. When an aristocracy is scarce a thousandth part of the body social, it is bound today, as of old, to multiply its points of action, so as to counterbalance the weight of the masses in a great crisis. And in our days those means of action must be living forces, and not historical memories.

In France, unluckily, the noblesse were still so puffed up with the notion of their vanished power, that it was difficult to contend against a kind of innate presumption in themselves. Perhaps this is a national defect. The Frenchman is less given than anyone else to undervalue himself; it comes natural to him to go from his degree to the one above it; and while it is a rare thing for him to pity the unfortunates over whose heads he rises, he always groans in spirit to see so many fortunate people above him. He is very far from heartless, but too often he prefers to listen to his intellect. The national instinct which brings the Frenchman to the front, the vanity that wastes his

substance, is as much a dominant passion as thrift in the Dutch. For three centuries it swayed the noblesse, who, in this respect, were certainly pre−eminently French. The scion of the Faubourg Saint−Germain, beholding his material superiority, was fully persuaded of his intellectual superiority. And everything contributed to confirm him in his belief; for ever since the Faubourg Saint−Germain existed at all—which is to say, ever since Versailles ceased to be the royal residence—the Faubourg, with some few gaps in continuity, was always backed up by the central power, which in France seldom fails to support that side.

Thence its downfall in 1830.

At that time the party of the Faubourg Saint−Germain was rather like an army without a base of operation. It had utterly failed to take advantage of the peace to plant itself in the heart of the nation. It sinned for want of learning its lesson, and through an utter incapability of regarding its interests as a whole. A future certainty was sacrificed to a doubtful present gain. This blunder in policy may perhaps be attributed to the following cause.

The class−isolation so strenuously kept up by the noblesse brought about fatal results during the last forty years; even caste−patriotism was extinguished by it, and rivalry fostered among themselves. When the French noblesse of other times were rich and powerful, the nobles (gentilhommes) could choose their chiefs and obey them in the hour of danger. As their power diminished, they grew less amenable to discipline; and as in the last days of the Byzantine Empire, everyone wished to be emperor.

They mistook their uniform weakness for uniform strength.

Each family ruined by the Revolution and the abolition of the law of primogeniture thought only of itself, and not at all of the great family of the noblesse. It seemed to them that as each individual grew rich, the party as a whole would gain in strength. And herein lay their mistake. Money, likewise, is only the outward and visible sign of power. All these families were made up of persons who preserved a high tradition of courtesy, of true graciousness of life, of refined speech, with a family pride, and a squeamish sense of noblesse oblige which suited well with the kind of life they led; a life wholly filled with occupations which become contemptible so soon as they cease to be accessories and take the chief place in existence. There was a certain intrinsic merit in all these people, but the merit was on the surface, and none of them were worth their face−value.

Not a single one among those families had courage to ask itself the question, “Are we strong enough for the responsibility of power?” They were cast on the top, like the lawyers of 1830; and instead of taking the patron's place, like a great man, the Faubourg Saint−Germain showed itself greedy as an upstart. The most intelligent nation in the world perceived clearly that the restored nobles were organising everything for their own particular benefit. From that day the noblesse was doomed. The Faubourg Saint−Germain tried to be an aristocracy when it could only be an oligarchy—two very different systems, as any man may see for himself if he gives an intelligent perusal to the list of the patronymics of the House of Peers.

The King's Government certainly meant well; but the maxim that the people must be made to WILL everything, even their own welfare, was pretty constantly forgotten, nor did they bear in mind that La France is a woman and capricious, and must be happy or chastised at her own good pleasure. If there had been many dukes like the Duc de Laval, whose modesty made him worthy of the name he bore, the elder branch would have been as securely seated on the throne as the House of Hanover at this day.

In 1814 the noblesse of France were called upon to assert their superiority over the most aristocratic bourgeoisie in the most feminine of all countries, to take the lead in the most highly educated epoch the world had yet seen. And this was even more notably the case in 1820. The Faubourg Saint−Germain might very easily have led and amused the middle classes in days when people's heads were turned with distinctions, and art and science were all the rage. But the narrow−minded leaders of a time of great intellectual progress all of them detested art and science.

They had not even the wit to present religion in attractive colours, though they needed its support. While Lamartine, Lamennais, Montalembert, and other writers were putting new life and elevation into men's ideas of religion, and gilding it with poetry, these bunglers in the Government chose to make the harshness of their creed felt all over the country. Never was nation in a more tractable humour; La France, like a tired woman, was ready to agree to anything; never was mismanagement so clumsy; and La France, like a woman, would have forgiven wrongs more easily than bungling.

If the noblesse meant to reinstate themselves, the better to found a strong oligarchy, they should have honestly and diligently searched their Houses for men of the stamp that Napoleon used; they should have turned

themselves inside out to see if peradventure there was a Constitutionalist Richelieu lurking in the entrails of the Faubourg; and if that genius was not forthcoming from among them, they should have set out to find him, even in the fireless garret where he might happen to be perishing of cold; they should have assimilated him, as the English House of Lords continually assimilates aristocrats made by chance; and finally ordered him to be ruthless, to lop away the old wood, and cut the tree down to the living shoots. But, in the first place, the great system of English Toryism was far too large for narrow minds; the importation required time, and in France a tardy success is no better than a fiasco. So far, moreover, from adopting a policy of redemption, and looking for new forces where God puts them, these petty great folk took a dislike to any capacity that did not issue from their midst; and, lastly, instead of growing young again, the Faubourg Saint−Germain grew positively older.

Etiquette, not an institution of primary necessity, might have been maintained if it had appeared only on state occasions, but as it was, there was a daily wrangle over precedence; it ceased to be a matter of art or court ceremonial, it became a question of power. And if from the outset the Crown lacked an adviser equal to so great a crisis, the aristocracy was still more lacking in a sense of its wider interests, an instinct which might have supplied the deficiency. They stood nice about M. de Talleyrand's marriage, when M. de Talleyrand was the one man among them with the steel−encompassed brains that can forge a new political system and begin a new career of glory for a nation. The Faubourg scoffed at a minister if he was not gently born, and produced no one of gentle birth that was fit to be a minister. There were plenty of nobles fitted to serve their country by raising the dignity of justices of the peace, by improving the land, by opening out roads and canals, and taking an active and leading part as country gentlemen; but these had sold their estates to gamble on the Stock Exchange. Again the Faubourg might have absorbed the energetic men among the bourgeoisie, and opened their ranks to the ambition which was undermining authority; they preferred instead to fight, and to fight unarmed, for of all that they once possessed there was nothing left but tradition. For their misfortune there was just precisely enough of their former wealth left them as a class to keep up their bitter pride. They were content with their past. Not one of them seriously thought of bidding the son of the house take up arms from the pile of weapons which the nineteenth century flings down in the market−place. Young men, shut out from office, were dancing at Madame's balls, while they should have been doing the work done under the Republic and the Empire by young, conscientious, harmlessly employed energies. It was their place to carry out at Paris the programme which their seniors should have been following in the country. The heads of houses might have won back recognition of their titles by unremitting attention to local interests, by falling in with the spirit of the age, by recasting their order to suit the taste of the times.

But, pent up together in the Faubourg Saint−Germain, where the spirit of the ancient court and traditions of bygone feuds between the nobles and the Crown still lingered on, the aristocracy was not whole−hearted in its allegiance to the Tuileries, and so much the more easily defeated because it was concentrated in the Chamber of Peers, and badly organised even there. If the noblesse had woven themselves into a network over the country, they could have held their own; but cooped up in their Faubourg, with their backs against the Chateau, or spread at full length over the Budget, a single blow cut the thread of a fast−expiring life, and a petty, smug−faced lawyer came forward with the axe. In spite of M. Royer−Collard's admirable discourse, the hereditary peerage and law of entail fell before the lampoons of a man who made it a boast that he had adroitly argued some few heads out of the executioner's clutches, and now forsooth must clumsily proceed to the slaying of old institutions.

There are examples and lessons for the future in all this. For if there were not still a future before the French aristocracy, there would be no need to do more than find a suitable sarcophagus; it were something pitilessly cruel to burn the dead body of it with fire of Tophet.

But though the surgeon's scalpel is ruthless, it sometimes gives back life to a dying man; and the Faubourg Saint−Germain may wax more powerful under persecution than in its day of triumph, if it but chooses to organise itself under a leader.

And now it is easy to give a summary of this semi−political survey. The wish to re−establish a large fortune was uppermost in everyone's mind; a lack of broad views, and a mass of small defects, a real need of religion as a political factor, combined with a thirst for pleasure which damaged the cause of religion and necessitated a good deal of hypocrisy; a certain attitude of protest on the part of loftier and clearer−sighted men who set their faces against Court jealousies; and the disaffection of the provincial families, who often came of purer descent than the nobles of the Court which alienated them from itself—all these things combined to bring about a most discordant state of things in the Faubourg Saint−Germain. It was neither compact in its organisation, nor consequent in its

action; neither completely moral, nor frankly dissolute; it did not corrupt, nor was it corrupted; it would neither wholly abandon the disputed points which damaged its cause, nor yet adopt the policy that might have saved it. In short, however effete individuals might be, the party as a whole was none the less armed with all the great principles which lie at the roots of national existence. What was there in the Faubourg that it should perish in its strength?

It was very hard to please in the choice of candidates; the Faubourg had good taste, it was scornfully fastidious, yet there was nothing very glorious nor chivalrous truly about its fall.

In the Emigration of 1789 there were some traces of a loftier feeling; but in the Emigration of 1830 from Paris into the country there was nothing discernible but self−interest. A few famous men of letters, a few oratorical triumphs in the Chambers, M. de Talleyrand's attitude in the Congress, the taking of Algiers, and not a few names that found their way from the battlefield into the pages of history—all these things were so many examples set before the French noblesse to show that it was still open to them to take their part in the national existence, and to win recognition of their claims, if, indeed, they could condescend thus far. In every living organism the work of bringing the whole into harmony within itself is always going on.

If a man is indolent, the indolence shows itself in everything that he does; and, in the same manner, the general spirit of a class is pretty plainly manifested in the face it turns on the world, and the soul informs the body.

The women of the Restoration displayed neither the proud disregard of public opinion shown by the court ladies of olden time in their wantonness, nor yet the simple grandeur of the tardy virtues by which they expiated their sins and shed so bright a glory about their names. There was nothing either very frivolous or very serious about the woman of the Restoration. She was hypocritical as a rule in her passion, and compounded, so to speak, with its pleasures. Some few families led the domestic life of the Duchesse d'Orleans, whose connubial couch was exhibited so absurdly to visitors at the Palais Royal. Two or three kept up the traditions of the Regency, filling cleverer women with something like disgust. The great lady of the new school exercised no influence at all over the manners of the time; and yet she might have done much. She might, at worst, have presented as dignified a spectacle as English−women of the same rank. But she hesitated feebly among old precedents, became a bigot by force of circumstances, and allowed nothing of herself to appear, not even her better qualities.

Not one among the Frenchwomen of that day had the ability to create a salon whither leaders of fashion might come to take lessons in taste and elegance. Their voices, which once laid down the law to literature, that living expression of a time, now counted absolutely for nought. Now when a literature lacks a general system, it fails to shape a body for itself, and dies out with its period.

When in a nation at any time there is a people apart thus constituted, the historian is pretty certain to find some representative figure, some central personage who embodies the qualities and the defects of the whole party to which he belongs; there is Coligny, for instance, among the Huguenots, the Coadjuteur in the time of the Fronde, the Marechal de Richelieu under Louis XV, Danton during the Terror. It is in the nature of things that the man should be identified with the company in which history finds him. How is it possible to lead a party without conforming to its ideas? or to shine in any epoch unless a man represents the ideas of his time? The wise and prudent head of a party is continually obliged to bow to the prejudices and follies of its rear; and this is the cause of actions for which he is afterwards criticised by this or that historian sitting at a safer distance from terrific popular explosions, coolly judging the passion and ferment without which the great struggles of the world could not be carried on at all. And if this is true of the Historical Comedy of the Centuries, it is equally true in a more restricted sphere in the detached scenes of the national drama known as the Manners of the Age.

At the beginning of that ephemeral life led by the Faubourg Saint−Germain under the Restoration, to which, if there is any truth in the above reflections, they failed to give stability, the most perfect type of the aristocratic caste in its weakness and strength, its greatness and littleness, might have been found for a brief space in a young married woman who belonged to it. This was a woman artificially educated, but in reality ignorant; a woman whose instincts and feelings were lofty while the thought which should have controlled them was wanting. She squandered the wealth of her nature in obedience to social conventions; she was ready to brave society, yet she hesitated till her scruples degenerated into artifice. With more wilfulness than real force of character, impressionable rather than enthusiastic, gifted with more brain than heart; she was supremely a woman, supremely a coquette, and above all things a Parisienne, loving a brilliant life and gaiety, reflecting never, or too

late; imprudent to the verge of poetry, and humble in the depths of her heart, in spite of her charming insolence. Like some straight−growing reed, she made a show of independence; yet, like the reed, she was ready to bend to a strong hand. She talked much of religion, and had it not at heart, though she was prepared to find in it a solution of her life. How explain a creature so complex? Capable of heroism, yet sinking unconsciously from heroic heights to utter a spiteful word; young and sweet−natured, not so much old at heart as aged by the maxims of those about her; versed in a selfish philosophy in which she was all unpractised, she had all the vices of a courtier, all the nobleness of developing womanhood. She trusted nothing and no one, yet there were times when she quitted her sceptical attitude for a submissive credulity.

How should any portrait be anything but incomplete of her, in whom the play of swiftly−changing colour made discord only to produce a poetic confusion? For in her there shone a divine brightness, a radiance of youth that blended all her bewildering characteristics in a certain completeness and unity informed by her charm. Nothing was feigned. The passion or semi−passion, the ineffectual high aspirations, the actual pettiness, the coolness of sentiment and warmth of impulse, were all spontaneous and unaffected, and as much the outcome of her own position as of the position of the aristocracy to which she belonged. She was wholly self−contained; she put herself proudly above the world and beneath the shelter of her name. There was something of the egoism of Medea in her life, as in the life of the aristocracy that lay a−dying, and would not so much as raise itself or stretch out a hand to any political physician; so well aware of its feebleness, or so conscious that it was already dust, that it refused to touch or be touched.

The Duchesse de Langeais (for that was her name) had been married for about four years when the Restoration was finally consummated, which is to say, in 1816. By that time the revolution of the Hundred Days had let in the light on the mind of Louis XVIII. In spite of his surroundings, he comprehended the situation and the age in which he was living; and it was only later, when this Louis XI, without the axe, lay stricken down by disease, that those about him got the upper hand. The Duchesse de Langeais, a Navarreins by birth, came of a ducal house which had made a point of never marrying below its rank since the reign of Louis XIV. Every daughter of the house must sooner or later take a tabouret at Court. So, Antoinette de Navarreins, at the age of eighteen, came out of the profound solitude in which her girlhood had been spent to marry the Duc de Langeais's eldest son. The two families at that time were living quite out of the world; but after the invasion of France, the return of the Bourbons seemed to every Royalist mind the only possible way of putting an end to the miseries of the war.

The Ducs de Navarreins and de Langeais had been faithful throughout to the exiled Princes, nobly resisting all the temptations of glory under the Empire. Under the circumstances they naturally followed out the old family policy; and Mlle Antoinette, a beautiful and portionless girl, was married to M. le Marquis de Langeais only a few months before the death of the Duke his father.

After the return of the Bourbons, the families resumed their rank, offices, and dignity at Court; once more they entered public life, from which hitherto they held aloof, and took their place high on the sunlit summits of the new political world. In that time of general baseness and sham political conversions, the public conscience was glad to recognise the unstained loyalty of the two houses, and a consistency in political and private life for which all parties involuntarily respected them. But, unfortunately, as so often happens in a time of transition, the most disinterested persons, the men whose loftiness of view and wise principles would have gained the confidence of the French nation and led them to believe in the generosity of a novel and spirited policy—these men, to repeat, were taken out of affairs, and public business was allowed to fall into the hands of others, who found it to their interest to push principles to their extreme consequences by way of proving their devotion.

The families of Langeais and Navarreins remained about the Court, condemned to perform the duties required by Court ceremonial amid the reproaches and sneers of the Liberal party. They were accused of gorging themselves with riches and honours, and all the while their family estates were no larger than before, and liberal allowances from the civil list were wholly expended in keeping up the state necessary for any European government, even if it be a Republic.

In 1818, M. le Duc de Langeais commanded a division of the army, and the Duchess held a post about one of the Princesses, in virtue of which she was free to live in Paris and apart from her husband without scandal. The Duke, moreover, besides his military duties, had a place at Court, to which he came during his term of waiting, leaving his major−general in command. The Duke and Duchess were leading lives entirely apart, the world none

the wiser. Their marriage of convention shared the fate of nearly all family arrangements of the kind. Two more antipathetic dispositions could not well have been found; they were brought together; they jarred upon each other; there was soreness on either side; then they were divided once for all. Then they went their separate ways, with a due regard for appearances. The Duc de Langeais, by nature as methodical as the Chevalier de Folard himself, gave himself up methodically to his own tastes and amusements, and left his wife at liberty to do as she pleased so soon as he felt sure of her character. He recognised in her a spirit pre−eminently proud, a cold heart, a profound submissiveness to the usages of the world, and a youthful loyalty. Under the eyes of great relations, with the light of a prudish and bigoted Court turned full upon the Duchess, his honour was safe.

So the Duke calmly did as the grands seigneurs of the eighteenth century did before him, and left a young wife of two−and−twenty to her own devices. He had deeply offended that wife, and in her nature there was one appalling characteristic—she would never forgive an offence when woman's vanity and self−love, with all that was best in her nature perhaps, had been slighted, wounded in secret. Insult and injury in the face of the world a woman loves to forget; there is a way open to her of showing herself great; she is a woman in her forgiveness; but a secret offence women never pardon; for secret baseness, as for hidden virtues and hidden love, they have no kindness.

This was Mme la Duchesse de Langeais's real position, unknown to the world. She herself did not reflect upon it. It was the time of the rejoicings over the Duc de Berri's marriage. The Court and the Faubourg roused itself from its listlessness and reserve.

This was the real beginning of that unheard−of splendour which the Government of the Restoration carried too far. At that time the Duchess, whether for reasons of her own, or from vanity, never appeared in public without a following of women equally distinguished by name and fortune. As queen of fashion she had her dames d'atours, her ladies, who modelled their manner and their wit on hers. They had been cleverly chosen. None of her satellites belonged to the inmost Court circle, nor to the highest level of the Faubourg Saint−Germain; but they had set their minds upon admission to those inner sanctuaries. Being as yet simple dominations, they wished to rise to the neighbourhood of the throne, and mingle with the seraphic powers in the high sphere known as le petit chateau. Thus surrounded, the Duchess's position was stronger and more commanding and secure. Her “ladies" defended her character and helped her to play her detestable part of a woman of fashion. She could laugh at men at her ease, play with fire, receive the homage on which the feminine nature is nourished, and remain mistress of herself.

At Paris, in the highest society of all, a woman is a woman still; she lives on incense, adulation, and honours. No beauty, however undoubted, no face, however fair, is anything without admiration. Flattery and a lover are proofs of power. And what is power without recognition? Nothing. If the prettiest of women were left alone in a corner of a drawing−room, she would droop. Put her in the very centre and summit of social grandeur, she will at once aspire to reign over all hearts—often because it is out of her power to be the happy queen of one. Dress and manner and coquetry are all meant to please one of the poorest creatures extant—the brainless coxcomb, whose handsome face is his sole merit; it was for such as these that women threw themselves away. The gilded wooden idols of the Restoration, for they were neither more nor less, had neither the antecedents of the petits maitres of the time of the Fronde, nor the rough sterling worth of Napoleon's heroes, not the wit and fine manners of their grandsires; but something of all three they meant to be without any trouble to themselves. Brave they were, like all young Frenchmen; ability they possessed, no doubt, if they had had a chance of proving it, but their places were filled up by the old worn−out men, who kept them in leading strings. It was a day of small things, a cold prosaic era. Perhaps it takes a long time for a Restoration to become a Monarchy.

For the past eighteen months the Duchesse de Langeais had been leading this empty life, filled with balls and subsequent visits, objectless triumphs, and the transient loves that spring up and die in an evening's space. All eyes were turned on her when she entered a room; she reaped her harvest of flatteries and some few words of warmer admiration, which she encouraged by a gesture or a glance, but never suffered to penetrate deeper than the skin. Her tone and bearing and everything else about her imposed her will upon others. Her life was a sort of fever of vanity and perpetual enjoyment, which turned her head. She was daring enough in conversation; she would listen to anything, corrupting the surface, as it were, of her heart. Yet when she returned home, she often blushed at the story that had made her laugh; at the scandalous tale that supplied the details, on the strength of which she analysed the love that she had never known, and marked the subtle distinctions of modern passion, not

with comment on the part of complacent hypocrites. For women know how to say everything among themselves, and more of them are ruined by each other than corrupted by men.

There came a moment when she discerned that not until a woman is loved will the world fully recognise her beauty and her wit. What does a husband prove? Simply that a girl or woman was endowed with wealth, or well brought up; that her mother managed cleverly that in some way she satisfied a man's ambitions. A lover constantly bears witness to her personal perfections. Then followed the discovery still in Mme de Langeais's early womanhood, that it was possible to be loved without committing herself, without permission, without vouchsafing any satisfaction beyond the most meagre dues. There was more than one demure feminine hypocrite to instruct her in the art of playing such dangerous comedies.

So the Duchess had her court, and the number of her adorers and courtiers guaranteed her virtue. She was amiable and fascinating; she flirted till the ball or the evening's gaiety was at an end. Then the curtain dropped. She was cold, indifferent, self−contained again till the next day brought its renewed sensations, superficial as before. Two or three men were completely deceived, and fell in love in earnest. She laughed at them, she was utterly insensible. “I am loved!” she told herself. “He loves me!” The certainty sufficed her. It is enough for the miser to know that his every whim might be fulfilled if he chose; so it was with the Duchess, and perhaps she did not even go so far as to form a wish.

One evening she chanced to be at the house of an intimate friend Mme la Vicomtesse de Fontaine, one of the humble rivals who cordially detested her, and went with her everywhere. In a “friendship” of this sort both sides are on their guard, and never lay their armour aside; confidences are ingeniously indiscreet, and not unfrequently treacherous. Mme de Langeais had distributed her little patronising, friendly, or freezing bows, with the air natural to a woman who knows the worth of her smiles, when her eyes fell upon a total stranger. Something in the man's large gravity of aspect startled her, and, with a feeling almost like dread, she turned to Mme de Maufrigneuse with, “Who is the newcomer, dear?”

“Someone that you have heard of, no doubt. The Marquis de Montriveau.”

“Oh! is it he?”

She took up her eyeglass and submitted him to a very insolent scrutiny, as if he had been a picture meant to receive glances, not to return them.

“Do introduce him; he ought to be interesting.”

“Nobody more tiresome and dull, dear. But he is the fashion.”

M. Armand de Montriveau, at that moment all unwittingly the object of general curiosity, better deserved attention than any of the idols that Paris needs must set up to worship for a brief space, for the city is vexed by periodical fits of craving, a passion for engouement and sham enthusiasm, which must be satisfied. The Marquis was the only son of General de Montriveau, one of the ci−devants who served the Republic nobly, and fell by Joubert's side at Novi. Bonaparte had placed his son at the school at Chalons, with the orphans of other generals who fell on the battlefield, leaving their children under the protection of the Republic. Armand de Montriveau left school with his way to make, entered the artillery, and had only reached a major's rank at the time of the Fontainebleau disaster. In his section of the service the chances of advancement were not many. There are fewer officers, in the first place, among the gunners than in any other corps; and in the second place, the feeling in the artillery was decidedly Liberal, not to say Republican; and the Emperor, feeling little confidence in a body of highly educated men who were apt to think for themselves, gave promotion grudgingly in the service. In the artillery, accordingly, the general rule of the army did not apply; the commanding officers were not invariably the most remarkable men in their department, because there was less to be feared from mediocrities. The artillery was a separate corps in those days, and only came under Napoleon in action.

Besides these general causes, other reasons, inherent in Armand de Montriveau's character, were sufficient in themselves to account for his tardy promotion. He was alone in the world. He had been thrown at the age of twenty into the whirlwind of men directed by Napoleon; his interests were bounded by himself, any day he might lose his life; it became a habit of mind with him to live by his own self−respect and the consciousness that he had done his duty. Like all shy men, he was habitually silent; but his shyness sprang by no means from timidity; it was a kind of modesty in him; he found any demonstration of vanity intolerable.

There was no sort of swagger about his fearlessness in action; nothing escaped his eyes; he could give sensible advice to his chums with unshaken coolness; he could go under fire, and duck upon occasion to avoid bullets. He

was kindly; but his expression was haughty and stern, and his face gained him this character. In everything he was rigorous as arithmetic; he never permitted the slightest deviation from duty on any plausible pretext, nor blinked the consequences of a fact. He would lend himself to nothing of which he was ashamed; he never asked anything for himself; in short, Armand de Montriveau was one of many great men unknown to fame, and philosophical enough to despise it; living without attaching themselves to life, because they have not found their opportunity of developing to the full their power to do and feel.

People were afraid of Montriveau; they respected him, but he was not very popular. Men may indeed allow you to rise above them, but to decline to descend as low as they can do is the one unpardonable sin. In their feeling towards loftier natures, there is a trace of hate and fear. Too much honour with them implies censure of themselves, a thing forgiven neither to the living nor to the dead.

After the Emperor's farewells at Fontainebleau, Montriveau, noble though he was, was put on half−pay. Perhaps the heads of the War Office took fright at uncompromising uprightness worthy of antiquity, or perhaps it was known that he felt bound by his oath to the Imperial Eagle. During the Hundred Days he was made a Colonel of the Guard, and left on the field of Waterloo. His wounds kept him in Belgium he was not present at the disbanding of the Army of the Loire, but the King's government declined to recognise promotion made during the Hundred Days, and Armand de Montriveau left France.

An adventurous spirit, a loftiness of thought hitherto satisfied by the hazards of war, drove him on an exploring expedition through Upper Egypt; his sanity or impulse directed his enthusiasm to a project of great importance, he turned his attention to that unexplored Central Africa which occupies the learned of today. The scientific expedition was long and unfortunate. He had made a valuable collection of notes bearing on various geographical and commercial problems, of which solutions are still eagerly sought; and succeeded, after surmounting many obstacles, in reaching the heart of the continent, when he was betrayed into the hands of a hostile native tribe. Then, stripped of all that he had, for two years he led a wandering life in the desert, the slave of savages, threatened with death at every moment, and more cruelly treated than a dumb animal in the power of pitiless children. Physical strength, and a mind braced to endurance, enabled him to survive the horrors of that captivity; but his miraculous escape well−nigh exhausted his energies. When he reached the French colony at Senegal, a half−dead fugitive covered with rags, his memories of his former life were dim and shapeless. The great sacrifices made in his travels were all forgotten like his studies of African dialects, his discoveries, and observations. One story will give an idea of all that he passed through. Once for several days the children of the sheikh of the tribe amused themselves by putting him up for a mark and flinging horses' knuckle−bones at his head.

Montriveau came back to Paris in 1818 a ruined man. He had no interest, and wished for none. He would have died twenty times over sooner than ask a favour of anyone; he would not even press the recognition of his claims. Adversity and hardship had developed his energy even in trifles, while the habit of preserving his self−respect before that spiritual self which we call conscience led him to attach consequence to the most apparently trivial actions. His merits and adventures became known, however, through his acquaintances, among the principal men of science in Paris, and some few well−read military men. The incidents of his slavery and subsequent escape bore witness to a courage, intelligence, and coolness which won him celebrity without his knowledge, and that transient fame of which Paris salons are lavish, though the artist that fain would keep it must make untold efforts.

Montriveau's position suddenly changed towards the end of that year. He had been a poor man, he was now rich; or, externally at any rate, he had all the advantages of wealth. The King's government, trying to attach capable men to itself and to strengthen the army, made concessions about that time to Napoleon's old officers if their known loyalty and character offered guarantees of fidelity. M. de Montriveau's name once more appeared in the army list with the rank of colonel; he received his arrears of pay and passed into the Guards. All these favours, one after another, came to seek the Marquis de Montriveau; he had asked for nothing however small. Friends had taken the steps for him which he would have refused to take for himself.

After this, his habits were modified all at once; contrary to his custom, he went into society. He was well received, everywhere he met with great deference and respect. He seemed to have found some end in life; but everything passed within the man, there were no external signs; in society he was silent and cold, and wore a grave, reserved face. His social success was great, precisely because he stood out in such strong contrast to the conventional faces which line the walls of Paris salons. He was, indeed, something quite new there. Terse of

speech, like a hermit or a savage, his shyness was thought to be haughtiness, and people were greatly taken with it. He was something strange and great. Women generally were so much the more smitten with this original person because he was not to be caught by their flatteries, however adroit, nor by the wiles with which they circumvent the strongest men and corrode the steel temper. Their Parisian's grimaces were lost upon M. de Montriveau; his nature only responded to the sonorous vibration of lofty thought and feeling. And he would very promptly have been dropped but for the romance that hung about his adventures and his life; but for the men who cried him up behind his back; but for a woman who looked for a triumph for her vanity, the woman who was to fill his thoughts.

For these reasons the Duchesse de Langeais's curiosity was no less lively than natural. Chance had so ordered it that her interest in the man before her had been aroused only the day before, when she heard the story of one of M. de Montriveau's adventures, a story calculated to make the strongest impression upon a woman's ever−changing fancy.

During M. de Montriveau's voyage of discovery to the sources of the Nile, he had had an argument with one of his guides, surely the most extraordinary debate in the annals of travel. The district that he wished to explore could only be reached on foot across a tract of desert. Only one of his guides knew the way; no traveller had penetrated before into that part of the country, where the undaunted officer hoped to find a solution of several scientific problems. In spite of the representations made to him by the guide and the older men of the place, he started upon the formidable journey. Summoning up courage, already highly strung by the prospect of dreadful difficulties, he set out in the morning.

The loose sand shifted under his feet at every step; and when, at the end of a long day's march, he lay down to sleep on the ground, he had never been so tired in his life. He knew, however, that he must be up and on his way before dawn next day, and his guide assured him that they should reach the end of their journey towards noon. That promise kept up his courage and gave him new strength. In spite of his sufferings, he continued his march, with some blasphemings against science; he was ashamed to complain to his guide, and kept his pain to himself. After marching for a third of the day, he felt his strength failing, his feet were bleeding, he asked if they should reach the place soon.

“In an hour's time,” said the guide. Armand braced himself for another hour's march, and they went on.

The hour slipped by; he could not so much as see against the sky the palm−trees and crests of hill that should tell of the end of the journey near at hand; the horizon line of sand was vast as the circle of the open sea.

He came to a stand, refused to go farther, and threatened the guide—he had deceived him, murdered him; tears of rage and weariness flowed over his fevered cheeks; he was bowed down with fatigue upon fatigue, his throat seemed to be glued by the desert thirst. The guide meanwhile stood motionless, listening to these complaints with an ironical expression, studying the while, with the apparent indifference of an Oriental, the scarcely perceptible indications in the lie of the sands, which looked almost black, like burnished gold.

“I have made a mistake,” he remarked coolly. “I could not make out the track, it is so long since I came this way; we are surely on it now, but we must push on for two hours.”

“The man is right,” thought M. de Montriveau.

So he went on again, struggling to follow the pitiless native. It seemed as if he were bound to his guide by some thread like the invisible tie between the condemned man and the headsman. But the two hours went by, Montriveau had spent his last drops of energy, and the skyline was a blank, there were no palm−trees, no hills. He could neither cry out nor groan, he lay down on the sand to die, but his eyes would have frightened the boldest; something in his face seemed to say that he would not die alone. His guide, like a very fiend, gave him back a cool glance like a man that knows his power, left him to lie there, and kept at a safe distance out of reach of his desperate victim. At last M. Montriveau recovered strength enough for a last curse.

The guide came nearer, silenced him with a steady look, and said, “Was it not your own will to go where I am taking you, in spite of us all? You say that I have lied to you. If I had not, you would not be even here. Do you want the truth? Here it is. WE HAVE STILL ANOTHER FIVE HOURS' MARCH BEFORE US, AND WE CANNOT GO BACK. Sound yourself; if you have not courage enough, here is my dagger.”

Startled by this dreadful knowledge of pain and human strength, M. de Montriveau would not be behind a savage; he drew a fresh stock of courage from his pride as a European, rose to his feet, and followed his guide. The five hours were at an end, and still M. de Montriveau saw nothing, he turned his failing eyes upon his guide;

but the Nubian hoisted him on his shoulders, and showed him a wide pool of water with greenness all about it, and a noble forest lighted up by the sunset. It lay only a hundred paces away; a vast ledge of granite hid the glorious landscape. It seemed to Armand that he had taken a new lease of life. His guide, that giant in courage and intelligence, finished his work of devotion by carrying him across the hot, slippery, scarcely discernible track on the granite. Behind him lay the hell of burning sand, before him the earthly paradise of the most beautiful oasis in the desert.

The Duchess, struck from the first by the appearance of this romantic figure, was even more impressed when she learned that this was that Marquis de Montriveau of whom she had dreamed during the night. She had been with him among the hot desert sands, he had been the companion of her nightmare wanderings; for such a woman was not this a delightful presage of a new interest in her life? And never was a man's exterior a better exponent of his character; never were curious glances so well justified. The principal characteristic of his great, square−hewn head was the thick, luxuriant black hair which framed his face, and gave him a strikingly close resemblance to General Kleber; and the likeness still held good in the vigorous forehead, in the outlines of his face, the quiet fearlessness of his eyes, and a kind of fiery vehemence expressed by strongly marked features. He was short, deep−chested, and muscular as a lion. There was something of the despot about him, and an indescribable suggestion of the security of strength in his gait, bearing, and slightest movements. He seemed to know that his will was irresistible, perhaps because he wished for nothing unjust. And yet, like all really strong men, he was mild of speech, simple in his manners, and kindly natured; although it seemed as if, in the stress of a great crisis, all these finer qualities must disappear, and the man would show himself implacable, unshaken in his resolve, terrific in action. There was a certain drawing in of the inner line of the lips which, to a close observer, indicated an ironical bent.

The Duchesse de Langeais, realising that a fleeting glory was to be won by such a conquest, made up her mind to gain a lover in Armand de Montriveau during the brief interval before the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse brought him to be introduced. She would prefer him above the others; she would attach him to herself, display all her powers of coquetry for him. It was a fancy, such a merest Duchess's whim as furnished a Lope or a Calderon with the plot of the Dog in the Manger. She would not suffer another woman to engross him; but she had not the remotest intention of being his.

Nature had given the Duchess every qualification for the part of coquette, and education had perfected her. Women envied her, and men fell in love with her, not without reason. Nothing that can inspire love, justify it, and give it lasting empire was wanting in her. Her style of beauty, her manner, her voice, her bearing, all combined to give her that instinctive coquetry which seems to be the consciousness of power. Her shape was graceful; perhaps there was a trace of self−consciousness in her changes of movement, the one affectation that could be laid to her charge; but everything about her was a part of her personality, from her least little gesture to the peculiar turn of her phrases, the demure glance of her eyes. Her great lady's grace, her most striking characteristic, had not destroyed the very French quick mobility of her person. There was an extraordinary fascination in her swift, incessant changes of attitude. She seemed as if she surely would be a most delicious mistress when her corset and the encumbering costume of her part were laid aside. All the rapture of love surely was latent in the freedom of her expressive glances, in her caressing tones, in the charm of her words. She gave glimpses of the high−born courtesan within her, vainly protesting against the creeds of the duchess.

You might sit near her through an evening, she would be gay and melancholy in turn, and her gaiety, like her sadness, seemed spontaneous. She could be gracious, disdainful, insolent, or confiding at will. Her apparent good nature was real; she had no temptation to descend to malignity. But at each moment her mood changed; she was full of confidence or craft; her moving tenderness would give place to a heart−breaking hardness and insensibility. Yet how paint her as she was, without bringing together all the extremes of feminine nature? In a word, the Duchess was anything that she wished to be or to seem. Her face was slightly too long. There was a grace in it, and a certain thinness and fineness that recalled the portraits of the Middle Ages. Her skin was white, with a faint rose tint. Everything about her erred, as it were, by an excess of delicacy.

M. de Montriveau willingly consented to be introduced to the Duchesse de Langeais; and she, after the manner of persons whose sensitive taste leads them to avoid banalities, refrained from overwhelming him with questions and compliments. She received him with a gracious deference which could not fail to flatter a man of more than ordinary powers, for the fact that a man rises above the ordinary level implies that he possesses

something of that tact which makes women quick to read feeling. If the Duchess showed any curiosity, it was by her glances; her compliments were conveyed in her manner; there was a winning grace displayed in her words, a subtle suggestion of a desire to please which she of all women knew the art of manifesting. Yet her whole conversation was but, in a manner, the body of the letter; the postscript with the principal thought in it was still to come. After half an hour spent in ordinary talk, in which the words gained all their value from her tone and smiles, M. de Montriveau was about to retire discreetly, when the Duchess stopped him with an expressive gesture.

"I do not know, monsieur, whether these few minutes during which I have had the pleasure of talking to you proved so sufficiently attractive, that I may venture to ask you to call upon me; I am afraid that it may be very selfish of me to wish to have you all to myself. If I should be so fortunate as to find that my house is agreeable to you, you will always find me at home in the evening until ten o'clock."

The invitation was given with such irresistible grace, that M. de Montriveau could not refuse to accept it. When he fell back again among the groups of men gathered at a distance from the women, his friends congratulated him, half laughingly, half in earnest, on the extraordinary reception vouchsafed him by the Duchesse de Langeais. The difficult and brilliant conquest had been made beyond a doubt, and the glory of it was reserved for the Artillery of the Guard. It is easy to imagine the jests, good and bad, when this topic had once been started; the world of Paris salons is so eager for amusement, and a joke lasts for such a short time, that everyone is eager to make the most of it while it is fresh.

All unconsciously, the General felt flattered by this nonsense. From his place where he had taken his stand, his eyes were drawn again and again to the Duchess by countless wavering reflections.

He could not help admitting to himself that of all the women whose beauty had captivated his eyes, not one had seemed to be a more exquisite embodiment of faults and fair qualities blended in a completeness that might realise the dreams of earliest manhood.

Is there a man in any rank of life that has not felt indefinable rapture in his secret soul over the woman singled out (if only in his dreams) to be his own; when she, in body, soul, and social aspects, satisfies his every requirement, a thrice perfect woman?

And if this threefold perfection that flatters his pride is no argument for loving her, it is beyond cavil one of the great inducements to the sentiment. Love would soon be convalescent, as the eighteenth century moralist remarked, were it not for vanity. And it is certainly true that for everyone, man or woman, there is a wealth of pleasure in the superiority of the beloved. Is she set so high by birth that a contemptuous glance can never wound her? is she wealthy enough to surround herself with state which falls nothing short of royalty, of kings, of finance during their short reign of splendour? is she so ready−witted that a keen−edged jest never brings her into confusion? beautiful enough to rival any woman?—Is it such a small thing to know that your self−love will never suffer through her? A man makes these reflections in the twinkling of an eye. And how if, in the future opened out by early ripened passion, he catches glimpses of the changeful delight of her charm, the frank innocence of a maiden soul, the perils of love's voyage, the thousand folds of the veil of coquetry? Is not this enough to move the coldest man's heart?

This, therefore, was M. de Montriveau's position with regard to woman; his past life in some measure explaining the extraordinary fact. He had been thrown, when little more than a boy, into the hurricane of Napoleon's wars; his life had been spent on fields of battle. Of women he knew just so much as a traveller knows of a country when he travels across it in haste from one inn to another. The verdict which Voltaire passed upon his eighty years of life might, perhaps, have been applied by Montriveau to his own thirty−seven years of existence; had he not thirty−seven follies with which to reproach himself? At his age he was as much a novice in love as the lad that has just been furtively reading Faublas. Of women he had nothing to learn; of love he knew nothing; and thus, desires, quite unknown before, sprang from this virginity of feeling.

There are men here and there as much engrossed in the work demanded of them by poverty or ambition, art or science, as M. de Montriveau by war and a life of adventure—these know what it is to be in this unusual position if they very seldom confess to it.

Every man in Paris is supposed to have been in love. No woman in Paris cares to take what other women have passed over. The dread of being taken for a fool is the source of the coxcomb's bragging so common in France; for in France to have the reputation of a fool is to be a foreigner in one's own country. Vehement desire seized on

M. de Montriveau, desire that had gathered strength from the heat of the desert and the first stirrings of a heart unknown as yet in its suppressed turbulence.

A strong man, and violent as he was strong, he could keep mastery over himself; but as he talked of indifferent things, he retired within himself, and swore to possess this woman, for through that thought lay the only way to love for him. Desire became a solemn compact made with himself, an oath after the manner of the Arabs among whom he had lived; for among them a vow is a kind of contract made with Destiny a man's whole future is solemnly pledged to fulfil it, and everything even his own death, is regarded simply as a means to the one end.

A younger man would have said to himself, “I should very much like to have the Duchess for my mistress!” or, “If the Duchesse de Langeais cared for a man, he would be a very lucky rascal!” But the General said, “I will have Mme de Langeais for my mistress.” And if a man takes such an idea into his head when his heart has never been touched before, and love begins to be a kind of religion with him, he little knows in what a hell he has set his foot.

Armand de Montriveau suddenly took flight and went home in the first hot fever−fit of the first love that he had known. When a man has kept all his boyish beliefs, illusions, frankness, and impetuosity into middle age, his first impulse is, as it were, to stretch out a hand to take the thing that he desires; a little later he realises that there is a gulf set between them, and that it is all but impossible to cross it. A sort of childish impatience seizes him, he wants the thing the more, and trembles or cries. Wherefore, the next day, after the stormiest reflections that had yet perturbed his mind, Armand de Montriveau discovered that he was under the yoke of the senses, and his bondage made the heavier by his love.

The woman so cavalierly treated in his thoughts of yesterday had become a most sacred and dreadful power. She was to be his world, his life, from this time forth. The greatest joy, the keenest anguish, that he had yet known grew colourless before the bare recollection of the least sensation stirred in him by her. The swiftest revolutions in a man's outward life only touch his interests, while passion brings a complete revulsion of feeling. And so in those who live by feeling, rather than by self−interest, the doers rather than the reasoners, the sanguine rather than the lymphatic temperaments, love works a complete revolution. In a flash, with one single reflection, Armand de Montriveau wiped out his whole past life.

A score of times he asked himself, like a boy, “Shall I go, or shall I not?” and then at last he dressed, came to the Hotel de Langeais towards eight o'clock that evening, and was admitted. He was to see the woman—ah! not the woman—the idol that he had seen yesterday, among lights, a fresh innocent girl in gauze and silken lace and veiling. He burst in upon her to declare his love, as if it were a question of firing the first shot on a field of battle.

Poor novice! He found his ethereal sylphide shrouded in a brown cashmere dressing−gown ingeniously befrilled, lying languidly stretched out upon a sofa in a dimly lighted boudoir. Mme de Langeais did not so much as rise, nothing was visible of her but her face, her hair was loose but confined by a scarf. A hand indicated a seat, a hand that seemed white as marble to Montriveau by the flickering light of a single candle at the further side of the room, and a voice as soft as the light said—

“If it had been anyone else, M. le Marquis, a friend with whom I could dispense with ceremony, or a mere acquaintance in whom I felt but slight interest, I should have closed my door. I am exceedingly unwell.”

“I will go,” Armand said to himself.

“But I do not know how it is,” she continued (and the simple warrior attributed the shining of her eyes to fever), “perhaps it was a presentiment of your kind visit (and no one can be more sensible of the prompt attention than I), but the vapours have left my head.”

“Then may I stay?”

“Oh, I should be very sorry to allow you to go. I told myself this morning that it was impossible that I should have made the slightest impression on your mind, and that in all probability you took my request for one of the commonplaces of which Parisians are lavish on every occasion. And I forgave your ingratitude in advance. An explorer from the deserts is not supposed to know how exclusive we are in our friendships in the Faubourg.”

The gracious, half−murmured words dropped one by one, as if they had been weighted with the gladness that apparently brought them to her lips. The Duchess meant to have the full benefit of her headache, and her speculation was fully successful. The General, poor man, was really distressed by the lady's simulated distress.

Like Crillon listening to the story of the Crucifixion, he was ready to draw his sword against the vapours. How

could a man dare to speak just then to this suffering woman of the love that she inspired? Armand had already felt that it would be absurd to fire off a declaration of love point−blank at one so far above other women. With a single thought came understanding of the delicacies of feeling, of the soul's requirements. To love: what was that but to know how to plead, to beg for alms, to wait? And as for the love that he felt, must he not prove it? His tongue was mute, it was frozen by the conventions of the noble Faubourg, the majesty of a sick headache, the bashfulness of love. But no power on earth could veil his glances; the heat and the Infinite of the desert blazed in eyes calm as a panther's, beneath the lids that fell so seldom. The Duchess enjoyed the steady gaze that enveloped her in light and warmth.

“Mme la Duchesse,” he answered, “I am afraid I express my gratitude for your goodness very badly. At this moment I have but one desire—I wish it were in my power to cure the pain.”

“Permit me to throw this off, I feel too warm now,” she said, gracefully tossing aside a cushion that covered her feet.

“Madame, in Asia your feet would be worth some ten thousand sequins.

“A traveller's compliment!” smiled she.

It pleased the sprightly lady to involve a rough soldier in a labyrinth of nonsense, commonplaces, and meaningless talk, in which he manoeuvred, in military language, as Prince Charles might have done at close quarters with Napoleon. She took a mischievous amusement in reconnoitring the extent of his infatuation by the number of foolish speeches extracted from a novice whom she led step by step into a hopeless maze, meaning to leave him there in confusion. She began by laughing at him, but nevertheless it pleased her to make him forget how time went.

The length of a first visit is frequently a compliment, but Armand was innocent of any such intent. The famous explorer spent an hour in chat on all sorts of subjects, said nothing that he meant to say, and was feeling that he was only an instrument on whom this woman played, when she rose, sat upright, drew the scarf from her hair, and wrapped it about her throat, leant her elbow on the cushions, did him the honour of a complete cure, and rang for lights. The most graceful movement succeeded to complete repose. She turned to M. de Montriveau, from whom she had just extracted a confidence which seemed to interest her deeply, and said—

“You wish to make game of me by trying to make me believe that you have never loved. It is a man's great pretension with us. And we always believe it! Out of pure politeness. Do we not know what to expect from it for ourselves? Where is the man that has found but a single opportunity of losing his heart? But you love to deceive us, and we submit to be deceived, poor foolish creatures that we are; for your hypocrisy is, after all, a homage paid to the superiority of our sentiments, which are all purity.”

The last words were spoken with a disdainful pride that made the novice in love feel like a worthless bale flung into the deep, while the Duchess was an angel soaring back to her particular heaven.

“Confound it!” thought Armand de Montriveau, “how am I to tell this wild thing that I love her?”

He had told her already a score of times; or rather, the Duchess had a score of times read his secret in his eyes; and the passion in this unmistakably great man promised her amusement, and an interest in her empty life. So she prepared with no little dexterity to raise a certain number of redoubts for him to carry by storm before he should gain an entrance into her heart. Montriveau should overleap one difficulty after another; he should be a plaything for her caprice, just as an insect teased by children is made to jump from one finger to another, and in spite of all its pains is kept in the same place by its mischievous tormentor. And yet it gave the Duchess inexpressible happiness to see that this strong man had told her the truth. Armand had never loved, as he had said. He was about to go, in a bad humour with himself, and still more out of humour with her; but it delighted her to see a sullenness that she could conjure away with a word, a glance, or a gesture.

“Will you come tomorrow evening?” she asked. “I am going to a ball, but I shall stay at home for you until ten o'clock.”

Montriveau spent most of the next day in smoking an indeterminate quantity of cigars in his study window, and so got through the hours till he could dress and go to the Hotel de Langeais. To anyone who had known the magnificent worth of the man, it would have been grievous to see him grown so small, so distrustful of himself; the mind that might have shed light over undiscovered worlds shrunk to the proportions of a she−coxcomb's boudoir. Even he himself felt that he had fallen so low already in his happiness that to save his life he could not have told his love to one of his closest friends. Is there not always a trace of shame in the lover's bashfulness, and

perhaps in woman a certain exultation over diminished masculine stature? Indeed, but for a host of motives of this kind, how explain why women are nearly always the first to betray the secret?—a secret of which, perhaps, they soon weary.

“Mme la Duchesse cannot see visitors, monsieur,” said the man; “she is dressing, she begs you to wait for her here.”

Armand walked up and down the drawing−room, studying her taste in the least details. He admired Mme de Langeais herself in the objects of her choosing; they revealed her life before he could grasp her personality and ideas. About an hour later the Duchess came noiselessly out of her chamber. Montriveau turned, saw her flit like a shadow across the room, and trembled. She came up to him, not with a bourgeoise's enquiry, “How do I look?” She was sure of herself; her steady eyes said plainly, “I am adorned to please you.”

No one surely, save the old fairy godmother of some princess in disguise, could have wound a cloud of gauze about the dainty throat, so that the dazzling satin skin beneath should gleam through the gleaming folds. The Duchess was dazzling. The pale blue colour of her gown, repeated in the flowers in her hair, appeared by the richness of its hue to lend substance to a fragile form grown too wholly ethereal; for as she glided towards Armand, the loose ends of her scarf floated about her, putting that valiant warrior in mind of the bright damosel flies that hover now over water, now over the flowers with which they seem to mingle and blend.

“I have kept you waiting,” she said, with the tone that a woman can always bring into her voice for the man whom she wishes to please.

“I would wait patiently through an eternity,” said he, “if I were sure of finding a divinity so fair; but it is no compliment to speak of your beauty to you; nothing save worship could touch you. Suffer me only to kiss your scarf.”

“Oh, fie!” she said, with a commanding gesture, “I esteem you enough to give you my hand.”

She held it out for his kiss. A woman's hand, still moist from the scented bath, has a soft freshness, a velvet smoothness that sends a tingling thrill from the lips to the soul. And if a man is attracted to a woman, and his senses are as quick to feel pleasure as his heart is full of love, such a kiss, though chaste in appearance, may conjure up a terrific storm.

“Will you always give it me like this?” the General asked humbly when he had pressed that dangerous hand respectfully to his lips.

“Yes, but there we must stop,” she said, smiling. She sat down, and seemed very slow over putting on her gloves, trying to slip the unstretched kid over all her fingers at once, while she watched M. de Montriveau; and he was lost in admiration of the Duchess and those repeated graceful movements of hers.

“Ah! you were punctual,” she said; “that is right. I like punctuality. It is the courtesy of kings, His Majesty says; but to my thinking, from you men it is the most respectful flattery of all. Now, is it not? Just tell me.”

Again she gave him a side glance to express her insidious friendship, for he was dumb with happiness sheer happiness through such nothings as these! Oh, the Duchess understood son metier de femme—the art and mystery of being a woman—most marvellously well; she knew, to admiration, how to raise a man in his own esteem as he humbled himself to her; how to reward every step of the descent to sentimental folly with hollow flatteries.

“You will never forget to come at nine o'clock.”

“No; but are you going to a ball every night?”

“Do I know?” she answered, with a little childlike shrug of the shoulders; the gesture was meant to say that she was nothing if not capricious, and that a lover must take her as she was.—“Besides,” she added, “what is that to you? You shall be my escort.”

“That would be difficult tonight,” he objected; “I am not properly dressed.”

“It seems to me,” she returned loftily, “that if anyone has a right to complain of your costume, it is I. Know, therefore, monsieur le voyageur, that if I accept a man's arm, he is forthwith above the laws of fashion, nobody would venture to criticise him. You do not know the world, I see; I like you the better for it.”

And even as she spoke she swept him into the pettiness of that world by the attempt to initiate him into the vanities of a woman of fashion.

“If she chooses to do a foolish thing for me, I should be a simpleton to prevent her,” said Armand to himself. “She has a liking for me beyond a doubt; and as for the world, she cannot despise it more than I do. So, now for the ball if she likes.”

The Duchess probably thought that if the General came with her and appeared in a ballroom in boots and a black tie, nobody would hesitate to believe that he was violently in love with her. And the General was well pleased that the queen of fashion should think of compromising herself for him; hope gave him wit. He had gained confidence, he brought out his thoughts and views; he felt nothing of the restraint that weighed on his spirits yesterday. His talk was interesting and animated, and full of those first confidences so sweet to make and to receive.

Was Mme de Langeais really carried away by his talk, or had she devised this charming piece of coquetry? At any rate, she looked up mischievously as the clock struck twelve.

“Ah! you have made me too late for the ball!” she exclaimed, surprised and vexed that she had forgotten how time was going.

The next moment she approved the exchange of pleasures with a smile that made Armand's heart give a sudden leap.

“I certainly promised Mme de Beauseant,” she added. “They are all expecting me.”

“Very well—go.”

“No—go on. I will stay. Your Eastern adventures fascinate me. Tell me the whole story of your life. I love to share in a brave man's hardships, and I feel them all, indeed I do!”

She was playing with her scarf, twisting it and pulling it to pieces, with jerky, impatient movements that seemed to tell of inward dissatisfaction and deep reflection.

“WE are fit for nothing,” she went on. “Ah! we are contemptible, selfish, frivolous creatures. We can bore ourselves with amusements, and that is all we can do. Not one of us that understands that she has a part to play in life. In old days in France, women were beneficent lights; they lived to comfort those that mourned, to encourage high virtues, to reward artists and stir new life with noble thoughts. If the world has grown so petty, ours is the fault. You make me loathe the ball and this world in which I live. No, I am not giving up much for you.”

She had plucked her scarf to pieces, as a child plays with a flower, pulling away all the petals one by one; and now she crushed it into a ball, and flung it away. She could show her swan's neck.

She rang the bell. “I shall not go out tonight,” she told the footman. Her long, blue eyes turned timidly to Armand; and by the look of misgiving in them, he knew that he was meant to take the order for a confession, for a first and great favour. There was a pause, filled with many thoughts, before she spoke with that tenderness which is often in women's voices, and not so often in their hearts. “You have had a hard life,” she said.

“No,” returned Armand. “Until today I did not know what happiness was.”

“Then you know it now?” she asked, looking at him with a demure, keen glance.

“What is happiness for me henceforth but this—to see you, to hear you? . . . Until now I have only known privation; now I know that I can be unhappy——”

“That will do, that will do,” she said. “You must go; it is past midnight. Let us regard appearances. People must not talk about us. I do not know quite what I shall say; but the headache is a good−natured friend, and tells no tales.”

“Is there to be a ball tomorrow night?”

“You would grow accustomed to the life, I think. Very well. Yes, we will go again tomorrow night.”

There was not a happier man in the world than Armand when he went out from her. Every evening he came to Mme de Langeais's at the hour kept for him by a tacit understanding.

It would be tedious, and, for the many young men who carry a redundance of such sweet memories in their hearts, it were superfluous to follow the story step by step—the progress of a romance growing in those hours spent together, a romance controlled entirely by a woman's will. If sentiment went too fast, she would raise a quarrel over a word, or when words flagged behind her thoughts, she appealed to the feelings. Perhaps the only way of following such Penelope's progress is by marking its outward and visible signs.

As, for instance, within a few days of their first meeting, the assiduous General had won and kept the right to kiss his lady's insatiable hands. Wherever Mme de Langeais went, M. de Montriveau was certain to be seen, till people jokingly called him “Her Grace's orderly.” And already he had made enemies; others were jealous, and envied him his position. Mme de Langeais had attained her end. The Marquis de Montriveau was among her numerous train of adorers, and a means of humiliating those who boasted of their progress in her good graces, for she publicly gave him preference over them all.

“Decidedly, M. de Montriveau is the man for whom the Duchess shows a preference,” pronounced Mme de Serizy.

And who in Paris does not know what it means when a woman “shows a preference?” All went on therefore according to prescribed rule. The anecdotes which people were pleased to circulate concerning the General put that warrior in so formidable a light, that the more adroit quietly dropped their pretensions to the Duchess, and remained in her train merely to turn the position to account, and to use her name and personality to make better terms for themselves with certain stars of the second magnitude. And those lesser powers were delighted to take a lover away from Mme de Langeais. The Duchess was keen−sighted enough to see these desertions and treaties with the enemy; and her pride would not suffer her to be the dupe of them. As M. de Talleyrand, one of her great admirers, said, she knew how to take a second edition of revenge, laying the two−edged blade of a sarcasm between the pairs in these “morganatic” unions. Her mocking disdain contributed not a little to increase her reputation as an extremely clever woman and a person to be feared. Her character for virtue was consolidated while she amused herself with other people's secrets, and kept her own to herself. Yet, after two months of assiduities, she saw with a vague dread in the depths of her soul that M. de Montriveau understood nothing of the subtleties of flirtation after the manner of the Faubourg Saint−Germain; he was taking a Parisienne's coquetry in earnest.

“You will not tame HIM, dear Duchess,” the old Vidame de Pamiers had said. “'Tis a first cousin to the eagle; he will carry you off to his eyrie if you do not take care.”

Then Mme de Langeais felt afraid. The shrewd old noble's words sounded like a prophecy. The next day she tried to turn love to hate. She was harsh, exacting, irritable, unbearable; Montriveau disarmed her with angelic sweetness. She so little knew the great generosity of a large nature, that the kindly jests with which her first complaints were met went to her heart. She sought a quarrel, and found proofs of affection. She persisted.

“When a man idolises you, how can he have vexed you?” asked Armand.

“You do not vex me,” she answered, suddenly grown gentle and submissive. “But why do you wish to compromise me? For me you ought to be nothing but a FRIEND. Do you not know it? I wish I could see that you had the instincts, the delicacy of real friendship, so that I might lose neither your respect nor the pleasure that your presence gives me.”

“Nothing but your FRIEND!” he cried out. The terrible word sent an electric shock through his brain. “On the faith of these happy hours that you grant me, I sleep and wake in your heart. And now today, for no reason, you are pleased to destroy all the secret hopes by which I live. You have required promises of such constancy in me, you have said so much of your horror of women made up of nothing but caprice; and now do you wish me to understand that, like other women here in Paris, you have passions, and know nothing of love? If so, why did you ask my life of me? why did you accept it?”

“I was wrong, my friend. Oh, it is wrong of a woman to yield to such intoxication when she must not and cannot make any return.”

“I understand. You have merely been coquetting with me, and——”

“Coquetting?” she repeated. “I detest coquetry. A coquette Armand, makes promises to many, and gives herself to none; and a woman who keeps such promises is a libertine. This much I believed I had grasped of our code. But to be melancholy with humorists, gay with the frivolous, and politic with ambitious souls; to listen to a babbler with every appearance of admiration, to talk of war with a soldier, wax enthusiastic with philanthropists over the good of the nation, and to give to each one his little dole of flattery—it seems to me that this is as much a matter of necessity as dress, diamonds, and gloves, or flowers in one's hair. Such talk is the moral counterpart of the toilette. You take it up and lay it aside with the plumed head−dress. Do you call this coquetry? Why, I have never treated you as I treat everyone else. With you, my friend, I am sincere. Have I not always shared your views, and when you convinced me after a discussion, was I not always perfectly glad? In short, I love you, but only as a devout and pure woman may love. I have thought it over. I am a married woman, Armand. My way of life with M. de Langeais gives me liberty to bestow my heart; but law and custom leave me no right to dispose of my person. If a woman loses her honour, she is an outcast in any rank of life; and I have yet to meet with a single example of a man that realises all that our sacrifices demand of him in such a case. Quite otherwise. Anyone can foresee the rupture between Mme de Beauseant and M. d'Ajuda (for he is going to marry Mlle de Rochefide, it seems), that affair made it clear to my mind that these very sacrifices on the woman's part are almost always the

cause of the man's desertion. If you had loved me sincerely, you would have kept away for a time.—Now, I will lay aside all vanity for you; is not that something? What will not people say of a woman to whom no man attaches himself? Oh, she is heartless, brainless, soulless; and what is more, devoid of charm! Coquettes will not spare me. They will rob me of the very qualities that mortify them. So long as my reputation is safe, what do I care if my rivals deny my merits? They certainly will not inherit them. Come, my friend; give up something for her who sacrifices so much for you. Do not come quite so often; I shall love you none the less."

"Ah!" said Armand, with the profound irony of a wounded heart in his words and tone. "Love, so the scribblers say, only feeds on illusions. Nothing could be truer, I see; I am expected to imagine that I am loved. But, there!—there are some thoughts like wounds, from which there is no recovery. My belief in you was one of the last left to me, and now I see that there is nothing left to believe in this earth."

She began to smile.

"Yes," Montriveau went on in an unsteady voice, "this Catholic faith to which you wish to convert me is a lie that men make for themselves; hope is a lie at the expense of the future; pride, a lie between us and our fellows; and pity, and prudence, and terror are cunning lies. And now my happiness is to be one more lying delusion; I am expected to delude myself, to be willing to give gold coin for silver to the end. If you can so easily dispense with my visits; if you can confess me neither as your friend nor your lover, you do not care for me! And I, poor fool that I am, tell myself this, and know it, and love you!"

"But, dear me, poor Armand, you are flying into a passion!"

"I flying into a passion?"

"Yes. You think that the whole question is opened because I ask you to be careful."

In her heart of hearts she was delighted with the anger that leapt out in her lover's eyes. Even as she tortured him, she was criticising him, watching every slightest change that passed over his face. If the General had been so unluckily inspired as to show himself generous without discussion (as happens occasionally with some artless souls), he would have been a banished man forever, accused and convicted of not knowing how to love. Most women are not displeased to have their code of right and wrong broken through. Do they not flatter themselves that they never yield except to force? But Armand was not learned enough in this kind of lore to see the snare ingeniously spread for him by the Duchess. So much of the child was there in the strong man in love.

"If all you want is to preserve appearances," he began in his simplicity, "I am willing to——"

"Simply to preserve appearances!" the lady broke in; "why, what idea can you have of me? Have I given you the slightest reason to suppose that I can be yours?"

"Why, what else are we talking about?" demanded Montriveau.

"Monsieur, you frighten me ! . . . No, pardon me. Thank you," she added, coldly; "thank you, Armand. You have given me timely warning of imprudence; committed quite unconsciously, believe it, my friend. You know how to endure, you say. I also know how to endure. We will not see each other for a time; and then, when both of us have contrived to recover calmness to some extent, we will think about arrangements for a happiness sanctioned by the world. I am young, Armand; a man with no delicacy might tempt a woman of four−and−twenty to do many foolish, wild things for his sake. But YOU! You will be my friend, promise me that you will?"

"The woman of four−and−twenty," returned he, "knows what she is about."

He sat down on the sofa in the boudoir, and leant his head on his hands.

"Do you love me, madame?" he asked at length, raising his head, and turning a face full of resolution upon her. "Say it straight out; Yes or No!"

His direct question dismayed the Duchess more than a threat of suicide could have done; indeed, the woman of the nineteenth century is not to be frightened by that stale stratagem, the sword has ceased to be part of the masculine costume. But in the effect of eyelids and lashes, in the contraction of the gaze, in the twitching of the lips, is there not some influence that communicates the terror which they express with such vivid magnetic power?

"Ah, if I were free, if——"

"Oh! is it only your husband that stands in the way?" the General exclaimed joyfully, as he strode to and fro in the boudoir. "Dear Antoinette, I wield a more absolute power than the Autocrat of all the Russias. I have a compact with Fate; I can advance or retard destiny, so far as men are concerned, at my fancy, as you alter the hands of a watch. If you can direct the course of fate in our political machinery, it simply means (does it not?) that

you understand the ins and outs of it. You shall be free before very long, and then you must remember your promise."

"Armand!" she cried. "What do you mean? Great heavens! Can you imagine that I am to be the prize of a crime? Do you want to kill me? Why! you cannot have any religion in you! For my own part, I fear God. M. de Langeais may have given me reason to hate him, but I wish him no manner of harm."

M. de Montriveau beat a tattoo on the marble chimneypiece, and only looked composedly at the lady.

"Dear," continued she, "respect him. He does not love me, he is not kind to me, but I have duties to fulfil with regard to him. What would I not do to avert the calamities with which you threaten him?—Listen," she continued after a pause, "I will not say another word about separation; you shall come here as in the past, and I will still give you my forehead to kiss. If I refused once or twice, it was pure coquetry, indeed it was. But let us understand each other," she added as he came closer. "You will permit me to add to the number of my satellites; to receive even more visitors in the morning than heretofore; I mean to be twice as frivolous; I mean to use you to all appearance very badly; to feign a rupture; you must come not quite so often, and then, afterwards——"

While she spoke, she had allowed him to put an arm about her waist, Montriveau was holding her tightly to him, and she seemed to feel the exceeding pleasure that women usually feel in that close contact, an earnest of the bliss of a closer union. And then, doubtless she meant to elicit some confidence, for she raised herself on tiptoe, and laid her forehead against Armand's burning lips.

"And then," Montriveau finished her sentence for her, "you shall not speak to me of your husband. You ought not to think of him again."

Mme de Langeais was silent awhile.

"At least," she said, after a significant pause, "at least you will do all that I wish without grumbling, you will not be naughty; tell me so, my friend? You wanted to frighten me, did you not? Come, now, confess it ? . . . You are too good ever to think of crimes. But is it possible that you can have secrets that I do not know? How can you control Fate?"

"Now, when you confirm the gift of the heart that you have already given me, I am far too happy to know exactly how to answer you. I can trust you, Antoinette; I shall have no suspicion, no unfounded jealousy of you. But if accident should set you free, we shall be one——"

"Accident, Armand?" (With that little dainty turn of the head that seems to say so many things, a gesture that such women as the Duchess can use on light occasions, as a great singer can act with her voice.) "Pure accident," she repeated. "Mind that. If anything should happen to M. de Langeais by your fault, I should never be yours."

And so they parted, mutually content. The Duchess had made a pact that left her free to prove to the world by words and deeds that M. de Montriveau was no lover of hers. And as for him, the wily Duchess vowed to tire him out. He should have nothing of her beyond the little concessions snatched in the course of contests that she could stop at her pleasure. She had so pretty an art of revoking the grant of yesterday, she was so much in earnest in her purpose to remain technically virtuous, that she felt that there was not the slightest danger for her in preliminaries fraught with peril for a woman less sure of her self−command. After all, the Duchess was practically separated from her husband; a marriage long since annulled was no great sacrifice to make to her love.

Montriveau on his side was quite happy to win the vaguest promise, glad once for all to sweep aside, with all scruples of conjugal fidelity, her stock of excuses for refusing herself to his love. He had gained ground a little, and congratulated himself. And so for a time he took unfair advantage of the rights so hardly won. More a boy than he had ever been in his life, he gave himself up to all the childishness that makes first love the flower of life. He was a child again as he poured out all his soul, all the thwarted forces that passion had given him, upon her hands, upon the dazzling forehead that looked so pure to his eyes; upon her fair hair; on the tufted curls where his lips were pressed. And the Duchess, on whom his love was poured like a flood, was vanquished by the magnetic influence of her lover's warmth; she hesitated to begin the quarrel that must part them forever. She was more a woman than she thought, this slight creature, in her effort to reconcile the demands of religion with the ever−new sensations of vanity, the semblance of pleasure which turns a Parisienne's head. Every Sunday she went to Mass; she never missed a service; then, when evening came, she was steeped in the intoxicating bliss of repressed desire. Armand and Mme de Langeais, like Hindoo fakirs, found the reward of their continence in the temptations to which it gave rise. Possibly, the Duchess had ended by resolving love into fraternal caresses, harmless enough, as it might have seemed to the rest of the world, while they borrowed extremes of degradation from the licence of

her thoughts. How else explain the incomprehensible mystery of her continual fluctuations? Every morning she proposed to herself to shut her door on the Marquis de Montriveau; every evening, at the appointed hour, she fell under the charm of his presence. There was a languid defence; then she grew less unkind. Her words were sweet and soothing. They were lovers—lovers only could have been thus. For him the Duchess would display her most sparkling wit, her most captivating wiles; and when at last she had wrought upon his senses and his soul, she might submit herself passively to his fierce caresses, but she had her nec plus ultra of passion; and when once it was reached, she grew angry if he lost the mastery of himself and made as though he would pass beyond. No woman on earth can brave the consequences of refusal without some motive; nothing is more natural than to yield to love; wherefore Mme de Langeais promptly raised a second line of fortification, a stronghold less easy to carry than the first. She evoked the terrors of religion. Never did Father of the Church, however eloquent, plead the cause of God better than the Duchess. Never was the wrath of the Most High better justified than by her voice. She used no preacher's commonplaces, no rhetorical amplifications. No. She had a “pulpit−tremor” of her own. To Armand's most passionate entreaty, she replied with a tearful gaze, and a gesture in which a terrible plenitude of emotion found expression. She stopped his mouth with an appeal for mercy. She would not hear another word; if she did, she must succumb; and better death than criminal happiness.

“Is it nothing to disobey God?” she asked him, recovering a voice grown faint in the crises of inward struggles, through which the fair actress appeared to find it hard to preserve her self−control. “I would sacrifice society, I would give up the whole world for you, gladly; but it is very selfish of you to ask my whole after−life of me for a moment of pleasure. Come, now! are you not happy?” she added, holding out her hand; and certainly in her careless toilette the sight of her afforded consolations to her lover, who made the most of them.

Sometimes from policy, to keep her hold on a man whose ardent passion gave her emotions unknown before, sometimes in weakness, she suffered him to snatch a swift kiss; and immediately, in feigned terror, she flushed red and exiled Armand from the sofa so soon as the sofa became dangerous ground.

“Your joys are sins for me to expiate, Armand; they are paid for by penitence and remorse,” she cried.

And Montriveau, now at two chairs' distance from that aristocratic petticoat, betook himself to blasphemy and railed against Providence. The Duchess grew angry at such times.

“My friend,” she said drily, “I do not understand why you decline to believe in God, for it is impossible to believe in man. Hush, do not talk like that. You have too great a nature to take up their Liberal nonsense with its pretension to abolish God.”

Theological and political disputes acted like a cold douche on Montriveau; he calmed down; he could not return to love when the Duchess stirred up his wrath by suddenly setting him down a thousand miles away from the boudoir, discussing theories of absolute monarchy, which she defended to admiration. Few women venture to be democrats; the attitude of democratic champion is scarcely compatible with tyrannous feminine sway. But often, on the other hand, the General shook out his mane, dropped politics with a leonine growling and lashing of the flanks, and sprang upon his prey; he was no longer capable of carrying a heart and brain at such variance for very far; he came back, terrible with love, to his mistress. And she, if she felt the prick of fancy stimulated to a dangerous point, knew that it was time to leave her boudoir; she came out of the atmosphere surcharged with desires that she drew in with her breath, sat down to the piano, and sang the most exquisite songs of modern music, and so baffled the physical attraction which at times showed her no mercy, though she was strong enough to fight it down.

At such times she was something sublime in Armand's eyes; she was not acting, she was genuine; the unhappy lover was convinced that she loved him. Her egoistic resistance deluded him into a belief that she was a pure and sainted woman; he resigned himself; he talked of Platonic love, did this artillery officer!

When Mme de Langeais had played with religion sufficiently to suit her own purposes, she played with it again for Armand's benefit. She wanted to bring him back to a Christian frame of mind; she brought out her edition of Le Genie du Christianisme, adapted for the use of military men. Montriveau chafed; his yoke was heavy. Oh! at that, possessed by the spirit of contradiction, she dinned religion into his ears, to see whether God might not rid her of this suitor, for the man's persistence was beginning to frighten her. And in any case she was glad to prolong any quarrel, if it bade fair to keep the dispute on moral grounds for an indefinite period; the material struggle which followed it was more dangerous.

But if the time of her opposition on the ground of the marriage law might be said to be the epoque civile of

this sentimental warfare, the ensuing phase which might be taken to constitute the epoque religieuse had also its crisis and consequent decline of severity.

Armand happening to come in very early one evening, found M. l'Abbe Gondrand, the Duchess's spiritual director, established in an armchair by the fireside, looking as a spiritual director might be expected to look while digesting his dinner and the charming sins of his penitent. In the ecclesiastic's bearing there was a stateliness befitting a dignitary of the Church; and the episcopal violet hue already appeared in his dress. At sight of his fresh, well−preserved complexion, smooth forehead, and ascetic's mouth, Montriveau's countenance grew uncommonly dark; he said not a word under the malicious scrutiny of the other's gaze, and greeted neither the lady nor the priest. The lover apart, Montriveau was not wanting in tact; so a few glances exchanged with the bishop−designate told him that here was the real forger of the Duchess's armoury of scruples.

That an ambitious abbe should control the happiness of a man of Montriveau's temper, and by underhand ways! The thought burst in a furious tide over his face, clenched his fists, and set him chafing and pacing to and fro; but when he came back to his place intending to make a scene, a single look from the Duchess was enough. He was quiet.

Any other woman would have been put out by her lover's gloomy silence; it was quite otherwise with Mme de Langeais. She continued her conversation with M. de Gondrand on the necessity of re−establishing the Church in its ancient splendour. And she talked brilliantly.

The Church, she maintained, ought to be a temporal as well as a spiritual power, stating her case better than the Abbe had done, and regretting that the Chamber of Peers, unlike the English House of Lords, had no bench of bishops. Nevertheless, the Abbe rose, yielded his place to the General, and took his leave, knowing that in Lent he could play a return game. As for the Duchess, Montriveau's behaviour had excited her curiosity to such a pitch that she scarcely rose to return her director's low bow.

“What is the matter with you, my friend?”

“Why, I cannot stomach that Abbe of yours.”

“Why did you not take a book?” she asked, careless whether the Abbe, then closing the door, heard her or no.

The General paused, for the gesture which accompanied the Duchess's speech further increased the exceeding insolence of her words.

“My dear Antoinette, thank you for giving love precedence of the Church; but, for pity's sake, allow me to ask one question.”

“Oh! you are questioning me! I am quite willing. You are my friend, are you not? I certainly can open the bottom of my heart to you; you will see only one image there.”

“Do you talk about our love to that man?”

“He is my confessor.”

“Does he know that I love you?”

“M. de Montriveau, you cannot claim, I think, to penetrate the secrets of the confessional?”

“Does that man know all about our quarrels and my love for you?”

“That man, monsieur; say God!”

“God again! *I* ought to be alone in your heart. But leave God alone where He is, for the love of God and me. Madame, you SHALL NOT go to confession again, or——”

“Or?” she repeated sweetly.

“Or I will never come back here.”

“Then go, Armand. Good−bye, good−bye forever.”

She rose and went to her boudoir without so much as a glance at Armand, as he stood with his hand on the back of a chair. How long he stood there motionless he himself never knew. The soul within has the mysterious power of expanding as of contracting space.

He opened the door of the boudoir. It was dark within. A faint voice was raised to say sharply—

“I did not ring. What made you come in without orders? Go away, Suzette.”

“Then you are ill,” exclaimed Montriveau.

“Stand up, monsieur, and go out of the room for a minute at any rate,” she said, ringing the bell.

“Mme la Duchesse rang for lights?” said the footman, coming in with the candles. When the lovers were alone together, Mme de Langeais still lay on her couch; she was just as silent and motionless as if Montriveau had not

been there.

“Dear, I was wrong,” he began, a note of pain and a sublime kindness in his voice. “Indeed, I would not have you without religion——”

“It is fortunate that you can recognise the necessity of a conscience,” she said in a hard voice, without looking at him. “I thank you in God's name.”

The General was broken down by her harshness; this woman seemed as if she could be at will a sister or a stranger to him. He made one despairing stride towards the door. He would leave her forever without another word. He was wretched; and the Duchess was laughing within herself over mental anguish far more cruel than the old judicial torture. But as for going away, it was not in his power to do it. In any sort of crisis, a woman is, as it were, bursting with a certain quantity of things to say; so long as she has not delivered herself of them, she experiences the sensation which we are apt to feel at the sight of something incomplete. Mme de Langeais had not said all that was in her mind. She took up her parable and said—

“We have not the same convictions, General, I am pained to think. It would be dreadful if a woman could not believe in a religion which permits us to love beyond the grave. I set Christian sentiments aside; you cannot understand them. Let me simply speak to you of expediency. Would you forbid a woman at court the table of the Lord when it is customary to take the sacrament at Easter? People must certainly do something for their party. The Liberals, whatever they may wish to do, will never destroy the religious instinct. Religion will always be a political necessity. Would you undertake to govern a nation of logic−choppers? Napoleon was afraid to try; he persecuted ideologists. If you want to keep people from reasoning, you must give them something to feel. So let us accept the Roman Catholic Church with all its consequences. And if we would have France go to mass, ought we not to begin by going ourselves? Religion, you see, Armand, is a bond uniting all the conservative principles which enable the rich to live in tranquillity. Religion and the rights of property are intimately connected. It is certainly a finer thing to lead a nation by ideas of morality than by fear of the scaffold, as in the time of the Terror—the one method by which your odious Revolution could enforce obedience. The priest and the king—that means you, and me, and the Princess my neighbour; and, in a word, the interests of all honest people personified. There, my friend, just be so good as to belong to your party, you that might be its Sylla if you had the slightest ambition that way. I know nothing about politics myself; I argue from my own feelings; but still I know enough to guess that society would be overturned if people were always calling its foundations in question——”

“If that is how your Court and your Government think, I am sorry for you,” broke in Montriveau. “The Restoration, madam, ought to say, like Catherine de Medici, when she heard that the battle of Dreux was lost, `Very well; now we will go to the meeting−house.' Now 1815 was your battle of Dreux. Like the royal power of those days, you won in fact, while you lost in right. Political Protestantism has gained an ascendancy over people's minds. If you have no mind to issue your Edict of Nantes; or if, when it is issued, you publish a Revocation; if you should one day be accused and convicted of repudiating the Charter, which is simply a pledge given to maintain the interests established under the Republic, then the Revolution will rise again, terrible in her strength, and strike but a single blow. It will not be the Revolution that will go into exile; she is the very soil of France. Men die, but people's interests do not die. . . . Eh, great Heavens! what are France and the crown and rightful sovereigns, and the whole world besides, to us? Idle words compared with my happiness. Let them reign or be hurled from the throne, little do I care. Where am I now?”

“In the Duchesse de Langeais's boudoir, my friend.”

“No, no. No more of the Duchess, no more of Langeais; I am with my dear Antoinette.”

“Will you do me the pleasure to stay where you are,” she said, laughing and pushing him back, gently however.

“So you have never loved me,” he retorted, and anger flashed in lightning from his eyes.

“No, dear”; but the “No” was equivalent to “Yes.”

“I am a great ass,” he said, kissing her hands. The terrible queen was a woman once more.—“Antoinette,” he went on, laying his head on her feet, “you are too chastely tender to speak of our happiness to anyone in this world.”

“Oh!” she cried, rising to her feet with a swift, graceful spring, “you are a great simpleton.” And without another word she fled into the drawing−room.

“What is it now?” wondered the General, little knowing that the touch of his burning forehead had sent a swift

electric thrill through her from foot to head.

In hot wrath he followed her to the drawing−room, only to hear divinely sweet chords. The Duchess was at the piano. If the man of science or the poet can at once enjoy and comprehend, bringing his intelligence to bear upon his enjoyment without loss of delight, he is conscious that the alphabet and phraseology of music are but cunning instruments for the composer, like the wood and copper wire under the hands of the executant. For the poet and the man of science there is a music existing apart, underlying the double expression of this language of the spirit and senses. Andiamo mio ben can draw tears of joy or pitying laughter at the will of the singer; and not unfrequently one here and there in the world, some girl unable to live and bear the heavy burden of an unguessed pain, some man whose soul vibrates with the throb of passion, may take up a musical theme, and lo! heaven is opened for them, or they find a language for themselves in some sublime melody, some song lost to the world.

The General was listening now to such a song; a mysterious music unknown to all other ears, as the solitary plaint of some mateless bird dying alone in a virgin forest.

“Great Heavens! what are you playing there?” he asked in an unsteady voice.

“The prelude of a ballad, called, I believe, Fleuve du Tage.”

“I did not know that there was such music in a piano,” he returned.

“Ah!” she said, and for the first time she looked at him as a woman looks at the man she loves, “nor do you know, my friend, that I love you, and that you cause me horrible suffering; and that I feel that I must utter my cry of pain without putting it too plainly into words. If I did not, I should yield——But you see nothing.”

“And you will not make me happy!”

“Armand, I should die of sorrow the next day.”

The General turned abruptly from her and went. But out in the street he brushed away the tears that he would not let fall.

The religious phase lasted for three months. At the end of that time the Duchess grew weary of vain repetitions; the Deity, bound hand and foot, was delivered up to her lover. Possibly she may have feared that by sheer dint of talking of eternity she might perpetuate his love in this world and the next. For her own sake, it must be believed that no man had touched her heart, or her conduct would be inexcusable. She was young; the time when men and women feel that they cannot afford to lose time or to quibble over their joys was still far off. She, no doubt, was on the verge not of first love, but of her first experience of the bliss of love. And from inexperience, for want of the painful lessons which would have taught her to value the treasure poured out at her feet, she was playing with it. Knowing nothing of the glory and rapture of the light, she was fain to stay in the shadow.

Armand was just beginning to understand this strange situation; he put his hope in the first word spoken by nature. Every evening, as he came away from Mme de Langeais's, he told himself that no woman would accept the tenderest, most delicate proofs of a man's love during seven months, nor yield passively to the slighter demands of passion, only to cheat love at the last. He was waiting patiently for the sun to gain power, not doubting but that he should receive the earliest fruits. The married woman's hesitations and the religious scruples he could quite well understand. He even rejoiced over those battles. He mistook the Duchess's heartless coquetry for modesty; and he would not have had her otherwise. So he had loved to see her devising obstacles; was he not gradually triumphing over them? Did not every victory won swell the meagre sum of lovers' intimacies long denied, and at last conceded with every sign of love? Still, he had had such leisure to taste the full sweetness of every small successive conquest on which a lover feeds his love, that these had come to be matters of use and wont. So far as obstacles went, there were none now save his own awe of her; nothing else left between him and his desire save the whims of her who allowed him to call her Antoinette. So he made up his mind to demand more, to demand all. Embarrassed like a young lover who cannot dare to believe that his idol can stoop so low, he hesitated for a long time. He passed through the experience of terrible reactions within himself. A set purpose was annihilated by a word, and definite resolves died within him on the threshold. He despised himself for his weakness, and still his desire remained unuttered.

Nevertheless, one evening, after sitting in gloomy melancholy, he brought out a fierce demand for his illegally legitimate rights. The Duchess had not to wait for her bond−slave's request to guess his desire. When was a man's desire a secret? And have not women an intuitive knowledge of the meaning of certain changes of countenance?

“What! you wish to be my friend no longer?” she broke in at the first words, and a divine red surging like new blood under the transparent skin, lent brightness to her eyes. “As a reward for my generosity, you would

dishonour me? Just reflect a little. I myself have thought much over this; and I think always for us BOTH. There is such a thing as a woman's loyalty, and we can no more fail in it than you can fail in honour. *I* cannot blind myself. If I am yours, how, in any sense, can I be M. de Langeais's wife? Can you require the sacrifice of my position, my rank, my whole life in return for a doubtful love that could not wait patiently for seven months? What! already you would rob me of my right to dispose of myself? No, no; you must not talk like this again. No, not another word. I will not, I cannot listen to you."

Mme de Langeais raised both hands to her head to push back the tufted curls from her hot forehead; she seemed very much excited.

"You come to a weak woman with your purpose definitely planned out. You say—`For a certain length of time she will talk to me of her husband, then of God, and then of the inevitable consequences. But I will use and abuse the ascendancy I shall gain over her; I will make myself indispensable; all the bonds of habit, all the misconstructions of outsiders, will make for me; and at length, when our liaison is taken for granted by all the world, I shall be this woman's master.'—Now, be frank; these are your thoughts! Oh! you calculate, and you say that you love. Shame on you! You are enamoured? Ah! that I well believe! You wish to possess me, to have me for your mistress, that is all! Very well then, No! The DUCHESSE DE LANGEAIS will not descend so far. Simple bourgeoises may be the victims of your treachery—I, never! Nothing gives me assurance of your love. You speak of my beauty; I may lose every trace of it in six months, like the dear Princess, my neighbour. You are captivated by my wit, my grace. Great Heavens! you would soon grow used to them and to the pleasures of possession. Have not the little concessions that I was weak enough to make come to be a matter of course in the last few months? Some day, when ruin comes, you will give me no reason for the change in you beyond a curt, `I have ceased to care for you.'—Then, rank and fortune and honour and all that was the Duchesse de Langeais will be swallowed up in one disappointed hope. I shall have children to bear witness to my shame, and——" With an involuntary gesture she interrupted herself, and continued: "But I am too good−natured to explain all this to you when you know it better than I. Come! let us stay as we are. I am only too fortunate in that I can still break these bonds which you think so strong. Is there anything so very heroic in coming to the Hotel de Langeais to spend an evening with a woman whose prattle amuses you?—a woman whom you take for a plaything? Why, half a dozen young coxcombs come here just as regularly every afternoon between three and five. They, too, are very generous, I am to suppose? I make fun of them; they stand my petulance and insolence pretty quietly, and make me laugh; but as for you, I give all the treasures of my soul to you, and you wish to ruin me, you try my patience in endless ways. Hush, that will do, that will do," she continued, seeing that he was about to speak, "you have no heart, no soul, no delicacy. I know what you want to tell me. Very well, then—yes. I would rather you should take me for a cold, insensible woman, with no devotion in her composition, no heart even, than be taken by everybody else for a vulgar person, and be condemned to your so−called pleasures, of which you would most certainly tire, and to everlasting punishment for it afterwards. Your selfish love is not worth so many sacrifices. . . ."

The words give but a very inadequate idea of the discourse which the Duchess trilled out with the quick volubility of a bird−organ. Nor, truly, was there anything to prevent her from talking on for some time to come, for poor Armand's only reply to the torrent of flute notes was a silence filled with cruelly painful thoughts. He was just beginning to see that this woman was playing with him; he divined instinctively that a devoted love, a responsive love, does not reason and count the consequences in this way. Then, as he heard her reproach him with detestable motives, he felt something like shame as he remembered that unconsciously he had made those very calculations. With angelic honesty of purpose, he looked within, and self−examination found nothing but selfishness in all his thoughts and motives, in the answers which he framed and could not utter. He was self−convicted. In his despair he longed to fling himself from the window. The egoism of it was intolerable.

What indeed can a man say when a woman will not believe in love? Let me prove how much I love you.—The *I* is always there.

The heroes of the boudoir, in such circumstances, can follow the example of the primitive logician who preceded the Pyrrhonists and denied movement. Montriveau was not equal to this feat. With all his audacity, he lacked this precise kind which never deserts an adept in the formulas of feminine algebra. If so many women, and even the best of women, fall a prey to a kind of expert to whom the vulgar give a grosser name, it is perhaps because the said experts are great PROVERS, and love, in spite of its delicious poetry of sentiment, requires a little more geometry than people are wont to think.

Now the Duchess and Montriveau were alike in this—they were both equally unversed in love lore. The lady's knowledge of theory was but scanty; in practice she knew nothing whatever; she felt nothing, and reflected over everything. Montriveau had had but little experience, was absolutely ignorant of theory, and felt too much to reflect at all. Both therefore were enduring the consequences of the singular situation. At that supreme moment the myriad thoughts in his mind might have been reduced to the formula—"Submit to be mine ——' words which seem horribly selfish to a woman for whom they awaken no memories, recall no ideas. Something nevertheless he must say. And what was more, though her barbed shafts had set his blood tingling, though the short phrases that she discharged at him one by one were very keen and sharp and cold, he must control himself lest he should lose all by an outbreak of anger.

"Mme la Duchesse, I am in despair that God should have invented no way for a woman to confirm the gift of her heart save by adding the gift of her person. The high value which you yourself put upon the gift teaches me that I cannot attach less importance to it. If you have given me your inmost self and your whole heart, as you tell me, what can the rest matter? And besides, if my happiness means so painful a sacrifice, let us say no more about it. But you must pardon a man of spirit if he feels humiliated at being taken for a spaniel."

The tone in which the last remark was uttered might perhaps have frightened another woman; but when the wearer of a petticoat has allowed herself to be addressed as a Divinity, and thereby set herself above all other mortals, no power on earth can be so haughty.

"M. le Marquis, I am in despair that God should not have invented some nobler way for a man to confirm the gift of his heart than by the manifestation of prodigiously vulgar desires. We become bond−slaves when we give ourselves body and soul, but a man is bound to nothing by accepting the gift. Who will assure me that love will last? The very love that I might show for you at every moment, the better to keep your love, might serve you as a reason for deserting me. I have no wish to be a second edition of Mme de Beauseant. Who can ever know what it is that keeps you beside us? Our persistent coldness of heart is the cause of an unfailing passion in some of you; other men ask for an untiring devotion, to be idolised at every moment; some for gentleness, others for tyranny. No woman in this world as yet has really read the riddle of man's heart."

There was a pause. When she spoke again it was in a different tone.

"After all, my friend, you cannot prevent a woman from trembling at the question, `Will this love last always?' Hard though my words may be, the dread of losing you puts them into my mouth. Oh, me! it is not I who speaks, dear, it is reason; and how should anyone so mad as I be reasonable? In truth, I am nothing of the sort."

The poignant irony of her answer had changed before the end into the most musical accents in which a woman could find utterance for ingenuous love. To listen to her words was to pass in a moment from martyrdom to heaven. Montriveau grew pale; and for the first time in his life, he fell on his knees before a woman. He kissed the Duchess's skirt hem, her knees, her feet; but for the credit of the Faubourg Saint−Germain it is necessary to respect the mysteries of its boudoirs, where many are fain to take the utmost that Love can give without giving proof of love in return.

The Duchess thought herself generous when she suffered herself to be adored. But Montriveau was in a wild frenzy of joy over her complete surrender of the position.

"Dear Antoinette," he cried. "Yes, you are right; I will not have you doubt any longer. I too am trembling at this moment—lest the angel of my life should leave me; I wish I could invent some tie that might bind us to each other irrevocably."

"Ah!" she said, under her breath, "so I was right, you see."

"Let me say all that I have to say; I will scatter all your fears with a word. Listen! if I deserted you, I should deserve to die a thousand deaths. Be wholly mine, and I will give you the right to kill me if I am false. I myself will write a letter explaining certain reasons for taking my own life; I will make my final arrangements, in short. You shall have the letter in your keeping; in the eye of the law it will be a sufficient explanation of my death. You can avenge yourself, and fear nothing from God or men."

"What good would the letter be to me? What would life be if I had lost your love? If I wished to kill you, should I not be ready to follow? No; thank you for the thought, but I do not want the letter. Should I not begin to dread that you were faithful to me through fear? And if a man knows that he must risk his life for a stolen pleasure, might it not seem more tempting? Armand, the thing I ask of you is the one hard thing to do."

"Then what is it that you wish?"

“Your obedience and my liberty.”

“Ah, God!” cried he, “I am a child.”

“A wayward, much spoilt child,” she said, stroking the thick hair, for his head still lay on her knee. “Ah! and loved far more than he believes, and yet he is very disobedient. Why not stay as we are? Why not sacrifice to me the desires that hurt me? Why not take what I can give, when it is all that I can honestly grant? Are you not happy?”

“Oh yes, I am happy when I have not a doubt left. Antoinette, doubt in love is a kind of death, is it not?”

In a moment he showed himself as he was, as all men are under the influence of that hot fever; he grew eloquent, insinuating. And the Duchess tasted the pleasures which she reconciled with her conscience by some private, Jesuitical ukase of her own; Armand's love gave her a thrill of cerebral excitement which custom made as necessary to her as society, or the Opera. To feel that she was adored by this man, who rose above other men, whose character frightened her; to treat him like a child; to play with him as Poppaea played with Nero—many women, like the wives of King Henry VIII, have paid for such a perilous delight with all the blood in their veins. Grim presentiment! Even as she surrendered the delicate, pale, gold curls to his touch, and felt the close pressure of his hand, the little hand of a man whose greatness she could not mistake; even as she herself played with his dark, thick locks, in that boudoir where she reigned a queen, the Duchess would say to herself—

“This man is capable of killing me if he once finds out that I am playing with him.”

Armand de Montriveau stayed with her till two o'clock in the morning. From that moment this woman, whom he loved, was neither a duchess nor a Navarreins; Antoinette, in her disguises, had gone so far as to appear to be a woman. On that most blissful evening, the sweetest prelude ever played by a Parisienne to what the world calls “a slip”; in spite of all her affectations of a coyness which she did not feel, the General saw all maidenly beauty in her. He had some excuse for believing that so many storms of caprice had been but clouds covering a heavenly soul; that these must be lifted one by one like the veils that hid her divine loveliness. The Duchess became, for him, the most simple and girlish mistress; she was the one woman in the world for him; and he went away quite happy in that at last he had brought her to give him such pledges of love, that it seemed to him impossible but that he should be but her husband henceforth in secret, her choice sanctioned by Heaven.

Armand went slowly home, turning this thought in his mind with the impartiality of a man who is conscious of all the responsibilities that love lays on him while he tastes the sweetness of its joys. He went along the Quais to see the widest possible space of sky; his heart had grown in him; he would fain have had the bounds of the firmament and of earth enlarged. It seemed to him that his lungs drew an ampler breath.

In the course of his self−examination, as he walked, he vowed to love this woman so devoutly, that every day of her life she should find absolution for her sins against society in unfailing happiness. Sweet stirrings of life when life is at the full! The man that is strong enough to steep his soul in the colour of one emotion, feels infinite joy as glimpses open out for him of an ardent lifetime that knows no diminution of passion to the end; even so it is permitted to certain mystics, in ecstasy, to behold the Light of God. Love would be naught without the belief that it would last forever; love grows great through constancy. It was thus that, wholly absorbed by his happiness, Montriveau understood passion.

“We belong to each other forever!”

The thought was like a talisman fulfilling the wishes of his life. He did not ask whether the Duchess might not change, whether her love might not last. No, for he had faith. Without that virtue there is no future for Christianity, and perhaps it is even more necessary to society. A conception of life as feeling occurred to him for the first time; hitherto he had lived by action, the most strenuous exertion of human energies, the physical devotion, as it may be called, of the soldier.

Next day M. de Montriveau went early in the direction of the Faubourg Saint−Germain. He had made an appointment at a house not far from the Hotel de Langeais; and the business over, he went thither as if to his own home. The General's companion chanced to be a man for whom he felt a kind of repulsion whenever he met him in other houses. This was the Marquis de Ronquerolles, whose reputation had grown so great in Paris boudoirs. He was witty, clever, and what was more—courageous; he set the fashion to all the young men in Paris. As a man of gallantry, his success and experience were equally matters of envy; and neither fortune nor birth was wanting in his case, qualifications which add such lustre in Paris to a reputation as a leader of fashion.

“Where are you going?” asked M. de Ronquerolles.

"To Mme de Langeais's."

"Ah, true. I forgot that you had allowed her to lime you. You are wasting your affections on her when they might be much better employed elsewhere. I could have told you of half a score of women in the financial world, any one of them a thousand times better worth your while than that titled courtesan, who does with her brains what less artificial women do with——"

"What is this, my dear fellow?" Armand broke in. "The Duchess is an angel of innocence."

Ronquerolles began to laugh.

"Things being thus, dear boy," said he, "it is my duty to enlighten you. Just a word; there is no harm in it between ourselves. Has the Duchess surrendered? If so, I have nothing more to say. Come, give me your confidence. There is no occasion to waste your time in grafting your great nature on that unthankful stock, when all your hopes and cultivation will come to nothing."

Armand ingenuously made a kind of general report of his position, enumerating with much minuteness the slender rights so hardly won. Ronquerolles burst into a peal of laughter so heartless, that it would have cost any other man his life. But from their manner of speaking and looking at each other during that colloquy beneath the wall, in a corner almost as remote from intrusion as the desert itself, it was easy to imagine the friendship between the two men knew no bounds, and that no power on earth could estrange them.

"My dear Armand, why did you not tell me that the Duchess was a puzzle to you? I would have given you a little advice which might have brought your flirtation properly through. You must know, to begin with, that the women of our Faubourg, like any other women, love to steep themselves in love; but they have a mind to possess and not to be possessed. They have made a sort of compromise with human nature. The code of their parish gives them a pretty wide latitude short of the last transgression. The sweets enjoyed by this fair Duchess of yours are so many venial sins to be washed away in the waters of penitence. But if you had the impertinence to ask in earnest for the moral sin to which naturally you are sure to attach the highest importance, you would see the deep disdain with which the door of the boudoir and the house would be incontinently shut upon you. The tender Antoinette would dismiss everything from her memory; you would be less than a cipher for her. She would wipe away your kisses, my dear friend, as indifferently as she would perform her ablutions. She would sponge love from her cheeks as she washes off rouge. We know women of that sort—the thorough−bred Parisienne. Have you ever noticed a grisette tripping along the street? Her face is as good as a picture. A pretty cap, fresh cheeks, trim hair, a guileful smile, and the rest of her almost neglected. Is not this true to the life? Well, that is the Parisienne. She knows that her face is all that will be seen, so she devotes all her care, finery, and vanity to her head. The Duchess is the same; the head is everything with her. She can only feel through her intellect, her heart lies in her brain, she is a sort of intellectual epicure, she has a head−voice. We call that kind of poor creature a Lais of the intellect. You have been taken in like a boy. If you doubt it, you can have proof of it tonight, this morning, this instant. Go up to her, try the demand as an experiment, insist peremptorily if it is refused. You might set about it like the late Marechal de Richelieu, and get nothing for your pains."

Armand was dumb with amazement.

"Has your desire reached the point of infatuation?"

"I want her at any cost!" Montriveau cried out despairingly.

"Very well. Now, look here. Be as inexorable as she is herself. Try to humiliate her, to sting her vanity. Do NOT try to move her heart, nor her soul, but the woman's nerves and temperament, for she is both nervous and lymphatic. If you can once awaken desire in her, you are safe. But you must drop these romantic boyish notions of yours. If when once you have her in your eagle's talons you yield a point or draw back, if you so much as stir an eyelid, if she thinks that she can regain her ascendancy over you, she will slip out of your clutches like a fish, and you will never catch her again. Be as inflexible as law. Show no more charity than the headsman. Hit hard, and then hit again. Strike and keep on striking as if you were giving her the knout. Duchesses are made of hard stuff, my dear Armand; there is a sort of feminine nature that is only softened by repeated blows; and as suffering develops a heart in women of that sort, so it is a work of charity not to spare the rod. Do you persevere. Ah! when pain has thoroughly relaxed those nerves and softened the fibres that you take to be so pliant and yielding; when a shrivelled heart has learned to expand and contract and to beat under this discipline; when the brain has capitulated—then, perhaps, passion may enter among the steel springs of this machinery that turns out tears and affectations and languors and melting phrases; then you shall see a most magnificent conflagration (always

supposing that the chimney takes fire). The steel feminine system will glow red−hot like iron in the forge; that kind of heat lasts longer than any other, and the glow of it may possibly turn to love.

“Still,” he continued, “I have my doubts. And, after all, is it worth while to take so much trouble with the Duchess? Between ourselves a man of my stamp ought first to take her in hand and break her in; I would make a charming woman of her; she is a thoroughbred; whereas, you two left to yourselves will never get beyond the A B C. But you are in love with her, and just now you might not perhaps share my views on this subject——. A pleasant time to you, my children,” added Ronquerolles, after a pause. Then with a laugh: “I have decided myself for facile beauties; they are tender, at any rate, the natural woman appears in their love without any of your social seasonings. A woman that haggles over herself, my poor boy, and only means to inspire love! Well, have her like an extra horse—for show. The match between the sofa and confessional, black and white, queen and knight, conscientious scruples and pleasure, is an uncommonly amusing game of chess. And if a man knows the game, let him be never so little of a rake, he wins in three moves. Now, if I undertook a woman of that sort, I should start with the deliberate purpose of——” His voice sank to a whisper over the last words in Armand's ear, and he went before there was time to reply.

As for Montriveau, he sprang at a bound across the courtyard of the Hotel de Langeais, went unannounced up the stairs straight to the Duchess's bedroom.

“This is an unheard−of thing,” she said, hastily wrapping her dressing−gown about her. “Armand! this is abominable of you! Come, leave the room, I beg. Just go out of the room, and go at once. Wait for me in the drawing−room.—Come now!”

“Dear angel, has a plighted lover no privilege whatsoever?”

“But, monsieur, it is in the worst possible taste of a plighted lover or a wedded husband to break in like this upon his wife.”

He came up to the Duchess, took her in his arms, and held her tightly to him.

“Forgive, dear Antoinette; but a host of horrid doubts are fermenting in my heart.”

“DOUBTS? Fie!—Oh, fie on you!”

“Doubts all but justified. If you loved me, would you make this quarrel? Would you not be glad to see me? Would you not have felt a something stir in your heart? For I, that am not a woman, feel a thrill in my inmost self at the mere sound of your voice. Often in a ballroom a longing has come upon me to spring to your side and put my arms about your neck.”

“Oh! if you have doubts of me so long as I am not ready to spring to your arms before all the world, I shall be doubted all my life long, I suppose. Why, Othello was a mere child compared with you!”

“Ah!” he cried despairingly, “you have no love for me——”

“Admit, at any rate, that at this moment you are not lovable.” Then I have still to find favour in your sight?”

“Oh, I should think so. Come,” added she, “with a little imperious air, go out of the room, leave me. I am not like you; I wish always to find favour in your eyes.”

Never woman better understood the art of putting charm into insolence, and does not the charm double the effect? is it not enough to infuriate the coolest of men? There was a sort of untrammelled freedom about Mme de Langeais; a something in her eyes, her voice, her attitude, which is never seen in a woman who loves when she stands face to face with him at the mere sight of whom her heart must needs begin to beat. The Marquis de Ronquerolles's counsels had cured Armand of sheepishness; and further, there came to his aid that rapid power of intuition which passion will develop at moments in the least wise among mortals, while a great man at such a time possesses it to the full. He guessed the terrible truth revealed by the Duchess's nonchalance, and his heart swelled with the storm like a lake rising in flood.

“If you told me the truth yesterday, be mine, dear Antoinette,” he cried; “you shall——”

“In the first place,” said she composedly, thrusting him back as he came nearer—“in the first place, you are not to compromise me. My woman might overhear you. Respect me, I beg of you. Your familiarity is all very well in my boudoir in an evening; here it is quite different. Besides, what may your `you shall' mean? `You shall.' No one as yet has ever used that word to me. It is quite ridiculous, it seems to me, absolutely ridiculous.

“Will you surrender nothing to me on this point?”

“Oh! do you call a woman's right to dispose of herself a `point?' A capital point indeed; you will permit me to be entirely my own mistress on that `point.'“

"And how if, believing in your promises to me, I should absolutely require it?"

"Oh! then you would prove that I made the greatest possible mistake when I made you a promise of any kind; and I should beg you to leave me in peace."

The General's face grew white; he was about to spring to her side, when Mme de Langeais rang the bell, the maid appeared, and, smiling with a mocking grace, the Duchess added, "Be so good as to return when I am visible."

Then Montriveau felt the hardness of a woman as cold and keen as a steel blade; she was crushing in her scorn. In one moment she had snapped the bonds which held firm only for her lover. She had read Armand's intention in his face, and held that the moment had come for teaching the Imperial soldier his lesson. He was to be made to feel that though duchesses may lend themselves to love, they do not give themselves, and that the conquest of one of them would prove a harder matter than the conquest of Europe.

"Madame," returned Armand, "I have not time to wait. I am a spoilt child, as you told me yourself. When I seriously resolve to have that of which we have been speaking, I shall have it."

"You will have it?" queried she, and there was a trace of surprise in her loftiness.

"I shall have it."

"Oh! you would do me a great pleasure by `resolving' to have it. For curiosity's sake, I should be delighted to know how you would set about it——"

"I am delighted to put a new interest into your life," interrupted Montriveau, breaking into a laugh which dismayed the Duchess. "Will you permit me to take you to the ball tonight?"

"A thousand thanks. M. de Marsay has been beforehand with you. I gave him my promise."

Montriveau bowed gravely and went.

"So Ronquerolles was right," thought he, "and now for a game of chess."

Thenceforward he hid his agitation by complete composure. No man is strong enough to bear such sudden alternations from the height of happiness to the depths of wretchedness. So he had caught a glimpse of happy life the better to feel the emptiness of his previous existence? There was a terrible storm within him; but he had learned to endure, and bore the shock of tumultuous thoughts as a granite cliff stands out against the surge of an angry sea.

"I could say nothing. When I am with her my wits desert me. She does not know how vile and contemptible she is. Nobody has ventured to bring her face to face with herself. She has played with many a man, no doubt; I will avenge them all."

For the first time, it may be, in a man's heart, revenge and love were blended so equally that Montriveau himself could not know whether love or revenge would carry all before it. That very evening he went to the ball at which he was sure of seeing the Duchesse de Langeais, and almost despaired of reaching her heart.

He inclined to think that there was something diabolical about this woman, who was gracious to him and radiant with charming smiles; probably because she had no wish to allow the world to think that she had compromised herself with M. de Montriveau. Coolness on both sides is a sign of love; but so long as the Duchess was the same as ever, while the Marquis looked sullen and morose, was it not plain that she had conceded nothing? Onlookers know the rejected lover by various signs and tokens; they never mistake the genuine symptoms for a coolness such as some women command their adorers to feign, in the hope of concealing their love. Everyone laughed at Montriveau; and he, having omitted to consult his cornac, was abstracted and ill at ease. M. de Ronquerolles would very likely have bidden him compromise the Duchess by responding to her show of friendliness by passionate demonstrations; but as it was, Armand de Montriveau came away from the ball, loathing human nature, and even then scarcely ready to believe in such complete depravity.

"If there is no executioner for such crimes," he said, as he looked up at the lighted windows of the ballroom where the most enchanting women in Paris were dancing, laughing, and chatting, "I will take you by the nape of the neck, Mme la Duchesse, and make you feel something that bites more deeply than the knife in the Place de la Greve. Steel against steel; we shall see which heart will leave the deeper mark."

For a week or so Mme de Langeais hoped to see the Marquis de Montriveau again; but he contented himself with sending his card every morning to the Hotel de Langeais. The Duchess could not help shuddering each time that the card was brought in, and a dim foreboding crossed her mind, but the thought was vague as a presentiment of disaster. When her eyes fell on the name, it seemed to her that she felt the touch of the implacable man's strong

hand in her hair; sometimes the words seemed like a prognostication of a vengeance which her lively intellect invented in the most shocking forms. She had studied him too well not to dread him. Would he murder her, she wondered? Would that bull−necked man dash out her vitals by flinging her over his head? Would he trample her body under his feet? When, where, and how would he get her into his power? Would he make her suffer very much, and what kind of pain would he inflict? She repented of her conduct. There were hours when, if he had come, she would have gone to his arms in complete self−surrender.

Every night before she slept she saw Montriveau's face; every night it wore a different aspect. Sometimes she saw his bitter smile, sometimes the Jovelike knitting of the brows; or his leonine look, or some disdainful movement of the shoulders made him terrible for her. Next day the card seemed stained with blood. The name of Montriveau stirred her now as the presence of the fiery, stubborn, exacting lover had never done. Her apprehensions gathered strength in the silence. She was forced, without aid from without, to face the thought of a hideous duel of which she could not speak. Her proud hard nature was more responsive to thrills of hate than it had ever been to the caresses of love. Ah! if the General could but have seen her, as she sat with her forehead drawn into folds between her brows; immersed in bitter thoughts in that boudoir where he had enjoyed such happy moments, he might perhaps have conceived high hopes. Of all human passions, is not pride alone incapable of engendering anything base? Mme de Langeais kept her thoughts to herself, but is it not permissible to suppose that M. de Montriveau was no longer indifferent to her? And has not a man gained ground immensely when a woman thinks about him? He is bound to make progress with her either one way or the other afterwards.

Put any feminine creature under the feet of a furious horse or other fearsome beast; she will certainly drop on her knees and look for death; but if the brute shows a milder mood and does not utterly slay her, she will love the horse, lion, bull, or what not, and will speak of him quite at her ease. The Duchess felt that she was under the lion's paws; she quaked, but she did not hate him.

The man and woman thus singularly placed with regard to each other met three times in society during the course of that week. Each time, in reply to coquettish questioning glances, the Duchess received a respectful bow, and smiles tinged with such savage irony, that all her apprehensions over the card in the morning were revived at night. Our lives are simply such as our feelings shape them for us; and the feelings of these two had hollowed out a great gulf between them.

The Comtesse de Serizy, the Marquis de Ronquerolles's sister, gave a great ball at the beginning of the following week, and Mme de Langeais was sure to go to it. Armand was the first person whom the Duchess saw when she came into the room, and this time Armand was looking out for her, or so she thought at least. The two exchanged a look, and suddenly the woman felt a cold perspiration break from every pore. She had thought all along that Montriveau was capable of taking reprisals in some unheard−of way proportioned to their condition, and now the revenge had been discovered, it was ready, heated, and boiling. Lightnings flashed from the foiled lover's eyes, his face was radiant with exultant vengeance. And the Duchess? Her eyes were haggard in spite of her resolution to be cool and insolent. She went to take her place beside the Comtesse de Serizy, who could not help exclaiming, “Dear Antoinette! what is the matter with you? You are enough to frighten one.”

“I shall be all right after a quadrille,” she answered, giving a hand to a young man who came up at that moment.

Mme de Langeais waltzed that evening with a sort of excitement and transport which redoubled Montriveau's lowering looks. He stood in front of the line of spectators, who were amusing themselves by looking on. Every time that SHE came past him, his eyes darted down upon her eddying face; he might have been a tiger with the prey in his grasp. The waltz came to an end, Mme de Langeais went back to her place beside the Countess, and Montriveau never took his eyes off her, talking all the while with a stranger.

“One of the things that struck me most on the journey,” he was saying (and the Duchess listened with all her ears), “was the remark which the man makes at Westminster when you are shown the axe with which a man in a mask cut off Charles the First's head, so they tell you. The King made it first of all to some inquisitive person, and they repeat it still in memory of him.”

“What does the man say?” asked Mme de Serizy.

“Do not touch the axe!'“ replied Montriveau, and there was menace in the sound of his voice.

“Really, my Lord Marquis,” said Mme de Langeais, “you tell this old story that everybody knows if they have been to London, and look at my neck in such a melodramatic way that you seem to me to have an axe in your

hand."

The Duchess was in a cold sweat, but nevertheless she laughed as she spoke the last words.

"But circumstances give the story a quite new application," returned he.

"How so; pray tell me, for pity's sake?"

"In this way, madame—you have touched the axe," said Montriveau, lowering his voice.

"What an enchanting prophecy!" returned she, smiling with assumed grace. "And when is my head to fall?"

"I have no wish to see that pretty head of yours cut off. I only fear some great misfortune for you. If your head were clipped close, would you feel no regrets for the dainty golden hair that you turn to such good account?"

"There are those for whom a woman would love to make such a sacrifice; even if, as often happens, it is for the sake of a man who cannot make allowances for an outbreak of temper."

"Quite so. Well, and if some wag were to spoil your beauty on a sudden by some chemical process, and you, who are but eighteen for us, were to be a hundred years old?"

"Why, the smallpox is our Battle of Waterloo, monsieur," she interrupted. "After it is over we find out those who love us sincerely."

"Would you not regret the lovely face that?"

"Oh! indeed I should, but less for my own sake than for the sake of someone else whose delight it might have been. And, after all, if I were loved, always loved, and truly loved, what would my beauty matter to me?—What do you say, Clara?"

"It is a dangerous speculation," replied Mme de Serizy.

"Is it permissible to ask His Majesty the King of Sorcerers when I made the mistake of touching the axe, since I have not been to London as yet?——"

"NOT SO," he answered in English, with a burst of ironical laughter.

"And when will the punishment begin?"

At this Montriveau coolly took out his watch, and ascertained the hour with a truly appalling air of conviction.

"A dreadful misfortune will befall you before this day is out."

"I am not a child to be easily frightened, or rather, I am a child ignorant of danger," said the Duchess. "I shall dance now without fear on the edge of the precipice."

"I am delighted to know that you have so much strength of character," he answered, as he watched her go to take her place in a square dance.

But the Duchess, in spite of her apparent contempt for Armand's dark prophecies, was really frightened. Her late lover's presence weighed upon her morally and physically with a sense of oppression that scarcely ceased when he left the ballroom. And yet when she had drawn freer breath, and enjoyed the relief for a moment, she found herself regretting the sensation of dread, so greedy of extreme sensations is the feminine nature. The regret was not love, but it was certainly akin to other feelings which prepare the way for love. And then—as if the impression which Montriveau had made upon her were suddenly revived—she recollected his air of conviction as he took out his watch, and in a sudden spasm of dread she went out.

By this time it was about midnight. One of her servants, waiting with her pelisse, went down to order her carriage. On her way home she fell naturally enough to musing over M. de Montriveau's prediction. Arrived in her own courtyard, as she supposed, she entered a vestibule almost like that of her own hotel, and suddenly saw that the staircase was different. She was in a strange house. Turning to call her servants, she was attacked by several men, who rapidly flung a handkerchief over her mouth, bound her hand and foot, and carried her off. She shrieked aloud.

"Madame, our orders are to kill you if you scream," a voice said in her ear.

So great was the Duchess's terror, that she could never recollect how nor by whom she was transported. When she came to herself, she was lying on a couch in a bachelor's lodging, her hands and feet tied with silken cords. In spite of herself, she shrieked aloud as she looked round and met Armand de Montriveau's eyes. He was sitting in his dressing−gown, quietly smoking a cigar in his armchair.

"Do not cry out, Mme la Duchesse," he said, coolly taking the cigar out of his mouth; "I have a headache. Besides, I will untie you. But listen attentively to what I have the honour to say to you."

Very carefully he untied the knots that bound her feet.

"What would be the use of calling out? Nobody can hear your cries. You are too well bred to make any

unnecessary fuss. If you do not stay quietly, if you insist upon a struggle with me, I shall tie your hands and feet again. All things considered, I think that you have self−respect enough to stay on this sofa as if you were lying on your own at home; cold as ever, if you will. You have made me shed many tears on this couch, tears that I hid from all other eyes."

While Montriveau was speaking, the Duchess glanced about her; it was a woman's glance, a stolen look that saw all things and seemed to see nothing. She was much pleased with the room. It was rather like a monk's cell. The man's character and thoughts seemed to pervade it. No decoration of any kind broke the grey painted surface of the walls. A green carpet covered the floor. A black sofa, a table littered with papers, two big easy−chairs, a chest of drawers with an alarum clock by way of ornament, a very low bedstead with a coverlet flung over it—a red cloth with a black key border—all these things made part of a whole that told of a life reduced to its simplest terms. A triple candle−sconce of Egyptian design on the chimney−piece recalled the vast spaces of the desert and Montriveau's long wanderings; a huge sphinx−claw stood out beneath the folds of stuff at the bed−foot; and just beyond, a green curtain with a black and scarlet border was suspended by large rings from a spear handle above a door near one corner of the room. The other door by which the band had entered was likewise curtained, but the drapery hung from an ordinary curtain−rod. As the Duchess finally noted that the pattern was the same on both, she saw that the door at the bed−foot stood open; gleams of ruddy light from the room beyond flickered below the fringed border. Naturally, the ominous light roused her curiosity; she fancied she could distinguish strange shapes in the shadows; but as it did not occur to her at the time that danger could come from that quarter, she tried to gratify a more ardent curiosity.

"Monsieur, if it is not indiscreet, may I ask what you mean to do with me?" The insolence and irony of the tone stung through the words. The Duchess quite believed that she read extravagant love in Montriveau's speech. He had carried her off; was not that in itself an acknowledgment of her power?

"Nothing whatever, madame," he returned, gracefully puffing the last whiff of cigar smoke. "You will remain here for a short time. First of all, I should like to explain to you what you are, and what I am. I cannot put my thoughts into words whilst you are twisting on the sofa in your boudoir; and besides, in your own house you take offence at the slightest hint, you ring the bell, make an outcry, and turn your lover out at the door as if he were the basest of wretches. Here my mind is unfettered. Here nobody can turn me out. Here you shall be my victim for a few seconds, and you are going to be so exceedingly kind as to listen to me. You need fear nothing. I did not carry you off to insult you, nor yet to take by force what you refused to grant of your own will to my unworthiness. I could not stoop so low. You possibly think of outrage; for myself, I have no such thoughts."

He flung his cigar coolly into the fire.

"The smoke is unpleasant to you, no doubt, madame?" he said, and rising at once, he took a chafing−dish from the hearth, burnt perfumes, and purified the air. The Duchess's astonishment was only equalled by her humiliation. She was in this man's power; and he would not abuse his power. The eyes in which love had once blazed like flame were now quiet and steady as stars. She trembled. Her dread of Armand was increased by a nightmare sensation of restlessness and utter inability to move; she felt as if she were turned to stone. She lay passive in the grip of fear. She thought she saw the light behind the curtains grow to a blaze, as if blown up by a pair of bellows; in another moment the gleams of flame grew brighter, and she fancied that three masked figures suddenly flashed out; but the terrible vision disappeared so swiftly that she took it for an optical delusion.

"Madame," Armand continued with cold contempt, "one minute, just one minute is enough for me, and you shall feel it afterwards at every moment throughout your lifetime, the one eternity over which I have power. I am not God. Listen carefully to me," he continued, pausing to add solemnity to his words. "Love will always come at your call. You have boundless power over men: but remember that once you called love, and love came to you; love as pure and true−hearted as may be on earth, and as reverent as it was passionate; fond as a devoted woman's, as a mother's love; a love so great indeed, that it was past the bounds of reason. You played with it, and you committed a crime. Every woman has a right to refuse herself to love which she feels she cannot share; and if a man loves and cannot win love in return, he is not to be pitied, he has no right to complain. But with a semblance of love to attract an unfortunate creature cut off from all affection; to teach him to understand happiness to the full, only to snatch it from him; to rob him of his future of felicity; to slay his happiness not merely today, but as long as his life lasts, by poisoning every hour of it and every thought—this I call a fearful crime!"

"Monsieur——"

“I cannot allow you to answer me yet. So listen to me still. In any case I have rights over you; but I only choose to exercise one—the right of the judge over the criminal, so that I may arouse your conscience. If you had no conscience left, I should not reproach you at all; but you are so young! You must feel some life still in your heart; or so I like to believe. While I think of you as depraved enough to do a wrong which the law does not punish, I do not think you so degraded that you cannot comprehend the full meaning of my words. I resume.”

As he spoke the Duchess heard the smothered sound of a pair of bellows. Those mysterious figures which she had just seen were blowing up the fire, no doubt; the glow shone through the curtain. But Montriveau's lurid face was turned upon her; she could not choose but wait with a fast−beating heart and eyes fixed in a stare. However curious she felt, the heat in Armand's words interested her even more than the crackling of the mysterious flames.

“Madame,” he went on after a pause, “if some poor wretch commits a murder in Paris, it is the executioner's duty, you know, to lay hands on him and stretch him on the plank, where murderers pay for their crimes with their heads. Then the newspapers inform everyone, rich and poor, so that the former are assured that they may sleep in peace, and the latter are warned that they must be on the watch if they would live. Well, you that are religious, and even a little of a bigot, may have masses said for such a man's soul. You both belong to the same family, but yours is the elder branch; and the elder branch may occupy high places in peace and live happily and without cares. Want or anger may drive your brother the convict to take a man's life; you have taken more, you have taken the joy out of a man's life, you have killed all that was best in his life—his dearest beliefs. The murderer simply lay in wait for his victim, and killed him reluctantly, and in fear of the scaffold; but YOU . . . ! You heaped up every sin that weakness can commit against strength that suspected no evil; you tamed a passive victim, the better to gnaw his heart out; you lured him with caresses; you left nothing undone that could set him dreaming, imagining, longing for the bliss of love. You asked innumerable sacrifices of him, only to refuse to make any in return. He should see the light indeed before you put out his eyes! It is wonderful how you found the heart to do it! Such villainies demand a display of resource quite above the comprehension of those bourgeoises whom you laugh at and despise. They can give and forgive; they know how to love and suffer. The grandeur of their devotion dwarfs us. Rising higher in the social scale, one finds just as much mud as at the lower end; but with this difference, at the upper end it is hard and gilded over.

“Yes, to find baseness in perfection, you must look for a noble bringing up, a great name, a fair woman, a duchess. You cannot fall lower than the lowest unless you are set high above the rest of the world.—I express my thoughts badly; the wounds you dealt me are too painful as yet, but do not think that I complain. My words are not the expression of any hope for myself; there is no trace of bitterness in them. Know this, madame, for a certainty—I forgive you. My forgiveness is so complete that you need not feel in the least sorry that you came hither to find it against your will. . . . But you might take advantage of other hearts as child−like as my own, and it is my duty to spare them anguish. So you have inspired the thought of justice. Expiate your sin here on earth; God may perhaps forgive you; I wish that He may, but He is inexorable, and will strike.”

The broken−spirited, broken−hearted woman looked up, her eyes filled with tears.

“Why do you cry? Be true to your nature. You could look on indifferently at the torture of a heart as you broke it. That will do, madame, do not cry. I cannot bear it any longer. Other men will tell you that you have given them life; as for myself, I tell you, with rapture, that you have given me blank extinction. Perhaps you guess that I am not my own, that I am bound to live for my friends, that from this time forth I must endure the cold chill of death, as well as the burden of life? Is it possible that there can be so much kindness in you? Are you like the desert tigress that licks the wounds she has inflicted?”

The Duchess burst out sobbing.

“Pray spare your tears, madame. If I believed in them at all, it would merely set me on my guard. Is this another of your artifices? or is it not? You have used so many with me; how can one think that there is any truth in you? Nothing that you do or say has any power now to move me. That is all I have to say.”

Mme de Langeais rose to her feet, with a great dignity and humility in her bearing.

“You are right to treat me very hardly,” she said, holding out a hand to the man who did not take it; “you have not spoken hardly enough; and I deserve this punishment.”

“*I* punish you, madame! A man must love still, to punish, must he not? From me you must expect no feeling, nothing resembling it. If I chose, I might be accuser and judge in my cause, and pronounce and carry out the sentence. But I am about to fulfil a duty, not a desire of vengeance of any kind. The cruellest revenge of all, I

think, is scorn of revenge when it is in our power to take it. Perhaps I shall be the minister of your pleasures; who knows? Perhaps from this time forth, as you gracefully wear the tokens of disgrace by which society marks out the criminal, you may perforce learn something of the convict's sense of honour. And then, you will love!”

The Duchess sat listening; her meekness was unfeigned; it was no coquettish device. When she spoke at last, it was after a silence.

“Armand,” she began, “it seems to me that when I resisted love, I was obeying all the instincts of woman's modesty; I should not have looked for such reproaches from YOU. I was weak; you have turned all my weaknesses against me, and made so many crimes of them. How could you fail to understand that the curiosity of love might have carried me further than I ought to go; and that next morning I might be angry with myself, and wretched because I had gone too far? Alas! I sinned in ignorance. I was as sincere in my wrongdoing, I swear to you, as in my remorse. There was far more love for you in my severity than in my concessions. And besides, of what do you complain? I gave you my heart; that was not enough; you demanded, brutally, that I should give my person——”

“Brutally?” repeated Montriveau. But to himself he said, “If I once allow her to dispute over words, I am lost.”

“Yes. You came to me as if I were one of those women. You showed none of the respect, none of the attentions of love. Had I not reason to reflect? Very well, I reflected. The unseemliness of your conduct is not inexcusable; love lay at the source of it; let me think so, and justify you to myself.—Well, Armand, this evening, even while you were prophesying evil, I felt convinced that there was happiness in store for us both. Yes, I put my faith in the noble, proud nature so often tested and proved.” She bent lower. “And I was yours wholly,” she murmured in his ear. “I felt a longing that I cannot express to give happiness to a man so violently tried by adversity. If I must have a master, my master should be a great man. As I felt conscious of my height, the less I cared to descend. I felt I could trust you, I saw a whole lifetime of love, while you were pointing to death. . . . Strength and kindness always go together. My friend, you are so strong, you will not be unkind to a helpless woman who loves you. If I was wrong, is there no way of obtaining forgiveness? No way of making reparation? Repentance is the charm of love; I should like to be very charming for you. How could I, alone among women, fail to know a woman's doubts and fears, the timidity that it is so natural to feel when you bind yourself for life, and know how easily a man snaps such ties? The bourgeoises, with whom you compared me just now, give themselves, but they struggle first. Very well—I struggled; but here I am!—Ah! God, he does not hear me!” she broke off, and wringing her hands, she cried out “But I love you! I am yours!” and fell at Armand's feet.

“Yours! yours! my one and only master!”

Armand tried to raise her.

“Madame, it is too late! Antoinette cannot save the Duchesse de Langeais. I cannot believe in either. Today you may give yourself; tomorrow, you may refuse. No power in earth or heaven can insure me the sweet constancy of love. All love's pledges lay in the past; and now nothing of that past exists.”

The light behind the curtain blazed up so brightly, that the Duchess could not help turning her head; this time she distinctly saw the three masked figures.

“Armand,” she said, “I would not wish to think ill of you. Why are those men there? What are you going to do to me?”

“Those men will be as silent as I myself with regard to the thing which is about to be done. Think of them simply as my hands and my heart. One of them is a surgeon——”

“A surgeon! Armand, my friend, of all things, suspense is the hardest to bear. Just speak; tell me if you wish for my life; I will give it to you, you shall not take it——”

“Then you did not understand me? Did I not speak just now of justice? To put an end to your misapprehensions,” continued he, taking up a small steel object from the table, “I will now explain what I have decided with regard to you.”

He held out a Lorraine cross, fastened to the tip of a steel rod.

“Two of my friends at this very moment are heating another cross, made on this pattern, red−hot. We are going to stamp it upon your forehead, here between the eyes, so that there will be no possibility of hiding the mark with diamonds, and so avoiding people's questions. In short, you shall bear on your forehead the brand of infamy which your brothers the convicts wear on their shoulders. The pain is a mere trifle, but I feared a nervous

crisis of some kind, of resistance——”

“Resistance?” she cried, clapping her hands for joy. “Oh no, no! I would have the whole world here to see. Ah, my Armand, brand her quickly, this creature of yours; brand her with your mark as a poor little trifle belonging to you. You asked for pledges of my love; here they are all in one. Ah! for me there is nothing but mercy and forgiveness and eternal happiness in this revenge of yours. When you have marked this woman with your mark, when you set your crimson brand on her, your slave in soul, you can never afterwards abandon her, you will be mine for evermore? When you cut me off from my kind, you make yourself responsible for my happiness, or you prove yourself base; and I know that you are noble and great! Why, when a woman loves, the brand of love is burnt into her soul by her own will.—Come in, gentlemen! come in and brand her, this Duchesse de Langeais. She is M. de Montriveau's forever! Ah! come quickly, all of you, my forehead burns hotter than your fire!”

Armand turned his head sharply away lest he should see the Duchess kneeling, quivering with the throbbings of her heart. He said some word, and his three friends vanished.

The women of Paris salons know how one mirror reflects another. The Duchess, with every motive for reading the depths of Armand's heart, was all eyes; and Armand, all unsuspicious of the mirror, brushed away two tears as they fell. Her whole future lay in those two tears. When he turned round again to help her to rise, she was standing before him, sure of love. Her pulses must have throbbed fast when he spoke with the firmness she had known so well how to use of old while she played with him.

“I spare you, madame. All that has taken place shall be as if it had never been, you may believe me. But now, let us bid each other goodbye. I like to think that you were sincere in your coquetries on your sofa, sincere again in this outpouring of your heart. Good−bye. I feel that there is no faith in you left in me. You would torment me again; you would always be the Duchess, and——But there, good−bye, we shall never understand each other.

“Now, what do you wish?” he continued, taking the tone of a master of the ceremonies—“to return home, or to go back to Mme de Serizy's ball? I have done all in my power to prevent any scandal. Neither your servants nor anyone else can possibly know what has passed between us in the last quarter of an hour. Your servants have no idea that you have left the ballroom; your carriage never left Mme de Serizy's courtyard; your brougham may likewise be found in the court of your own hotel. Where do you wish to be?”

“What do you counsel, Armand?”

“There is no Armand now, Mme la Duchesse. We are strangers to each other.”

“Then take me to the ball,” she said, still curious to put Armand's power to the test. “Thrust a soul that suffered in the world, and must always suffer there, if there is no happiness for her now, down into hell again. And yet, oh my friend, I love you as your bourgeoises love; I love you so that I could come to you and fling my arms about your neck before all the world if you asked it off me. The hateful world has not corrupted me. I am young at least, and I have grown younger still. I am a child, yes, your child, your new creature. Ah! do not drive me forth out of my Eden!”

Armand shook his head.

“Ah! let me take something with me, if I go, some little thing to wear tonight on my heart,” she said, taking possession of Armand's glove, which she twisted into her handkerchief.

“No, I am NOT like all those depraved women. You do not know the world, and so you cannot know my worth. You shall know it now! There are women who sell themselves for money; there are others to be gained by gifts, it is a vile world! Oh, I wish I were a simple bourgeoise, a working girl, if you would rather have a woman beneath you than a woman whose devotion is accompanied by high rank, as men count it. Oh, my Armand, there are noble, high, and chaste and pure natures among us; and then they are lovely indeed. I would have all nobleness that I might offer it all up to you. Misfortune willed that I should be a duchess; I would I were a royal princess, that my offering might be complete. I would be a grisette for you, and a queen for everyone besides.”

He listened, damping his cigars with his lips.

“You will let me know when you wish to go,” he said.

“But I should like to stay——”

“That is another matter!”

“Stay, that was badly rolled,” she cried, seizing on a cigar and devouring all that Armand's lips had touched.

“Do you smoke?”

“Oh, what would I not do to please you?”

“Very well. Go, madame.”

“I will obey you,” she answered, with tears in her eyes.

“You must be blindfolded; you must not see a glimpse of the way.”

“I am ready, Armand,” she said, bandaging her eyes.

“Can you see?”

“No.”

Noiselessly he knelt before her.

“Ah! I can hear you!” she cried, with a little fond gesture, thinking that the pretence of harshness was over.

He made as if he would kiss her lips; she held up her face.

“You can see, madame.”

“I am just a little bit curious.”

“So you always deceive me?”

“Ah! take off this handkerchief, sir,” she cried out, with the passion of a great generosity repelled with scorn, “lead me; I will not open my eyes.”

Armand felt sure of her after that cry. He led the way; the Duchess nobly true to her word, was blind. But while Montriveau held her hand as a father might, and led her up and down flights of stairs, he was studying the throbbing pulses of this woman's heart so suddenly invaded by Love. Mme de Langeais, rejoicing in this power of speech, was glad to let him know all; but he was inflexible; his hand was passive in reply to the questionings of her hand.

At length, after some journey made together, Armand bade her go forward; the opening was doubtless narrow, for as she went she felt that his hand protected her dress. His care touched her; it was a revelation surely that there was a little love still left; yet it was in some sort a farewell, for Montriveau left her without a word. The air was warm; the Duchess, feeling the heat, opened her eyes, and found herself standing by the fire in the Comtesse de Serizy's boudoir.

She was alone. Her first thought was for her disordered toilette; in a moment she had adjusted her dress and restored her picturesque coiffure.

“Well, dear Antoinette, we have been looking for you everywhere.” It was the Comtesse de Serizy who spoke as she opened the door.

“I came here to breathe,” said the Duchess; “it is unbearably hot in the rooms.”

“People thought that you had gone; but my brother Ronquerolles told me that your servants were waiting for you.”

“I am tired out, dear, let me stay and rest here for a minute,” and the Duchess sat down on the sofa.

“Why, what is the matter with you? You are shaking from head to foot!”

The Marquis de Ronquerolles came in.

“Mme la Duchesse, I was afraid that something might have happened. I have just come across your coachman, the man is as tipsy as all the Swiss in Switzerland.”

The Duchess made no answer; she was looking round the room, at the chimney−piece and the tall mirrors, seeking the trace of an opening. Then with an extraordinary sensation she recollected that she was again in the midst of the gaiety of the ballroom after that terrific scene which had changed the whole course of her life. She began to shiver violently.

“M. de Montriveau's prophecy has shaken my nerves,” she said. “It was a joke, but still I will see whether his axe from London will haunt me even in my sleep. So good−bye, dear.—Good−bye, M. le Marquis.”

As she went through the rooms she was beset with enquiries and regrets. Her world seemed to have dwindled now that she, its queen, had fallen so low, was so diminished. And what, moreover, were these men compared with him whom she loved with all her heart; with the man grown great by all that she had lost in stature? The giant had regained the height that he had lost for a while, and she exaggerated it perhaps beyond measure. She looked, in spite of herself, at the servant who had attended her to the ball. He was fast asleep.

“Have you been here all the time?” she asked.

“Yes, madame.”

As she took her seat in her carriage she saw, in fact, that her coachman was drunk—so drunk, that at any other

time she would have been afraid; but after a great crisis in life, fear loses its appetite for common food. She reached home, at any rate, without accident; but even there she felt a change in herself, a new feeling that she could not shake off. For her, there was now but one man in the world; which is to say that henceforth she cared to shine for his sake alone.

While the physiologist can define love promptly by following out natural laws, the moralist finds a far more perplexing problem before him if he attempts to consider love in all its developments due to social conditions. Still, in spite of the heresies of the endless sects that divide the church of Love, there is one broad and trenchant line of difference in doctrine, a line that all the discussion in the world can never deflect. A rigid application of this line explains the nature of the crisis through which the Duchess, like most women, was to pass. Passion she knew, but she did not love as yet.

Love and passion are two different conditions which poets and men of the world, philosophers and fools, alike continually confound.

Love implies a give and take, a certainty of bliss that nothing can change; it means so close a clinging of the heart, and an exchange of happiness so constant, that there is no room left for jealousy. Then possession is a means and not an end; unfaithfulness may give pain, but the bond is not less close; the soul is neither more nor less ardent or troubled, but happy at every moment; in short, the divine breath of desire spreading from end to end of the immensity of Time steeps it all for us in the selfsame hue; life takes the tint of the unclouded heaven. But Passion is the foreshadowing of Love, and of that Infinite to which all suffering souls aspire. Passion is a hope that may be cheated. Passion means both suffering and transition. Passion dies out when hope is dead. Men and women may pass through this experience many times without dishonour, for it is so natural to spring towards happiness; but there is only one love in a lifetime. All discussions of sentiment ever conducted on paper or by word of mouth may therefore be resumed by two questions—"Is it passion? Is it love?" So, since love comes into existence only through the intimate experience of the bliss which gives it lasting life, the Duchess was beneath the yoke of passion as yet; and as she knew the fierce tumult, the unconscious calculations, the fevered cravings, and all that is meant by that word PASSION—she suffered. Through all the trouble of her soul there rose eddying gusts of tempest, raised by vanity or self−love, or pride or a high spirit; for all these forms of egoism make common cause together.

She had said to this man, "I love you; I am yours!" Was it possible that the Duchesse de Langeais should have uttered those words—in vain? She must either be loved now or play her part of queen no longer. And then she felt the loneliness of the luxurious couch where pleasure had never yet set his glowing feet; and over and over again, while she tossed and writhed there, she said, "I want to be loved."

But the belief that she still had in herself gave her hope of success. The Duchess might be piqued, the vain Parisienne might be humiliated; but the woman saw glimpses of wedded happiness, and imagination, avenging the time lost for nature, took a delight in kindling the inextinguishable fire in her veins. She all but attained to the sensations of love; for amid her poignant doubt whether she was loved in return, she felt glad at heart to say to herself, "I love him!" As for her scruples, religion, and the world she could trample them under foot! Montriveau was her religion now. She spent the next day in a state of moral torpor, troubled by a physical unrest, which no words could express. She wrote letters and tore them all up, and invented a thousand impossible fancies.

When M. de Montriveau's usual hour arrived, she tried to think that he would come, and enjoyed the feeling of expectation. Her whole life was concentrated in the single sense of hearing. Sometimes she shut her eyes, straining her ears to listen through space, wishing that she could annihilate everything that lay between her and her lover, and so establish that perfect silence which sounds may traverse from afar. In her tense self−concentration, the ticking of the clock grew hateful to her; she stopped its ill−omened garrulity. The twelve strokes of midnight sounded from the drawing−room.

"Ah, God!" she cried, "to see him here would be happiness. And yet, it is not so very long since he came here, brought by desire, and the tones of his voice filled this boudoir. And now there is nothing."

She remembered the times that she had played the coquette with him, and how that her coquetry had cost her her lover, and the despairing tears flowed for long.

Her woman came at length with, "Mme la Duchesse does not know, perhaps, that it is two o'clock in the morning; I thought that madame was not feeling well."

"Yes, I am going to bed," said the Duchess, drying her eyes. "But remember, Suzanne, never to come in again

without orders; I tell you this for the last time."

For a week, Mme de Langeais went to every house where there was a hope of meeting M. de Montriveau. Contrary to her usual habits, she came early and went late; gave up dancing, and went to the card−tables. Her experiments were fruitless. She did not succeed in getting a glimpse of Armand. She did not dare to utter his name now. One evening, however, in a fit of despair, she spoke to Mme de Serizy, and asked as carelessly as she could, "You must have quarrelled with M. de Montriveau? He is not to be seen at your house now."

The Countess laughed. "So he does not come here either?" she returned. "He is not to be seen anywhere, for that matter. He is interested in some woman, no doubt."

"I used to think that the Marquis de Ronquerolles was one of his friends——" the Duchess began sweetly.

"I have never heard my brother say that he was acquainted with him."

Mme de Langeais did not reply. Mme de Serizy concluded from the Duchess's silence that she might apply the scourge with impunity to a discreet friendship which she had seen, with bitterness of soul, for a long time past.

"So you miss that melancholy personage, do you? I have heard most extraordinary things of him. Wound his feelings, he never comes back, he forgives nothing; and, if you love him, he keeps you in chains. To everything that I said of him, one of those that praise him sky−high would always answer, `He knows how to love!' People are always telling me that Montriveau would give up all for his friend; that his is a great nature. Pooh! society does not want such tremendous natures. Men of that stamp are all very well at home; let them stay there and leave us to our pleasant littlenesses. What do you say, Antoinette?"

Woman of the world though she was, the Duchess seemed agitated, yet she replied in a natural voice that deceived her fair friend—

"I am sorry to miss him. I took a great interest in him, and promised to myself to be his sincere friend. I like great natures, dear friend, ridiculous though you may think it. To give oneself to a fool is a clear confession, is it not, that one is governed wholly by one's senses?"

Mme de Serizy's "preferences" had always been for commonplace men; her lover at the moment, the Marquis d'Aiglemont, was a fine, tall man.

After this, the Countess soon took her departure, you may be sure Mme de Langeais saw hope in Armand's withdrawal from the world; she wrote to him at once; it was a humble, gentle letter, surely it would bring him if he loved her still. She sent her footman with it next day. On the servant's return, she asked whether he had given the letter to M. de Montriveau himself, and could not restrain the movement of joy at the affirmative answer. Armand was in Paris! He stayed alone in his house; he did not go out into society! So she was loved! All day long she waited for an answer that never came. Again and again, when impatience grew unbearable, Antoinette found reasons for his delay. Armand felt embarrassed; the reply would come by post; but night came, and she could not deceive herself any longer. It was a dreadful day, a day of pain grown sweet, of intolerable heart−throbs, a day when the heart squanders the very forces of life in riot.

Next day she sent for an answer.

"M. le Marquis sent word that he would call on Mme la Duchesse," reported Julien.

She fled lest her happiness should be seen in her face, and flung herself on her couch to devour her first sensations.

"He is coming!"

The thought rent her soul. And, in truth, woe unto those for whom suspense is not the most horrible time of tempest, while it increases and multiplies the sweetest joys; for they have nothing in them of that flame which quickens the images of things, giving to them a second existence, so that we cling as closely to the pure essence as to its outward and visible manifestation. What is suspense in love but a constant drawing upon an unfailing hope?—a submission to the terrible scourging of passion, while passion is yet happy, and the disenchantment of reality has not set in. The constant putting forth of strength and longing, called suspense, is surely, to the human soul, as fragrance to the flower that breathes it forth. We soon leave the brilliant, unsatisfying colours of tulips and coreopsis, but we turn again and again to drink in the sweetness of orange−blossoms or volkameria−flowers compared separately, each in its own land, to a betrothed bride, full of love, made fair by the past and future.

The Duchess learned the joys of this new life of hers through the rapture with which she received the scourgings of love. As this change wrought in her, she saw other destinies before her, and a better meaning in the things of life. As she hurried to her dressing−room, she understood what studied adornment and the most minute

attention to her toilet mean when these are undertaken for love's sake and not for vanity. Even now this making ready helped her to bear the long time of waiting. A relapse of intense agitation set in when she was dressed; she passed through nervous paroxysms brought on by the dreadful power which sets the whole mind in ferment. Perhaps that power is only a disease, though the pain of it is sweet. The Duchess was dressed and waiting at two o clock in the afternoon. At half−past eleven that night M. de Montriveau had not arrived. To try to give an idea of the anguish endured by a woman who might be said to be the spoilt child of civilisation, would be to attempt to say how many imaginings the heart can condense into one thought. As well endeavour to measure the forces expended by the soul in a sigh whenever the bell rang; to estimate the drain of life when a carriage rolled past without stopping, and left her prostrate.

“Can he be playing with me?” she said, as the clocks struck midnight.

She grew white; her teeth chattered; she struck her hands together and leapt up and crossed the boudoir, recollecting as she did so how often he had come thither without a summons. But she resigned herself. Had she not seen him grow pale, and start up under the stinging barbs of irony? Then Mme de Langeais felt the horror of the woman's appointed lot; a man's is the active part, a woman must wait passively when she loves. If a woman goes beyond her beloved, she makes a mistake which few men can forgive; almost every man would feel that a woman lowers herself by this piece of angelic flattery. But Armand's was a great nature; he surely must be one of the very few who can repay such exceeding love by love that lasts forever.

“Well, I will make the advance,” she told herself, as she tossed on her bed and found no sleep there; “I will go to him. I will not weary myself with holding out a hand to him, but I will hold it out. A man of a thousand will see a promise of love and constancy in every step that a woman takes towards him. Yes, the angels must come down from heaven to reach men; and I wish to be an angel for him.”

Next day she wrote. It was a billet of the kind in which the intellects of the ten thousand Sevignes that Paris now can number particularly excel. And yet only a Duchesse de Langeais, brought up by Mme la Princesse de Blamont−Chauvry, could have written that delicious note; no other woman could complain without lowering herself; could spread wings in such a flight without draggling her pinions in humiliation; rise gracefully in revolt; scold without giving offence; and pardon without compromising her personal dignity.

Julien went with the note. Julien, like his kind, was the victim of love's marches and countermarches.

“What did M. de Montriveau reply?” she asked, as indifferently as she could, when the man came back to report himself.

“M. le Marquis requested me to tell Mme la Duchesse that it was all right.”

Oh the dreadful reaction of the soul upon herself! To have her heart stretched on the rack before curious witnesses; yet not to utter a sound, to be forced to keep silence! One of the countless miseries of the rich!

More than three weeks went by. Mme de Langeais wrote again and again, and no answer came from Montriveau. At last she gave out that she was ill, to gain a dispensation from attendance on the Princess and from social duties. She was only at home to her father the Duc de Navarreins, her aunt the Princesse de Blamont−Chauvry, the old Vidame de Pamiers (her maternal great−uncle), and to her husband's uncle, the Duc de Grandlieu. These persons found no difficulty in believing that the Duchess was ill, seeing that she grew thinner and paler and more dejected every day. The vague ardour of love, the smart of wounded pride, the continual prick of the only scorn that could touch her, the yearnings towards joys that she craved with a vain continual longing—all these things told upon her, mind and body; all the forces of her nature were stimulated to no purpose. She was paying the arrears of her life of make−believe.

She went out at last to a review. M. de Montriveau was to be there. For the Duchess, on the balcony of the Tuileries with the Royal Family, it was one of those festival days that are long remembered. She looked supremely beautiful in her languor; she was greeted with admiration in all eyes. It was Montriveau's presence that made her so fair.

Once or twice they exchanged glances. The General came almost to her feet in all the glory of that soldier's uniform, which produces an effect upon the feminine imagination to which the most prudish will confess. When a woman is very much in love, and has not seen her lover for two months, such a swift moment must be something like the phase of a dream when the eyes embrace a world that stretches away forever. Only women or young men can imagine the dull, frenzied hunger in the Duchess's eyes. As for older men, if during the paroxysms of early passion in youth they had experience of such phenomena of nervous power; at a later day it is so completely

forgotten that they deny the very existence of the luxuriant ecstasy—the only name that can be given to these wonderful intuitions. Religious ecstasy is the aberration of a soul that has shaken off its bonds of flesh; whereas in amorous ecstasy all the forces of soul and body are embraced and blended in one. If a woman falls a victim to the tyrannous frenzy before which Mme de Langeais was forced to bend, she will take one decisive resolution after another so swiftly that it is impossible to give account of them. Thought after thought rises and flits across her brain, as clouds are whirled by the wind across the grey veil of mist that shuts out the sun. Thenceforth the facts reveal all. And the facts are these.

The day after the review, Mme de Langeais sent her carriage and liveried servants to wait at the Marquis de Montriveau's door from eight o'clock in the morning till three in the afternoon. Armand lived in the Rue de Tournon, a few steps away from the Chamber of Peers, and that very day the House was sitting; but long before the peers returned to their palaces, several people had recognised the Duchess's carriage and liveries. The first of these was the Baron de Maulincour. That young officer had met with disdain from Mme de Langeais and a better reception from Mme de Serizy; he betook himself at once therefore to his mistress, and under seal of secrecy told her of this strange freak.

In a moment the news was spread with telegraphic speed through all the coteries in the Faubourg Saint−Germain; it reached the Tuileries and the Elysee−Bourbon; it was the sensation of the day, the matter of all the talk from noon till night. Almost everywhere the women denied the facts, but in such a manner that the report was confirmed; the men one and all believed it, and manifested a most indulgent interest in Mme de Langeais. Some among them threw the blame on Armand.

“That savage of a Montriveau is a man of bronze,” said they; “he insisted on making this scandal, no doubt.”

“Very well, then,” others replied, “Mme de Langeais has been guilty of a most generous piece of imprudence. To renounce the world and rank, and fortune, and consideration for her lover's sake, and that in the face of all Paris, is as fine a coup d'etat for a woman as that barber's knife−thrust, which so affected Canning in a court of assize. Not one of the women who blame the Duchess would make a declaration worthy of ancient times. It is heroic of Mme de Langeais to proclaim herself so frankly. Now there is nothing left to her but to love Montriveau. There must be something great about a woman if she says, `I will have but one passion.'“

“But what is to become of society, monsieur, if you honour vice in this way without respect for virtue?” asked the Comtesse de Granville, the attorney−general's wife.

While the Chateau, the Faubourg, and the Chaussee d'Antin were discussing the shipwreck of aristocratic virtue; while excited young men rushed about on horseback to make sure that the carriage was standing in the Rue de Tournon, and the Duchess in consequence was beyond a doubt in M. de Montriveau's rooms, Mme de Langeais, with heavy throbbing pulses, was lying hidden away in her boudoir. And Armand?—he had been out all night, and at that moment was walking with M. de Marsay in the Gardens of the Tuileries. The elder members, of Mme de Langeais's family were engaged in calling upon one another, arranging to read her a homily and to hold a consultation as to the best way of putting a stop to the scandal.

At three o'clock, therefore, M. le Duc de Navarreins, the Vidame de Pamiers, the old Princesse de Blamont−Chauvry, and the Duc de Grandlieu were assembled in Mme la Duchesse de Langeais's drawing−room. To them, as to all curious enquirers, the servants said that their mistress was not at home; the Duchess had made no exceptions to her orders. But these four personages shone conspicuous in that lofty sphere, of which the revolutions and hereditary pretensions are solemnly recorded year by year in the Almanach de Gotha, wherefore without some slight sketch of each of them this picture of society were incomplete.

The Princesse de Blamont−Chauvry, in the feminine world, was a most poetic wreck of the reign of Louis Quinze. In her beautiful prime, so it was said, she had done her part to win for that monarch his appellation of le Bien−aime. Of her past charms of feature, little remained save a remarkably prominent slender nose, curved like a Turkish scimitar, now the principal ornament of a countenance that put you in mind of an old white glove. Add a few powdered curls, high−heeled pantoufles, a cap with upstanding loops of lace, black mittens, and a decided taste for ombre. But to do full justice to the lady, it must be said that she appeared in low−necked gowns of an evening (so high an opinion of her ruins had she), wore long gloves, and raddled her cheeks with Martin's classic rouge. An appalling amiability in her wrinkles, a prodigious brightness in the old lady's eyes, a profound dignity in her whole person, together with the triple barbed wit of her tongue, and an infallible memory in her head, made of her a real power in the land. The whole Cabinet des Chartes was entered in duplicate on the parchment of her

brain. She knew all the genealogies of every noble house in Europe—princes, dukes, and counts—and could put her hand on the last descendants of Charlemagne in the direct line. No usurpation of title could escape the Princesse de Blamont−Chauvry.

Young men who wished to stand well at Court, ambitious men, and young married women paid her assiduous homage. Her salon set the tone of the Faubourg Saint−Germain. The words of this Talleyrand in petticoats were taken as final decrees. People came to consult her on questions of etiquette or usages, or to take lessons in good taste. And, in truth, no other old woman could put back her snuff−box in her pocket as the Princess could; while there was a precision and a grace about the movements of her skirts, when she sat down or crossed her feet, which drove the finest ladies of the young generation to despair. Her voice had remained in her head during one−third of her lifetime; but she could not prevent a descent into the membranes of the nose, which lent to it a peculiar expressiveness. She still retained a hundred and fifty thousand livres of her great fortune, for Napoleon had generously returned her woods to her; so that personally and in the matter of possessions she was a woman of no little consequence.

This curious antique, seated in a low chair by the fireside, was chatting with the Vidame de Pamiers, a contemporary ruin. The Vidame was a big, tall, and spare man, a seigneur of the old school, and had been a Commander of the Order of Malta. His neck had always been so tightly compressed by a strangulation stock, that his cheeks pouched over it a little, and he held his head high; to many people this would have given an air of self−sufficiency, but in the Vidame it was justified by a Voltairean wit. His wide prominent eyes seemed to see everything, and as a matter of fact there was not much that they had not seen. Altogether, his person was a perfect model of aristocratic outline, slim and slender, supple and agreeable. He seemed as if he could be pliant or rigid at will, and twist and bend, or rear his head like a snake.

The Duc de Navarreins was pacing up and down the room with the Duc de Grandlieu. Both were men of fifty−six or thereabouts, and still hale; both were short, corpulent, flourishing, somewhat florid−complexioned men with jaded eyes, and lower lips that had begun to hang already. But for an exquisite refinement of accent, an urbane courtesy, and an ease of manner that could change in a moment to insolence, a superficial observer might have taken them for a couple of bankers. Any such mistake would have been impossible, however, if the listener could have heard them converse, and seen them on their guard with men whom they feared, vapid and commonplace with their equals, slippery with the inferiors whom courtiers and statesmen know how to tame by a tactful word, or to humiliate with an unexpected phrase.

Such were the representatives of the great noblesse that determined to perish rather than submit to any change. It was a noblesse that deserved praise and blame in equal measure; a noblesse that will never be judged impartially until some poet shall arise to tell how joyfully the nobles obeyed the King though their heads fell under a Richelieu's axe, and how deeply they scorned the guillotine of '89 as a foul revenge.

Another noticeable trait in all the four was a thin voice that agreed peculiarly well with their ideas and bearing. Among themselves, at any rate, they were on terms of perfect equality. None of them betrayed any sign of annoyance over the Duchess's escapade, but all of them had learned at Court to hide their feelings.

And here, lest critics should condemn the puerility of the opening of the forthcoming scene, it is perhaps as well to remind the reader that Locke, once happening to be in the company of several great lords, renowned no less for their wit than for their breeding and political consistency, wickedly amused himself by taking down their conversation by some shorthand process of his own; and afterwards, when he read it over to them to see what they could make of it, they all burst out laughing. And, in truth, the tinsel jargon which circulates among the upper ranks in every country yields mighty little gold to the crucible when washed in the ashes of literature or philosophy. In every rank of society (some few Parisian salons excepted) the curious observer finds folly a constant quantity beneath a more or less transparent varnish. Conversation with any substance in it is a rare exception, and boeotianism is current coin in every zone. In the higher regions they must perforce talk more, but to make up for it they think the less. Thinking is a tiring exercise, and the rich like their lives to flow by easily and without effort. It is by comparing the fundamental matter of jests, as you rise in the social scale from the street−boy to the peer of France, that the observer arrives at a true comprehension of M. de Talleyrand's maxim, “The manner is everything”; an elegant rendering of the legal axiom, “The form is of more consequence than the matter.” In the eyes of the poet the advantage rests with the lower classes, for they seldom fail to give a certain character of rude poetry to their thoughts. Perhaps also this same observation may explain the sterility of the

salons, their emptiness, their shallowness, and the repugnance felt by men of ability for bartering their ideas for such pitiful small change.

The Duke suddenly stopped as if some bright idea occurred to him, and remarked to his neighbour—

"So you have sold Tornthon?"

"No, he is ill. I am very much afraid I shall lose him, and I should be uncommonly sorry. He is a very good hunter. Do you know how the Duchesse de Marigny is?"

"No. I did not go this morning. I was just going out to call when you came in to speak about Antoinette. But yesterday she was very ill indeed; they had given her up, she took the sacrament."

"Her death will make a change in your cousin's position."

"Not at all. She gave away her property in her lifetime, only keeping an annuity. She made over the Guebriant estate to her niece, Mme de Soulanges, subject to a yearly charge."

"It will be a great loss for society. She was a kind woman. Her family will miss her; her experience and advice carried weight. Her son Marigny is an amiable man; he has a sharp wit, he can talk. He is pleasant, very pleasant. Pleasant? oh, that no one can deny, but—ill regulated to the last degree. Well, and yet it is an extraordinary thing, he is very acute. He was dining at the club the other day with that moneyed Chaussee−d'Antin set. Your uncle (he always goes there for his game of cards) found him there to his astonishment, and asked if he was a member. `Yes,' said he, `I don't go into society now; I am living among the bankers.'—You know why?" added the Marquis, with a meaning smile.

"No," said the Duke.

"He is smitten with that little Mme Keller, Gondreville's daughter; she is only lately married, and has a great vogue, they say, in that set."

"Well, Antoinette does not find time heavy on her hands, it seems," remarked the Vidame.

"My affection for that little woman has driven me to find a singular pastime," replied the Princess, as she returned her snuff−box to her pocket.

"Dear aunt, I am extremely vexed," said the Duke, stopping short in his walk. "Nobody but one of Buonaparte's men could ask such an indecorous thing of a woman of fashion. Between ourselves, Antoinette might have made a better choice."

"The Montriveaus are a very old family and very well connected, my dear," replied the Princess; "they are related to all the noblest houses of Burgundy. If the Dulmen branch of the Arschoot Rivaudoults should come to an end in Galicia, the Montriveaus would succeed to the Arschoot title and estates. They inherit through their great−grandfather.

"Are you sure?"

"I know it better than this Montriveau's father did. I told him about it, I used to see a good deal of him; and, Chevalier of several orders though he was, he only laughed; he was an encyclopaedist. But his brother turned the relationship to good account during the emigration. I have heard it said that his northern kinsfolk were most kind in every way——"

"Yes, to be sure. The Comte de Montriveau died at St. Petersburg," said the Vidame. "I met him there. He was a big man with an incredible passion for oysters."

"However many did he eat?" asked the Duc de Grandlieu.

"Ten dozen every day."

"And did they not disagree with him?"

"Not the least bit in the world."

"Why, that is extraordinary! Had he neither the stone nor gout, nor any other complaint, in consequence?"

"No; his health was perfectly good, and he died through an accident."

"By accident! Nature prompted him to eat oysters, so probably he required them; for up to a certain point our predominant tastes are conditions of our existence."

"I am of your opinion," said the Princess, with a smile.

"Madame, you always put a malicious construction on things," returned the Marquis.

"I only want you to understand that these remarks might leave a wrong impression on a young woman's mind," said she, and interrupted herself to exclaim, "But this niece, this niece of mine!"

"Dear aunt, I still refuse to believe that she can have gone to M. de Montriveau," said the Duc de Navarreins.

“Bah!” returned the Princess.

“What do you think, Vidame?” asked the Marquis.

“If the Duchess were an artless simpleton, I should think that——”

“But when a woman is in love she becomes an artless simpleton,” retorted the Princess. “Really, my poor Vidame, you must be getting older.”

“After all, what is to be done?” asked the Duke.

“If my dear niece is wise,” said the Princess, “she will go to Court this evening—fortunately, today is Monday, and reception day—and you must see that we all rally round her and give the lie to this absurd rumour. There are hundreds of ways of explaining things; and if the Marquis de Montriveau is a gentleman, he will come to our assistance. We will bring these children to listen to reason——”

“But, dear aunt, it is not easy to tell M. de Montriveau the truth to his face. He is one of Buonaparte's pupils, and he has a position. Why, he is one of the great men of the day; he is high up in the Guards, and very useful there. He has not a spark of ambition. He is just the man to say, `Here is my commission, leave me in peace,' if the King should say a word that he did not like.”

“Then, pray, what are his opinions?”

“Very unsound.”

“Really,” sighed the Princess, “the King is, as he always has been, a Jacobin under the Lilies of France.”

“Oh! not quite so bad,” said the Vidame.

“Yes; I have known him for a long while. The man that pointed out the Court to his wife on the occasion of her first state dinner in public with, `These are our people,' could only be a black−hearted scoundrel. I can see Monsieur exactly the same as ever in the King. The bad brother who voted so wrongly in his department of the Constituent Assembly was sure to compound with the Liberals and allow them to argue and talk. This philosophical cant will be just as dangerous now for the younger brother as it used to be for the elder; this fat man with the little mind is amusing himself by creating difficulties, and how his successor is to get out of them I do not know; he holds his younger brother in abhorrence; he would be glad to think as he lay dying, `He will not reign very long——'“

“Aunt, he is the King, and I have the honour to be in his service——”

“But does your post take away your right of free speech, my dear? You come of quite as good a house as the Bourbons. If the Guises had shown a little more resolution, His Majesty would be a nobody at this day. It is time I went out of this world, the noblesse is dead. Yes, it is all over with you, my children,” she continued, looking as she spoke at the Vidame. “What has my niece done that the whole town should be talking about her? She is in the wrong; I disapprove of her conduct, a useless scandal is a blunder; that is why I still have my doubts about this want of regard for appearances; I brought her up, and I know that——”

Just at that moment the Duchess came out of her boudoir. She had recognised her aunt's voice and heard the name of Montriveau. She was still in her loose morning−gown; and even as she came in, M. de Grandlieu, looking carelessly out of the window, saw his niece's carriage driving back along the street. The Duke took his daughter's face in both hands and kissed her on the forehead.

“So, dear girl,” he said, “you do not know what is going on?”

“Has anything extraordinary happened, father dear?”

“Why, all Paris believes that you are with M. de Montriveau.”

“My dear Antoinette, you were at home all the time, were you not?” said the Princess, holding out a hand, which the Duchess kissed with affectionate respect.

“Yes, dear mother; I was at home all the time. And,” she added, as she turned to greet the Vidame and the Marquis, “I wished that all Paris should think that I was with M. de Montriveau.”

The Duke flung up his hands, struck them together in despair, and folded his arms.

“Then, cannot you see what will come of this mad freak?” he asked at last.

But the aged Princess had suddenly risen, and stood looking steadily at the Duchess, the younger woman flushed, and her eyes fell. Mme de Chauvry gently drew her closer, and said, “My little angel, let me kiss you!”

She kissed her niece very affectionately on the forehead, and continued smiling, while she held her hand in a tight clasp.

“We are not under the Valois now, dear child. You have compromised your husband and your position. Still,

we will arrange to make everything right."

"But, dear aunt, I do not wish to make it right at all. It is my wish that all Paris should say that I was with M. de Montriveau this morning. If you destroy that belief, however ill grounded it may be, you will do me a singular disservice."

"Do you really wish to ruin yourself, child, and to grieve your family?"

"My family, father, unintentionally condemned me to irreparable misfortune when they sacrificed me to family considerations. You may, perhaps, blame me for seeking alleviations, but you will certainly feel for me."

"After all the endless pains you take to settle your daughters suitably!" muttered M. de Navarreins, addressing the Vidame.

The Princess shook a stray grain of snuff from her skirts. "My dear little girl," she said, "be happy, if you can. We are not talking of troubling your felicity, but of reconciling it with social usages. We all of us here assembled know that marriage is a defective institution tempered by love. But when you take a lover, is there any need to make your bed in the Place du Carrousel? See now, just be a bit reasonable, and hear what we have to say."

"I am listening."

"Mme la Duchesse," began the Duc de Grandlieu, "if it were any part of an uncle's duty to look after his nieces, he ought to have a position; society would owe him honours and rewards and a salary, exactly as if he were in the King's service. So I am not here to talk about my nephew, but of your own interests. Let us look ahead a little. If you persist in making a scandal—I have seen the animal before, and I own that I have no great liking for him—Langeais is stingy enough, and he does not care a rap for anyone but himself; he will have a separation; he will stick to your money, and leave you poor, and consequently you will be a nobody. The income of a hundred thousand livres that you have just inherited from your maternal great−aunt will go to pay for his mistresses' amusements. You will be bound and gagged by the law; you will have to say Amen to all these arrangements. Suppose M. de Montriveau leaves you——dear me! do not let us put ourselves in a passion, my dear niece; a man does not leave a woman while she is young and pretty; still, we have seen so many pretty women left disconsolate, even among princesses, that you will permit the supposition, an all but impossible supposition I quite wish to believe.——Well, suppose that he goes, what will become of you without a husband? Keep well with your husband as you take care of your beauty; for beauty, after all, is a woman's parachute, and a husband also stands between you and worse. I am supposing that you are happy and loved to the end, and I am leaving unpleasant or unfortunate events altogether out of the reckoning. This being so, fortunately or unfortunately, you may have children. What are they to be? Montriveaus? Very well; they certainly will not succeed to their father's whole fortune. You will want to give them all that you have; he will wish to do the same. Nothing more natural, dear me! And you will find the law against you. How many times have we seen heirs−at−law bringing a law−suit to recover the property from illegitimate children? Every court of law rings with such actions all over the world. You will create a fidei commissum perhaps; and if the trustee betrays your confidence, your children have no remedy against him; and they are ruined. So choose carefully. You see the perplexities of the position. In every possible way your children will be sacrificed of necessity to the fancies of your heart; they will have no recognised status. While they are little they will be charming; but, Lord! some day they will reproach you for thinking of no one but your two selves. We old gentlemen know all about it. Little boys grow up into men, and men are ungrateful beings. When I was in Germany, did I not hear young de Horn say, after supper, `If my mother had been an honest woman, I should be prince−regnant!' `IF?' We have spent our lives in hearing plebeians say IF. IF brought about the Revolution. When a man cannot lay the blame on his father or mother, he holds God responsible for his hard lot. In short, dear child, we are here to open your eyes. I will say all I have to say in a few words, on which you had better meditate: A woman ought never to put her husband in the right."

"Uncle, so long as I cared for nobody, I could calculate; I looked at interests then, as you do; now, I can only feel."

"But, my dear little girl," remonstrated the Vidame, "life is simply a complication of interests and feelings; to be happy, more particularly in your position, one must try to reconcile one's feelings with one's interests. A grisette may love according to her fancy, that is intelligible enough, but you have a pretty fortune, a family, a name and a place at Court, and you ought not to fling them out of the window. And what have we been asking you to do to keep them all?—To manoeuvre carefully instead of falling foul of social conventions. Lord! I shall very soon be eighty years old, and I cannot recollect, under any regime, a love worth the price that you are willing

to pay for the love of this lucky young man."

The Duchess silenced the Vidame with a look; if Montriveau could have seen that glance, he would have forgiven all.

"It would be very effective on the stage," remarked the Duc de Grandlieu, "but it all amounts to nothing when your jointure and position and independence is concerned. You are not grateful, my dear niece. You will not find many families where the relatives have courage enough to teach the wisdom gained by experience, and to make rash young heads listen to reason. Renounce your salvation in two minutes, if it pleases you to damn yourself; well and good; but reflect well beforehand when it comes to renouncing your income. I know of no confessor who remits the pains of poverty. I have a right, I think, to speak in this way to you; for if you are ruined, I am the one person who can offer you a refuge. I am almost an uncle to Langeais, and I alone have a right to put him in the wrong."

The Duc de Navarreins roused himself from painful reflections.

"Since you speak of feeling, my child," he said, "let me remind you that a woman who bears your name ought to be moved by sentiments which do not touch ordinary people. Can you wish to give an advantage to the Liberals, to those Jesuits of Robespierre's that are doing all they can to vilify the noblesse? Some things a Navarreins cannot do without failing in duty to his house. You would not be alone in your dishonour——"

"Come, come!" said the Princess. "Dishonour? Do not make such a fuss about the journey of an empty carriage, children, and leave me alone with Antoinette. Ail three of you come and dine with me. I will undertake to arrange matters suitably. You men understand nothing; you are beginning to talk sourly already, and I have no wish to see a quarrel between you and my dear child. Do me the pleasure to go."

The three gentlemen probably guessed the Princess's intentions; they took their leave. M. de Navarreins kissed his daughter on the forehead with, "Come, be good, dear child. It is not too late yet if you choose."

"Couldn't we find some good fellow in the family to pick a quarrel with this Montriveau?" said the Vidame, as they went downstairs.

When the two women were alone, the Princess beckoned her niece to a little low chair by her side.

"My pearl," said she, "in this world below, I know nothing worse calumniated than God and the eighteenth century; for as I look back over my own young days, I do not recollect that a single duchess trampled the proprieties underfoot as you have just done. Novelists and scribblers brought the reign of Louis XV into disrepute. Do not believe them. The du Barry, my dear, was quite as good as the Widow Scarron, and the more agreeable woman of the two. In my time a woman could keep her dignity among her gallantries. Indiscretion was the ruin of us, and the beginning of all the mischief. The philosophists—the nobodies whom we admitted into our salons—had no more gratitude or sense of decency than to make an inventory of our hearts, to traduce us one and all, and to rail against the age by way of a return for our kindness. The people are not in a position to judge of anything whatsoever; they looked at the facts, not at the form. But the men and women of those times, my heart, were quite as remarkable as at any other period of the Monarchy. Not one of your Werthers, none of your notabilities, as they are called, never a one of your men in yellow kid gloves and trousers that disguise the poverty of their legs, would cross Europe in the dress of a travelling hawker to brave the daggers of a Duke of Modena, and to shut himself up in the dressing−room of the Regent's daughter at the risk of his life. Not one of your little consumptive patients with their tortoiseshell eyeglasses would hide himself in a closet for six weeks, like Lauzun, to keep up his mistress's courage while she was lying in of her child. There was more passion in M. de Jaucourt's little finger than in your whole race of higglers that leave a woman to better themselves elsewhere! Just tell me where to find the page that would be cut in pieces and buried under the floorboards for one kiss on the Konigsmark's gloved finger!

"Really, it would seem today that the roles are exchanged, and women are expected to show their devotion for men. These modern gentlemen are worth less, and think more of themselves. Believe me, my dear, all these adventures that have been made public, and now are turned against our good Louis XV, were kept quite secret at first. If it had not been for a pack of poetasters, scribblers, and moralists, who hung about our waiting−women, and took down their slanders, our epoch would have appeared in literature as a well−conducted age. I am justifying the century and not its fringe. Perhaps a hundred women of quality were lost; but for every one, the rogues set down ten, like the gazettes after a battle when they count up the losses of the beaten side. And in any case I do not know that the Revolution and the Empire can reproach us; they were coarse, dull, licentious times.

Faugh! it is revolting. Those are the brothels of French history.

"This preamble, my dear child," she continued after a pause, "brings me to the thing that I have to say. If you care for Montriveau, you are quite at liberty to love him at your ease, and as much as you can. I know by experience that, unless you are locked up (but locking people up is out of fashion now), you will do as you please; I should have done the same at your age. Only, sweetheart, I should not have given up my right to be the mother of future Ducs de Langeais. So mind appearances. The Vidame is right. No man is worth a single one of the sacrifices which we are foolish enough to make for their love. Put yourself in such a position that you may still be M. de Langeais's wife, in case you should have the misfortune to repent. When you are an old woman, you will be very glad to hear mass said at Court, and not in some provincial convent. Therein lies the whole question. A single imprudence means an allowance and a wandering life; it means that you are at the mercy of your lover; it means that you must put up with insolence from women that are not so honest, precisely because they have been very vulgarly sharp−witted. It would be a hundred times better to go to Montriveau's at night in a cab, and disguised, instead of sending your carriage in broad daylight. You are a little fool, my dear child! Your carriage flattered his vanity; your person would have ensnared his heart. All this that I have said is just and true; but, for my own part, I do not blame you. You are two centuries behind the times with your false ideas of greatness. There, leave us to arrange your affairs, and say that Montriveau made your servants drunk to gratify his vanity and to compromise you——"

The Duchess rose to her feet with a spring. "In Heaven's name, aunt, do not slander him!"

The old Princess's eyes flashed.

"Dear child," she said, "I should have liked to spare such of your illusions as were not fatal. But there must be an end of all illusions now. You would soften me if I were not so old. Come, now, do not vex him, or us, or anyone else. I will undertake to satisfy everybody; but promise me not to permit yourself a single step henceforth until you have consulted me. Tell me all, and perhaps I may bring it all right again."

"Aunt, I promise——"

"To tell me everything?"

"Yes, everything. Everything that can be told."

"But, my sweetheart, it is precisely what cannot be told that I want to know. Let us understand each other thoroughly. Come, let me put my withered old lips on your beautiful forehead. No; let me do as I wish. I forbid you to kiss my bones. Old people have a courtesy of their own. . . . There, take me down to my carriage," she added, when she had kissed her niece.

"Then may I go to him in disguise, dear aunt?"

"Why—yes. The story can always be denied," said the old Princess.

This was the one idea which the Duchess had clearly grasped in the sermon. When Mme de Chauvry was seated in the corner of her carriage, Mme de Langeais bade her a graceful adieu and went up to her room. She was quite happy again.

"My person would have snared his heart; my aunt is right; a man cannot surely refuse a pretty woman when she understands how to offer herself."

That evening, at the Elysee−Bourbon, the Duc de Navarreins, M. de Pamiers, M. de Marsay, M. de Grandlieu, and the Duc de Maufrigneuse triumphantly refuted the scandals that were circulating with regard to the Duchesse de Langeais. So many officers and other persons had seen Montriveau walking in the Tuileries that morning, that the silly story was set down to chance, which takes all that is offered. And so, in spite of the fact that the Duchess's carriage had waited before Montriveau's door, her character became as clear and as spotless as Mambrino's sword after Sancho had polished it up.

But, at two o'clock, M. de Ronquerolles passed Montriveau in a deserted alley, and said with a smile, "She is coming on, is your Duchess. Go on, keep it up!" he added, and gave a significant cut of the riding whip to his mare, who sped off like a bullet down the avenue.

Two days after the fruitless scandal, Mme de Langeais wrote to M. de Montriveau. That letter, like the preceding ones, remained unanswered. This time she took her own measures, and bribed M. de Montriveau's man, Auguste. And so at eight o'clock that evening she was introduced into Armand's apartment. It was not the room in which that secret scene had passed; it was entirely different. The Duchess was told that the General would not be at home that night. Had he two houses? The man would give no answer. Mme de Langeais had bought the key of

the room, but not the man's whole loyalty.

When she was left alone she saw her fourteen letters lying on an old−fashioned stand, all of them uncreased and unopened. He had not read them. She sank into an easy−chair, and for a while she lost consciousness. When she came to herself, Auguste was holding vinegar for her to inhale.

“A carriage; quick!” she ordered.

The carriage came. She hastened downstairs with convulsive speed, and left orders that no one was to be admitted. For twenty−four hours she lay in bed, and would have no one near her but her woman, who brought her a cup of orange−flower water from time to time. Suzette heard her mistress moan once or twice, and caught a glimpse of tears in the brilliant eyes, now circled with dark shadows.

The next day, amid despairing tears, Mme de Langeais took her resolution. Her man of business came for an interview, and no doubt received instructions of some kind. Afterwards she sent for the Vidame de Pamiers; and while she waited, she wrote a letter to M. de Montriveau. The Vidame punctually came towards two o'clock that afternoon, to find his young cousin looking white and worn, but resigned; never had her divine loveliness been more poetic than now in the languor of her agony.

“You owe this assignation to your eighty−four years, dear cousin,” she said. “Ah! do not smile, I beg of you, when an unhappy woman has reached the lowest depths of wretchedness. You are a gentleman, and after the adventures of your youth you must feel some indulgence for women.”

“None whatever,” said he.

“Indeed!”

“Everything is in their favour.”

“Ah! Well, you are one of the inner family circle; possibly you will be the last relative, the last friend whose hand I shall press, so I can ask your good offices. Will you, dear Vidame, do me a service which I could not ask of my own father, nor of my uncle Grandlieu, nor of any woman? You cannot fail to understand. I beg of you to do my bidding, and then to forget what you have done, whatever may come of it. It is this: Will you take this letter and go to M. de Montriveau? will you see him yourself, give it into his hands, and ask him, as you men can ask things between yourselves—for you have a code of honour between man and man which you do not use with us, and a different way of regarding things between yourselves—ask him if he will read this letter? Not in your presence. Certain feelings men hide from each other. I give you authority to say, if you think it necessary to bring him, that it is a question of life or death for me. If he deigns——”

“DEIGNS!” repeated the Vidame.

“If he deigns to read it,” the Duchess continued with dignity, “say one thing more. You will go to see him about five o'clock, for I know that he will dine at home today at that time. Very good. By way of answer he must come to see me. If, three hours afterwards, by eight o'clock, he does not leave his house, all will be over. The Duchesse de Langeais will have vanished from the world. I shall not be dead, dear friend, no, but no human power will ever find me again on this earth. Come and dine with me; I shall at least have one friend with me in the last agony. Yes, dear cousin, tonight will decide my fate; and whatever happens to me, I pass through an ordeal by fire. There! not a word. I will hear nothing of the nature of comment or advice——Let us chat and laugh together,” she added, holding out a hand, which he kissed. “We will be like two grey−headed philosophers who have learned how to enjoy life to the last moment. I will look my best; I will be very enchanting for you. You perhaps will be the last man to set eyes on the Duchesse de Langeais.”

The Vicomte bowed, took the letter, and went without a word. At five o'clock he returned. His cousin had studied to please him, and she looked lovely indeed. The room was gay with flowers as if for a festivity; the dinner was exquisite. For the grey−headed Vidame the Duchess displayed all the brilliancy of her wit; she was more charming than she had ever been before. At first the Vidame tried to look on all these preparations as a young woman's jest; but now and again the attempted illusion faded, the spell of his fair cousin's charm was broken. He detected a shudder caused by some kind of sudden dread, and once she seemed to listen during a pause.

“What is the matter?” he asked.

“Hush!” she said.

At seven o'clock the Duchess left him for a few minutes. When she came back again she was dressed as her maid might have dressed for a journey. She asked her guest to be her escort, took his arm, sprang into a hackney

coach, and by a quarter to eight they stood outside M. de Montriveau's door.

Armand meantime had been reading the following letter:—

"MY FRIEND,—I went to your rooms for a few minutes without your knowledge; I found my letters there, and took them away. This cannot be indifference, Armand, between us; and hatred would show itself quite differently. If you love me, make an end of this cruel play, or you will kill me, and afterwards, learning how much you were loved, you might be in despair. If I have not rightly understood you, if you have no feeling towards me but aversion, which implies both contempt and disgust, then I give up all hope. A man never recovers from those feelings. You will have no regrets. Dreadful though that thought may be, it will comfort me in my long sorrow. Regrets? Oh, my Armand, may I never know of them; if I thought that I had caused you a single regret——But, no, I will not tell you what desolation I should feel. I should be living still, and I could not be your wife; it would be too late!

"Now that I have given myself wholly to you in thought, to whom else should I give myself?—to God. The eyes that you loved for a little while shall never look on another man's face; and may the glory of God blind them to all besides. I shall never hear human voices more since I heard yours—so gentle at the first, so terrible yesterday; for it seems to me that I am still only on the morrow of your vengeance. And now may the will of God consume me. Between His wrath and yours, my friend, there will be nothing left for me but a little space for tears and prayers.

"Perhaps you wonder why I write to you? Ah! do not think ill of me if I keep a gleam of hope, and give one last sigh to happy life before I take leave of it forever. I am in a hideous position. I feel all the inward serenity that comes when a great resolution has been taken, even while I hear the last growlings of the storm. When you went out on that terrible adventure which so drew me to you, Armand, you went from the desert to the oasis with a good guide to show you the way. Well, I am going out of the oasis into the desert, and you are a pitiless guide to me. And yet you only, my friend, can understand how melancholy it is to look back for the last time on happiness—to you, and you only, I can make moan without a blush. If you grant my entreaty, I shall be happy; if you are inexorable, I shall expiate the wrong that I have done. After all, it is natural, is it not, that a woman should wish to live, invested with all noble feelings, in her friend's memory? Oh! my one and only love, let her to whom you gave life go down into the tomb in the belief that she is great in your eyes. Your harshness led me to reflect; and now that I love you so, it seems to me that I am less guilty than you think. Listen to my justification, I owe it to you; and you that are all the world to me, owe me at least a moment's justice.

"I have learned by my own anguish all that I made you suffer by my coquetry; but in those days I was utterly ignorant of love. YOU know what the torture is, and you mete it out to me! During those first eight months that you gave me you never roused any feeling of love in me. Do you ask why this was so, my friend? I can no more explain it than I can tell you why I love you now. Oh! certainly it flattered my vanity that I should be the subject of your passionate talk, and receive those burning glances of yours; but you left me cold. No, I was not a woman; I had no conception of womanly devotion and happiness. Who was to blame? You would have despised me, would you not, if I had given myself without the impulse of passion? Perhaps it is the highest height to which we can rise—to give all and receive no joy; perhaps there is no merit in yielding oneself to bliss that is foreseen and ardently desired. Alas, my friend, I can say this now; these thoughts came to me when I played with you; and you seemed to me so great even then that I would not have you owe the gift to pity——What is this that I have written?

"I have taken back all my letters; I am flinging them one by one on the fire; they are burning. You will never know what they confessed—all the love and the passion and the madness——

"I will say no more, Armand; I will stop. I will not say another word of my feelings. If my prayers have not echoed from my soul through yours, I also, woman that I am, decline to owe your love to your pity. It is my wish to be loved, because you cannot choose but love me, or else to be left without mercy. If you refuse to read this letter, it shall be burnt. If, after you have read it, you do not come to me within three hours, to be henceforth forever my husband, the one man in the world for me; then I shall never blush to know that this letter is in your hands, the pride of my despair will protect my memory from all insult, and my end shall be worthy of my love. When you see me no more on earth, albeit I shall still be alive, you yourself will not think without a shudder of the woman who, in three hours' time, will live only to overwhelm you with her tenderness; a woman consumed by a hopeless love, and faithful—not to memories of past joys—but to a love that was slighted.

“The Duchesse de la Valliere wept for lost happiness and vanished power; but the Duchesse de Langeais will be happy that she may weep and be a power for you still. Yes, you will regret me. I see clearly that I was not of this world, and I thank you for making it clear to me.

“Farewell; you will never touch MY axe. Yours was the executioner's axe, mine is God's; yours kills, mine saves. Your love was but mortal, it could not endure disdain or ridicule; mine can endure all things without growing weaker, it will last eternally. Ah! I feel a sombre joy in crushing you that believe yourself so great; in humbling you with the calm, indulgent smile of one of the least among the angels that lie at the feet of God, for to them is given the right and the power to protect and watch over men in His name. You have but felt fleeting desires, while the poor nun will shed the light of her ceaseless and ardent prayer about you, she will shelter you all your life long beneath the wings of a love that has nothing of earth in it.

“I have a presentiment of your answer; our trysting place shall be—in heaven. Strength and weakness can both enter there, dear Armand; the strong and the weak are bound to suffer. This thought soothes the anguish of my final ordeal. So calm am I that I should fear that I had ceased to love you if I were not about to leave the world for your sake.

“ANTOINETTE.”

“Dear Vidame,” said the Duchess as they reached Montriveau's house, “do me the kindness to ask at the door whether he is at home.” The Vidame, obedient after the manner of the eighteenth century to a woman's wish, got out, and came back to bring his cousin an affirmative answer that sent a shudder through her. She grasped his hand tightly in hers, suffered him to kiss her on either cheek, and begged him to go at once. He must not watch her movements nor try to protect her. “But the people passing in the street,” he objected.

“No one can fail in respect to me,” she said. It was the last word spoken by the Duchess and the woman of fashion.

The Vidame went. Mme de Langeais wrapped herself about in her cloak, and stood on the doorstep until the clocks struck eight. The last stroke died away. The unhappy woman waited ten, fifteen minutes; to the last she tried to see a fresh humiliation in the delay, then her faith ebbed. She turned to leave the fatal threshold.

“Oh, God!” the cry broke from her in spite of herself; it was the first word spoken by the Carmelite.

Montriveau and some of his friends were talking together. He tried to hasten them to a conclusion, but his clock was slow, and by the time he started out for the Hotel de Langeais the Duchess was hurrying on foot through the streets of Paris, goaded by the dull rage in her heart. She reached the Boulevard d'Enfer, and looked out for the last time through falling tears on the noisy, smoky city that lay below in a red mist, lighted up by its own lamps. Then she hailed a cab, and drove away, never to return. When the Marquis de Montriveau reached the Hotel de Langeais, and found no trace of his mistress, he thought that he had been duped. He hurried away at once to the Vidame, and found that worthy gentleman in the act of slipping on his flowered dressing−gown, thinking the while of his fair cousin's happiness.

Montriveau gave him one of the terrific glances that produced the effect of an electric shock on men and women alike.

“Is it possible that you have lent yourself to some cruel hoax, monsieur?” Montriveau exclaimed. “I have just come from Mme de Langeais's house; the servants say that she is out.”

“Then a great misfortune has happened, no doubt,” returned the Vidame, “and through your fault. I left the Duchess at your door——”

“When?”

“At a quarter to eight.”

“Good evening,” returned Montriveau, and he hurried home to ask the porter whether he had seen a lady standing on the doorstep that evening.

“Yes, my Lord Marquis, a handsome woman, who seemed very much put out. She was crying like a Magdalen, but she never made a sound, and stood as upright as a post. Then at last she went, and my wife and I that were watching her while she could not see us, heard her say, `Oh, God!' so that it went to our hearts, asking your pardon, to hear her say it.”

Montriveau, in spite of all his firmness, turned pale at those few words. He wrote a few lines to Ronquerolles, sent off the message at once, and went up to his rooms. Ronquerolles came just about midnight.

Armand gave him the Duchess's letter to read.

“Well?” asked Ronquerolles.

“She was here at my door at eight o'clock; at a quarter−past eight she had gone. I have lost her, and I love her. Oh! if my life were my own, I could blow my brains out.”

“Pooh, pooh! Keep cool,” said Ronquerolles. “Duchesses do not fly off like wagtails. She cannot travel faster than three leagues an hour, and tomorrow we will ride six.—Confound it! Mme de Langeais is no ordinary woman,” he continued. “Tomorrow we will all of us mount and ride. The police will put us on her track during the day. She must have a carriage; angels of that sort have no wings. We shall find her whether she is on the road or hidden in Paris. There is the semaphore. We can stop her. You shall be happy. But, my dear fellow, you have made a blunder, of which men of your energy are very often guilty. They judge others by themselves, and do not know the point when human nature gives way if you strain the cords too tightly. Why did you not say a word to me sooner? I would have told you to be punctual. Good−bye till tomorrow,” he added, as Montriveau said nothing. “Sleep if you can,” he added, with a grasp of the hand.

But the greatest resources which society has ever placed at the disposal of statesmen, kings, ministers, bankers, or any human power, in fact, were all exhausted in vain. Neither Montriveau nor his friends could find any trace of the Duchess. It was clear that she had entered a convent. Montriveau determined to search, or to institute a search, for her through every convent in the world. He must have her, even at the cost of all the lives in a town. And in justice to this extraordinary man, it must be said that his frenzied passion awoke to the same ardour daily and lasted through five years. Only in 1829 did the Duc de Navarreins hear by chance that his daughter had travelled to Spain as Lady Julia Hopwood's maid, that she had left her service at Cadiz, and that Lady Julia never discovered that Mlle Caroline was the illustrious duchess whose sudden disappearance filled the minds of the highest society of Paris.

The feelings of the two lovers when they met again on either side of the grating in the Carmelite convent should now be comprehended to the full, and the violence of the passion awakened in either soul will doubtless explain the catastrophe of the story.

In 1823 the Duc de Langeais was dead, and his wife was free. Antoinette de Navarreins was living, consumed by love, on a ledge of rock in the Mediterranean; but it was in the Pope's power to dissolve Sister Theresa's vows. The happiness bought by so much love might yet bloom for the two lovers. These thoughts sent Montriveau flying from Cadiz to Marseilles, and from Marseilles to Paris.

A few months after his return to France, a merchant brig, fitted out and munitioned for active service, set sail from the port of Marseilles for Spain. The vessel had been chartered by several distinguished men, most of them Frenchmen, who, smitten with a romantic passion for the East, wished to make a journey to those lands. Montriveau's familiar knowledge of Eastern customs made him an invaluable travelling companion, and at the entreaty of the rest he had joined the expedition; the Minister of War appointed him lieutenant−general, and put him on the Artillery Commission to facilitate his departure.

Twenty−fours hours later the brig lay to off the north−west shore of an island within sight of the Spanish coast. She had been specially chosen for her shallow keel and light mastage, so that she might lie at anchor in safety half a league away from the reefs that secure the island from approach in this direction. If fishing vessels or the people on the island caught sight of the brig, they were scarcely likely to feel suspicious of her at once; and besides, it was easy to give a reason for her presence without delay. Montriveau hoisted the flag of the United States before they came in sight of the island, and the crew of the vessel were all American sailors, who spoke nothing but English. One of M. de Montriveau's companions took the men ashore in the ship's longboat, and made them so drunk at an inn in the little town that they could not talk. Then he gave out that the brig was manned by treasure−seekers, a gang of men whose hobby was well known in the United States; indeed, some Spanish writer had written a history of them. The presence of the brig among the reefs was now sufficiently explained. The owners of the vessel, according to the self−styled boatswain's mate, were looking for the wreck of a galleon which foundered thereabouts in 1778 with a cargo of treasure from Mexico. The people at the inn and the authorities asked no more questions.

Armand, and the devoted friends who were helping him in his difficult enterprise, were all from the first of the opinion that there was no hope of rescuing or carrying off Sister Theresa by force or stratagem from the side of the little town. Wherefore these bold spirits, with one accord, determined to take the bull by the horns. They would make a way to the convent at the most seemingly inaccessible point; like General Lamarque, at the

storming of Capri, they would conquer Nature. The cliff at the end of the island, a sheer block of granite, afforded even less hold than the rock of Capri. So it seemed at least to Montriveau, who had taken part in that incredible exploit, while the nuns in his eyes were much more redoubtable than Sir Hudson Lowe. To raise a hubbub over carrying off the Duchess would cover them with confusion. They might as well set siege to the town and convent, like pirates, and leave not a single soul to tell of their victory. So for them their expedition wore but two aspects. There should be a conflagration and a feat of arms that should dismay all Europe, while the motives of the crime remained unknown; or, on the other hand, a mysterious, aerial descent which should persuade the nuns that the Devil himself had paid them a visit. They had decided upon the latter course in the secret council held before they left Paris, and subsequently everything had been done to insure the success of an expedition which promised some real excitement to jaded spirits weary of Paris and its pleasures.

An extremely light pirogue, made at Marseilles on a Malayan model, enabled them to cross the reef, until the rocks rose from out of the water. Then two cables of iron wire were fastened several feet apart between one rock and another. These wire ropes slanted upwards and downwards in opposite directions, so that baskets of iron wire could travel to and fro along them; and in this manner the rocks were covered with a system of baskets and wire−cables, not unlike the filaments which a certain species of spider weaves about a tree. The Chinese, an essentially imitative people, were the first to take a lesson from the work of instinct. Fragile as these bridges were, they were always ready for use; high waves and the caprices of the sea could not throw them out of working order; the ropes hung just sufficiently slack, so as to present to the breakers that particular curve discovered by Cachin, the immortal creator of the harbour at Cherbourg. Against this cunningly devised line the angry surge is powerless; the law of that curve was a secret wrested from Nature by that faculty of observation in which nearly all human genius consists.

M. de Montriveau's companions were alone on board the vessel, and out of sight of every human eye. No one from the deck of a passing vessel could have discovered either the brig hidden among the reefs, or the men at work among the rocks; they lay below the ordinary range of the most powerful telescope. Eleven days were spent in preparation, before the Thirteen, with all their infernal power, could reach the foot of the cliffs. The body of the rock rose up straight from the sea to a height of thirty fathoms. Any attempt to climb the sheer wall of granite seemed impossible; a mouse might as well try to creep up the slippery sides of a plain china vase. Still there was a cleft, a straight line of fissure so fortunately placed that large blocks of wood could be wedged firmly into it at a distance of about a foot apart. Into these blocks the daring workers drove iron cramps, specially made for the purpose, with a broad iron bracket at the outer end, through which a hole had been drilled. Each bracket carried a light deal board which corresponded with a notch made in a pole that reached to the top of the cliffs, and was firmly planted in the beach at their feet. With ingenuity worthy of these men who found nothing impossible, one of their number, a skilled mathematician, had calculated the angle from which the steps must start; so that from the middle they rose gradually, like the sticks of a fan, to the top of the cliff, and descended in the same fashion to its base. That miraculously light, yet perfectly firm, staircase cost them twenty−two days of toil. A little tinder and the surf of the sea would destroy all trace of it forever in a single night. A betrayal of the secret was impossible; and all search for the violators of the convent was doomed to failure.

At the top of the rock there was a platform with sheer precipice on all sides. The Thirteen, reconnoitring the ground with their glasses from the masthead, made certain that though the ascent was steep and rough, there would be no difficulty in gaining the convent garden, where the trees were thick enough for a hiding−place. After such great efforts they would not risk the success of their enterprise, and were compelled to wait till the moon passed out of her last quarter.

For two nights Montriveau, wrapped in his cloak, lay out on the rock platform. The singing at vespers and matins filled him with unutterable joy. He stood under the wall to hear the music of the organ, listening intently for one voice among the rest. But in spite of the silence, the confused effect of music was all that reached his ears. In those sweet harmonies defects of execution are lost; the pure spirit of art comes into direct communication with the spirit of the hearer, making no demand on the attention, no strain on the power of listening. Intolerable memories awoke. All the love within him seemed to break into blossom again at the breath of that music; he tried to find auguries of happiness in the air. During the last night he sat with his eyes fixed upon an ungrated window, for bars were not needed on the side of the precipice. A light shone there all through the hours; and that instinct of the heart, which is sometimes true, and as often false, cried within him, “She is there!”

“She is certainly there! Tomorrow she will be mine,” he said to himself, and joy blended with the slow tinkling of a bell that began to ring.

Strange unaccountable workings of the heart! The nun, wasted by yearning love, worn out with tears and fasting, prayer and vigils; the woman of nine−and−twenty, who had passed through heavy trials, was loved more passionately than the lighthearted girl, the woman of four−and−twenty, the sylphide, had ever been. But is there not, for men of vigorous character, something attractive in the sublime expression engraven on women's faces by the impetuous stirrings of thought and misfortunes of no ignoble kind? Is there not a beauty of suffering which is the most interesting of all beauty to those men who feel that within them there is an inexhaustible wealth of tenderness and consoling pity for a creature so gracious in weakness, so strong with love? It is the ordinary nature that is attracted by young, smooth, pink−and−white beauty, or, in one word, by prettiness. In some faces love awakens amid the wrinkles carved by sorrow and the ruin made by melancholy; Montriveau could not but feel drawn to these. For cannot a lover, with the voice of a great longing, call forth a wholly new creature? a creature athrob with the life but just begun breaks forth for him alone, from the outward form that is fair for him, and faded for all the world besides. Does he not love two women?—One of them, as others see her, is pale and wan and sad; but the other, the unseen love that his heart knows, is an angel who understands life through feeling, and is adorned in all her glory only for love's high festivals.

The General left his post before sunrise, but not before he had heard voices singing together, sweet voices full of tenderness sounding faintly from the cell. When he came down to the foot of the cliffs where his friends were waiting, he told them that never in his life had he felt such enthralling bliss, and in the few words there was that unmistakable thrill of repressed strong feeling, that magnificent utterance which all men respect.

That night eleven of his devoted comrades made the ascent in the darkness. Each man carried a poniard, a provision of chocolate, and a set of house−breaking tools. They climbed the outer walls with scaling−ladders, and crossed the cemetery of the convent. Montriveau recognised the long, vaulted gallery through which he went to the parlour, and remembered the windows of the room. His plans were made and adopted in a moment. They would effect an entrance through one of the windows in the Carmelite's half of the parlour, find their way along the corridors, ascertain whether the sister's names were written on the doors, find Sister Theresa's cell, surprise her as she slept, and carry her off, bound and gagged. The programme presented no difficulties to men who combined boldness and a convict's dexterity with the knowledge peculiar to men of the world, especially as they would not scruple to give a stab to ensure silence.

In two hours the bars were sawn through. Three men stood on guard outside, and two inside the parlour. The rest, barefooted, took up their posts along the corridor. Young Henri de Marsay, the most dexterous man among them, disguised by way of precaution in a Carmelite's robe, exactly like the costume of the convent, led the way, and Montriveau came immediately behind him. The clock struck three just as the two men reached the dormitory cells. They soon saw the position. Everything was perfectly quiet. With the help of a dark lantern they read the names luckily written on every door, together with the picture of a saint or saints and the mystical words which every nun takes as a kind of motto for the beginning of her new life and the revelation of her last thought. Montriveau reached Sister Theresa's door and read the inscription, Sub invocatione sanctae matris Theresae, and her motto, Adoremus in aeternum. Suddenly his companion laid a hand on his shoulder. A bright light was streaming through the chinks of the door. M. de Ronquerolles came up at that moment.

“All the nuns are in the church,” he said; “they are beginning the Office for the Dead.”

“I will stay here,” said Montriveau. “Go back into the parlour, and shut the door at the end of the passage.”

He threw open the door and rushed in, preceded by his disguised companion, who let down the veil over his face.

There before them lay the dead Duchess; her plank bed had been laid on the floor of the outer room of her cell, between two lighted candles. Neither Montriveau nor de Marsay spoke a word or uttered a cry; but they looked into each other's faces. The General's dumb gesture tried to say, “Let us carry her away!”

“Quickly” shouted Ronquerolles, “the procession of nuns is leaving the church. You will be caught!”

With magical swiftness of movement, prompted by an intense desire, the dead woman was carried into the convent parlour, passed through the window, and lowered from the walls before the Abbess, followed by the nuns, returned to take up Sister Theresa's body. The sister left in charge had imprudently left her post; there were secrets that she longed to know; and so busy was she ransacking the inner room, that she heard nothing, and was

horrified when she came back to find that the body was gone. Before the women, in their blank amazement, could think of making a search, the Duchess had been lowered by a cord to the foot of the crags, and Montriveau's companions had destroyed all traces of their work. By nine o'clock that morning there was not a sign to show that either staircase or wire−cables had ever existed, and Sister Theresa's body had been taken on board. The brig came into the port to ship her crew, and sailed that day.

Montriveau, down in the cabin, was left alone with Antoinette de Navarreins. For some hours it seemed as if her dead face was transfigured for him by that unearthly beauty which the calm of death gives to the body before it perishes.

“Look here,” said Ronquerolles when Montriveau reappeared on deck, “THAT was a woman once, now it is nothing. Let us tie a cannon ball to both feet and throw the body overboard; and if ever you think of her again, think of her as of some book that you read as a boy.”

“Yes,” assented Montriveau, “it is nothing now but a dream.”

“That is sensible of you. Now, after this, have passions; but as for love, a man ought to know how to place it wisely; it is only a woman's last love that can satisfy a man's first love.”

ADDENDUM

The Duchesse de Langeais is the second part of the trilogy. Part one is entitled Ferragus and part three is The Girl with the Golden Eyes. In other addendum references all three stories are usually combined under the title The Thirteen.

The following personages appear in other stories of the Human Comedy.

Blamont−Chauvry, Princesse de
Madame Firmiani
The Lily of the Valley

Grandlieu, Duc Ferdinand de
The Gondreville Mystery
A Bachelor's Establishment
Modeste Mignon
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life

Keller, Madame Francois
Domestic Peace
The Member for Arcis

Langeais, Duc de
An Episode under the Terror

Langeais, Duchesse Antoinette de
Father Goriot
Ferragus

Marsay, Henri de
Ferragus
The Girl with the Golden Eyes
The Unconscious Humorists
Another Study of Woman
The Lily of the Valley
Father Goriot
Jealousies of a Country Town
Ursule Mirouet
A Marriage Settlement
Lost Illusions
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
Letters of Two Brides
The Ball at Sceaux
Modeste Mignon
The Secrets of a Princess
The Gondreville Mystery
A Daughter of Eve

Montriveau, General Marquis Armand de
Father Goriot
Lost Illusions
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
Another Study of Woman
Pierrette
The Member for Arcis

Navarreins, Duc de
A Bachelor's Establishment
Colonel Chabert
The Muse of the Department
Jealousies of a Country Town
The Peasantry
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life
The Country Parson
The Magic Skin
The Gondreville Mystery
The Secrets of a Princess

Cousin Betty

Nucingen, Baronne Delphine de
Father Goriot
Eugenie Grandet
Cesar Birotteau
Melmoth Reconciled
Lost Illusions
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
The Commission in Lunacy
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life
Modeste Mignon
The Firm of Nucingen
Another Study of Woman
A Daughter of Eve
The Member for Arcis

Pamiers, Vidame de
Ferragus
Jealousies of a Country Town

Ronquerolles, Marquis de
The Imaginary Mistress
Ferragus
The Girl with the Golden Eyes
The Peasantry
Ursule Mirouet
A Woman of Thirty
Another Study of Woman
The Member for Arcis

Serizy, Comtesse de
A Start in Life
Ferragus
Ursule Mirouet
A Woman of Thirty
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life
Another Study of Woman
The Imaginary Mistress

Soulanges, Comtesse Hortense de

Domestic Peace
The Peasantry

III. THE GIRL WITH THE GOLDEN EYES By HONORE DE BALZAC

Translated by Ellen Marriage

DEDICATION

To Eugene Delacroix, Painter.

One of those sights in which most horror is to be encountered is, surely, the general aspect of the Parisian populace—a people fearful to behold, gaunt, yellow, tawny. Is not Paris a vast field in perpetual turmoil from a storm of interests beneath which are whirled along a crop of human beings, who are, more often than not, reaped by death, only to be born again as pinched as ever, men whose twisted and contorted faces give out at every pore the instinct, the desire, the poisons with which their brains are pregnant; not faces so much as masks; masks of weakness, masks of strength, masks of misery, masks of joy, masks of hypocrisy; all alike worn and stamped with the indelible signs of a panting cupidity? What is it they want? Gold or pleasure? A few observations upon the soul of Paris may explain the causes of its cadaverous physiognomy, which has but two ages—youth and decay: youth, wan and colorless; decay, painted to seem young. In looking at this excavated people, foreigners, who are not prone to reflection, experience at first a movement of disgust towards the capital, that vast workshop of delights, from which, in a short time, they cannot even extricate themselves, and where they stay willingly to be corrupted. A few words will suffice to justify physiologically the almost infernal hue of Parisian faces, for it is not in mere sport that Paris has been called a hell. Take the phrase for truth. There all is smoke and fire, everything gleams, crackles, flames, evaporates, dies out, then lights up again, with shooting sparks, and is consumed. In no other country has life ever been more ardent or acute. The social nature, even in fusion, seems to say after each completed work: “Pass on to another!” just as Nature says herself. Like Nature herself, this social nature is busied with insects and flowers of a day—ephemeral trifles; and so, too, it throws up fire and flame from its eternal crater. Perhaps, before analyzing the causes which lend a special physiognomy to each tribe of this intelligent and mobile nation, the general cause should be pointed out which bleaches and discolors, tints with blue or brown individuals in more or less degree.

By dint of taking interest in everything, the Parisian ends by being interested in nothing. No emotion dominating his face, which friction has rubbed away, it turns gray like the faces of those houses upon which all kinds of dust and smoke have blown. In effect, the Parisian, with his indifference on the day for what the morrow will bring forth, lives like a child, whatever may be his age. He grumbles at everything, consoles himself for everything, jests at everything, forgets, desires, and tastes everything, seizes all with passion, quits all with indifference—his kings, his conquests, his glory, his idols of bronze or glass—as he throws away his stockings, his hats, and his fortune. In Paris no sentiment can withstand the drift of things, and their current compels a struggle in which the passions are relaxed: there love is a desire, and hatred a whim; there's no true kinsman but the thousand−franc note, no better friend than the pawnbroker. This universal toleration bears its fruits, and in the salon, as in the street, there is no one *de trop*, there is no one absolutely useful, or absolutely harmful—knaves or fools, men of wit or integrity. There everything is tolerated: the government and the guillotine, religion and the cholera. You are always acceptable to this world, you will never be missed by it. What, then, is the dominating impulse in this country without morals, without faith, without any sentiment, wherein, however, every sentiment, belief, and moral has its origin and end? It is gold and pleasure. Take those two words for a lantern, and explore that great stucco cage, that hive with its black gutters, and follow the windings of that thought which agitates, sustains, and occupies it! Consider! And, in the first place, examine the world which possesses nothing.

The artisan, the man of the proletariat, who uses his hands, his tongue, his back, his right arm, his five fingers, to live—well, this very man, who should be the first to economize his vital principle, outruns his strength, yokes his wife to some machine, wears out his child, and ties him to the wheel. The manufacturer—or I know not what secondary thread which sets in motion all these folk who with their foul hands mould and gild porcelain, sew coats and dresses, beat out iron, turn wood and steel, weave hemp, festoon crystal, imitate flowers, work woolen things, break in horses, dress harness, carve in copper, paint carriages, blow glass, corrode the diamond, polish metals, turn marble into leaves, labor on pebbles, deck out thought, tinge, bleach, or blacken everything—well, this middleman has come to that world of sweat and good−will, of study and patience, with promises of lavish wages, either in the name of the town's caprices or with the voice of the monster dubbed speculation. Thus, these

quadrumanes set themselves to watch, work, and suffer, to fast, sweat, and bestir them. Then, careless of the future, greedy of pleasure, counting on their right arm as the painter on his palette, lords for one day, they throw their money on Mondays to the *cabarets* which gird the town like a belt of mud, haunts of the most shameless of the daughters of Venus, in which the periodical money of this people, as ferocious in their pleasures as they are calm at work, is squandered as it had been at play. For five days, then, there is no repose for this laborious portion of Paris! It is given up to actions which make it warped and rough, lean and pale, gush forth with a thousand fits of creative energy. And then its pleasure, its repose, are an exhausting debauch, swarthy and black with blows, white with intoxication, or yellow with indigestion. It lasts but two days, but it steals to−morrow's bread, the week's soup, the wife's dress, the child's wretched rags. Men, born doubtless to be beautiful—for all creatures have a relative beauty—are enrolled from their childhood beneath the yoke of force, beneath the rule of the hammer, the chisel, the loom, and have been promptly vulcanized. Is not Vulcan, with his hideousness and his strength, the emblem of this strong and hideous nation—sublime in its mechanical intelligence, patient in its season, and once in a century terrible, inflammable as gunpowder, and ripe with brandy for the madness of revolution, with wits enough, in fine, to take fire at a captious word, which signifies to it always: Gold and Pleasure! If we comprise in it all those who hold out their hands for an alms, for lawful wages, or the five francs that are granted to every kind of Parisian prostitution, in short, for all the money well or ill earned, this people numbers three hundred thousand individuals. Were it not for the *cabarets*, would not the Government be overturned every Tuesday? Happily, by Tuesday, this people is glutted, sleeps off its pleasure, is penniless, and returns to its labor, to dry bread, stimulated by a need of material procreation, which has become a habit to it. None the less, this people has its phenomenal virtues, its complete men, unknown Napoleons, who are the type of its strength carried to its highest expression, and sum up its social capacity in an existence wherein thought and movement combine less to bring joy into it than to neutralize the action of sorrow.

Chance has made an artisan economical, chance has favored him with forethought, he has been able to look forward, has met with a wife and found himself a father, and, after some years of hard privation, he embarks in some little draper's business, hires a shop. If neither sickness nor vice blocks his way—if he has prospered—there is the sketch of this normal life.

And, in the first place, hail to that king of Parisian activity, to whom time and space give way. Yes, hail to that being, composed of saltpetre and gas, who makes children for France during his laborious nights, and in the day multiplies his personality for the service, glory, and pleasure of his fellow−citizens. This man solves the problem of sufficing at once to his amiable wife, to his hearth, to the *Constitutionnel*, to his office, to the National Guard, to the opera, and to God; but, only in order that the *Constitutionnel*, his office, the National Guard, the opera, his wife, and God may be changed into coin. In fine, hail to an irreproachable pluralist. Up every day at five o'clock, he traverses like a bird the space which separates his dwelling from the Rue Montmartre. Let it blow or thunder, rain or snow, he is at the *Constitutionnel*, and waits there for the load of newspapers which he has undertaken to distribute. He receives this political bread with eagerness, takes it, bears it away. At nine o'clock he is in the bosom of his family, flings a jest to his wife, snatches a loud kiss from her, gulps down a cup of coffee, or scolds his children. At a quarter to ten he puts in an appearance at the *Mairie*. There, stuck upon a stool, like a parrot on its perch, warmed by Paris town, he registers until four o'clock, with never a tear or a smile, the deaths and births of an entire district. The sorrow, the happiness, of the parish flow beneath his pen—as the essence of the *Constitutionnel* traveled before upon his shoulders. Nothing weighs upon him! He goes always straight before him, takes his patriotism ready made from the newspaper, contradicts no one, shouts or applauds with the world, and lives like a bird. Two yards from his parish, in the event of an important ceremony, he can yield his place to an assistant, and betake himself to chant a requiem from a stall in the church of which on Sundays he is the fairest ornament, where his is the most imposing voice, where he distorts his huge mouth with energy to thunder out a joyous *Amen*. So is he chorister. At four o'clock, freed from his official servitude, he reappears to shed joy and gaiety upon the most famous shop in the city. Happy is his wife, he has no time to be jealous: he is a man of action rather than of sentiment. His mere arrival spurs the young ladies at the counter; their bright eyes storm the customers; he expands in the midst of all the finery, the lace and muslin kerchiefs, that their cunning hands have wrought. Or, again, more often still, before his dinner he waits on a client, copies the page of a newspaper, or carries to the doorkeeper some goods that have been delayed. Every other day, at six, he is faithful to his post. A permanent bass for the chorus, he betakes himself to the opera, prepared to become a soldier or an arab, prisoner,

savage, peasant, spirit, camel's leg or lion, a devil or a genie, a slave or a eunuch, black or white; always ready to feign joy or sorrow, pity or astonishment, to utter cries that never vary, to hold his tongue, to hunt, or fight for Rome or Egypt, but always at heart—a huckster still.

At midnight he returns—a man, the good husband, the tender father; he slips into the conjugal bed, his imagination still afire with the illusive forms of the operatic nymphs, and so turns to the profit of conjugal love the world's depravities, the voluptuous curves of Taglioni's leg. And finally, if he sleeps, he sleeps apace, and hurries through his slumber as he does his life.

This man sums up all things—history, literature, politics, government, religion, military science. Is he not a living encyclopaedia, a grotesque Atlas; ceaselessly in motion, like Paris itself, and knowing not repose? He is all legs. No physiognomy could preserve its purity amid such toils. Perhaps the artisan who dies at thirty, an old man, his stomach tanned by repeated doses of brandy, will be held, according to certain leisured philosophers, to be happier than the huckster is. The one perishes in a breath, and the other by degrees. From his eight industries, from the labor of his shoulders, his throat, his hands, from his wife and his business, the one derives—as from so many farms—children, some thousands of francs, and the most laborious happiness that has ever diverted the heart of man. This fortune and these children, or the children who sum up everything for him, become the prey of the world above, to which he brings his ducats and his daughter or his son, reared at college, who, with more education than his father, raises higher his ambitious gaze. Often the son of a retail tradesman would fain be something in the State.

Ambition of that sort carries on our thought to the second Parisian sphere. Go up one story, then, and descend to the *entresol/: or climb down from the attic and remain on the fourth floor; in fine, penetrate into the world which has possessions: the same result! Wholesale merchants, and their men—people with small banking accounts and much integrity—rogues and catspaws, clerks old and young, sheriffs' clerks, barristers' clerks, solicitors' clerks; in fine, all the working, thinking, and speculating members of that lower middle class which honeycombs the interests of Paris and watches over its granary, accumulates the coin, stores the products that the proletariat have made, preserves the fruits of the South, the fishes, the wine from every sun−favored hill; which stretches its hands over the Orient, and takes from it the shawls that the Russ and the Turk despise; which harvests even from the Indies; crouches down in expectation of a sale, greedy of profit; which discounts bills, turns over and collects all kinds of securities, holds all Paris in its hand, watches over the fantasies of children, spies out the caprices and the vices of mature age, sucks money out of disease. Even so, if they drink no brandy, like the artisan, nor wallow in the mire of debauch, all equally abuse their strength, immeasurably strain their bodies and their minds alike, are burned away with desires, devastated with the swiftness of the pace. In their case the physical distortion is accomplished beneath the whip of interests, beneath the scourge of ambitions which torture the educated portion of this monstrous city, just as in the case of the proletariat it is brought about by the cruel see−saw of the material elaborations perpetually required from the despotism of the aristocratic "I will." Here, too, then, in order to obey that universal master, pleasure or gold, they must devour time, hasten time, find more than four−and−twenty hours in the day and night, waste themselves, slay themselves, and purchase two years of unhealthy repose with thirty years of old age. Only, the working−man dies in hospital when the last term of his stunted growth expires; whereas the man of the middle class is set upon living, and lives on, but in a state of idiocy. You will meet him, with his worn, flat old face, with no light in his eyes, with no strength in his limbs, dragging himself with a dazed air along the boulevard—the belt of his Venus, of his beloved city. What was his want? The sabre of the National Guard, a permanent stock−pot, a decent plot in Pere Lachaise, and, for his old age, a little gold honestly earned. HIS Monday is on Sunday, his rest a drive in a hired carriage—a country excursion during which his wife and children glut themselves merrily with dust or bask in the sun; his dissipation is at the restaurateur's, whose poisonous dinner has won renown, or at some family ball, where he suffocates till midnight. Some fools are surprised at the phantasmagoria of the monads which they see with the aid of the microscope in a drop of water; but what would Rabelais' Gargantua,—that misunderstood figure of an audacity so sublime,—what would that giant say, fallen from the celestial spheres, if he amused himself by contemplating the motions of this secondary life of Paris, of which here is one of the formulae? Have you seen one of those little constructions—cold in summer, and with no other warmth than a small stove in winter—placed beneath the vast copper dome which crowns the Halle−auble? Madame is there by morning. She is engaged at the markets, and makes by this occupation twelve thousand francs a year, people say. Monsieur, when Madame is up, passes into a*

gloomy office, where he lends money till the week− end to the tradesmen of his district. By nine o'clock he is at the passport office, of which he is one of the minor officials. By evening he is at the box−office of the Theatre Italien, or of any other theatre you like. The children are put out to nurse, and only return to be sent to college or to boarding−school. Monsieur and Madame live on the third floor, have but one cook, give dances in a salon twelve foot by eight, lit by argand lamps; but they give a hundred and fifty thousand francs to their daughter, and retire at the age of fifty, an age when they begin to show themselves on the balcony of the opera, in a fiacre at Longchamps; or, on sunny days, in faded clothes on the boulevards—the fruit of all this sowing. Respected by their neighbors, in good odor with the government, connected with the upper middle classes, Monsieur obtains at sixty−five the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and his daughter's father−in−law, a parochial mayor, invites him to his evenings. These life−long labors, then, are for the good of the children, whom these lower middle classes are inevitably driven to exalt. Thus each sphere directs all its efforts towards the sphere above it. The son of the rich grocer becomes a notary, the son of the timber merchant becomes a magistrate. No link is wanting in the chain, and everything stimulates the upward march of money.

Thus we are brought to the third circle of this hell, which, perhaps, will some day find its Dante. In this third social circle, a sort of Parisian belly, in which the interests of the town are digested, and where they are condensed into the form known as *business*, there moves and agitates, as by some acrid and bitter intestinal process, the crowd of lawyers, doctors, notaries, councillors, business men, bankers, big merchants, speculators, and magistrates. Here are to be found even more causes of moral and physical destruction than elsewhere. These people—almost all of them—live in unhealthy offices, in fetid ante−chambers, in little barred dens, and spend their days bowed down beneath the weight of affairs; they rise at dawn to be in time, not to be left behind, to gain all or not to lose, to overreach a man or his money, to open or wind up some business, to take advantage of some fleeting opportunity, to get a man hanged or set him free. They infect their horses, they overdrive and age and break them, like their own legs, before their time. Time is their tyrant: it fails them, it escapes them; they can neither expand it nor cut it short. What soul can remain great, pure, moral, and generous, and, consequently, what face retain its beauty in this depraving practice of a calling which compels one to bear the weight of the public sorrows, to analyze them, to weigh them, estimate them, and mark them out by rule? Where do these folk put aside their hearts? . . . I do not know; but they leave them somewhere or other, when they have any, before they descend each morning into the abyss of the misery which puts families on the rack. For them there is no such thing as mystery; they see the reverse side of society, whose confessors they are, and despise it. Then, whatever they do, owing to their contact with corruption, they either are horrified at it and grow gloomy, or else, out of lassitude, or some secret compromise, espouse it. In fine, they necessarily become callous to every sentiment, since man, his laws and his institutions, make them steal, like jackals, from corpses that are still warm. At all hours the financier is trampling on the living, the attorney on the dead, the pleader on the conscience. Forced to be speaking without a rest, they all substitute words for ideas, phrases for feelings, and their soul becomes a larynx. Neither the great merchant, nor the judge, nor the pleader preserves his sense of right; they feel no more, they apply set rules that leave cases out of count. Borne along by their headlong course, they are neither husbands nor fathers nor lovers; they glide on sledges over the facts of life, and live at all times at the high pressure conduced by business and the vast city. When they return to their homes they are required to go to a ball, to the opera, into society, where they can make clients, acquaintances, protectors. They all eat to excess, play and keep vigil, and their faces become bloated, flushed, and emaciated.

To this terrific expenditure of intellectual strength, to such multifold moral contradictions, they oppose—not, indeed pleasure, it would be too pale a contrast—but debauchery, a debauchery both secret and alarming, for they have all means at their disposal, and fix the morality of society. Their genuine stupidity lies hid beneath their specialism. They know their business, but are ignorant of everything which is outside it. So that to preserve their self−conceit they question everything, are crudely and crookedly critical. They appear to be sceptics and are in reality simpletons; they swamp their wits in interminable arguments. Almost all conveniently adopt social, literary, or political prejudices, to do away with the need of having opinions, just as they adapt their conscience to the standard of the Code or the Tribunal of Commerce. Having started early to become men of note, they turn into mediocrities, and crawl over the high places of the world. So, too, their faces present the harsh pallor, the deceitful coloring, those dull, tarnished eyes, and garrulous, sensual mouths, in which the observer recognizes the symptoms of the degeneracy of the thought and its rotation in the circle of a special idea which destroys the

creative faculties of the brain and the gift of seeing in large, of generalizing and deducing. No man who has allowed himself to be caught in the revolutions of the gear of these huge machines can ever become great. If he is a doctor, either he has practised little or he is an exception—a Bichat who dies young. If a great merchant, something remains—he is almost Jacques Coeur. Did Robespierre practise? Danton was an idler who waited. But who, moreover has ever felt envious of the figures of Danton and Robespierre, however lofty they were? These men of affairs, *par excellence*, attract money to them, and hoard it in order to ally themselves with aristocratic families. If the ambition of the working− man is that of the small tradesman, here, too, are the same passions. The type of this class might be either an ambitious bourgeois, who, after a life of privation and continual scheming, passes into the Council of State as an ant passes through a chink; or some newspaper editor, jaded with intrigue, whom the king makes a peer of France— perhaps to revenge himself on the nobility; or some notary become mayor of his parish: all people crushed with business, who, if they attain their end, are literally *killed* in its attainment. In France the usage is to glorify wigs. Napoleon, Louis XVI., the great rulers, alone have always wished for young men to fulfil their projects.

Above this sphere the artist world exists. But here, too, the faces stamped with the seal of originality are worn, nobly indeed, but worn, fatigued, nervous. Harassed by a need of production, outrun by their costly fantasies, worn out by devouring genius, hungry for pleasure, the artists of Paris would all regain by excessive labor what they have lost by idleness, and vainly seek to reconcile the world and glory, money and art. To begin with, the artist is ceaselessly panting under his creditors; his necessities beget his debts, and his debts require of him his nights. After his labor, his pleasure. The comedian plays till midnight, studies in the morning, rehearses at noon; the sculptor is bent before his statue; the journalist is a marching thought, like the soldier when at war; the painter who is the fashion is crushed with work, the painter with no occupation, if he feels himself to be a man of genius, gnaws his entrails. Competition, rivalry, calumny assail talent. Some, in desperation, plunge into the abyss of vice, others die young and unknown because they have discounted their future too soon. Few of these figures, originally sublime, remain beautiful. On the other hand, the flagrant beauty of their heads is not understood. An artist's face is always exorbitant, it is always above or below the conventional lines of what fools call the *beau−ideal*. What power is it that destroys them? Passion. Every passion in Paris resolves into two terms: gold and pleasure. Now, do you not breathe again? Do you not feel air and space purified? Here is neither labor nor suffering. The soaring arch of gold has reached the summit. From the lowest gutters, where its stream commences, from the little shops where it is stopped by puny coffer−dams, from the heart of the counting−houses and great workshops, where its volume is that of ingots—gold, in the shape of dowries and inheritances, guided by the hands of young girls or the bony fingers of age, courses towards the aristocracy, where it will become a blazing, expansive stream. But, before leaving the four territories upon which the utmost wealth of Paris is based, it is fitting, having cited the moral causes, to deduce those which are physical, and to call attention to a pestilence, latent, as it were, which incessantly acts upon the faces of the porter, the artisan, the small shopkeeper; to point out a deleterious influence the corruption of which equals that of the Parisian administrators who allow it so complacently to exist!

If the air of the houses in which the greater proportion of the middle classes live is noxious, if the atmosphere of the streets belches out cruel miasmas into stuffy back−kitchens where there is little air, realize that, apart from this pestilence, the forty thousand houses of this great city have their foundations in filth, which the powers that be have not yet seriously attempted to enclose with mortar walls solid enough to prevent even the most fetid mud from filtering through the soil, poisoning the wells, and maintaining subterraneously to Lutetia the tradition of her celebrated name. Half of Paris sleeps amidst the putrid exhalations of courts and streets and sewers. But let us turn to the vast saloons, gilded and airy; the hotels in their gardens, the rich, indolent, happy moneyed world. There the faces are lined and scarred with vanity. There nothing is real. To seek for pleasure is it not to find *ennui*? People in society have at an early age warped their nature. Having no occupation other than to wallow in pleasure, they have speedily misused their sense, as the artisan has misused brandy. Pleasure is of the nature of certain medical substances: in order to obtain constantly the same effects the doses must be doubled, and death or degradation is contained in the last. All the lower classes are on their knees before the wealthy, and watch their tastes in order to turn them into vices and exploit them. Thus you see in these folk at an early age tastes instead of passions, romantic fantasies and lukewarm loves. There impotence reigns; there ideas have ceased—they have evaporated together with energy amongst the affectations of the boudoir and the cajolements of women. There are fledglings

of forty, old doctors of sixty years. The wealthy obtain in Paris ready−made wit and science—formulated opinions which save them the need of having wit, science, or opinion of their own. The irrationality of this world is equaled by its weakness and its licentiousness. It is greedy of time to the point of wasting it. Seek in it for affection as little as for ideas. Its kisses conceal a profound indifference, its urbanity a perpetual contempt. It has no other fashion of love. Flashes of wit without profundity, a wealth of indiscretion, scandal, and above all, commonplace. Such is the sum of its speech; but these happy fortunates pretend that they do not meet to make and repeat maxims in the manner of La Rochefoucauld as though there did not exist a mean, invented by the eighteenth century, between a superfluity and absolute blank. If a few men of character indulge in witticism, at once subtle and refined, they are misunderstood; soon, tired of giving without receiving, they remain at home, and leave fools to reign over their territory. This hollow life, this perpetual expectation of a pleasure which never comes, this permanent *ennui* and emptiness of soul, heart, and mind, the lassitude of the upper Parisian world, is reproduced on its features, and stamps its parchment faces, its premature wrinkles, that physiognomy of the wealthy upon which impotence has set its grimace, in which gold is mirrored, and whence intelligence has fled.

Such a view of moral Paris proves that physical Paris could not be other than it is. This coroneted town is like a queen, who, being always with child, has desires of irresistible fury. Paris is the crown of the world, a brain which perishes of genius and leads human civilization; it is a great man, a perpetually creative artist, a politician with second−sight who must of necessity have wrinkles on his forehead, the vices of a great man, the fantasies of the artist, and the politician's disillusions. Its physiognomy suggests the evolution of good and evil, battle and victory; the moral combat of '89, the clarion calls of which still re−echo in every corner of the world; and also the downfall of 1814. Thus this city can no more be moral, or cordial, or clean, than the engines which impel those proud leviathans which you admire when they cleave the waves! Is not Paris a sublime vessel laden with intelligence? Yes, her arms are one of those oracles which fatality sometimes allows. The *City of Paris* has her great mast, all of bronze, carved with victories, and for watchman— Napoleon. The barque may roll and pitch, but she cleaves the world, illuminates it through the hundred mouths of her tribunes, ploughs the seas of science, rides with full sail, cries from the height of her tops, with the voice of her scientists and artists: “Onward, advance! Follow me!” She carries a huge crew, which delights in adorning her with fresh streamers. Boys and urchins laughing in the rigging; ballast of heavy *bourgeoisie*; working−men and sailor−men touched with tar; in her cabins the lucky passengers; elegant midshipmen smoke their cigars leaning over the bulwarks; then, on the deck, her soldiers, innovators or ambitious, would accost every fresh shore, and shooting out their bright lights upon it, ask for glory which is pleasure, or for love which needs gold.

Thus the exorbitant movement of the proletariat, the corrupting influence of the interests which consume the two middle classes, the cruelties of the artist's thought, and the excessive pleasure which is sought for incessantly by the great, explain the normal ugliness of the Parisian physiognomy. It is only in the Orient that the human race presents a magnificent figure, but that is an effect of the constant calm affected by those profound philosophers with their long pipes, their short legs, their square contour, who despise and hold activity in horror, whilst in Paris the little and the great and the mediocre run and leap and drive, whipped on by an inexorable goddess, Necessity —the necessity for money, glory, and amusement. Thus, any face which is fresh and graceful and reposeful, any really young face, is in Paris the most extraordinary of exceptions; it is met with rarely. Should you see one there, be sure it belongs either to a young and ardent ecclesiastic or to some good abbe of forty with three chins; to a young girl of pure life such as is brought up in certain middle− class families; to a mother of twenty, still full of illusions, as she suckles her first−born; to a young man newly embarked from the provinces, and intrusted to the care of some devout dowager who keeps him without a sou; or, perhaps, to some shop assistant who goes to bed at midnight wearied out with folding and unfolding calico, and rises at seven o'clock to arrange the window; often again to some man of science or poetry, who lives monastically in the embrace of a fine idea, who remains sober, patient, and chaste; else to some self− contented fool, feeding himself on folly, reeking of health, in a perpetual state of absorption with his own smile; or to the soft and happy race of loungers, the only folk really happy in Paris, which unfolds for them hour by hour its moving poetry.

Nevertheless, there is in Paris a proportion of privileged beings to whom this excessive movement of industries, interests, affairs, arts, and gold is profitable. These beings are women. Although they also have a thousand secret causes which, here more than elsewhere, destroy their physiognomy, there are to be found in the feminine world little happy colonies, who live in Oriental fashion and can preserve their beauty; but these women

rarely show themselves on foot in the streets, they lie hid like rare plants who only unfold their petals at certain hours, and constitute veritable exotic exceptions. However, Paris is essentially the country of contrasts. If true sentiments are rare there, there also are to be found, as elsewhere, noble friendships and unlimited devotion. On this battlefield of interests and passions, just as in the midst of those marching societies where egoism triumphs, where every one is obliged to defend himself, and which we call *armies*, it seems as though sentiments liked to be complete when they showed themselves, and are sublime by juxtaposition. So it is with faces. In Paris one sometimes sees in the aristocracy, set like stars, the ravishing faces of young people, the fruit of quite exceptional manners and education. To the youthful beauty of the English stock they unite the firmness of Southern traits. The fire of their eyes, a delicious bloom on their lips, the lustrous black of their soft locks, a white complexion, a distinguished caste of features, render them the flowers of the human race, magnificent to behold against the mass of other faces, worn, old, wrinkled, and grimacing. So women, too, admire such young people with that eager pleasure which men take in watching a pretty girl, elegant, gracious, and embellished with all the virginal charms with which our imagination pleases to adorn the perfect woman. If this hurried glance at the population of Paris has enabled us to conceive the rarity of a Raphaelesque face, and the passionate admiration which such an one must inspire at the first sight, the prime interest of our history will have been justified. *Quod erat demonstrandum*—if one may be permitted to apply scholastic formulae to the science of manners.

Upon one of those fine spring mornings, when the leaves, although unfolded, are not yet green, when the sun begins to gild the roofs, and the sky is blue, when the population of Paris issues from its cells to swarm along the boulevards, glides like a serpent of a thousand coils through the Rue de la Paix towards the Tuileries, saluting the hymeneal magnificence which the country puts on; on one of these joyous days, then, a young man as beautiful as the day itself, dressed with taste, easy of manner—to let out the secret he was a love−child, the natural son of Lord Dudley and the famous Marquise de Vordac—was walking in the great avenue of the Tuileries. This Adonis, by name Henri de Marsay, was born in France, when Lord Dudley had just married the young lady, already Henri's mother, to an old gentleman called M. de Marsay. This faded and almost extinguished butterfly recognized the child as his own in consideration of the life interest in a fund of a hundred thousand francs definitively assigned to his putative son; a generosity which did not cost Lord Dudley too dear. French funds were worth at that time seventeen francs, fifty centimes. The old gentleman died without having ever known his wife. Madame de Marsay subsequently married the Marquis de Vordac, but before becoming a marquise she showed very little anxiety as to her son and Lord Dudley. To begin with, the declaration of war between France and England had separated the two lovers, and fidelity at all costs was not, and never will be, the fashion of Paris. Then the successes of the woman, elegant, pretty, universally adored, crushed in the Parisienne the maternal sentiment. Lord Dudley was no more troubled about his offspring than was the mother,—the speedy infidelity of a young girl he had ardently loved gave him, perhaps, a sort of aversion for all that issued from her. Moreover, fathers can, perhaps, only love the children with whom they are fully acquainted, a social belief of the utmost importance for the peace of families, which should be held by all the celibate, proving as it does that paternity is a sentiment nourished artificially by woman, custom, and the law.

Poor Henri de Marsay knew no other father than that one of the two who was not compelled to be one. The paternity of M. de Marsay was naturally most incomplete. In the natural order, it is but for a few fleeting instants that children have a father, and M. de Marsay imitated nature. The worthy man would not have sold his name had he been free from vices. Thus he squandered without remorse in gambling hells, and drank elsewhere, the few dividends which the National Treasury paid to its bondholders. Then he handed over the child to an aged sister, a Demoiselle de Marsay, who took much care of him, and provided him, out of the meagre sum allowed by her brother, with a tutor, an abbe without a farthing, who took the measure of the youth's future, and determined to pay himself out of the hundred thousand livres for the care given to his pupil, for whom he conceived an affection. As chance had it, this tutor was a true priest, one of those ecclesiastics cut out to become cardinals in France, or Borgias beneath the tiara. He taught the child in three years what he might have learned at college in ten. Then the great man, by name the Abbe de Maronis, completed the education of his pupil by making him study civilization under all its aspects: he nourished him on his experience, led him little into churches, which at that time were closed; introduced him sometimes behind the scenes of theatres, more often into the houses of courtesans; he exhibited human emotions to him one by one; taught him politics in the drawing−rooms, where they simmered at the time, explained to him the machinery of government, and endeavored out of attraction

towards a fine nature, deserted, yet rich in promise, virilely to replace a mother: is not the Church the mother of orphans? The pupil was responsive to so much care. The worthy priest died in 1812, a bishop, with the satisfaction of having left in this world a child whose heart and mind were so well moulded that he could outwit a man of forty. Who would have expected to have found a heart of bronze, a brain of steel, beneath external traits as seductive as ever the old painters, those naive artists, had given to the serpent in the terrestrial paradise? Nor was that all. In addition, the good−natured prelate had procured for the child of his choice certain acquaintances in the best Parisian society, which might equal in value, in the young man's hand, another hundred thousand invested livres. In fine, this priest, vicious but politic, sceptical yet learned, treacherous yet amiable, weak in appearance yet as vigorous physically as intellectually, was so genuinely useful to his pupil, so complacent to his vices, so fine a calculator of all kinds of strength, so profound when it was needful to make some human reckoning, so youthful at table, at Frascati, at—I know not where, that the grateful Henri de Marsay was hardly moved at aught in 1814, except when he looked at the portrait of his beloved bishop, the only personal possession which the prelate had been able to bequeath him (admirable type of the men whose genius will preserve the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church, compromised for the moment by the feebleness of its recruits and the decrepit age of its pontiffs; but if the church likes!).

The continental war prevented young De Marsay from knowing his real father. It is doubtful whether he was aware of his name. A deserted child, he was equally ignorant of Madame de Marsay. Naturally, he had little regret for his putative father. As for Mademoiselle de Marsay, his only mother, he built for her a handsome little monument in Pere Lachaise when she died. Monseigneur de Maronis had guaranteed to this old lady one of the best places in the skies, so that when he saw her die happy, Henri gave her some egotistical tears; he began to weep on his own account. Observing this grief, the abbe dried his pupil's tears, bidding him observe that the good woman took her snuff most offensively, and was becoming so ugly and deaf and tedious that he ought to return thanks for her death. The bishop had emancipated his pupil in 1811. Then, when the mother of M. de Marsay remarried, the priest chose, in a family council, one of those honest dullards, picked out by him through the windows of his confessional, and charged him with the administration of the fortune, the revenues of which he was willing to apply to the needs of the community, but of which he wished to preserve the capital.

Towards the end of 1814, then, Henri de Marsay had no sentiment of obligation in the world, and was as free as an unmated bird. Although he had lived twenty−two years he appeared to be barely seventeen. As a rule the most fastidious of his rivals considered him to be the prettiest youth in Paris. From his father, Lord Dudley, he had derived a pair of the most amorously deceiving blue eyes; from his mother the bushiest of black hair, from both pure blood, the skin of a young girl, a gentle and modest expression, a refined and aristocratic figure, and beautiful hands. For a woman, to see him was to lose her head for him; do you understand? to conceive one of those desires which eat the heart, which are forgotten because of the impossibility of satisfying them, because women in Paris are commonly without tenacity. Few of them say to themselves, after the fashion of men, the "*Je Maintiendrai*," of the House of Orange.

Underneath this fresh young life, and in spite of the limpid springs in his eyes, Henri had a lion's courage, a monkey's agility. He could cut a ball in half at ten paces on the blade of a knife; he rode his horse in a way that made you realize the fable of the Centaur; drove a four−in−hand with grace; was as light as a cherub and quiet as a lamb, but knew how to beat a townsman at the terrible game of *savate* or cudgels; moreover, he played the piano in a fashion which would have enabled him to become an artist should he fall on calamity, and owned a voice which would have been worth to Barbaja fifty thousand francs a season. Alas, that all these fine qualities, these pretty faults, were tarnished by one abominable vice: he believed neither in man nor woman, God nor Devil. Capricious nature had commenced by endowing him, a priest had completed the work.

To render this adventure comprehensible, it is necessary to add here that Lord Dudley naturally found many women disposed to reproduce samples of such a delicious pattern. His second masterpiece of this kind was a young girl named Euphemie, born of a Spanish lady, reared in Havana, and brought to Madrid with a young Creole woman of the Antilles, and with all the ruinous tastes of the Colonies, but fortunately married to an old and extremely rich Spanish noble, Don Hijos, Marquis de San−Real, who, since the occupation of Spain by French troops, had taken up his abode in Paris, and lived in the Rue St. Lazare. As much from indifference as from any respect for the innocence of youth, Lord Dudley was not in the habit of keeping his children informed of the relations he created for them in all parts. That is a slightly inconvenient form of civilization; it has so many

advantages that we must overlook its drawbacks in consideration of its benefits. Lord Dudley, to make no more words of it, came to Paris in 1816 to take refuge from the pursuit of English justice, which protects nothing Oriental except commerce. The exiled lord, when he saw Henri, asked who that handsome young man might be. Then, upon hearing the name, “Ah, it is my son. . . . What a pity!” he said.

Such was the story of the young man who, about the middle of the month of April, 1815, was walking indolently up the broad avenue of the Tuileries, after the fashion of all those animals who, knowing their strength, pass along in majesty and peace. Middle−class matrons turned back naively to look at him again; other women, without turning round, waited for him to pass again, and engraved him in their minds that they might remember in due season that fragrant face, which would not have disadorned the body of the fairest among themselves.

“What are you doing here on Sunday?” said the Marquis de Ronquerolles to Henri, as he passed.

“There's a fish in the net,” answered the young man.

This exchange of thoughts was accomplished by means of two significant glances, without it appearing that either De Ronquerolles or De Marsay had any knowledge of the other. The young man was taking note of the passers−by with that promptitude of eye and ear which is peculiar to the Parisian who seems, at first, to see and hear nothing, but who sees and hears all.

At that moment a young man came up to him and took him familiarly by the arm, saying to him: “How are you, my dear De Marsay?”

“Extremely well,” De Marsay answered, with that air of apparent affection which amongst the young men of Paris proves nothing, either for the present or the future.

In effect, the youth of Paris resemble the youth of no other town. They may be divided into two classes: the young man who has something, and the young man who has nothing; or the young man who thinks and he who spends. But, be it well understood this applies only to those natives of the soil who maintain in Paris the delicious course of the elegant life. There exist, as well, plenty of other young men, but they are children who are late in conceiving Parisian life, and who remain its dupes. They do not speculate, they study; they *fag*, as the others say. Finally there are to be found, besides, certain young people, rich or poor, who embrace careers and follow them with a single heart; they are somewhat like the Emile of Rousseau, of the flesh of citizens, and they never appear in society. The diplomatic impolitely dub them fools. Be they that or no, they augment the number of those mediocrities beneath the yoke of which France is bowed down. They are always there, always ready to bungle public or private concerns with the dull trowel of their mediocrity, bragging of their impotence, which they count for conduct and integrity. This sort of social *prizemen* infests the administration, the army, the magistracy, the chambers, the courts. They diminish and level down the country and constitute, in some manner, in the body politic, a lymph which infects it and renders it flabby. These honest folk call men of talent immoral or rogues. If such rogues require to be paid for their services, at least their services are there; whereas the other sort do harm and are respected by the mob; but, happily for France, elegant youth stigmatizes them ceaselessly under the name of louts.

At the first glance, then, it is natural to consider as very distinct the two sorts of young men who lead the life of elegance, the amiable corporation to which Henri de Marsay belonged. But the observer, who goes beyond the superficial aspect of things, is soon convinced that the difference is purely moral, and that nothing is so deceptive as this pretty outside. Nevertheless, all alike take precedence over everybody else; speak rightly or wrongly of things, of men, literature, and the fine arts; have ever in their mouth the Pitt and Coburg of each year; interrupt a conversation with a pun, turn into ridicule science and the *savant*; despise all things which they do not know or which they fear; set themselves above all by constituting themselves the supreme judges of all. They would all hoax their fathers, and be ready to shed crocodile tears upon their mothers' breasts; but generally they believe in nothing, blaspheme women, or play at modesty, and in reality are led by some old woman or an evil courtesan. They are all equally eaten to the bone with calculation, with depravity, with a brutal lust to succeed, and if you plumbed for their hearts you would find in all a stone. In their normal state they have the prettiest exterior, stake their friendship at every turn, are captivating alike. The same badinage dominates their ever−changing jargon; they seek for oddity in their toilette, glory in repeating the stupidities of such and such actor who is in fashion, and commence operations, it matters not with whom, with contempt and impertinence, in order to have, as it were, the first move in the game; but, woe betide him who does not know how to take a blow on one cheek for the sake of rendering two. They resemble, in fine, that pretty white spray which crests the stormy waves. They dress and

dance, dine and take their pleasure, on the day of Waterloo, in the time of cholera or revolution. Finally, their expenses are all the same, but here the contrast comes in. Of this fluctuating fortune, so agreeably flung away, some possess the capital for which the others wait; they have the same tailors, but the bills of the latter are still to pay. Next, if the first, like sieves, take in ideas of all kinds without retaining any, the latter compare them and assimilate all the good. If the first believe they know something, know nothing and understand everything, lend all to those who need nothing and offer nothing to those who are in need; the latter study secretly others' thoughts and place out their money, like their follies, at big interest. The one class have no more faithful impressions, because their soul, like a mirror, worn from use, no longer reflects any image; the others economize their senses and life, even while they seem, like the first, to be flinging them away broadcast. The first, on the faith of a hope, devote themselves without conviction to a system which has wind and tide against it, but they leap upon another political craft when the first goes adrift; the second take the measure of the future, sound it, and see in political fidelity what the English see in commercial integrity, an element of success. Where the young man of possessions makes a pun or an epigram upon the restoration of the throne, he who has nothing makes a public calculation or a secret reservation, and obtains everything by giving a handshake to his friends. The one deny every faculty to others, look upon all their ideas as new, as though the world had been made yesterday, they have unlimited confidence in themselves, and no crueler enemy than those same selves. But the others are armed with an incessant distrust of men, whom they estimate at their value, and are sufficiently profound to have one thought beyond their friends, whom they exploit; then of evenings, when they lay their heads on their pillows, they weigh men as a miser weighs his gold pieces. The one are vexed at an aimless impertinence, and allow themselves to be ridiculed by the diplomatic, who make them dance for them by pulling what is the main string of these puppets—their vanity. Thus, a day comes when those who had nothing have something, and those who had something have nothing. The latter look at their comrades who have achieved positions as cunning fellows; their hearts may be bad, but their heads are strong. “He is very strong!” is the supreme praise accorded to those who have attained *quibuscumque viis*, political rank, a woman, or a fortune. Amongst them are to be found certain young men who play this *role* by commencing with having debts. Naturally, these are more dangerous than those who play it without a farthing.

The young man who called himself a friend of Henri de Marsay was a rattle−head who had come from the provinces, and whom the young men then in fashion were teaching the art of running through an inheritance; but he had one last leg to stand on in his province, in the shape of a secure establishment. He was simply an heir who had passed without any transition from his pittance of a hundred francs a month to the entire paternal fortune, and who, if he had not wit enough to perceive that he was laughed at, was sufficiently cautious to stop short at two−thirds of his capital. He had learned at Paris, for a consideration of some thousands of francs, the exact value of harness, the art of not being too respectful to his gloves, learned to make skilful meditations upon the right wages to give people, and to seek out what bargain was the best to close with them. He set store on his capacity to speak in good terms of his horses, of his Pyrenean hound; to tell by her dress, her walk, her shoes, to what class a woman belonged; to study *ecarte*, remember a few fashionable catchwords, and win by his sojourn in Parisian society the necessary authority to import later into his province a taste for tea and silver of an English fashion, and to obtain the right of despising everything around him for the rest of his days.

De Marsay had admitted him to his society in order to make use of him in the world, just as a bold speculator employs a confidential clerk. The friendship, real or feigned, of De Marsay was a social position for Paul de Manerville, who, on his side, thought himself astute in exploiting, after his fashion, his intimate friend. He lived in the reflecting lustre of his friend, walked constantly under his umbrella, wore his boots, gilded himself with his rays. When he posed in Henri's company or walked at his side, he had the air of saying: “Don't insult us, we are real dogs.” He often permitted himself to remark fatuously: “If I were to ask Henri for such and such a thing, he is a good enough friend of mine to do it.” But he was careful never to ask anything of him. He feared him, and his fear, although imperceptible, reacted upon the others, and was of use to De Marsay.

“De Marsay is a man of a thousand,” said Paul. “Ah, you will see, he will be what he likes. I should not be surprised to find him one of these days Minister of Foreign Affairs. Nothing can withstand him.”

He made of De Marsay what Corporal Trim made of his cap, a perpetual instance.

“Ask De Marsay and you will see!”

Or again:

“The other day we were hunting, De Marsay and I, He would not believe me, but I jumped a hedge without moving on my horse!”

Or again:

“We were with some women, De Marsay and I, and upon my word of honor, I was——” etc.

Thus Paul de Manerville could not be classed amongst the great, illustrious, and powerful family of fools who succeed. He would one day be a deputy. For the time he was not even a young man. His friend, De Marsay, defined him thus: “You ask me what is Paul? Paul? Why, Paul de Manerville!”

“I am surprised, my dear fellow,” he said to De Marsay, “to see you here on a Sunday.”

“I was going to ask you the same question.”

“Is it an intrigue?”

“An intrigue.”

“Bah!”

“I can mention it to you without compromising my passion. Besides, a woman who comes to the Tuileries on Sundays is of no account, aristocratically speaking.”

“Ah! ah!”

“Hold your tongue then, or I shall tell you nothing. Your laugh is too loud, you will make people think that we have lunched too well. Last Thursday, here on the Terrasse des Feuillants, I was walking along, thinking of nothing at all, but when I got to the gate of the Rue de Castiglione, by which I intended to leave, I came face to face with a woman, or rather a young girl; who, if she did not throw herself at my head, stopped short, less I think, from human respect, than from one of those movements of profound surprise which affect the limbs, creep down the length of the spine, and cease only in the sole of the feet, to nail you to the ground. I have often produced effects of this nature, a sort of animal magnetism which becomes enormously powerful when the relations are reciprocally precise. But, my dear fellow, this was not stupefaction, nor was she a common girl. Morally speaking, her face seemed to say: 'What, is it you, my ideal! The creation of my thoughts, of my morning and evening dreams! What, are you there? Why this morning? Why not yesterday? Take me, I am thine, *et cetera*!' Good, I said to myself, another one! Then I scrutinize her. Ah, my dear fellow, speaking physically, my incognita is the most adorable feminine person whom I ever met. She belongs to that feminine variety which the Romans call *fulva, flava*—the woman of fire. And in chief, what struck me the most, what I am still taken with, are her two yellow eyes, like a tiger's, a golden yellow that gleams, living gold, gold which thinks, gold which loves, and is determined to take refuge in your pocket.”

“My dear fellow, we are full of her!” cried Paul. “She comes here sometimes—*the girl with the golden eyes*! That is the name we have given her. She is a young creature—not more than twenty−two, and I have seen her here in the time of the Bourbons, but with a woman who was worth a hundred thousand of her.”

“Silence, Paul! It is impossible for any woman to surpass this girl; she is like the cat who rubs herself against your legs; a white girl with ash−colored hair, delicate in appearance, but who must have downy threads on the third phalanx of her fingers, and all along her cheeks a white down whose line, luminous on fine days, begins at her ears and loses itself on her neck.”

“Ah, the other, my dear De Marsay! She has black eyes which have never wept, but which burn; black eyebrows which meet and give her an air of hardness contradicted by the compact curve of her lips, on which the kisses do not stay, lips burning and fresh; a Moorish color that warms a man like the sun. But—upon my word of honor, she is like you!”

“You flatter her!”

“A firm figure, the tapering figure of a corvette built for speed, which rushes down upon the merchant vessel with French impetuosity, which grapples with her and sinks her at the same time.”

“After all, my dear fellow,” answered De Marsay, “what has that got to do with me, since I have never seen her? Ever since I have studied women, my incognita is the only one whose virginal bosom, whose ardent and voluptuous forms, have realized for me the only woman of my dreams —of my dreams! She is the original of that ravishing picture called *La Femme Caressant sa Chimere*, the warmest, the most infernal inspiration of the genius of antiquity; a holy poem prostituted by those who have copied it for frescoes and mosiacs; for a heap of bourgeois who see in this gem nothing more than a gew−gaw and hang it on their watch−chains—whereas, it is the whole woman, an abyss of pleasure into which one plunges and finds no end; whereas, it is the ideal woman,

to be seen sometimes in reality in Spain or Italy, almost never in France. Well, I have again seen this girl of the gold eyes, this woman caressing her chimera. I saw her on Friday. I had a presentiment that on the following day she would be here at the same hour; I was not mistaken. I have taken a pleasure in following her without being observed, in studying her indolent walk, the walk of the woman without occupation, but in the movements of which one devines all the pleasure that lies asleep. Well, she turned back again, she saw me, once more she adored me, once more trembled, shivered. It was then I noticed the genuine Spanish duenna who looked after her, a hyena upon whom some jealous man has put a dress, a she−devil well paid, no doubt, to guard this delicious creature. . . . Ah, then the duenna made me deeper in love. I grew curious. On Saturday, nobody. And here I am to−day waiting for this girl whose chimera I am, asking nothing better than to pose as the monster in the fresco."

"There she is," said Paul. "Every one is turning round to look at her."

The unknown blushed, her eyes shone; she saw Henri, she shut them and passed by.

"You say that she notices you?" cried Paul, facetiously.

The duenna looked fixedly and attentively at the two young men. When the unknown and Henri passed each other again, the young girl touched him, and with her hand pressed the hand of the young man. Then she turned her head and smiled with passion, but the duenna led her away very quickly to the gate of the Rue de Castiglione.

The two friends followed the young girl, admiring the magnificent grace of the neck which met her head in a harmony of vigorous lines, and upon which a few coils of hair were tightly wound. The girl with the golden eyes had that well−knitted, arched, slender foot which presents so many attractions to the dainty imagination. Moreover, she was shod with elegance, and wore a short skirt. During her course she turned from time to time to look at Henri, and appeared to follow the old woman regretfully, seeming to be at once her mistress and her slave; she could break her with blows, but could not dismiss her. All that was perceptible. The two friends reached the gate. Two men in livery let down the step of a tasteful *coupe* emblazoned with armorial bearings. The girl with the golden eyes was the first to enter it, took her seat at the side where she could be best seen when the carriage turned, put her hand on the door, and waved her handkerchief in the duennna's despite. In contempt of what might be said by the curious, her handkerchief cried to Henri openly: "Follow me!"

"Have you ever seen a handkerchief better thrown?" said Henri to Paul de Manerville.

Then, observing a fiacre on the point of departure, having just set down a fare, he made a sign to the driver to wait.

"Follow that carriage, notice the house and the street where it stops —you shall have ten francs. . . . Paul, adieu."

The cab followed the *coupe*. The *coupe* stopped in the Rue Saint Lazare before one of the finest houses of the neighborhood.

De Marsay was not impulsive. Any other young man would have obeyed his impulse to obtain at once some information about a girl who realized so fully the most luminous ideas ever expressed upon women in the poetry of the East; but, too experienced to compromise his good fortune, he had told his coachman to continue along the Rue Saint Lazare and carry him back to his house. The next day, his confidential valet, Laurent by name, as cunning a fellow as the Frontin of the old comedy, waited in the vicinity of the house inhabited by the unknown for the hour at which letters were distributed. In order to be able to spy at his ease and hang about the house, he had followed the example of those police officers who seek a good disguise, and bought up cast−off clothes of an Auvergnat, the appearance of whom he sought to imitate. When the postman, who went the round of the Rue Saint Lazare that morning, passed by, Laurent feigned to be a porter unable to remember the name of a person to whom he had to deliver a parcel, and consulted the postman. Deceived at first by appearances, this personage, so picturesque in the midst of Parisian civilization, informed him that the house in which the girl with the golden eyes dwelt belonged to Don Hijos, Marquis de San−Real, grandee of Spain. Naturally, it was not with the Marquis that the Auvergnat was concerned.

"My parcel," he said, "is for the marquise."

"She is away," replied the postman. "Her letters are forwarded to London."

"Then the marquise is not a young girl who . . . ?"

"Ah!" said the postman, interrupting the *valet de chambre* and observing him attentively, "you are as much a porter as I'm . . ."

Laurent chinked some pieces of gold before the functionary, who began to smile.

“Come, here's the name of your quarry,” he said, taking from his leather wallet a letter bearing a London stamp, upon which the address, “To Mademoiselle Paquita Valdes, Rue Saint Lazare, Hotel San− Real, Paris,” was written in long, fine characters, which spoke of a woman's hand.

“Could you tap a bottle of Chablis, with a few dozen oysters, and a *filet saute* with mushrooms to follow it?” said Laurent, who wished to win the postman's valuable friendship.

“At half−past nine, when my round is finished——Where?”

“At the corner of the Rue de la Chaussee−d'Antin and the Rue Neuve−des−Mathurins, at the *Puits sans Vin*,” said Laurent.

“Hark ye, my friend,” said the postman, when he rejoined the valet an hour after this encounter, “if your master is in love with the girl, he is in for a famous task. I doubt you'll not succeed in seeing her. In the ten years that I've been postman in Paris, I have seen plenty of different kinds of doors! But I can tell you, and no fear of being called a liar by any of my comrades, there never was a door so mysterious as M. de San−Real's. No one can get into the house without the Lord knows what counter−word; and, notice, it has been selected on purpose between a courtyard and a garden to avoid any communication with other houses. The porter is an old Spaniard, who never speaks a word of French, but peers at people as Vidocq might, to see if they are not thieves. If a lover, a thief, or you—I make no comparisons— could get the better of this first wicket, well, in the first hall, which is shut by a glazed door, you would run across a butler surrounded by lackeys, an old joker more savage and surly even than the porter. If any one gets past the porter's lodge, my butler comes out, waits for you at the entrance, and puts you through a cross− examination like a criminal. That has happened to me, a mere postman. He took me for an eavesdropper in disguise, he said, laughing at his nonsense. As for the servants, don't hope to get aught out of them; I think they are mutes, no one in the neighborhood knows the color of their speech; I don't know what wages they can pay them to keep them from talk and drink; the fact is, they are not to be got at, whether because they are afraid of being shot, or that they have some enormous sum to lose in the case of an indiscretion. If your master is fond enough of Mademoiselle Paquita Valdes to surmount all these obstacles, he certainly won't triumph over Dona Concha Marialva, the duenna who accompanies her and would put her under her petticoats sooner than leave her. The two women look as if they were sewn to one another.”

“All that you say, worthy postman,” went on Laurent, after having drunk off his wine, “confirms me in what I have learned before. Upon my word, I thought they were making fun of me! The fruiterer opposite told me that of nights they let loose dogs whose food is hung up on stakes just out of their reach. These cursed animals think, therefore, that any one likely to come in has designs on their victuals, and would tear one to pieces. You will tell me one might throw them down pieces, but it seems they have been trained to touch nothing except from the hand of the porter.”

“The porter of the Baron de Nucingen, whose garden joins at the top that of the Hotel San−Real, told me the same thing,” replied the postman.

“Good! my master knows him,” said Laurent, to himself. “Do you know,” he went on, leering at the postman, “I serve a master who is a rare man, and if he took it into his head to kiss the sole of the foot of an empress, she would have to give in to him. If he had need of you, which is what I wish for you, for he is generous, could one count on you?”

“Lord, Monsieur Laurent, my name is Moinot. My name is written exactly like *Moineau*, magpie: M−o−i−n−o−t, Moinot.”

“Exactly,” said Laurent.

“I live at No. 11, Rue des Trois Freres, on the fifth floor,” went on Moinot; “I have a wife and four children. If what you want of me doesn't transgress the limits of my conscience and my official duties, you understand! I am your man.”

“You are an honest fellow,” said Laurent, shaking his hand. . . .

“Paquita Valdes is, no doubt, the mistress of the Marquis de San−Real, the friend of King Ferdinand. Only an old Spanish mummy of eighty years is capable of taking such precautions,” said Henri, when his *valet de chambre* had related the result of his researches.

“Monsieur,” said Laurent, “unless he takes a balloon no one can get into that hotel.”

“You are a fool! Is it necessary to get into the hotel to have Paquita, when Paquita can get out of it?”

“But, sir, the duenna?”

"We will shut her up for a day or two, your duenna."

"So, we shall have Paquita!" said Laurent, rubbing his hands.

"Rascal!" answered Henri, "I shall condemn you to the Concha, if you carry your impudence so far as to speak so of a woman before she has become mine. . . . Turn your thoughts to dressing me, I am going out."

Henri remained for a moment plunged in joyous reflections. Let us say it to the praise of women, he obtained all those whom he deigned to desire. And what could one think of a woman, having no lover, who should have known how to resist a young man armed with beauty which is the intelligence of the body, with intelligence which is a grace of the soul, armed with moral force and fortune, which are the only two real powers? Yet, in triumphing with such ease, De Marsay was bound to grow weary of his triumphs; thus, for about two years he had grown very weary indeed. And diving deep into the sea of pleasures he brought back more grit than pearls. Thus had he come, like potentates, to implore of Chance some obstacle to surmount, some enterprise which should ask the employment of his dormant moral and physical strength. Although Paquita Valdes presented him with a marvelous concentration of perfections which he had only yet enjoyed in detail, the attraction of passion was almost *nil* with him. Constant satiety had weakened in his heart the sentiment of love. Like old men and people disillusioned, he had no longer anything but extravagant caprices, ruinous tastes, fantasies, which, once satisfied, left no pleasant memory in his heart. Amongst young people love is the finest of the emotions, it makes the life of the soul blossom, it nourishes by its solar power the finest inspirations and their great thoughts; the first fruits in all things have a delicious savor. Amongst men love becomes a passion; strength leads to abuse. Amongst old men it turns to vice; impotence tends to extremes. Henri was at once an old man, a man, and a youth. To afford him the feelings of a real love, he needed like Lovelace, a Clarissa Harlowe. Without the magic lustre of that unattainable pearl he could only have either passions rendered acute by some Parisian vanity, or set determinations with himself to bring such and such a woman to such and such a point of corruption, or else adventures which stimulated his curiosity.

The report of Laurent, his *valet de chambre* had just given an enormous value to the girl with the golden eyes. It was a question of doing battle with some secret enemy who seemed as dangerous as he was cunning; and to carry off the victory, all the forces which Henri could dispose of would be useful. He was about to play in that eternal old comedy which will be always fresh, and the characters in which are an old man, a young girl, and a lover: Don Hijos, Paquita, De Marsay. If Laurent was the equal of Figaro, the duenna seemed incorruptible. Thus, the living play was supplied by Chance with a stronger plot than it had ever been by dramatic author! But then is not Chance too, a man of genius?

"It must be a cautious game," said Henri, to himself.

"Well," said Paul de Manerville, as he entered the room. "How are we getting on? I have come to breakfast with you."

"So be it," said Henri. "You won't be shocked if I make my toilette before you?"

"How absurd!"

"We take so many things from the English just now that we might well become as great prudes and hypocrites as themselves," said Henri.

Laurent had set before his master such a quantity of utensils, so many different articles of such elegance, that Paul could not refrain from saying:

"But you will take a couple of hours over that?"

"No!" said Henri, "two hours and a half."

"Well, then, since we are by ourselves, and can say what we like, explain to me why a man as superior as yourself—for you are superior —should affect to exaggerate a foppery which cannot be natural. Why spend two hours and a half in adorning yourself, when it is sufficient to spend a quarter of an hour in your bath, to do your hair in two minutes, and to dress! There, tell me your system."

"I must be very fond of you, my good dunce, to confide such high thoughts to you," said the young man, who was at that moment having his feet rubbed with a soft brush lathered with English soap.

"Have I not the most devoted attachment to you," replied Paul de Manerville, "and do I not like you because I know your superiority? . . ."

"You must have noticed, if you are in the least capable of observing any moral fact, that women love fops," went on De Marsay, without replying in any way to Paul's declaration except by a look. "Do you know why

women love fops? My friend, fops are the only men who take care of themselves. Now, to take excessive care of oneself, does it not imply that one takes care in oneself of what belongs to another? The man who does not belong to himself is precisely the man on whom women are keen. Love is essentially a thief. I say nothing about that excess of niceness to which they are so devoted. Do you know of any woman who has had a passion for a sloven, even if he were a remarkable man? If such a fact has occurred, we must put it to the account of those morbid affections of the breeding woman, mad fancies which float through the minds of everybody. On the other hand, I have seen most remarkable people left in the lurch because of their carelessness. A fop, who is concerned about his person, is concerned with folly, with petty things. And what is a woman? A petty thing, a bundle of follies. With two words said to the winds, can you not make her busy for four hours? She is sure that the fop will be occupied with her, seeing that he has no mind for great things. She will never be neglected for glory, ambition, politics, art—those prostitutes who for her are rivals. Then fops have the courage to cover themselves with ridicule in order to please a woman, and her heart is full of gratitude towards the man who is ridiculous for love. In fine, a fop can be no fop unless he is right in being one. It is women who bestow that rank. The fop is love's colonel; he has his victories, his regiment of women at his command. My dear fellow, in Paris everything is known, and a man cannot be a fop there *gratis*. You, who have only one woman, and who, perhaps, are right to have but one, try to act the fop! . . . You will not even become ridiculous, you will be dead. You will become a foregone conclusion, one of those men condemned inevitably to do one and the same thing. You will come to signify *folly* as inseparably as M. de La Fayette signifies *America*; M. de Talleyrand, *diplomacy*; Desaugiers, *song*; M. de Segur, *romance*. If they once forsake their own line people no longer attach any value to what they do. So, foppery, my friend Paul, is the sign of an incontestable power over the female folk. A man who is loved by many women passes for having superior qualities, and then, poor fellow, it is a question who shall have him! But do you think it is nothing to have the right of going into a drawing−room, of looking down at people from over your cravat, or through your eye−glass, and of despising the most superior of men should he wear an old−fashioned waistcoat? . . . Laurent, you are hurting me! After breakfast, Paul, we will go to the Tuileries and see the adorable girl with the golden eyes."

When, after making an excellent meal, the two young men had traversed the Terrasse de Feuillants and the broad walk of the Tuileries, they nowhere discovered the sublime Paquita Valdes, on whose account some fifty of the most elegant young men in Paris where to be seen, all scented, with their high scarfs, spurred and booted, riding, walking, talking, laughing, and damning themselves mightily.

"It's a white Mass," said Henri; "but I have the most excellent idea in the world. This girl receives letters from London. The postman must be bought or made drunk, a letter opened, read of course, and a love−letter slipped in before it is sealed up again. The old tyrant, *crudel tirano*, is certain to know the person who writes the letters from London, and has ceased to be suspicious of them."

The day after, De Marsay came again to walk on the Terrasse des Feuillants, and saw Paquita Valdes; already passion had embellished her for him. Seriously, he was wild for those eyes, whose rays seemed akin to those which the sun emits, and whose ardor set the seal upon that of her perfect body, in which all was delight. De Marsay was on fire to brush the dress of this enchanting girl as they passed one another in their walk; but his attempts were always vain. But at one moment, when he had repassed Paquita and the duenna, in order to find himself on the same side as the girl of the golden eyes, when he returned, Paquita, no less impatient, came forward hurriedly, and De Marsay felt his hand pressed by her in a fashion at once so swift and so passionately significant that it was as though he had received the emotions surged up in his heart. When the two lovers glanced at one another, Paquita seemed ashamed, she dropped her eyes lest she should meet the eyes of Henri, but her gaze sank lower to fasten on the feet and form of him whom women, before the Revolution, called *their conqueror*.

"I am determined to make this girl my mistress," said Henri to himself.

As he followed her along the terrace, in the direction of the Place Louis XV., he caught sight of the aged Marquis de San−Real, who was walking on the arm of his valet, stepping with all the precautions due to gout and decrepitude. Dona Concha, who distrusted Henri, made Paquita pass between herself and the old man.

"Oh, for you," said De Marsay to himself, casting a glance of disdain upon the duenna, "if one cannot make you capitulate, with a little opium one can make you sleep. We know mythology and the fable of Argus."

Before entering the carriage, the golden−eyed girl exchanged certain glances with her lover, of which the

meaning was unmistakable and which enchanted Henri, but one of them was surprised by the duenna; she said a few rapid words to Paquita, who threw herself into the *coupe* with an air of desperation. For some days Paquita did not appear in the Tuileries. Laurent, who by his master's orders was on watch by the hotel, learned from the neighbors that neither the two women nor the aged marquis had been abroad since the day upon which the duenna had surprised a glance between the young girl in her charge and Henri. The bond, so flimsy withal, which united the two lovers was already severed.

Some days later, none knew by what means, De Marsay had attained his end; he had a seal and wax, exactly resembling the seal and wax affixed to the letters sent to Mademoiselle Valdes from London; paper similar to that which her correspondent used; moreover, all the implements and stamps necessary to affix the French and English postmarks.

He wrote the following letter, to which he gave all the appearances of a letter sent from London:—

"MY DEAR PAQUITA,—I shall not try to paint to you in words the passion with which you have inspired me. If, to my happiness, you reciprocate it, understand that I have found a means of corresponding with you. My name is Adolphe de Gouges, and I live at No. 54 Rue de l'Universite. If you are too closely watched to be able to write to me, if you have neither pen nor paper, I shall understand it by your silence. If then, to−morrow, you have not, between eight o'clock in the morning and ten o'clock in the evening, thrown a letter over the wall of your garden into that of the Baron de Nucingen, where it will be waited for during the whole of the day, a man, who is entirely devoted to me, will let down two flasks by a string over your wall at ten o'clock the next morning. Be walking there at that hour. One of the two flasks will contain opium to send your Argus to sleep; it will be sufficient to employ six drops; the other will contain ink. The flask of ink is of cut glass; the other is plain. Both are of such a size as can easily be concealed within your bosom. All that I have already done, in order to be able to correspond with you, should tell you how greatly I love you. Should you have any doubt of it, I will confess to you, that to obtain an interview of one hour with you I would give my life."

"At least they believe that, poor creatures!" said De Marsay; "but they are right. What should we think of a woman who refused to be beguiled by a love−letter accompanied by such convincing accessories?"

This letter was delivered by Master Moinot, postman, on the following day, about eight o'clock in the morning, to the porter of the Hotel San−Real.

In order to be nearer to the field of action, De Marsay went and breakfasted with Paul, who lived in the Rue de la Pepiniere. At two o'clock, just as the two friends were laughingly discussing the discomfiture of a young man who had attempted to lead the life of fashion without a settled income, and were devising an end for him, Henri's coachman came to seek his master at Paul's house, and presented to him a mysterious personage who insisted on speaking himself with his master.

This individual was a mulatto, who would assuredly have given Talma a model for the part of Othello, if he had come across him. Never did any African face better express the grand vengefulness, the ready suspicion, the promptitude in the execution of a thought, the strength of the Moor, and his childish lack of reflection. His black eyes had the fixity of the eyes of a bird of prey, and they were framed, like a vulture's, by a bluish membrane devoid of lashes. His forehead, low and narrow, had something menacing. Evidently, this man was under the yoke of some single and unique thought. His sinewy arm did not belong to him.

He was followed by a man whom the imaginations of all folk, from those who shiver in Greenland to those who sweat in the tropics, would paint in the single phrase: *He was an unfortunate man*. From this phrase, everybody will conceive him according to the special ideas of each country. But who can best imagine his face—white and wrinkled, red at the extremities, and his long beard. Who will see his lean and yellow scarf, his

greasy shirt−collar, his battered hat, his green frock coat, his deplorable trousers, his dilapidated waistcoat, his imitation gold pin, and battered shoes, the strings of which were plastered in mud? Who will see all that but the Parisian? The unfortunate man of Paris is the unfortunate man *in toto,* for he has still enough mirth to know the extent of his misfortune. The mulatto was like an executioner of Louis XI. leading a man to the gallows.

"Who has hunted us out these two extraordinary creatures?" said Henri.

"Faith! there is one of them who makes me shudder," replied Paul.

"Who are you—you fellow who look the most like a Christian of the two?" said Henri, looking at the unfortunate man.

The mulatto stood with his eyes fixed upon the two young men, like a man who understood nothing, and who sought no less to divine something from the gestures and movements of the lips.

"I am a public scribe and interpreter; I live at the Palais de Justice, and am named Poincet."

"Good! . . . and this one?" said Henri to Poincet, looking towards the mulatto.

"I do not know; he only speaks a sort of Spanish *patois*, and he has brought me here to make himself understood by you."

The mulatto drew from his pocket the letter which Henri had written to Paquita and handed it to him. Henri threw it in the fire.

"Ah—so—the game is beginning," said Henri to himself. "Paul, leave us alone for a moment."

"I translated this letter for him," went on the interpreter, when they were alone. "When it was translated, he was in some place which I don't remember. Then he came back to look for me, and promised me two *louis* to fetch him here."

"What have you to say to me, nigger?" asked Henri.

"I did not translate *nigger*," said the interpreter, waiting for the mulatto's reply. . . .

"He said, sir," went on the interpreter, after having listened to the unknown, "that you must be at half−past ten to−morrow night on the boulevard Montmartre, near the cafe. You will see a carriage there, in which you must take your place, saying to the man, who will wait to open the door for you, the word *cortejo*—a Spanish word, which means *lover*," added Poincet, casting a glance of congratulation upon Henri.

"Good."

The mulatto was about to bestow the two *louis*, but De Marsay would not permit it, and himself rewarded the interpreter. As he was paying him, the mulatto began to speak.

"What is he saying?"

"He is warning me," replied the unfortunate, "that if I commit a single indiscretion he will strangle me. He speaks fair and he looks remarkably as if he were capable of carrying out his threat."

"I am sure of it," answered Henri; "he would keep his word."

"He says, as well," replied the interpreter, "that the person from whom he is sent implores you, for your sake and for hers, to act with the greatest prudence, because the daggers which are raised above your head would strike your heart before any human power could save you from them."

"He said that? So much the better, it will be more amusing. You can come in now, Paul," he cried to his friend.

The mulatto, who had not ceased to gaze at the lover of Paquita Valdes with magnetic attention, went away, followed by the interpreter.

"Well, at last I have an adventure which is entirely romantic," said Henri, when Paul returned. "After having shared in a certain number I have finished by finding in Paris an intrigue accompanied by serious accidents, by grave perils. The deuce! what courage danger gives a woman! To torment a woman, to try and contradict her—doesn't it give her the right and the courage to scale in one moment obstacles which it would take her years to surmount of herself? Pretty creature, jump then! To die? Poor child! Daggers? Oh, imagination of women! They cannot help trying to find authority for their little jests. Besides, can one think of it, Paquita? Can one think of it, my child? The devil take me, now that I know this beautiful girl, this masterpiece of nature, is mine, the adventure has lost its charm."

For all his light words, the youth in Henri had reappeared. In order to live until the morrow without too much pain, he had recourse to exorbitant pleasure; he played, dined, supped with his friends; he drank like a fish, ate like a German, and won ten or twelve thousand francs. He left the Rocher de Cancale at two o'clock in the

morning, slept like a child, awoke the next morning fresh and rosy, and dressed to go to the Tuileries, with the intention of taking a ride, after having seen Paquita, in order to get himself an appetite and dine the better, and so kill the time.

At the hour mentioned Henri was on the boulevard, saw the carriage, and gave the counter−word to a man who looked to him like the mulatto. Hearing the word, the man opened the door and quickly let down the step. Henri was so rapidly carried through Paris, and his thoughts left him so little capacity to pay attention to the streets through which he passed, that he did not know where the carriage stopped. The mulatto let him into a house, the staircase of which was quite close to the entrance. This staircase was dark, as was also the landing upon which Henri was obliged to wait while the mulatto was opening the door of a damp apartment, fetid and unlit, the chambers of which, barely illuminated by the candle which his guide found in the ante−chamber, seemed to him empty and ill furnished, like those of a house the inhabitants of which are away. He recognized the sensation which he had experienced from the perusal of one of those romances of Anne Radcliffe, in which the hero traverses the cold, sombre, and uninhabited saloons of some sad and desert spot.

At last the mulatto opened the door of a *salon*. The condition of the old furniture and the dilapidated curtains with which the room was adorned gave it the air of the reception−room of a house of ill fame. There was the same pretension to elegance, and the same collection of things in bad taste, of dust and dirt. Upon a sofa covered with red Utrecht velvet, by the side of a smoking hearth, the fire of which was buried in ashes, sat an old, poorly dressed woman, her head capped by one of those turbans which English women of a certain age have invented and which would have a mighty success in China, where the artist's ideal is the monstrous.

The room, the old woman, the cold hearth, all would have chilled love to death had not Paquita been there, upon an ottoman, in a loose voluptuous wrapper, free to scatter her gaze of gold and flame, free to show her arched foot, free of her luminous movements. This first interview was what every *rendezvous* must be between persons of passionate disposition, who have stepped over a wide distance quickly, who desire each other ardently, and who, nevertheless, do not know each other. It is impossible that at first there should not occur certain discordant notes in the situation, which is embarrassing until the moment when two souls find themselves in unison.

If desire gives a man boldness and disposes him to lay restraint aside, the mistress, under pain of ceasing to be woman, however great may be her love, is afraid of arriving at the end so promptly, and face to face with the necessity of giving herself, which to many women is equivalent to a fall into an abyss, at the bottom of which they know not what they shall find. The involuntary coldness of the woman contrasts with her confessed passion, and necessarily reacts upon the most passionate lover. Thus ideas, which often float around souls like vapors, determine in them a sort of temporary malady. In the sweet journey which two beings undertake through the fair domains of love, this moment is like a waste land to be traversed, a land without a tree, alternatively damp and warm, full of scorching sand, traversed by marshes, which leads to smiling groves clad with roses, where Love and his retinue of pleasures disport themselves on carpets of soft verdure. Often the witty man finds himself afflicted with a foolish laugh which is his only answer to everything; his wit is, as it were, suffocated beneath the icy pressure of his desires. It would not be impossible for two beings of equal beauty, intelligence, and passion to utter at first nothing but the most silly commonplaces, until chance, a word, the tremor of a certain glance, the communication of a spark, should have brought them to the happy transition which leads to that flowery way in which one does not walk, but where one sways and at the same time does not lapse.

Such a state of mind is always in proportion with the violence of the feeling. Two creatures who love one another weakly feel nothing similar. The effect of this crisis can even be compared with that which is produced by the glow of a clear sky. Nature, at the first view, appears to be covered with a gauze veil, the azure of the firmament seems black, the intensity of light is like darkness. With Henri, as with the Spanish girl, there was an equal intensity of feeling; and that law of statics, in virtue of which two identical forces cancel each other, might have been true also in the moral order. And the embarrassment of the moment was singularly increased by the presence of the old hag. Love takes pleasure or fright at all, all has meaning for it, everything is an omen of happiness or sorrow for it.

This decrepit woman was there like a suggestion of catastrophe, and represented the horrid fish's tail with which the allegorical geniuses of Greece have terminated their chimeras and sirens, whose figures, like all passions, are so seductive, so deceptive.

Although Henri was not a free−thinker—the phrase is always a mockery —but a man of extraordinary power, a man as great as a man can be without faith, the conjunction struck him. Moreover, the strongest men are naturally the most impressionable, and consequently the most superstitious, if, indeed, one may call superstition the prejudice of the first thoughts, which, without doubt, is the appreciation of the result in causes hidden to other eyes but perceptible to their own.

The Spanish girl profited by this moment of stupefaction to let herself fall into the ecstasy of that infinite adoration which seizes the heart of a woman, when she truly loves and finds herself in the presence of an idol for whom she has vainly longed. Her eyes were all joy, all happiness, and sparks flew from them. She was under the charm, and fearlessly intoxicated herself with a felicity of which she had dreamed long. She seemed then so marvelously beautiful to Henri, that all this phantasmagoria of rags and old age, of worn red drapery and of the green mats in front of the armchairs, the ill−washed red tiles, all this sick and dilapidated luxury, disappeared.

The room seemed lit up; and it was only through a cloud that one could see the fearful harpy fixed and dumb on her red sofa, her yellow eyes betraying the servile sentiments, inspired by misfortune, or caused by some vice beneath whose servitude one has fallen as beneath a tyrant who brutalizes one with the flagellations of his despotism. Her eyes had the cold glitter of a caged tiger, knowing his impotence and being compelled to swallow his rage of destruction.

“Who is that woman?” said Henri to Paquita.

But Paquita did not answer. She made a sign that she understood no French, and asked Henri if he spoke English.

De Marsay repeated his question in English.

“She is the only woman in whom I can confide, although she has sold me already,” said Paquita, tranquilly. “My dear Adolphe, she is my mother, a slave bought in Georgia for her rare beauty, little enough of which remains to−day. She only speaks her native tongue.”

The attitude of this woman and her eagerness to guess from the gestures of her daughter and Henri what was passing between them, were suddenly explained to the young man; and this explanation put him at his ease.

“Paquita,” he said, “are we never to be free then?”

“Never,” she said, with an air of sadness. “Even now we have but a few days before us.”

She lowered her eyes, looked at and counted with her right hand on the fingers of her left, revealing so the most beautiful hands which Henri had ever seen.

“One, two, three——”

She counted up to twelve.

“Yes,” she said, “we have twelve days.”

“And after?”

“After,” she said, showing the absorption of a weak woman before the executioner's axe, and slain in advance, as it were, by a fear which stripped her of that magnificent energy which Nature seemed to have bestowed upon her only to aggrandize pleasure and convert the most vulgar delights into endless poems. “After——” she repeated. Her eyes took a fixed stare; she seemed to contemplate a threatening object far away.

“I do not know,” she said.

“This girl is mad,” said Henri to himself, falling into strange reflections.

Paquita appeared to him occupied by something which was not himself, like a woman constrained equally by remorse and passion. Perhaps she had in her heart another love which she alternately remembered and forgot. In a moment Henri was assailed by a thousand contradictory thoughts. This girl became a mystery for him; but as he contemplated her with the scientific attention of the *blase* man, famished for new pleasures, like that Eastern king who asked that a pleasure should be created for him,—a horrible thirst with which great souls are seized, —Henri recognized in Paquita the richest organization that Nature had ever deigned to compose for love. The presumptive play of this machinery, setting aside the soul, would have frightened any other man than Henri; but he was fascinated by that rich harvest of promised pleasures, by that constant variety in happiness, the dream of every man, and the desire of every loving woman too. He was infuriated by the infinite rendered palpable, and transported into the most excessive raptures of which the creature is capable. All that he saw in this girl more distinctly than he had yet seen it, for she let herself be viewed complacently, happy to be admired. The admiration of De Marsay became a secret fury, and he unveiled her completely, throwing a glance at her which the Spaniard

understood as though she had been used to receive such.

"If you are not to be mine, mine only, I will kill you!" he cried.

Hearing this speech, Paquita covered her face in her hands, and cried naively:

"Holy Virgin! What have I brought upon myself?"

She rose, flung herself down upon the red sofa, and buried her head in the rags which covered the bosom of her mother, and wept there. The old woman received her daughter without issuing from her state of immobility, or displaying any emotion. The mother possessed in the highest degree that gravity of savage races, the impassiveness of a statue upon which all remarks are lost. Did she or did she not love her daughter? Beneath that mask every human emotion might brood—good and evil; and from this creature all might be expected. Her gaze passed slowly from her daughter's beautiful hair, which covered her like a mantle, to the face of Henri, which she considered with an indescribable curiosity.

She seemed to ask by what fatality he was there, from what caprice Nature had made so seductive a man.

"These women are making sport of me," said Henri to himself.

At that moment Paquita raised her head, cast at him one of those looks which reach the very soul and consume it. So beautiful seemed she that he swore he would possess such a treasure of beauty.

"My Paquita! Be mine!"

"Wouldst thou kill me?" she said fearfully, palpitating and anxious, but drawn towards him by an inexplicable force.

"Kill thee—I!" he said, smiling.

Paquita uttered a cry of alarm, said a word to the old woman, who authoritatively seized Henri's hand and that of her daughter. She gazed at them for a long time, and then released them, wagging her head in a fashion horribly significant.

"Be mine—this evening, this moment; follow me, do not leave me! It must be, Paquita! Dost thou love me? Come!"

In a moment he had poured out a thousand foolish words to her, with the rapidity of a torrent coursing between the rocks, and repeating the same sound in a thousand different forms.

"It is the same voice!" said Paquita, in a melancholy voice, which De Marsay could not overhear, "and the same ardor," she added. "So be it—yes," she said, with an abandonment of passion which no words can describe. "Yes; but not to−night. To−night Adolphe, I gave too little opium to La Concha. She might wake up, and I should be lost. At this moment the whole household believes me to be asleep in my room. In two days be at the same spot, say the same word to the same man. That man is my foster−father. Cristemio worships me, and would die in torments for me before they could extract one word against me from him. Farewell," she said seizing Henri by the waist and twining round him like a serpent.

She pressed him on every side at once, lifted her head to his, and offered him her lips, then snatched a kiss which filled them both with such a dizziness that it seemed to Henri as though the earth opened; and Paquita cried: "Enough, depart!" in a voice which told how little she was mistress of herself. But she clung to him still, still crying "Depart!" and brought him slowly to the staircase. There the mulatto, whose white eyes lit up at the sight of Paquita, took the torch from the hands of his idol, and conducted Henri to the street. He left the light under the arch, opened the door, put Henri into the carriage, and set him down on the Boulevard des Italiens with marvelous rapidity. It was as though the horses had hell−fire in their veins.

The scene was like a dream to De Marsay, but one of those dreams which, even when they fade away, leave a feeling of supernatural voluptuousness, which a man runs after for the remainder of his life. A single kiss had been enough. Never had *rendezvous* been spent in a manner more decorous or chaste, or, perhaps, more coldly, in a spot of which the surroundings were more gruesome, in presence of a more hideous divinity; for the mother had remained in Henri's imagination like some infernal, cowering thing, cadaverous, monstrous, savagely ferocious, which the imagination of poets and painters had not yet conceived. In effect, no *rendezvous* had ever irritated his senses more, revealed more audacious pleasures, or better aroused love from its centre to shed itself round him like an atmosphere. There was something sombre, mysterious, sweet, tender, constrained, and expansive, an intermingling of the awful and the celestial, of paradise and hell, which made De Marsay like a drunken man.

He was no longer himself, and he was, withal, great enough to be able to resist the intoxication of pleasure.

In order to render his conduct intelligible in the catastrophe of this story, it is needful to explain how his soul

had broadened at an age when young men generally belittle themselves in their relations with women, or in too much occupation with them. Its growth was due to a concurrence of secret circumstances, which invested him with a vast and unsuspected power.

This young man held in his hand a sceptre more powerful than that of modern kings, almost all of whom are curbed in their least wishes by the laws. De Marsay exercised the autocratic power of an Oriental despot. But this power, so stupidly put into execution in Asia by brutish men, was increased tenfold by its conjunction with European intelligence, with French wit—the most subtle, the keenest of all intellectual instruments. Henri could do what he would in the interest of his pleasures and vanities. This invisible action upon the social world had invested him with a real, but secret, majesty, without emphasis and deriving from himself. He had not the opinion which Louis XIV. could have of himself, but that which the proudest of the Caliphs, the Pharoahs, the Xerxes, who held themselves to be of divine origin, had of themselves when they imitated God, and veiled themselves from their subjects under the pretext that their looks dealt forth death. Thus, without any remorse at being at once the judge and the accuser, De Marsay coldly condemned to death the man or the woman who had seriously offended him. Although often pronounced almost lightly, the verdict was irrevocable. An error was a misfortune similar to that which a thunderbolt causes when it falls upon a smiling Parisienne in some hackney coach, instead of crushing the old coachman who is driving her to a *rendezvous*. Thus the bitter and profound sarcasm which distinguished the young man's conversation usually tended to frighten people; no one was anxious to put him out. Women are prodigiously fond of those persons who call themselves pashas, and who are, as it were accompanied by lions and executioners, and who walk in a panoply of terror. The result, in the case of such men, is a security of action, a certitude of power, a pride of gaze, a leonine consciousness, which makes women realize the type of strength of which they all dream. Such was De Marsay.

Happy, for the moment, with his future, he grew young and pliable, and thought of nothing but love as he went to bed. He dreamed of the girl with the golden eyes, as the young and passionate can dream. His dreams were monstrous images, unattainable extravagances—full of light, revealing invisible worlds, yet in a manner always incomplete, for an intervening veil changes the conditions of vision.

For the next and succeeding day Henri disappeared and no one knew what had become of him. His power only belonged to him under certain conditions, and, happily for him, during those two days he was a private soldier in the service of the demon to whom he owed his talismanic existence. But at the appointed time, in the evening, he was waiting—and he had not long to wait—for the carriage. The mulatto approached Henri, in order to repeat to him in French a phrase which he seemed to have learned by heart.

“If you wish to come, she told me, you must consent to have your eyes bandaged.”

And Cristemio produced a white silk handkerchief.

“No!” said Henri, whose omnipotence revolted suddenly.

He tried to leap in. The mulatto made a sign, and the carriage drove off.

“Yes!” cried De Marsay, furious at the thought of losing a piece of good fortune which had been promised him.

He saw, moreover, the impossibility of making terms with a slave whose obedience was as blind as the hangman's. Nor was it this passive instrument upon whom his anger could fall.

The mulatto whistled, the carriage returned. Henri got in hastily. Already a few curious onlookers had assembled like sheep on the boulevard. Henri was strong; he tried to play the mulatto. When the carriage started at a gallop he seized his hands, in order to master him, and retain, by subduing his attendant, the possession of his faculties, so that he might know whither he was going. It was a vain attempt. The eyes of the mulatto flashed from the darkness. The fellow uttered a cry which his fury stifled in his throat, released himself, threw back De Marsay with a hand like iron, and nailed him, so to speak, to the bottom of the carriage; then with his free hand, he drew a triangular dagger, and whistled. The coachman heard the whistle and stopped. Henri was unarmed, he was forced to yield. He moved his head towards the handkerchief. The gesture of submission calmed Cristemio, and he bound his eyes with a respect and care which manifested a sort of veneration for the person of the man whom his idol loved. But, before taking this course, he had placed his dagger distrustfully in his side pocket, and buttoned himself up to the chin.

“That nigger would have killed me!” said De Marsay to himself.

Once more the carriage moved on rapidly. There was one resource still open to a young man who knew Paris

as well as Henri. To know whither he was going, he had but to collect himself and count, by the number of gutters crossed, the streets leading from the boulevards by which the carriage passed, so long as it continued straight along. He could thus discover into which lateral street it would turn, either towards the Seine or towards the heights of Montmartre, and guess the name or position of the street in which his guide should bring him to a halt. But the violent emotion which his struggle had caused him, the rage into which his compromised dignity had thrown him, the ideas of vengeance to which he abandoned himself, the suppositions suggested to him by the circumstantial care which this girl had taken in order to bring him to her, all hindered him from the attention, which the blind have, necessary for the concentration of his intelligence and the perfect lucidity of his recollection. The journey lasted half an hour. When the carriage stopped, it was no longer on the street. The mulatto and the coachman took Henri in their arms, lifted him out, and, putting him into a sort of litter, conveyed him across a garden. He could smell its flowers and the perfume peculiar to trees and grass.

The silence which reigned there was so profound that he could distinguish the noise made by the drops of water falling from the moist leaves. The two men took him to a staircase, set him on his feet, led him by his hands through several apartments, and left him in a room whose atmosphere was perfumed, and the thick carpet of which he could feel beneath his feet.

A woman's hand pushed him on to a divan, and untied the handkerchief for him. Henri saw Paquita before him, but Paquita in all her womanly and voluptuous glory. The section of the boudoir in which Henri found himself described a circular line, softly gracious, which was faced opposite by the other perfectly square half, in the midst of which a chimney−piece shone of gold and white marble. He had entered by a door on one side, hidden by a rich tapestried screen, opposite which was a window. The semicircular portion was adorned with a real Turkish divan, that is to say, a mattress thrown on the ground, but a mattress as broad as a bed, a divan fifty feet in circumference, made of white cashmere, relieved by bows of black and scarlet silk, arranged in panels. The top of this huge bed was raised several inches by numerous cushions, which further enriched it by their tasteful comfort. The boudoir was lined with some red stuff, over which an Indian muslin was stretched, fluted after the fashion of Corinthian columns, in plaits going in and out, and bound at the top and bottom by bands of poppy−colored stuff, on which were designs in black arabesque.

Below the muslin the poppy turned to rose, that amorous color, which was matched by window−curtains, which were of Indian muslin lined with rose−colored taffeta, and set off with a fringe of poppy−color and black. Six silver−gilt arms, each supporting two candles, were attached to the tapestry at an equal distance, to illuminate the divan. The ceiling, from the middle of which a lustre of unpolished silver hung, was of a brilliant whiteness, and the cornice was gilded. The carpet was like an Oriental shawl; it had the designs and recalled the poetry of Persia, where the hands of slaves had worked on it. The furniture was covered in white cashmere, relieved by black and poppy− colored ornaments. The clock, the candelabra, all were in white marble and gold. The only table there had a cloth of cashmere. Elegant flower−pots held roses of every kind, flowers white or red. In fine, the least detail seemed to have been the object of loving thought. Never had richness hidden itself more coquettishly to become elegance, to express grace, to inspire pleasure. Everything there would have warmed the coldest of beings. The caresses of the tapestry, of which the color changed according to the direction of one's gaze, becoming either all white or all rose, harmonized with the effects of the light shed upon the diaphanous tissues of the muslin, which produced an appearance of mistiness. The soul has I know not what attraction towards white, love delights in red, and the passions are flattered by gold, which has the power of realizing their caprices. Thus all that man possesses within him of vague and mysterious, all his inexplicable affinities, were caressed in their involuntary sympathies. There was in this perfect harmony a concert of color to which the soul responded with vague and voluptuous and fluctuating ideas.

It was out of a misty atmosphere, laden with exquisite perfumes, that Paquita, clad in a white wrapper, her feet bare, orange blossoms in her black hair, appeared to Henri, knelt before him, adoring him as the god of this temple, whither he had deigned to come. Although De Marsay was accustomed to seeing the utmost efforts of Parisian luxury, he was surprised at the aspect of this shell, like that from which Venus rose out of the sea. Whether from an effect of contrast between the darkness from which he issued and the light which bathed his soul, whether from a comparison which he swiftly made between this scene and that of their first interview, he experienced one of those delicate sensations which true poetry gives. Perceiving in the midst of this retreat, which had been opened to him as by a fairy's magic wand, the masterpiece of creation, this girl, whose warmly colored

tints, whose soft skin—soft, but slightly gilded by the shadows, by I know not what vaporous effusion of love—gleamed as though it reflected the rays of color and light, his anger, his desire for vengeance, his wounded vanity, all were lost.

Like an eagle darting on his prey, he took her utterly to him, set her on his knees, and felt with an indescribable intoxication the voluptuous pressure of this girl, whose richly developed beauties softly enveloped him.

“Come to me, Paquita!” he said, in a low voice.

“Speak, speak without fear!” she said. “This retreat was built for love. No sound can escape from it, so greatly was it desired to guard avariciously the accents and music of the beloved voice. However loud should be the cries, they would not be heard without these walls. A person might be murdered, and his moans would be as vain as if he were in the midst of the great desert.”

“Who has understood jealousy and its needs so well?”

“Never question me as to that,” she answered, untying with a gesture of wonderful sweetness the young man's scarf, doubtless in order the better to behold his neck.

“Yes, there is the neck I love so well!” she said. “Wouldst thou please me?”

This interrogation, rendered by the accent almost lascivious, drew De Marsay from the reverie in which he had been plunged by Paquita's authoritative refusal to allow him any research as to the unknown being who hovered like a shadow about them.

“And if I wished to know who reigns here?”

Paquita looked at him trembling.

“It is not I, then?” he said, rising and freeing himself from the girl, whose head fell backwards. “Where I am, I would be alone.”

“Strike, strike! . . .” said the poor slave, a prey to terror.

“For what do you take me, then? . . . Will you answer?”

Paquita got up gently, her eyes full of tears, took a poniard from one of the two ebony pieces of furniture, and presented it to Henri with a gesture of submission which would have moved a tiger.

“Give me a feast such as men give when they love,” she said, “and whilst I sleep, slay me, for I know not how to answer thee. Hearken! I am bound like some poor beast to a stake; I am amazed that I have been able to throw a bridge over the abyss which divides us. Intoxicate me, then kill me! Ah, no, no!” she cried, joining her hands, “do not kill me! I love life! Life is fair to me! If I am a slave, I am a queen too. I could beguile you with words, tell you that I love you alone, prove it to you, profit by my momentary empire to say to you: 'Take me as one tastes the perfume of a flower when one passes it in a king's garden.' Then, after having used the cunning eloquence of woman and soared on the wings of pleasure, after having quenched my thirst, I could have you cast into a pit, where none could find you, which has been made to gratify vengeance without having to fear that of the law, a pit full of lime which would kindle and consume you, until no particle of you were left. You would stay in my heart, mine forever.”

Henri looked at the girl without trembling, and this fearless gaze filled her with joy.

“No, I shall not do it! You have fallen into no trap here, but upon the heart of a woman who adores you, and it is I who will be cast into the pit.”

“All this appears to me prodigiously strange,” said De Marsay, considering her. “But you seem to me a good girl, a strange nature; you are, upon my word of honor, a living riddle, the answer to which is very difficult to find.”

Paquita understood nothing of what the young man said; she looked at him gently, opening wide eyes which could never be stupid, so much was pleasure written in them.

“Come, then, my love,” she said, returning to her first idea, “wouldst thou please me?”

“I would do all that thou wouldst, and even that thou wouldst not,” answered De Marsay, with a laugh. He had recovered his foppish ease, as he took the resolve to let himself go to the climax of his good fortune, looking neither before nor after. Perhaps he counted, moreover, on his power and his capacity of a man used to adventures, to dominate this girl a few hours later and learn all her secrets.

“Well,” said she, “let me arrange you as I would like.”

Paquita went joyously and took from one of the two chests a robe of red velvet, in which she dressed De

Marsay, then adorned his head with a woman's bonnet and wrapped a shawl round him. Abandoning herself to these follies with a child's innocence, she laughed a convulsive laugh, and resembled some bird flapping its wings; but he saw nothing beyond.

If it be impossible to paint the unheard−of delights which these two creatures—made by heaven in a joyous moment—found, it is perhaps necessary to translate metaphysically the extraordinary and almost fantastic impressions of the young man. That which persons in the social position of De Marsay, living as he lived, are best able to recognize is a girl's innocence. But, strange phenomenon! The girl of the golden eyes might be virgin, but innocent she was certainly not. The fantastic union of the mysterious and the real, of darkness and light, horror and beauty, pleasure and danger, paradise and hell, which had already been met with in this adventure, was resumed in the capricious and sublime being with which De Marsay dallied. All the utmost science or the most refined pleasure, all that Henri could know of that poetry of the senses which is called love, was excelled by the treasures poured forth by this girl, whose radiant eyes gave the lie to none of the promises which they made.

She was an Oriental poem, in which shone the sun that Saadi, that Hafiz, have set in their pulsing strophes. Only, neither the rhythm of Saadi, nor that of Pindar, could have expressed the ecstasy—full of confusion and stupefaction—which seized the delicious girl when the error in which an iron hand had caused her to live was at an end.

“Dead!” she said, “I am dead, Adolphe! Take me away to the world's end, to an island where no one knows us. Let there be no traces of our flight! We should be followed to the gates of hell. God! here is the day! Escape! Shall I ever see you again? Yes, to−morrow I will see you, if I have to deal death to all my warders to have that joy. Till to−morrow.”

She pressed him in her arms with an embrace in which the terror of death mingled. Then she touched a spring, which must have been in connection with a bell, and implored De Marsay to permit his eyes to be bandaged.

“And if I would not—and if I wished to stay here?”

“You would be the death of me more speedily,” she said, “for now I know I am certain to die on your account.”

Henri submitted. In the man who had just gorged himself with pleasure there occurs a propensity to forgetfulness, I know not what ingratitude, a desire for liberty, a whim to go elsewhere, a tinge of contempt and, perhaps, of disgust for his idol; in fine, indescribable sentiments which render him ignoble and ashamed. The certainty of this confused, but real, feeling in souls who are not illuminated by that celestial light, nor perfumed with that holy essence from which the performance of sentiment springs, doubtless suggested to Rousseau the adventures of Lord Edward, which conclude the letters of the *Nouvelle Heloise*. If Rousseau is obviously inspired by the work of Richardson, he departs from it in a thousand details, which leave his achievement magnificently original; he has recommended it to posterity by great ideas which it is difficult to liberate by analysis, when, in one's youth, one reads this work with the object of finding in it the lurid representation of the most physical of our feelings, whereas serious and philosophical writers never employ its images except as the consequence or the corollary of a vast thought; and the adventures of Lord Edward are one of the most Europeanly delicate ideas of the whole work.

Henri, therefore, found himself beneath the domination of that confused sentiment which is unknown to true love. There was needful, in some sort, the persuasive grip of comparisons, and the irresistible attraction of memories to lead him back to a woman. True love rules above all through recollection. A woman who is not engraven upon the soul by excess of pleasure or by strength of emotion, how can she ever be loved? In Henri's case, Paquita had established herself by both of these reasons. But at this moment, seized as he was by the satiety of his happiness, that delicious melancholy of the body, he could hardly analyze his heart, even by recalling to his lips the taste of the liveliest gratifications that he had ever grasped.

He found himself on the Boulevard Montmartre at the break of day, gazed stupidly at the retreating carriage, produced two cigars from his pocket, lit one from the lantern of a good woman who sold brandy and coffee to workmen and street arabs and chestnut venders—to all the Parisian populace which begins its work before daybreak; then he went off, smoking his cigar, and putting his hands in his trousers' pockets with a devil−may−care air which did him small honor.

“What a good thing a cigar is! That's one thing a man will never tire of,” he said to himself.

Of the girl with the golden eyes, over whom at that time all the elegant youth of Paris was mad, he hardly

thought. The idea of death, expressed in the midst of their pleasure, and the fear of which had more than once darkened the brow of that beautiful creature, who held to the houris of Asia by her mother, to Europe by her education, to the tropics by her birth, seemed to him merely one of those deceptions by which women seek to make themselves interesting.

"She is from Havana—the most Spanish region to be found in the New World. So she preferred to feign terror rather than cast in my teeth indisposition or difficulty, coquetry or duty, like a Parisian woman. By her golden eyes, how glad I shall be to sleep."

He saw a hackney coach standing at the corner of Frascati's waiting for some gambler; he awoke the driver, was driven home, went to bed, and slept the sleep of the dissipated, which for some queer reason—of which no rhymer has yet taken advantage—is as profound as that of innocence. Perhaps it is an instance of the proverbial axiom, *extremes meet*.

About noon De Marsay awoke and stretched himself; he felt the grip of that sort of voracious hunger which old soldiers can remember having experienced on the morrow of victory. He was delighted, therefore, to see Paul de Manerville standing in front of him, for at such a time nothing is more agreeable than to eat in company.

"Well," his friend remarked, "we all imagined that you had been shut up for the last ten days with the girl of the golden eyes."

"The girl of the golden eyes! I have forgotten her. Faith! I have other fish to fry!"

"Ah! you are playing at discretion."

"Why not?" asked De Marsay, with a laugh. "My dear fellow, discretion is the best form of calculation. Listen—however, no! I will not say a word. You never teach me anything; I am not disposed to make you a gratuitous present of the treasures of my policy. Life is a river which is of use for the promotion of commerce. In the name of all that is most sacred in life—of cigars! I am no professor of social economy for the instruction of fools. Let us breakfast! It costs less to give you a tunny omelette than to lavish the resources of my brain on you."

"Do you bargain with your friends?"

"My dear fellow," said Henri, who rarely denied himself a sarcasm, "since all the same, you may some day need, like anybody else, to use discretion, and since I have much love for you—yes, I like you! Upon my word, if you only wanted a thousand−franc note to keep you from blowing your brains out, you would find it here, for we haven't yet done any business of that sort, eh, Paul? If you had to fight to−morrow, I would measure the ground and load the pistols, so that you might be killed according to rule. In short, if anybody besides myself took it into his head to say ill of you in your absence, he would have to deal with the somewhat nasty gentleman who walks in my shoes—there's what I call a friendship beyond question. Well, my good fellow, if you should ever have need of discretion, understand that there are two sorts of discretion—the active and the negative. Negative discretion is that of fools who make use of silence, negation, an air of refusal, the discretion of locked doors—mere impotence! Active discretion proceeds by affirmation. Suppose at the club this evening I were to say: 'Upon my word of honor the golden− eyed was not worth all she cost me!' Everybody would exclaim when I was gone: 'Did you hear that fop De Marsay, who tried to make us believe that he has already had the girl of the golden eyes? It's his way of trying to disembarrass himself of his rivals: he's no simpleton.' But such a ruse is vulgar and dangerous. However gross a folly one utters, there are always idiots to be found who will believe it. The best form of discretion is that of women when they want to take the change out of their husbands. It consists in compromising a woman with whom we are not concerned, or whom we do not love, in order to save the honor of the one whom we love well enough to respect. It is what is called the *woman−screen*. . . . Ah! here is Laurent. What have you got for us?"

"Some Ostend oysters, Monsieur le Comte."

"You will know some day, Paul, how amusing it is to make a fool of the world by depriving it of the secret of one's affections. I derive an immense pleasure in escaping from the stupid jurisdiction of the crowd, which knows neither what it wants, nor what one wants of it, which takes the means for the end, and by turns curses and adores, elevates and destroys! What a delight to impose emotions on it and receive none from it, to tame it, never to obey it. If one may ever be proud of anything, is it not a self−acquired power, of which one is at once the cause and effect, the principle and the result? Well, no man knows what I love, nor what I wish. Perhaps what I have loved, or what I may have wished will be known, as a drama which is accomplished is known; but to let my game be seen—weakness, mistake! I know nothing more despicable than strength outwitted by cunning. Can I initiate

myself with a laugh into the ambassador's part, if indeed diplomacy is as difficult as life? I doubt it. Have you any ambition? Would you like to become something?"

"But, Henri, you are laughing at me—as though I were not sufficiently mediocre to arrive at anything."

"Good Paul! If you go on laughing at yourself, you will soon be able to laugh at everybody else."

At breakfast, by the time he had started his cigars, De Marsay began to see the events of the night in a singular light. Like many men of great intelligence, his perspicuity was not spontaneous, as it did not at once penetrate to the heart of things. As with all natures endowed with the faculty of living greatly in the present, of extracting, so to speak, the essence of it and assimilating it, his second−sight had need of a sort of slumber before it could identify itself with causes. Cardinal de Richelieu was so constituted, and it did not debar in him the gift of foresight necessary to the conception of great designs.

De Marsay's conditions were alike, but at first he only used his weapons for the benefit of his pleasures, and only became one of the most profound politicians of his day when he had saturated himself with those pleasures to which a young man's thoughts—when he has money and power—are primarily directed. Man hardens himself thus: he uses woman in order that she may not make use of him.

At this moment, then, De Marsay perceived that he had been fooled by the girl of the golden eyes, seeing, as he did, in perspective, all that night of which the delights had been poured upon him by degrees until they had ended by flooding him in torrents. He could read, at last, that page in effect so brilliant, divine its hidden meaning. The purely physical innocence of Paquita, the bewilderment of her joy, certain words, obscure at first, but now clear, which had escaped her in the midst of that joy, all proved to him that he had posed for another person. As no social corruption was unknown to him, as he professed a complete indifference towards all perversities, and believed them to be justified on the simple ground that they were capable of satisfaction, he was not startled at vice, he knew it as one knows a friend, but he was wounded at having served as sustenance for it. If his presumption was right, he had been outraged in the most sensitive part of him. The mere suspicion filled him with fury, he broke out with the roar of a tiger who has been the sport of a deer, the cry of a tiger which united a brute's strength with the intelligence of the demon.

"I say, what is the matter with you?" asked Paul.

"Nothing!"

"I should be sorry, if you were to be asked whether you had anything against me and were to reply with a *nothing* like that! It would be a sure case of fighting the next day."

"I fight no more duels," said De Marsay.

"That seems to me even more tragical. Do you assassinate, then?"

"You travesty words. I execute."

"My dear friend," said Paul, "your jokes are of a very sombre color this morning."

"What would you have? Pleasure ends in cruelty. Why? I don't know, and am not sufficiently curious to try and find out. . . . These cigars are excellent. Give your friend some tea. Do you know, Paul, I live a brute's life? It should be time to choose oneself a destiny, to employ one's powers on something which makes life worth living. Life is a singular comedy. I am frightened, I laugh at the inconsequence of our social order. The Government cuts off the heads of poor devils who may have killed a man and licenses creatures who despatch, medically speaking, a dozen young folks in a season. Morality is powerless against a dozen vices which destroy society and which nothing can punish.—Another cup!—Upon my word of honor! man is a jester dancing upon a precipice. They talk to us about the immorality of the *Liaisons Dangereuses*, and any other book you like with a vulgar reputation; but there exists a book, horrible, filthy, fearful, corrupting, which is always open and will never be shut, the great book of the world; not to mention another book, a thousand times more dangerous, which is composed of all that men whisper into each other's ears, or women murmur behind their fans, of an evening in society."

"Henri, there is certainly something extraordinary the matter with you; that is obvious in spite of your active discretion."

"Yes! . . . Come, I must kill the time until this evening. Let's to the tables. . . . Perhaps I shall have the good luck to lose."

De Marsay rose, took a handful of banknotes and folded them into his cigar−case, dressed himself, and took advantage of Paul's carriage to repair to the Salon des Etrangers, where until dinner he consumed the time in those exciting alternations of loss and gain which are the last resource of powerful organizations when they are

compelled to exercise themselves in the void. In the evening he repaired to the trysting−place and submitted complacently to having his eyes bandaged. Then, with that firm will which only really strong men have the faculty of concentrating, he devoted his attention and applied his intelligence to the task of divining through what streets the carriage passed. He had a sort of certitude of being taken to the Rue Saint− Lazare, and being brought to a halt at the little gate in the garden of the Hotel San−Real. When he passed, as on the first occasion, through this gate, and was put in a litter, carried, doubtless by the mulatto and the coachman, he understood, as he heard the gravel grate beneath their feet, why they took such minute precautions. He would have been able, had he been free, or if he had walked, to pluck a twig of laurel, to observe the nature of the soil which clung to his boots; whereas, transported, so to speak, ethereally into an inaccessible mansion, his good fortune must remain what it had been hitherto, a dream. But it is man's despair that all his work, whether for good or evil, is imperfect. All his labors, physical or intellectual, are sealed with the mark of destruction. There had been a gentle rain, the earth was moist. At night−time certain vegetable perfumes are far stronger than during the day; Henri could smell, therefore, the scent of the mignonette which lined the avenue along which he was conveyed. This indication was enough to light him in the researches which he promised himself to make in order to recognize the hotel which contained Paquita's boudoir. He studied in the same way the turnings which his bearers took within the house, and believed himself able to recall them.

As on the previous night, he found himself on the ottoman before Paquita, who was undoing his bandage; but he saw her pale and altered. She had wept. On her knees like an angel in prayer, but like an angel profoundly sad and melancholy, the poor girl no longer resembled the curious, impatient, and impetuous creature who had carried De Marsay on her wings to transport him to the seventh heaven of love. There was something so true in this despair veiled by pleasure, that the terrible De Marsay felt within him an admiration for this new masterpiece of nature, and forgot, for the moment, the chief interest of his assignation.

“What is the matter with thee, my Paquita?”

“My friend,” she said, “carry me away this very night. Bear me to some place where no one can answer: 'There is a girl with a golden gaze here, who has long hair.' Yonder I will give thee as many pleasures as thou wouldst have of me. Then when you love me no longer, you shall leave me, I shall not complain, I shall say nothing; and your desertion need cause you no remorse, for one day passed with you, only one day, in which I have had you before my eyes, will be worth all my life to me. But if I stay here, I am lost.”

“I cannot leave Paris, little one!” replied Henri. “I do not belong to myself, I am bound by a vow to the fortune of several persons who stand to me, as I do to them. But I can place you in a refuge in Paris, where no human power can reach you.”

“No,” she said, “you forget the power of woman.”

Never did phrase uttered by human voice express terror more absolutely.

“What could reach you, then, if I put myself between you and the world?”

“Poison!” she said. “Dona Concha suspects you already . . . and,” she resumed, letting the tears fall and glisten on her cheeks, “it is easy enough to see I am no longer the same. Well, if you abandon me to the fury of the monster who will destroy me, your holy will be done! But come, let there be all the pleasures of life in our love. Besides, I will implore, I will weep and cry out and defend myself; perhaps I shall be saved.”

“Whom will your implore?” he asked.

“Silence!” said Paquita. “If I obtain mercy it will perhaps be on account of my discretion.”

“Give me my robe,” said Henri, insidiously.

“No, no!” she answered quickly, “be what you are, one of those angels whom I have been taught to hate, and in whom I only saw ogres, whilst you are what is fairest under the skies,” she said, caressing Henri's hair. “You do not know how silly I am. I have learned nothing. Since I was twelve years old I have been shut up without ever seeing any one. I can neither read nor write, I can only speak English and Spanish.”

“How is it, then, that you receive letters from London?”

“My letters? . . . See, here they are!” she said, proceeding to take some papers out of a tall Japanese vase.

She offered De Marsay some letters, in which the young man saw, with surprise, strange figures, similar to those of a rebus, traced in blood, and illustrating phrases full of passion.

“But,” he cried, marveling at these hieroglyphics created by the alertness of jealousy, “you are in the power of an infernal genius?”

“Infernal,” she repeated.

“But how, then, were you able to get out?”

“Ah!” she said, “that was my ruin. I drove Dona Concha to choose between the fear of immediate death and anger to be. I had the curiosity of a demon, I wished to break the bronze circle which they had described between creation and me, I wished to see what young people were like, for I knew nothing of man except the Marquis and Cristemio. Our coachman and the lackey who accompanies us are old men. . . .”

“But you were not always thus shut up? Your health . . . ?”

“Ah,” she answered, “we used to walk, but it was at night and in the country, by the side of the Seine, away from people.”

“Are you not proud of being loved like that?”

“No,” she said, “no longer. However full it be, this hidden life is but darkness in comparison with the light.”

“What do you call the light?”

“Thee, my lovely Adolphe! Thee, for whom I would give my life. All the passionate things that have been told me, and that I have inspired, I feel for thee! For a certain time I understood nothing of existence, but now I know what love is, and hitherto I have been the loved one only; for myself, I did not love. I would give up everything for you, take me away. If you like, take me as a toy, but let me be near you until you break me.”

“You will have no regrets?”

“Not one”! she said, letting him read her eyes, whose golden tint was pure and clear.

“Am I the favored one?” said Henri to himself. If he suspected the truth, he was ready at that time to pardon the offence in view of a love so single minded. “I shall soon see,” he thought.

If Paquita owed him no account of the past, yet the least recollection of it became in his eyes a crime. He had therefore the sombre strength to withhold a portion of his thought, to study her, even while abandoning himself to the most enticing pleasures that ever peri descended from the skies had devised for her beloved.

Paquita seemed to have been created for love by a particular effort of nature. In a night her feminine genius had made the most rapid progress. Whatever might be the power of this young man, and his indifference in the matter of pleasures, in spite of his satiety of the previous night, he found in the girl with the golden eyes that seraglio which a loving woman knows how to create and which a man never refuses. Paquita responded to that passion which is felt by all really great men for the infinite—that mysterious passion so dramatically expressed in Faust, so poetically translated in Manfred, and which urged Don Juan to search the heart of women, in his hope to find there that limitless thought in pursuit of which so many hunters after spectres have started, which wise men think to discover in science, and which mystics find in God alone. The hope of possessing at last the ideal being with whom the struggle could be constant and tireless ravished De Marsay, who, for the first time for long, opened his heart. His nerves expanded, his coldness was dissipated in the atmosphere of that ardent soul, his hard and fast theories melted away, and happiness colored his existence to the tint of the rose and white boudoir. Experiencing the sting of a higher pleasure, he was carried beyond the limits within which he had hitherto confined passion. He would not be surpassed by this girl, whom a somewhat artificial love had formed all ready for the needs of his soul, and then he found in that vanity which urges a man to be in all things a victor, strength enough to tame the girl; but, at the same time, urged beyond that line where the soul is mistress over herself, he lost himself in these delicious limboes, which the vulgar call so foolishly “the imaginary regions.” He was tender, kind, and confidential. He affected Paquita almost to madness.

“Why should we not go to Sorrento, to Nice, to Chiavari, and pass all our life so? Will you?” he asked of Paquita, in a penetrating voice.

“Was there need to say to me: 'Will you'?” she cried. “Have I a will? I am nothing apart from you, except in so far as I am a pleasure for you. If you would choose a retreat worthy of us, Asia is the only country where love can unfold his wings. . . .”

“You are right,” answered Henri. “Let us go to the Indies, there where spring is eternal, where the earth grows only flowers, where man can display the magnificence of kings and none shall say him nay, as in the foolish lands where they would realize the dull chimera of equality. Let us go to the country where one lives in the midst of a nation of slaves, where the sun shines ever on a palace which is always white, where the air sheds perfumes, the birds sing of love and where, when one can love no more, one dies. . . .”

“And where one dies together!” said Paquita. “But do not let us start to−morrow, let us start this moment . . .

take Cristemio."

"Faith! pleasure is the fairest climax of life. Let us go to Asia; but to start, my child, one needs much gold, and to have gold one must set one's affairs in order."

She understood no part of these ideas.

"Gold! There is a pile of it here—as high as that," she said holding up her hand.

"It is not mine."

"What does that matter?" she went on; "if we have need of it let us take it."

"It does not belong to you."

"Belong!" she repeated. "Have you not taken me? When we have taken it, it will belong to us."

He gave a laugh.

"Poor innocent! You know nothing of the world."

"Nay, but this is what I know," she cried, clasping Henri to her.

At the very moment when De Marsay was forgetting all, and conceiving the desire to appropriate this creature forever, he received in the midst of his joy a dagger−thrust, which Paquita, who had lifted him vigorously in the air, as though to contemplate him, exclaimed: "Oh, Margarita!"

"Margarita!" cried the young man, with a roar; "now I know all that I still tried to disbelieve."

He leaped upon the cabinet in which the long poniard was kept. Happily for Paquita and for himself, the cupboard was shut. His fury waxed at this impediment, but he recovered his tranquillity, went and found his cravat, and advanced towards her with an air of such ferocious meaning that, without knowing of what crime she had been guilty, Paquita understood, none the less, that her life was in question. With one bound she rushed to the other end of the room to escape the fatal knot which De Marsay tried to pass round her neck. There was a struggle. On either side there was an equality of strength, agility, and suppleness. To end the combat Paquita threw between the legs of her lover a cushion which made him fall, and profited by the respite which this advantage gave to her, to push the button of the spring which caused the bell to ring. Promptly the mulatto arrived. In a second Cristemio leaped on De Marsay and held him down with one foot on his chest, his heel turned towards the throat. De Marsay realized that, if he struggled, at a single sign from Paquita he would be instantly crushed.

"Why did you want to kill me, my beloved?" she said. De Marsay made no reply.

"In what have I angered you?" she asked. "Speak, let us understand each other."

Henri maintained the phlegmatic attitude of a strong man who feels himself vanquished; his countenance, cold, silent, entirely English, revealed the consciousness of his dignity in a momentary resignation. Moreover, he had already thought, in spite of the vehemence of his anger, that it was scarcely prudent to compromise himself with the law by killing this girl on the spur of the moment, before he had arranged the murder in such a manner as should insure his impunity.

"My beloved," went on Paquita, "speak to me; do not leave me without one loving farewell! I would not keep in my heart the terror which you have just inspired in it. . . . Will you speak?" she said, stamping her foot with anger.

De Marsay, for all reply, gave her a glance, which signified so plainly, "*You must die!*" that Paquita threw herself upon him.

"Ah, well, you want to kill me! . . . If my death can give you any pleasure—kill me!"

She made a sign to Cristemio, who withdrew his foot from the body of the young man, and retired without letting his face show that he had formed any opinion, good or bad, with regard to Paquita.

"That is a man," said De Marsay, pointing to the mulatto, with a sombre gesture. "There is no devotion like the devotion which obeys in friendship, and does not stop to weigh motives. In that man you possess a true friend."

"I will give him you, if you like," she answered; "he will serve you with the same devotion that he has for me, if I so instruct him."

She waited for a word of recognition, and went on with an accent replete with tenderness:

"Adolphe, give me then one kind word! . . . It is nearly day."

Henri did not answer. The young man had one sorry quality, for one considers as something great everything which resembles strength, and often men invent extravagances. Henri knew not how to pardon. That *returning*

upon itself which is one of the soul's graces, was a non−existent sense for him. The ferocity of the Northern man, with which the English blood is deeply tainted, had been transmitted to him by his father. He was inexorable both in his good and evil impulses. Paquita's exclamation had been all the more horrible to him, in that it had dethroned him from the sweetest triumph which had ever flattered his man's vanity. Hope, love, and every emotion had been exalted with him, all had lit up within his heart and his intelligence, then these torches illuminating his life had been extinguished by a cold wind. Paquita, in her stupefaction of grief, had only strength enough to give the signal for departure.

"What is the use of that!" she said, throwing away the bandage. "If he does not love me, if he hates me, it is all over."

She waited for one look, did not obtain it, and fell, half dead. The mulatto cast a glance at Henri, so horribly significant, that, for the first time in his life, the young man, to whom no one denied the gift of rare courage, trembled. "*If you do not love her well, if you give her the least pain, I will kill you*." such was the sense of that brief gaze. De Marsay was escorted, with a care almost obsequious, along the dimly lit corridor, at the end of which he issued by a secret door into the garden of the Hotel San−Real. The mulatto made him walk cautiously through an avenue of lime trees, which led to a little gate opening upon a street which was at that hour deserted. De Marsay took a keen notice of everything. The carriage awaited him. This time the mulatto did not accompany him, and at the moment when Henri put his head out of the window to look once more at the gardens of the hotel, he encountered the white eyes of Cristemio, with whom he exchanged a glance. On either side there was a provocation, a challenge, the declaration of a savage war, of a duel in which ordinary laws were invalid, where treason and treachery were admitted means. Cristemio knew that Henri had sworn Paquita's death. Henri knew that Cristemio would like to kill him before he killed Paquita. Both understood each other to perfection.

"The adventure is growing complicated in a most interesting way," said Henri.

"Where is the gentleman going to?" asked the coachman.

De Marsay was driven to the house of Paul de Manerville. For more than a week Henri was away from home, and no one could discover either what he did during this period, nor where he stayed. This retreat saved him from the fury of the mulatto and caused the ruin of the charming creature who had placed all her hope in him whom she loved as never human heart had loved on this earth before. On the last day of the week, about eleven o'clock at night, Henri drove up in a carriage to the little gate in the garden of the Hotel San−Real. Four men accompanied him. The driver was evidently one of his friends, for he stood up on his box, like a man who was to listen, an attentive sentinel, for the least sound. One of the other three took his stand outside the gate in the street; the second waited in the garden, leaning against the wall; the last, who carried in his hand a bunch of keys, accompanied De Marsay.

"Henri," said his companion to him, "we are betrayed."

"By whom, my good Ferragus?"

"They are not all asleep," replied the chief of the Devourers; "it is absolutely certain that some one in the house has neither eaten nor drunk. . . . Look! see that light!"

"We have a plan of the house; from where does it come?"

"I need no plan to know," replied Ferragus; "it comes from the room of the Marquise."

"Ah," cried De Marsay, "no doubt she arrived from London to−day. The woman has robbed me even of my revenge! But if she has anticipated me, my good Gratien, we will give her up to the law."

"Listen, listen! . . . The thing is settled," said Ferragus to Henri.

The two friends listened intently, and heard some feeble cries which might have aroused pity in the breast of a tiger.

"Your marquise did not think the sound would escape by the chimney," said the chief of the Devourers, with the laugh of a critic, enchanted to detect a fault in a work of merit.

"We alone, we know how to provide for every contingency," said Henri. "Wait for me. I want to see what is going on upstairs—I want to know how their domestic quarrels are managed. By God! I believe she is roasting her at a slow fire."

De Marsay lightly scaled the stairs, with which he was familiar, and recognized the passage leading to the boudoir. When he opened the door he experienced the involuntary shudder which the sight of bloodshed gives to the most determined of men. The spectacle which was offered to his view was, moreover, in more than one

respect astonishing to him. The Marquise was a woman; she had calculated her vengeance with that perfection of perfidy which distinguishes the weaker animals. She had dissimulated her anger in order to assure herself of the crime before she punished it.

"Too late, my beloved!" said Paquita, in her death agony, casting her pale eyes upon De Marsay.

The girl of the golden eyes expired in a bath of blood. The great illumination of candles, a delicate perfume which was perceptible, a certain disorder, in which the eye of a man accustomed to amorous adventures could not but discern the madness which is common to all the passions, revealed how cunningly the Marquise had interrogated the guilty one. The white room, where the blood showed so well, betrayed a long struggle. The prints of Paquita's hands were on the cushions. Here she had clung to her life, here she had defended herself, here she had been struck. Long strips of the tapestry had been torn down by her bleeding hands, which, without a doubt, had struggled long. Paquita must have tried to reach the window; her bare feet had left their imprints on the edge of the divan, along which she must have run. Her body, mutilated by the dagger−thrusts of her executioner, told of the fury with which she had disputed a life which Henri had made precious to her. She lay stretched on the floor, and in her death−throes had bitten the ankles of Madame de San−Real, who still held in her hand her dagger, dripping blood. The hair of the Marquise had been torn out, she was covered with bites, many of which were bleeding, and her torn dress revealed her in a state of semi−nudity, with the scratches on her breasts. She was sublime so. Her head, eager and maddened, exhaled the odor of blood. Her panting mouth was open, and her nostrils were not sufficient for her breath. There are certain animals who fall upon their enemy in their rage, do it to death, and seem in the tranquillity of victory to have forgotten it. There are others who prowl around their victim, who guard it in fear lest it should be taken away from them, and who, like the Achilles of Homer, drag their enemy by the feet nine times round the walls of Troy. The Marquise was like that. She did not see Henri. In the first place, she was too secure of her solitude to be afraid of witnesses; and, secondly, she was too intoxicated with warm blood, too excited with the fray, too exalted, to take notice of the whole of Paris, if Paris had formed a circle round her. A thunderbolt would not have disturbed her. She had not even heard Paquita's last sigh, and believed that the dead girl could still hear her.

"Die without confessing!" she said. "Go down to hell, monster of ingratitude; belong to no one but the fiend. For the blood you gave him you owe me all your own! Die, die, suffer a thousand deaths! I have been too kind—I was only a moment killing you. I should have made you experience all the tortures that you have bequeathed to me. I —I shall live! I shall live in misery. I have no one left to love but God!"

She gazed at her.

"She is dead!" she said to herself, after a pause, in a violent reaction. "Dead! Oh, I shall die of grief!"

The Marquise was throwing herself upon the divan, stricken with a despair which deprived her of speech, when this movement brought her in view of Henri de Marsay.

"Who are you?" she asked, rushing at him with her dagger raised.

Henri caught her arm, and thus they could contemplate each other face to face. A horrible surprise froze the blood in their veins, and their limbs quivered like those of frightened horses. In effect, the two Menoechmi had not been more alike. With one accord they uttered the same phrase:

"Lord Dudley must have been your father!"

The head of each was drooped in affirmation.

"She was true to the blood," said Henri, pointing to Paquita.

"She was as little guilty as it is possible to be," replied Margarita Euphemia Porraberil, and she threw herself upon the body of Paquita, giving vent to a cry of despair. "Poor child! Oh, if I could bring thee to life again! I was wrong—forgive me, Paquita! Dead! and I live! I—I am the most unhappy."

At that moment the horrible face of the mother of Paquita appeared.

"You are come to tell me that you never sold her to me to kill," cried the Marquise. "I know why you have left your lair. I will pay you twice over. Hold your peace."

She took a bag of gold from the ebony cabinet, and threw it contemptuously at the old woman's feet. The chink of the gold was potent enough to excite a smile on the Georgian's impassive face.

"I come at the right moment for you, my sister," said Henri. "The law will ask of you——"

"Nothing," replied the Marquise. "One person alone might ask for a reckoning for the death of this girl. Cristemio is dead."

"And the mother," said Henri, pointing to the old woman. "Will you not always be in her power?"

"She comes from a country where women are not beings, but things— chattels, with which one does as one wills, which one buys, sells, and slays; in short, which one uses for one's caprices as you, here, use a piece of furniture. Besides, she has one passion which dominates all the others, and which would have stifled her maternal love, even if she had loved her daughter, a passion——"

"What?" Henri asked quickly, interrupting his sister.

"Play! God keep you from it," answered the Marquise.

"But whom have you," said Henri, looking at the girl of the golden eyes, "who will help you to remove the traces of this fantasy which the law would not overlook?"

"I have her mother," replied the Marquise, designating the Georgian, to whom she made a sign to remain.

"We shall meet again," said Henri, who was thinking anxiously of his friends and felt that it was time to leave.

"No, brother," she said, "we shall not meet again. I am going back to Spain to enter the Convent of *los Dolores*."

"You are too young yet, too lovely," said Henri, taking her in his arms and giving her a kiss.

"Good−bye," she said; "there is no consolation when you have lost that which has seemed to you the infinite."

A week later Paul de Manerville met De Marsay in the Tuileries, on the Terrasse de Feuillants.

"Well, what has become of our beautiful girl of the golden eyes, you rascal?"

"She is dead."

"What of?"

"Consumption."

PARIS, March 1834−April 1835.

ADDENDUM

The Girl with the Golden Eyes is the third part of the trilogy. Part one is entitled Ferragus and part two is The Duchesse de Langeais. The three stories are frequently combined under the title The Thirteen.

The following personages appear in other stories of the Human Comedy.

Bourignard, Gratien−Henri−Victor−Jean−Joseph
Ferragus

Dudley, Lord
The Lily of the Valley
A Man of Business
Another Study of Woman
A Daughter of Eve

Manerville, Paul Francois−Joseph, Comte de

The Ball at Sceaux
Lost Illusions
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
A Marriage Settlement

Marsay, Henri de
Ferragus
The Duchesse of Langeais
The Unconscious Humorists
Another Study of Woman
The Lily of the Valley
Father Goriot
Jealousies of a Country Town
Ursule Mirouet
A Marriage Settlement
Lost Illusions
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
Letters of Two Brides
The Ball at Sceaux
Modeste Mignon
The Secrets of a Princess
The Gondreville Mystery
A Daughter of Eve

Ronquerolles, Marquis de
The Imaginary Mistress
The Peasantry
Ursule Mirouet
A Woman of Thirty
Another Study of Woman
Ferragus
The Duchesse of Langeais
The Member for Arcis