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A ROMANCE OF YOUTH

By FRANCOIS COPPEE

BOOK 4.

CHAPTER XIV

TOO LATE!

It had been more than three months since Maria and Maurice had met again. One day the young man went to the Louvre to see his favorite pictures of the painters of the Eighteenth Century. His attention was attracted by the beautiful hair of a young artist dressed in black, who was copying one of Rosalba's portraits. It was our pretty pastel artist whose wonderful locks disturbed all the daubers in the museum, and which made colorists out of Signol's pupils themselves. Maurice approached the copyist, and then both exclaimed at once:

"Mademoiselle Maria!"

"Monsieur Maurice!"

She had recognized him so quickly and with such a charming smile, she had not, then, forgotten him? When he used to visit Pere Gerard he had noticed that she was not displeased with him; but after such a long time, at first sight, to obtain such a greeting, such a delighted exclamation-- it was flattering!

The young man standing by her easel, with his hat off, so graceful and elegant in his well-cut garments, began to talk with her. He spoke first, in becoming and proper terms, of her father's death; inquired for her mother and sister, congratulated himself upon having been recognized thus, and then yielding to his bold custom, he added:

"As to myself, I hesitated at first. You have grown still more beautiful in two years."

As she blushed, he continued, in a joking way, which excused his audacity:

"Amedee told me that you had become delicious, but now I hardly dare ask him for news of you. Ever since you have lived at Montmartre--and I know that he sees you every Sunday--he has never offered to take me with him to pay my respects. Upon my word of honor, Mademoiselle Maria, I believe that he is in love with you and as jealous as a Turk."

She protested against it, confused but still smiling.

Ah! if he had known of the dream that Maria had kept concealed in one corner of her heart ever since their first meeting. If he had known that her only desire was to be chosen and loved by this handsome Maurice, who had gone through their house and among poor Papa Gerard's bric-a-brac like a meteor! Why not, after all? Did she not possess that great power, beauty? Her father, her mother, and even her sister, the wise Louise, had often said so to her. Yes! from the very first she had been charmed by this young man with the golden moustache, and the ways of a young lord; she had hoped to please him, and later, in spite of poverty and death, she had continued to be intoxicated with this folly and to dream of this narcotic against grief, of the return of this Prince Charming. Poor Maria, so good and so artless, who had been told too many times that she was pretty! Poor little spoiled child!

When he left you yesterday, little Maria, after half an hour's pleasing conversation, Maurice said to you jokingly: "Do not tell Violette, above all, that we have met. I should lose my best friend." You not only said nothing to Amedee, but you told neither your mother nor your sister. For Louise and Madame Gerard are prudent and wise, and they would tell you to avoid this rash fellow who has accosted you in a public place, and has told you at once that you are beautiful and beloved. They would scold you; they would tell you that this young man is of a rich and distinguished family; that his mother has great ambitions for him; that you have only your old black dress and beautiful eyes, and to-morrow, when you return to the Louvre, Madame Gerard will establish herself near your easel and discourage the young gallant.

But, little Maria, you conceal it from your mother and Louise! You have a secret from your family! To-morrow when you make your toilette before the mirror and twist up your golden hair, your heart will beat with hope and vanity. In the Louvre your attention will be distracted from your work when you hear a man's step resound in a neighboring gallery, and when Maurice arrives you will doubtless be troubled, but very much surprised and not displeased, ah! only too much pleased. Little Maria, little Maria, he talks to you in a low tone now. His blond moustache is very near your cheek, and you do well to lower your eyes, for I see a gleam of pleasure under your long lashes. I do not hear what he says, nor your replies; but how fast he works, how he gains your confidence! You will compromise yourself, little Maria, if you keep him too long by

your easel. Four o'clock will soon strike, and the watchman in the green coat, who is snoozing before Watteau's designs, will arouse from his torpor, stretch his arms, look at his watch, get up from his seat, and call out "Time to close." Why do you allow Maurice to help you arrange your things, to accompany you through the galleries, carrying your box of pastels? The long, lanky girl in the Salon Carre, who affects the English ways, the one who will never finish copying the "Vierge au coussin vert," has followed you into the Louvre court. Take care! She has noticed, envious creature, that you are very much moved as you take leave of your companion, and that you let your hand remain for a second in his! This old maid 'a l'anglaise' has a viper's tongue. To-morrow you will be the talk of the Louvre, and the gossip will spread to the 'Ecole des Beaux-Arts', even to Signol's studio, where the two daubers, your respectful admirers, who think of cutting their throats in your honor, will accost each other with a "Well, the pretty pastelist! Yes, I know, she has a lover."

If it was only a lover! But the pretty pastelist has been very careless, more foolish than the old maid or the two young fellows dream of. It is so sweet to hear him say: "I love you!" and so delicious to listen for the question: "And you, do you love me a little?" when she is dying to say, "Yes!" Bending her head and blushing with confusion under Maurice's ardent gaze, the pretty Maria ends by murmuring the fatal "Yes." Then she sees Maurice turn pale with joy, and he says to her, "I must talk to you alone; not before these bores." She replies: "But how? It is impossible!" Then he asks whether she does not trust him, whether she does not believe him to be an honest man, and the young girl's looks say more than any protestation would.

"Well! to-morrow morning at ten o'clock--instead of coming to the Louvre--will you? I will wait for you on the Quai d'Orsay, before the Saint-Cloud pier."

She was there at the appointed hour, overwhelmed with emotion and ready to faint. He took her by the arm and led her aboard the boat.

"Do you see, now we are almost alone. Give me the pleasure of wandering through the fields with you. It is such beautiful weather. Be tranquil, we shall return early."

Oh, the happy day! Maria sees pass before her, as she is seated beside Maurice, who is whispering in her ear loving words and whose glances cover her with caresses, as if in a dream, views of Paris that were not familiar to her, high walls, arches of bridges, then the bare suburbs, the smoking manufactories of Grenelle, the Bas Meudon, with its boats and public-houses. At last, on the borders of the stream, the park with its extensive verdure appeared.

They wandered there for a long time under the chestnut-trees, loaded with their fruit in its green shells. The sun, filtering through the foliage, dotted the walks with patches of light, and Maurice continued to repeat to Maria that he loved her; that he had never loved any one but her! that he had loved her from the very first time that he saw her at Pere

Gerard's, and that neither time nor absence had been able to drive away the remembrance of her. And at this moment he imagined that it was true. He did not think that he was telling a lie. As to poor Maria, do not be too severe upon her! think of her youth, her poverty and imprisonment-- she was overwhelmed with happiness. She could think of nothing to say, and, giving herself up into the young man's arms, she had hardly the strength to turn upon him, from time to time, her eyes tortured with love.

Is it necessary to tell how she succumbed? how they went to a restaurant and dined? Emotion, the heavy heat of the afternoon, champagne, that golden wine that she tasted for the first time, stunned the imprudent child. Her charming head slips down upon the sofa-pillow, she is nearly fainting.

"You are too warm," said Maurice. "This bright light makes you ill."

He draws the curtains; they are in the darkness, and he takes the young girl in his arms, covering her hands, eyes, and lips with kisses.

Doubtless he swears to her that she shall be his wife. He asks only a little time, a few weeks, in which to prepare his mother, the ambitious Madame Roger, for his unexpected marriage. Maria never doubts him, but overcome by her fault, she feels an intense shame, and buries her face on her lover's shoulder. She thinks then, the guilty girl, of her past; of her innocence and poverty, of her humble but honest home; her dead father, her mother and sister---her two mothers, properly speaking---who yet call her "little one" and always consider her as a child, an infant in all its purity. She feels impressed with her sin, and wishes that she might die there at once.

Oh! I beg of you, be charitable to the poor, weak Maria, for she is young and she must suffer!

Maurice was not a rascal, after all; he was in earnest when he promised to marry her without delay. He even meant to admit all to his mother the next day; but when he saw her she never had appeared so imposing to him, with her gray hair under her widow's cap. He shivered as he thought of the tearful scenes, the reproaches and anger, and in his indolence he said to himself: "Upon my honor, I will do it later!" He loves Maria after his fashion. He is faithful to her, and when she steals away an hour from her work to come to see him, he is uneasy at the least delay. She is truly adorable, only Maurice does not like the unhappy look that she wears when she asks him, in a trembling voice: "Have you spoken to your mother?" He embraces her, reassures her. "Be easy. Leave me time to arrange it." The truth is, that now he begins to be perplexed at the idea of this marriage. It is his duty, he knows that very well; but he is not twenty three years old yet. There is no hurry. After all, is it duty? the little one yielded easily enough. Has he not the right to test her and wait a little? It is what his mother would advise him, he is certain. That is the only reasonable way to look at it.

Alas, egotists and cowards always have a reason for everything!

How dearly poor Maria's foolish step has cost her! How heavily such a secret weighs upon the child's heart! For a few moments of uneasy intoxication with this man, whom she already doubts and who sometimes makes her afraid, she must lie to her mother without blushing or lowering her eyes, and enter Maurice's house veiled and hiding like a thief. But that is nothing yet. After some time of this agonizing life her health is troubled. Quickly she goes to find Maurice! She arrives unexpectedly and finds him lying upon the sofa smoking a cigar. Without giving him time to rise, she throws herself into his arms, and, bursting into sobs, makes her terrible avowal. At first he only gives a start of angry astonishment, a harsh glance.

"Bah! you must be mistaken."

"I am sure of it, I tell you, I am sure of it!"

She has caught his angry glance and feels condemned in advance. However, he gives her a cold kiss, and it is with a great effort that she stammers:

"Maurice--you must--speak to your mother--"

He rises with an impatient gesture and Maria seats herself--her strength is leaving her--while he walks up and down the room.

"My poor Maria," he begins in a hesitating manner, "I dared not tell you, but my mother will not consent to our marriage--now, at least."

He lies! He has not spoken to his mother; she knows it. Ah! unhappy creature! he does not love her! and, discouraged, with a rumbling noise in her ears, she listens to Maurice as he speaks in his soft voice.

"Oh! be tranquil. I shall not abandon you, my poor child. If what you say is true--if you are sure of it, then the best thing that you can do, you see, is to leave your family and come and live with me. At first we will go away from Paris; you can be confined in the country. We can put the child out to nurse; they will take care of the little brat, of course. And later, perhaps, my mother will soften and will understand that we must marry. No, truly, the more I think of it, the more I believe that that is the best way to do. Yes! I know very well it will be hard to leave your home, but what can you do, my darling? You can write your mother a very affectionate letter."

And going to her he takes her, inert and heartbroken, into his arms, and tries to show himself loving.

"You are my wife, my dear little wife, I repeat it. Are you not glad, eh! that we can live together?"

This is what he proposes to do. He thinks to take her publicly to his house and to blazon her shame before the eyes of everybody! Maria feels that she is lost. She rises abruptly and says to him in the tone of a

somnambulist: "That will do. We will talk of it again."

She goes away and returns to Montmartre at a crazy woman's pace, and finds her mother knitting and her sister ready to lay the table--yes! as if nothing at all was the matter. She takes their hands and falls at their feet!

Ah, poor women!

They had already been very much tried. The decay of this worthy family was lamentable; but in spite of all, yesterday even, they endured their fate with resignation. Yes! the economy, the degrading drudgery, the old, mended gowns--they accepted all this without a murmur. A noble sentiment sustained and gave them courage. All three--the old mother in a linen cap doing the cooking and the washing, the elder sister giving lessons at forty sous, and the little one working in pastels--were vaguely conscious of representing something very humble, but sacred and noble--a family without a blemish on their name. They felt that they moved in an atmosphere of esteem and respect. "Those ladies upon the first floor have so many accomplishments," say the neighbors. Their apartment--with its stained woodwork, its torn wall, paper, but where they were all united in work and drawn closer and closer to each other in love--had still the sweetness of a home; and upon their ragged mourning, their dilapidated furniture, the meagre meat soup at night, the pure light of honor gleamed and watched over them. Now, after this guilty child's avowal, all this was ended, lost forever! There was a blemish upon their life of duty and poverty, upon their irreproachable past, even upon the father's memory. Certainly the mother and elder sister excused the poor creature who sobbed under their kisses and begged their pardon. However, when they gazed at each other with red eyes and dry lips, they measured the fall of the family; they saw for the first time how frightful were their destitution and distress; they felt the unbearable feeling of shame glide into their hearts like a sinister and unexpected guest who, at the first glance, makes one understand that he has come to be master of the lodging. This was the secret, the overwhelming secret, which the distracted Louise Gerard revealed that evening to her only friend, Amedee Violette, acting thus by instinct, as a woman with too heavy a burden throws it to the ground, crying for help.

When she had ended her cruel confidence, to which the poet listened with his face buried in his hands, and he uncovered his face creased and furrowed by the sudden wrinkles of despair, Louise was frightened.

"How I have wounded him!" she thought. "How he loves Maria!"

But she saw shining in the young man's eyes a gloomy resolution.

"Very well, Louise," muttered he, between his teeth. "Do not tell me any more, I beg of you. I do not know where to find Maurice at this hour, but he will see me to-morrow morning, rest easy. If the evil is not repaired--and at once!"

He did not finish; his voice was stifled with grief and rage, and upon an

almost imperious gesture to leave, Louise departed, overcome by her undertaking.

No, Maurice Roger was not a villain. After Maria's departure he felt ashamed and displeased with himself. A mother! poor little thing! Certainly he would take charge of her and the child; he would behave like a gentleman. But, to speak plainly, he did not now love her as much as he did. His vagabond nature was already tired of his love-affair. This one was watered too much by tears. Bah! he was usually lucky, and this troublesome affair would come out all right like the others. Truly, it was as bad an accident as if one had fallen into a hole and broken his leg. But then, who could tell? Chance and time arrange many things. The child might not live, perhaps; at any rate, it was perfectly natural that he should wait and see what happened.

The next morning the reckless Maurice--who had not slept badly--was tranquilly preparing his palette while awaiting his model, when he saw Amedee Violette enter his studio. At the first glance he saw that the poet knew all.

"Maurice," said Amedee, in a freezing tone, "I received a visit from Mademoiselle Louise Gerard last evening. She told me everything--all, do you understand me perfectly? I have come to learn whether I am mistaken regarding you--whether Maurice Roger is an honest man."

A flame darted from the young artist's eyes. Amedee, with his livid complexion and haggard from a sleepless night and tears, was pitiful to see. And then it was Amedee, little Amedee whom Maurice sincerely loved, for whom he had kept, ever since their college days, a sentiment, all the more precious that it flattered his vanity, the indulgent affection and protection of a superior.

"Oh! Grand, melodramatic words already!" said he, placing his palette upon the table. "Amedee, my dear boy, I do not recognize you, and if you have any explanation that you wish to ask of your old friend, it is not thus that you should do it. You have received, you tell me, Mademoiselle Gerard's confidence. I know you are devoted to those ladies. I understand your emotion and I think your intervention legitimate; but you see I speak calmly and in a friendly way. Calm yourself in your turn and do not forget that, in spite of your zeal for those ladies, I am the best and dearest companion of your youth. I am, I know, in one of the gravest situations of my life. Let us talk of it. Advise me; you have the right to do so; but not in that tone of voice--that angry, threatening tone which I pardon, but which hurts and makes me doubt, were it possible, your love for me."

"Ah! you know very well that I love you," replied the unhappy Amedee, "but why do you need my advice? You are frank enough to deny nothing. You admit that it is true, that you have seduced a young girl. Does not your conscience tell you what to do?"

"To marry her? That is my intention. But, Amedee, do you think of my mother? This marriage will distress her, destroy her fond hopes and

ambitions. I hope to be able to gain her consent; only I must have time to turn myself. Later--very soon. I do not say--if the child lives."

This word, torn from Maurice by the cynicism which is in the heart of all egotists, made Amedee angry.

"Your mother!" exclaimed he. "Your mother is the widow of a French officer who died facing the enemy. She will understand it, I am sure, as a matter of honor and duty. Go and find her, tell her that you have ruined this unfortunate child. Your mother will advise you to marry her. She will command you to do it."

This argument was forcible and direct, and impressed Maurice; but his friend's violence irritated him.

"You go to work badly, Amedee, I repeat it," said he, raising his tone. "You have no right to prejudge my mother's opinion, and I receive no orders from anybody. After all, nothing authorizes you to do it; if it is because you were in love with Maria--"

A furious cry interrupted him. Amedee, with wild eyes and shaking his fists, walked toward Maurice, speaking in a cutting tone:

"Well, yes! I loved her," said he, "and I wished to make her my wife. You, who no longer love her, who took her out of caprice, as you have taken others, you have destroyed all of my dreams for the future. She preferred you, and, understand me, Maurice, I am too proud to complain, too just to hold spite against you. I am only here to prevent your committing an infamy. Upon my honor! If you repulse me, our friendship is destroyed forever, and I dare not think of what will happen between us, but it will be terrible! Alas! I am wrong, I do not talk to you as I ought. Maurice, there is time yet! Only listen to your heart, which I know is generous and good. You have wronged an innocent child and driven a poor and worthy family to despair. You can repair the evil you have caused. You wish to. You will! I beg of you, do it out of respect for yourself and the name you bear. Act like a brave man and a gentleman! Give this young girl--whose only wrong has been in loving you too much--give the mother of your child your name, your heart, your love. You will be happy with her and through her. Go! I shall not be jealous of your happiness, but only too glad to have found my friend, my loyal Maurice once more, and to be able still to love and admire him as heretofore."

Stirred by these warm words, and fatigued by the discussion and struggle, the painter reached out his hands to his friend, who pressed them in his. Suddenly he looked at Amedee and saw his eyes shining with tears, and, partly from sorrow, but more from want of will and from moral weakness, to end it he exclaimed:

"You are right, after all. We will arrange this matter without delay. What do you wish me to do?"

Ah, how Amedee bounded upon his neck!

"My good, my dear Maurice! Quickly dress yourself. Let us go to those ladies and embrace and console that dear child. Ah! I knew very well that you would understand me and that your heart was in the right place. How happy the poor women will be! Now then, my old friend, is it not good to do one's duty?"

Yes, Maurice found that it was good now; excited and carried away by his friend, he hurried toward the good action that was pointed out to him as he would to a pleasure-party, and while putting on his coat to go out, he said:

"After all, my mother can only approve, and since she always does as I wish, she will end by adoring my little Maria. It is all right; there is no way of resisting you, Violette. You are a good and persuasive Violette. Now, then, here I am, ready--a handkerchief--my hat. Off we go!"

They went out and took a cab which carried them toward Montmartre. The easy-going Maurice, reconciled to his future, sketched out his plan of life. Once married, he would work seriously. At first, immediately after the ceremony, he would leave with his wife to pass the winter in the South, where she could be confined. He knew a pretty place in the Corniche, near Antibes, where he should not lose his time, as he could bring back marine and landscape sketches. But it would not be until the next winter that he would entirely arrange his life. The painter Laugeol was going to move; he would hire his apartment--"a superb studio, my dear fellow, with windows looking out upon the Luxembourg." He could see himself there now, working hard, having a successful picture in the Salon, wearing a medal. He chose even the hangings in the sleeping-rooms in advance. Then, upon beautiful days, how convenient the garden would be for the child and the nurse.

Suddenly, in the midst of this chattering, he noticed Amedee's sad face as he shrank into the back of the carriage.

"Forgive me, my dear friend," said he, taking him affectionately by the hand. "I forgot what you told me just now. Ah! fate is ridiculous, when I think that my happiness makes you feel badly."

The poet gave his friend a long, sad look.

"Be happy with Maria and make her happy, that is all I ask for you both."

They had reached the foot of Montmartre, and the carriage went slowly up the steep streets.

"My friend," said Amedee, "we shall arrive there soon. You will go in alone to see these ladies, will you not? Oh! do not be afraid. I know Louise and the mother. They will not utter one word of reproach. Your upright act will be appreciated by them as it merits--but you will excuse me from going with you, do you see? It would be too painful for me."

"Yes, I understand, my poor Amedee. As it pleases you. Now then,

courage, you will be cured of it. Everything is alleviated in time," replied Maurice, who supposed everybody to have his fickle nature. "I shall always remember the service that you have rendered me, for I blush now as I think of it. Yes, I was going to do a villainous act. Amedee, embrace me."

They threw their arms about each other's neck, and the carriage stopped. Once on the sidewalk, Amedee noticed his friend's wry face as he saw the home of the Gerards, a miserable, commonplace lodging-house, whose crackled plastered front made one think of the wrinkles on a poor man's face. On the right and on the left of the entrance-door were two shops, one a butcher's, the other a fruiterer's, exhaling their fetid odors. But Amedee paid no attention to the delicate Maurice's repugnance, saying:

"Do you see that little garden at the end of the walk? It is there. Au revoir."

They separated with a last grasp of the hand. The poet saw Maurice enter the dark alley, cross the narrow court and push the gate open into the garden, and then disappear among the mass of verdure. How many times Amedee had passed through there, moved at the thought that he was going to see Maria; and Maurice crossed this threshold for the first time in his life to take her away. He wanted her! He had himself given his beloved to another! He had begged, almost forced his rival, so to speak, to rob him of his dearest hope! What sorrow!

Amedee gave his address to the driver and entered the carriage again. A cold autumn rain had commenced to fall, and he was obliged to close the windows. As he was jolted harshly through the streets of Paris at a trot, the young poet, all of a shiver, saw carriages streaming with water, bespattered pedestrians under their umbrellas, a heavy gloom fall from the leaden sky; and Amedee, stupefied with grief, felt a strange sensation of emptiness, as if somebody had taken away his heart.

When he entered his room, the sight of his furniture, his engravings, his books on their shelves, and his table covered with its papers distressed him. His long evenings of study near this lamp, the long hours of thought over some difficult work, the austere and cheerless year that he had lived there, all had been dedicated to Maria. It was in order to obtain her some day, that he had labored so assiduously and obstinately! And now the frivolous and guilty child was doubtless weeping for joy in Maurice's arms, her husband to-morrow?

Seated before his table, with his head buried in his hands, Amedee sank into the depths of melancholy. His life seemed such a failure, his fate so disastrous, his future so gloomy, he felt so discouraged and lonely, that for the moment the courage to live deserted him. It seemed to him that an invisible hand touched him upon the shoulder with compassion, and he had at once a desire and a fear to turn around and look; for he knew very well that this hand was that of the dead. He did not fancy it under the hideous aspect of a skeleton, but as a calm, sad, but yet very sweet face which drew him against its breast with a mother's tenderness, and

made him and his grief sleep--a sleep without dreams, profound and eternal. Suddenly he turned around and uttered a frightful cry. For a moment he thought he saw, extended at his feet, and still holding a razor in his hand, the dead body of his unhappy father, a horrible wound in his throat, and his thin gray hair in a pool of blood!

He was still trembling with this frightful hallucination when somebody knocked at his door. It was the concierge, who brought him two letters.

The first was stamped with the celebrated name:

"Comedie Francaise, 1680." The manager announced in the most gracious terms that he had read with the keenest pleasure his drama in verse, entitled *L'Atelier*, and he hoped that the reading committee would accept this work.

"Too late!" thought the young poet, as he tore open the other envelope.

This second letter bore the address of a Paris notary, and informed M. Amedee Violette that M. Isidore Gauvre had died without leaving a will, and that, as nephew of the defunct, he would receive a part of the estate, still difficult to appraise, but which would not be less than two hundred and fifty or three hundred thousand francs.

Success and fortune! Everything came at once! Amedee was at first overwhelmed with surprise; but with all these unhoped-for favors of fortune, which did not give him the power to repair his misfortune, the noble poet deeply realized that riches and glory were not equal to a great love or a beautiful dream, and, completely upset by the irony of his fate, he broke into a harsh burst of laughter.

## CHAPTER XV

### REPARATION

The late M. Violette was not mistaken when he supposed M. Gauvre capable of disinheriting his family in favor of his servant-mistress, but Berenice was wanting in patience. The rough beard and cap of an irresistible sergeant-major were the ruin of the girl. One Sunday, when M. Gauvre, as usual, recited vespers at St. Sulpice, he found that for the first time in his life he had forgotten his snuff-box. The holy offices were unbearable to this hypocritical person unless frequently broken by a good pinch of snuff. Instead of waiting for the final benediction and then going to take his usual walk, he left his church warden's stall and returned unexpectedly to the Rue Servandoni, where he surprised Berenice in a loving interview with her military friend. The old man's rage was pitiful to behold. He turned the Normandy beauty ignominiously out of doors, tore up the will he had made in her favor, and died some weeks after from indigestion, and left, in spite of himself, all his fortune to his natural heirs.

Amedee's drama had been accepted by the Comedie Francaise, but was not to be brought out until spring. The notary in charge of his uncle's estate had advanced him a few thousand francs, and, feeling sad and not having the courage to be present at the marriage of Maurice and Maria, the poet wished at least to enjoy, in a way, his new fortune and the independence that it gave him; so he resigned his position and left for a trip to Italy, in the hope of dissipating his grief.

Ah, never travel when the heart is troubled! You sleep with the echo of a dear name in your thoughts, and the half sleep of nights on a train is feverish and full of nightmares. Amedee suffered tortures from it. In the midst of the continual noise of the cars he thought he could hear sad voices crying loudly the name of a beloved lost one. Sometimes the tumult would become quiet for a little; brakes, springs, wheels, all parts of the furious cast-iron machine seemed to him tired of howling the deafening rhythmical gallop, and the vigorously rocked traveller could distinguish in the diminished uproar a strain of music, at first confused like a groan, then more distinct, but always the same cruel, haunting monotone--the fragment of a song that Maria once sang when they were both children. Suddenly a mournful and prolonged whistle would resound through the night. The express rushed madly into a tunnel. Under the sonorous roof, the frightful concert redoubled, exasperating him among all these metallic clamors; but Amedee still heard a distant sound like that of a blacksmith's hammer, and each heavy blow made his heart bound painfully.

Ah! never travel, and above all, never travel alone, if your heart is sad! How hostile and inhospitable the first sensation is that one feels then when entering an unknown city! Amedee was obliged to submit to the tiresome delay of looking after his baggage in a commonplace station; the hasty packing into an omnibus of tired-out travellers, darting glances of bad humor and suspicion; to the reception upon the hotel steps by the inevitable Swiss porter with his gold-banded cap, murdering all the European languages, greeting all the newcomers, and getting mixed in his "Yes, sir," "Ja, wohl," and "Si, signor." Amedee was an inexperienced tourist, who did not drag along with him a dozen trunks, and had not a rich and indolent air; so he was quickly despatched by the Swiss polyglot into a fourth-story room, which looked out into an open well, and was so gloomy that while he washed his hands he was afraid of falling ill and dying there without help. A notice written in four languages hung upon the wall, and, to add to his cheerfulness, it advised him to leave all his valuables at the office of the hotel--as if he had penetrated a forest infested with brigands. The rigid writing warned him still further that they looked upon him as a probable sharper, and that his bill would be presented every five days.

The tiresome life of railroads and table-d'hotes began for him.

He would be dragged about from city to city, like a bag of wheat or a cask of wine. He would dwell in pretentious and monumental hotels, where he would be numbered like a convict; he would meet the same carnivorous English family, with whom he might have made a tour of the world without

exchanging one word; swallowing every day the tasteless soup, old fish, tough vegetables, and insipid wine which have an international reputation, so to speak. But above all, he was to have the horror, every evening upon going to his room, of passing through those uniform and desolate corridors, faintly lighted by gas, where before each door are pairs of cosmopolitan shoes--heavy alpine shoes, filthy German boots, the conjugal boots of my lord and my lady, which make one think, by their size, of the troglodyte giants--awaiting, with a fatigued air, their morning polish.

The imprudent Amedee was destined to all sorts of weariness, all sorts of deceptions, and all the homesickness of a solitary traveller. At the sight of the famous monuments and celebrated sites, which have become in some way looked upon as models for painters and material for literary development, Amedee felt that sensation of "already seen" which paralyzes the faculty of admiration. Dare we say it? The dome in Milan, that enormous quiver of white marble arrows, did not move him. He was indifferent to the sublime medley of bronze in the Baptistery in Florence; and the leaning tower at Pisa produced simply the effect of mystification. He walked miles through the museums and silent galleries, satiated with art and glutted with masterpieces. He was disgusted to find that he could not tolerate a dozen "Adorations of the Shepherds," or fourteen "Descents from the Cross," consecutively, even if they were signed with the most glorious names. The scenes of suffering and martyrdom, so many times repeated, were particularly distasteful to him; and he took a still greater dislike even to a certain monk, always represented on his knees in prayer with an axe sticking in his tonsure, than to the everlasting St. Sebastian pierced with arrows. His deadened and depraved attention discerned only the disagreeable and ugly side of a work of art. In the adorable artless originals he could see only childish and barbarous drawing, and he thought the old colorists' yolk-of-an-egg tone monotonous.

He wished to spur his sensations, to see something extraordinary. He travelled toward Venice, the noiseless city, the city without birds or verdure, toward that silent country of sky, marble, and water; but once there, the reality seemed inferior to his dream. He had not that shock of surprise and enthusiasm in the presence of St. Mark's and the Doges' palace which he had hoped for. He had read too many descriptions of all these wonders; seen too many more or less faithful pictures, and in his disenchantment he recalled a lamp-shade which once, in his own home, had excited his childish imagination--an ugly lampshade of blue pasteboard upon which was printed a nocturnal fete, the illuminations upon the ducal palace being represented by a row of pin-pricks.

Once more I repeat it, never travel alone, and above all, never go to Venice alone and without love! For young married people in their honeymoon, or a pair of lovers, the gondola is a floating boudoir, a nest upon the waters like a kingfisher's. But for one who is sad, and who stretches himself upon the sombre cushions of the bark, the gondola is a tomb.

Toward the last of January, Amedee suddenly returned to Paris. He would

not be obliged to see Maurice or his young bride at once. They had been married one month and would remain in the South until the end of winter. He was recalled by the rehearsals of his drama. The notary who had charge of his affairs gave him twelve thousand pounds' income, a large competency, which enabled him to work for the pure and disinterested love of art, and without concessions to common people. The young poet furnished an elegant apartment in an old and beautiful house on the Quai d'Orsay, and sought out some of his old comrades--among others Paul Sillery, who now held a distinguished place in journalism and reappeared a little in society, becoming very quickly reconciled with life.

His first call was upon Madame Roger. He was very glad to see Maurice's mother; she was a little sad, but indulgent to Maurice, and resigned to her son's marriage, because she felt satisfied that he had acted like a man of honor. He also went at once to Montmartre to embrace Louise and Madame Gerard, who received him with great demonstrations. They were not so much embarrassed in money matters, for Maurice was very generous and had aided his wife's family. Louise gave lessons now for a proper remuneration, and Madame Gerard was able to refuse, with tears of gratitude, the poet's offer of assistance, who filially opened his purse to her. He dined as usual with his old friends, and they had tact enough not to say too much about the newly married ones; but there was one empty place at the table. He was once more seized with thoughts of the absent, and returned to his room that evening with an attack of the blues.

The rehearsal of his piece, which had just begun at the Comedie Francaise, the long sittings at the theatre, and the changes to be made from day to day, were a useful and powerful distraction for Amedee Violette's grief. L'Atelier, when played the first week in April, did not obtain more than a respectful greeting from the public; it was an indifferent success. This vulgar society, these simple, plain, sentiments, the sweetheart in a calico gown, the respectable old man in short frock and overalls, the sharp lines where here and there boldly rang out a slang word of the faubourg; above all, the scene representing a mill in full activity, with its grumbling workmen, its machines in motion, even the continual puffing of steam, all displeased the worldly people and shocked them. This was too abrupt a change from luxurious drawing-rooms, titled persons, aristocratic adulteresses, and declarations of love murmured to the heroine in full toilette by a lover leaning his elbow upon the piano, with all the airs and graces of a first-class dandy. However, Jocquelet, in the old artisan's role, was emphatic and exaggerated, and an ugly and commonplace debutante was an utter failure. The criticisms, generally routine in character, were not gracious, and the least surly ones condemned Amedee's attempt, qualifying it as an honorable effort. There were some slashes; one "long-haired" fellow from the Cafe de Seville failed in his criticism--the very one who once wrote a description of the violation of a tomb--to crush the author of L'Atelier in an ultra-classical article, wherein he protested against realism and called to witness all the silent, sculptured authors in the hall.

It was a singular thing, but Amedee was easily consoled over his failure. He did not have the necessary qualities to succeed in the theatrical

line? Very well, he would give it up, that was all! It was not such a great misfortune, upon the whole, to abandon the most difficult art of all, but not the first; which did not allow a poet to act his own free liking. Amedee began to compose verses for himself--for his own gratification; to become intoxicated with his own rhymes and fancies; to gather with a sad pleasure the melancholy flowers that his trouble had caused to blossom in his heart.

Meanwhile summer arrived, and Maurice returned to Paris with his wife and a little boy, born at Nice, and Amedee must go to see them, although he knew in advance that the visit would make him unhappy.

The amateur painter was handsomer than ever. He was alone in his studio, wearing his same red jacket. He had decorated and even crammed the room full of luxurious and amusing knickknacks. The careless young man received his friend as if nothing had happened between them, and after their greetings and inquiries as to old friends, and the events that had happened since their last meeting, they lighted their cigarettes.

"Well, what have you done?" asked the poet. "You had great projects of work. Have you carried out your plans? Have you many sketches to show me?"

"Upon my word, no! Almost nothing. Do you know, when I was there I abandoned myself to living; I played the lizard in the sun. Happiness is very engrossing, and I have been foolishly happy."

Then placing his hand upon his friend's, who sat near him, he added:

"But I owe that happiness to you, my good Amedee."

Maurice said this carelessly, in order to satisfy his conscience. Did he remember, did he even suspect how unhappy the poet had been, and was now, on account of this happiness? A bell rang.

"Ah!" exclaimed the master of the house, joyfully.

"It is Maria returning with the baby from a walk in the gardens. This little citizen will be six weeks old to-morrow, and you must see what a handsome little fellow he is already."

Amedee felt stifled with emotion. He was about to see her again! To see her as a wife and a mother was quite different, of course.

She appeared, raising the portiere with one hand, while behind her appeared the white bonnet and rustic face of the nurse. No! she was not changed, but maternity, love, and a rich and easy life had expanded her beauty. She was dressed in a fresh and charming toilette. She blushed when she first recognized Amedee; and he felt with sadness that his presence could only awaken unpleasant recollections in the young woman's mind.

"Kiss each other, like old acquaintances," said the painter, laughing,

with the air of a man who is loved and sure of himself.

But Amedee contented himself with kissing the tips of her glove, and the glance with which Maria thanked him for this reserve was one more torture for him to endure. She was grateful to him and gave him a kind smile.

"My mother and my sister," said she, graciously, "often have the pleasure of a visit from you, Monsieur Amedee. I hope that you will not make us jealous, but come often to see Maurice and me."

"Maurice and me!" How soft and tender her voice and eyes became as she said these simple words, "Maurice and me!" Ah, were they not one! How she loved him! How she loved him!

Then Amedee must admire the baby, who was now awake in his nurse's arms, aroused by his father's noisy gayety. The child opened his blue eyes, as serious as those of an old man's, and peeped out from the depth of lace, feebly squeezing the finger that the poet extended to him.

"What do you call him?" asked Amedee, troubled to find anything to say.

"Maurice, after his father," quickly responded Maria, who also put a mint of love into these words.

Amedee could endure no more. He made some pretext for withdrawing and went away, promising that he would see them again soon.

"I shall not go there very often!" he said to himself, as he descended the steps, furious with himself that he was obliged to hold back a sob.

He went there, however, and always suffered from it. He was the one who had made this marriage; he ought to rejoice that Maurice, softened by conjugal life and paternity, did not return to his recklessness of former days; but, on the contrary, the sight of this household, Maria's happy looks, the allusions that she sometimes made of gratitude to Amedee; above all Maurice's domineering way in his home, his way of speaking to his wife like an indulgent master to a slave delighted to obey, all displeased and unmanned him. He always left Maurice's displeased with himself, and irritated with the bad sentiments that he had in his heart; ashamed of loving another's wife, the wife of his old comrade; and keeping up all the same his friendship for Maurice, whom he was never able to see without a feeling of envy and secret bitterness.

He managed to lengthen the distance between his visits to the young pair, and to put another interest into his life. He was now a man of leisure, and his fortune allowed him to work when he liked and felt inspired. He returned to society and traversed the midst of miscellaneous parlors, greenrooms, and Bohemian society. He loitered about these places a great deal and lost his time, was interested by all the women, duped by his tender imagination; always expending too much sensibility in his fancies; taking his desires for love, and devoting himself to women.

The first of his loves was a beautiful Madame, whom he met in the

Countess Fontaine's parlors. She was provided with a very old husband belonging to the political and financial world; a servant of several regimes, who having on many occasions feathered his own nest, made false statements of accounts, and betrayed his vows, his name could not be spoken in public assemblies without being preceded by the epithet of honorable. A man so seriously occupied in saving the Capitol, that is to say, in courageously sustaining the stronger, approving the majorities in all of their mean actions and thus increasing his own ground, sinecures, tips, stocks, and various other advantages, necessarily neglected his charming wife, and took very little notice of the ridicule that she inflicted upon him often, and to which he seemed predestined.

The fair lady--with a wax doll's beauty, not very young, confining herself to George Sand in literature, making three toilettes a day, and having a large account at the dentist's--singled out the young poet with a romantic head, and rapidly traversed with him the whole route through the country of Love. Thanks to modern progress, the voyage is now made by a through train. After passing the smaller stations, "blushing behind the fan," a "significant pressure of the hand," "appointment in a museum," etc., and halting at a station of very little importance called "scruples" (ten minutes' pause), Amedee reached the terminus of the line and was the most enviable of mortals. He became Madame's lapdog, the essential ornament in her drawing-room, figured at all the dinners, balls, and routs where she appeared, stifled his yawns at the back of her box at the Opera, and received the confidential mission of going to hunt for sweetmeats and chocolates in the foyer. His recompense consisted in metaphysical conversations and sentimental seances, in which he was not long in discovering that his heart was blinded by his emotions. At the end of a few months of this commonplace happiness, the rupture took place without any regrets on either side, and Amedee returned, without a pang, the love-tokens he had received, namely: a photograph, a package of letters in imitation of fashionable romances, written in long, angular handwriting, after the English style, upon very chic paper; and, we must not forget, a white glove which was a little yellowed from confinement in the casket, like the beautiful Madame herself.

A tall girl, with a body like a goddess, who earned three hundred francs a month by showing her costumes on the Vaudeville stage, and who gave one louis a day to her hairdresser, gave Amedee a new experience in love, more expensive, but much more amusing than the first. There were no more psychological subtleties or hazy consciences; but she had fine, strong limbs and the majestic carriage of a cardinal's mistress going through the Rue de Constance in heavy brocade garments, to see Jean Huss burned; and her voluptuous smile showed teeth made to devour patrimonies. Unfortunately, Mademoiselle Rose de Juin's--that was the young lady's theatrical name--charming head was full of the foolishness and vanity of a poor actress. Her attacks of rage when she read an article in the journals which cut her up, her nervous attacks and torrents of tears when they gave her parts with only fifteen lines in a new piece, had begun to annoy Amedee, when chance gave him a new rival in the person of Gradoux, an actor in the Varietes, the ugly clown whose chronic cold in the head and ugly face seemed for twenty years so delicious to the most refined public in the world. Relieved of a large number of bank-notes, Violette

discreetly retired.

He next carried on a commonplace romance with a pretty little girl whose acquaintance he made one evening at a public fete. Louison was twenty years old, and earned her living at a famous florist's, and was as pink and fresh as an almond-bush in April. She had had only two lovers, gay fellows--an art student first--then a clerk in a novelty store, who had given her the not very aristocratic taste for boating. It was on the Marne, seated near Louison in a boat moored to the willows on the Ile d'Amour, that Amedee obtained his first kiss between two stanzas of a boating song, and this pretty creature, who never came to see him without bringing him a bouquet, charmed the poet. He remembered Beranger's charming verses, "I am of the people as well, my love!" felt that he loved, and was softened. In reality, he had turned this naive head. Louison became dreamy, asked for a lock of his hair, which she always carried with her in her 'porte-monnaie', went to get her fortune told to know whether the dark-complexioned young man, the knave of clubs, would be faithful to her for a long time. Amedee trusted this simple heart for some time, but at length he became tired of her vulgarities. She was really too talkative, not minding her h's and punctuating her discourse with "for certain" and "listen to me, then," calling Amedee "my little man," and eating vulgar dishes. One day she offered to kiss him, with a breath that smelled of garlic. She was the one who left him, from feminine pride, feeling that he no longer loved her, and he almost regretted her.

Thus his life passed; he worked a little and dreamed much. He went as rarely as possible to Maurice Roger's house. Maurice had decidedly turned out to be a good husband, and was fond of his home and playing with his little boy. Every time that Amedee saw Maria it meant several days of discouragement, sorrow, and impossibility of work.

"Well! well!" he would murmur, throwing down his pen, when the young woman's face would rise between his thoughts and his page; "I am incurable; I shall always love her."

In the summer of 1870 Amedee, being tired of Paris, thought of a new trip, and he was upon the point of going again, unfortunate fellow! to see the Swiss porters who speak all the languages in the world, and to view the melancholy boots in the hotel corridors, when the war broke out. The poet's passage through the midst of the revolutionary "beards" in the Cafe de Seville, and the parliamentary cravats in the Countess's drawing-room, had disgusted him forever with politics. He also was very suspicious of the Liberal ministers and all the different phases of the malady that was destroying the Second Empire. But Amedee was a good Frenchman. The assaults upon the frontiers, and the first battles lost, made a burning blush suffuse his face at the insult. When Paris was threatened he asked for arms, like the others, and although he had not a military spirit, he swore to do his duty, and his entire duty, too. One beautiful September morning he saw Trochu's gilded cap passing among the bayonets; four hundred thousand Parisians were there, like himself, full of good-will, who had taken up their guns with the resolve to die steadfast. Ah, the misery of defeat! All these brave men for five

months could only fidget about the place and eat carcasses. May the good God forgive the timid and the prattler! Alas! Poor old France! After so much glory! Poor France of Jeanne d'Arc and of Napoleon!

## CHAPTER XVI

### IN TIME OF WAR

The great siege lasted nearly three months. Upon the thirtieth of November they had fought a battle upon the banks of the Marne, then for twenty-four hours the fight had seemed to slacken, and there was a heavy snow-storm; but they maintained that the second of December would be decisive. That morning the battalion of the National Guard, of which Amedee Violette was one, went out for the first time, with the order simply to hold themselves in reserve in the third rank, by the fort's cannons, upon a hideous plain at the east of Paris.

Truly this National Guard did not make a bad appearance. They were a trifle awkward, perhaps, in their dark-blue hooded cloaks, with their tin-plate buttons, and armed with breech-loading rifles, and encumbered with canteens, basins, and pouches, all having an unprepared and too-new look. They all came from the best parts of the city, with accelerated steps and a loud beating of drums, and headed, if you please, by their major on horseback, a truss-maker, who had formerly been quartermaster of the third hussars. Certainly they only asked for service; it was not their fault, after all, if one had not confidence in them, and if they were not sent to the front as soon as they reached the fortifications. While crossing the drawbridge they had sung the Marseillaise like men ready to be shot down. What spoiled their martial appearance, perhaps, were their strong hunting-boots, their leather leggings, knit gloves, and long gaiters; lastly, that comfortable air of people who have brought with them a few dainties, such as a little bread with something eatable between, some tablets of chocolate, tobacco, and a phial filled with old rum. They had not gone two kilometres outside the ramparts, and were near the fort, where for the time being the artillery was silent, when a staff officer who was awaiting them upon an old hack of a horse, merely skin and bones, stopped them by a gesture of the hand, and said sharply to their major to take position on the left of the road, in an open field. They then stacked their arms there and broke ranks, and rested until further orders.

What a dismal place! Under a canopy of dull clouds, the earth bare with half-melted snow, with the low fort rising up before them as if in an attitude of defence, here and there groups of ruined houses, a mill whose tall chimney and walls had been half destroyed by shells, but where one still read, in large black letters, these words, "Soap-maker to the Nobility;" and through this desolated country was a long and muddy road which led over to where the battle field lay, and in the midst of which, presenting a symbol of death, lay the dead body of a horse.

In front of the National Guard, on the other side of the road, a battalion, which had been strongly put to the test the night before, were cooking. They had retreated as far as this to rest a little, and had spent all that night without shelter under the falling snow. Exhausted, bespattered, in rags, they were dolefully crouched around their meagre green-wood fires; the poor creatures were to be pitied. Underneath their misshapen caps they all showed yellow, wrinkled, and unshaven faces. The bitter, cold wind that swept over the plain made their thin shoulders, stooping from fatigue, shiver, and their shoulder-blades protruded under their faded capes. Some of them were wounded, too slightly to be sent away in the ambulance, and wore about their wrists and foreheads bands of bloody linen. When an officer passed with his head bent and a humiliated air, nobody saluted him. These men had suffered too much, and one could divine an angry and insolent despair in their gloomy looks, ready to burst out and tell of their injuries. They would have disgusted one if they had not excited one's pity. Alas, they were vanquished!

The Parisians were eager for news as to recent military operations, for they had only read in the morning papers--as they always did during this frightful siege--enigmatical despatches and bulletins purposely bristling with strategic expressions not comprehensible to the outsider. But all, or nearly all, had kept their patriotic hopes intact, or, to speak more plainly, their blind fanatical patriotism, and were certain against all reason of a definite victory; they walked along the road in little groups, and drew near the red pantaloons to talk a little.

"Well, it was a pretty hot affair on the thirtieth, wasn't it? Is it true that you had command of the Marne? You know what they say in Paris, my children? That Trochu knows something new, that he is going to make his way through the Prussian lines and join hands with the helping armies--in a word that we are going to strike the last blow."

At the sight of these spectres of soldiers, these unhappy men broken down with hunger and fatigue, the genteel National Guards, warmly clad and wrapped up for the winter, commenced to utter foolish speeches and big hopes which had been their daily food for several months: "Break the iron circle;" "not one inch, not a stone;" "war to the knife;" "one grand effort," etc. But the very best talkers were speedily discouraged by the shrugging of shoulders and ugly glances of the soldiers, that were like those of a snarling cur.

Meanwhile, a superb sergeant-major of the National Guard, newly equipped, a big, full-blooded fellow, with a red beard, the husband of a fashionable dressmaker, who every evening at the beer-house, after his sixth glass of beer would show, with matches, an infallible plan for blocking Paris and crushing the Prussian army like pepper, and was foolish enough to insist upon it.

"Now then, you, my good fellow," said he, addressing an insignificant corporal just about to eat his stew, as if he were questioning an old tactician or a man skilled like Turenne or Davoust; "do you see? you hit it in this affair of day before yesterday. Give us your opinion. Are

the positions occupied by Ducrot as strong as they pretend? Is it victory for to-day?"

The corporal turned around suddenly; with a face the color of boxwood, and his blue eyes shining with rage and defiance, he cried in a hoarse voice:

"Go and see for yourselves, you stay-at-homes!"

Saddened and heart-broken at the demoralization of the soldiers, the National Guards withdrew.

"Behold the army which the Empire has left us!" said the dressmaker's husband, who was a fool.

Upon the road leading from Paris, pressing toward the cannon's mouth which was commencing to grumble again in the distance, a battalion of militia arrived, a disorderly troop. They were poor fellows from the departments in the west, all young, wearing in their caps the Brittany coat-of-arms, and whom suffering and privation had not yet entirely deprived of their good country complexions. They were less worn out than the other unfortunate fellows whose turn came too often, and did not feel the cold under their sheepskins, and still respected their officers, whom they knew personally, and were assured in case of accident of absolution given by one of their priests, who marched in the rear file of the first company, with his cassock tucked up and his Roman hat over his eyes. These country fellows walked briskly, a little helter-skelter, like their ancestors in the time of Stofflet and M. de la Rochejaquelin, but with a firm step and their muskets well placed upon their shoulders, by Ste. Anne! They looked like soldiers in earnest.

When they passed by the National Guard, the big blond waved his cap in the air, furiously shouting at the top of his lungs:

"Long live the Republic!"

But once more the fanatical patriot's enthusiasm fell flat. The Bretons were marching into danger partly from desire, but more from duty and discipline. At the very first shot these simple-minded creatures reach the supreme wisdom of loving one's country and losing one's life for it, if necessary, without interesting themselves in the varied mystifications one calls government. Four or five of the men, more or less astonished at the cry which greeted them, turned their placid, countrified faces toward the National Guard, and the battalion passed by.

The dressmaker's husband--he did nothing at his trade, for his wife adored him, and he spent at cafes all the money which she gave him--was extremely scandalized. During this time Amedee Violette was dreamily walking up and down before the stacks of guns. His warlike ardor of the first few days had dampened. He had seen and heard too many foolish things said and done since the beginning of this horrible siege; had taken part too many times in one of the most wretched spectacles in which a people can show vanity in adversity. He was heart broken to see his

dear compatriots, his dear Parisians, redouble their boasting after each defeat and take their levity for heroism. If he admired the resignation of the poor women standing in line before the door of a butcher's shop, he was every day more sadly tormented by the bragging of his comrades, who thought themselves heroes when playing a game of corks. The official placards, the trash in the journals, inspired him with immense disgust, for they had never lied so boldly or flattered the people with so much low meanness. It was with a despairing heart and the certitude of final disaster that Amedee, needing a little sleep after the fatigue, wandered through Paris's obscure streets, barely lighted here and there by petroleum lamps, under the dark, opaque winter sky, where the echoes of the distant cannonading unceasingly growled like the barking of monstrous dogs.

What solitude! The poet had not one friend, not one comrade to whom he could confide his patriotic sorrows. Paul Sillery was serving in the army of the Loire. Arthur Papillon, who had shown such boisterous enthusiasm on the fourth of September, had been nominated prefet in a Pyrenean department, and having looked over his previous studies, the former laureate of the university examinations spent much of his time therein, far from the firing, in making great speeches and haranguing from the top of the balconies, in which speeches the three hundred heroes of antiquity in a certain mountain-pass were a great deal too often mentioned. Amedee sometimes went to see Jocquelet in the theatres, where they gave benefit performances for the field hospitals or to contribute to the molding of a new cannon. The actor, wearing a short uniform and booted to the thighs, would recite with enormous success poems of the times in which enthusiasm and fine sentiments took the place of art and common sense. What can one say to a triumphant actor who takes himself for a second Tyrtee, and who after a second recall is convinced that he is going to save the country, and that Bismarck and old William had better look after their laurels.

As to Maurice Roger, at the beginning of the campaign he sent his mother, wife, and child into the country, and, wearing the double golden stripe of a lieutenant upon his militia jacket, he was now at the outposts near his father's old friend, Colonel Lantz.

Owing to a scarcity of officers, they had fished up the old Colonel from the depths of his engineer's office, and had torn him away from his squares and compasses. Poor old fellow! His souvenirs of activity went as far back as the Crimea and Sebastopol. Since that time he had not even seen a pickaxe glisten in the sun, and, behold, they asked this worthy man to return to the trench, and to powder his despatches with earth ploughed up by bombs, like Junot at Toulon in the fearless battery.

Well, he did not say "No," and after kissing his three portionless daughters on the forehead, he took his old uniform, half-eaten up by moths, from a drawer, shook the grains of pepper and camphor from it, and, with his slow, red-tapist step, went to make his excavators work as far as possible from the walls and close by the Prussians. I can tell you, the men of the auxiliary engineers and the gentlemen with the American-caps had not joked for some time over his African cape or his

superannuated cap, which seemed to date from Pere Bugeaud. One day, when a German bomb burst among them, and they all fell to the ground excepting Colonel Lantz, who had not flinched. He tranquilly settled his glasses upon his nose and wiped off his splashed beard as coolly as he had, not long since, cleaned his India-ink brushes. Bless me! it gave you a lesson, gentlemen snobs, to sustain the honor of the special army, and taught you to respect the black velvet plastron and double red bands on the trousers. In spite of his appearance of absence of mind and deafness, the Colonel had just before heard murmured around him the words "old Lantz," and "old dolphin." Very well, gentlemen officers, you know now that the old army was composed of good material!

Maurice Roger was ordered from his battalion to Colonel Lantz, and did his duty like a true soldier's son, following his chief into the most perilous positions, and he no longer lowered his head or bent his shoulders at the whistling of a bomb. It was genuine military blood that flowed in his veins, and he did not fear death; but life in the open air, absence from his wife, the state of excitement produced by the war, and this eagerness for pleasure common to all those who risk their lives, had suddenly awakened his licentious temperament. When his service allowed him to do so, he would go into Paris and spend twenty-four hours there, profiting by it to have a champagne dinner at Brebant's or Voisin's, in company with some beautiful girl, and to eat the luxurious dishes of that time, such as beans, Gruyere cheese, and the great rarity which had been secretly raised for three months on the fifth floor, a leg of mutton.

One evening Amedee Violette was belated upon the boulevards, and saw coming out of a restaurant Maurice in full uniform, with one of the pretty comedienenes from the Varietes leaning upon his arm. This meeting gave Amedee one heart-ache the more. It was for such a husband as this, then, that Maria, buried in some country place, was probably at this very time overwhelmed with fears about his safety. It was for this incorrigible rake that she had disdained her friend from childhood, and scorned the most delicate, faithful, and tender of lovers.

Finally, to kill time and to flee from solitude, Amedee went to the Cafe de Seville, but he only found a small group of his former acquaintances there. No more literary men, or almost none. The "long-haired" ones had to-day the "regulation cut," and wore divers head-gears, for the most of the scattered poets carried cartridge-boxes and guns; but some of the political "beards" had not renounced their old customs; the war and the fall of the Empire had been a triumph for them, and the fourth of September had opened every career for them. Twenty of these "beards" had been provided with prefectures; at least all, or nearly all, of them occupied public positions. There was one in the Government of National Defence, and three or four others, chosen from among the most rabid ones, were members of the Committee on Barricades; for, improbable as the thing may seem today, this commission existed and performed its duties, a commission according to all rules, with an organized office, a large china inkstand, stamped paper, verbal reports read and voted upon at the beginning of each meeting; and, around a table covered with green cloth, these professional instigators of the Cafe de Seville, these teachers of insurrection, generously gave the country the benefit of the practical

experience that they had acquired in practising with the game of dominoes.

The "beards" remaining in Paris were busied with employments more or less considerable in the government, but did not do very much, the offices in which they worked for France's salvation usually closed at four o'clock, and they went as usual to take their appetizers at the Cafe de Seville. It was there that Amedee met them again, and mixed anew in their conversations, which now dwelt exclusively upon patriotic and military subjects. These "beards" who would none of them have been able to command "by the right flank" a platoon of artillery, had all at once been endowed by some magical power with the genius of strategy. Every evening, from five to seven, they fought a decisive battle upon each marble table, sustained by the artillery of the iced decanter which represented Mount Valerien, a glass of bitters, that is to say, Vinoy's brigade, feigned to attack a saucer representing the Montretout batteries; while the regular army and National Guard, symbolized by a glass of vermouth and absinthe, were coming in solid masses from the south, and marching straight into the heart of the enemy, the match-box.

There were scheming men among these "beards," and particularly terrible inventors, who all had an infallible way of destroying at a blow the Prussian army, and who accused General Trochu of treason, and of refusing their offers, giving as a reason the old prejudices of military laws among nations. One of these visionary people had formerly been physician to a somnambulist, and took from his pocket--with his tobacco and cigarette papers--a series of bottles labelled: cholera, yellow fever, typhus fever, smallpox, etc., and proposed as a very simple thing to go and spread these epidemics in all the German camps, by the aid of a navigable balloon, which he had just invented the night before upon going to bed. Amedee soon became tired of these braggarts and lunatics, and no longer went to the Cafe de Seville. He lived alone and shut himself up in his discouragement, and he had never perhaps had it weigh more heavily upon his shoulders than this morning of the second of December, the last day of the battle of Champigny, while he was sadly promenading before the stacked guns of his battalion.

The dark clouds, heavy with snow, were hurrying by, the tormenting rumble of the cannons, the muddy country, the crumbling buildings, and these vanquished soldiers shivering under their rags, all threw the poet into the most gloomy of reveries. Then humanity so many ages, centuries, perhaps, old, had only reached this point: Hatred, absurd war, fratricidal murder! Progress? Civilization? Mere words! No rest, no peaceful repose, either in fraternity or love! The primitive brute always reappears, the right of the stronger to hold in its clutches the pale cadaver of justice! What is the use of so many religions, philosophies, all the noble dreams, all the grand impulses of the thought toward the ideal and good? This horrible doctrine of the pessimists was true then! We are, then, like animals, eternally condemned to kill each other in order to live? If that is so, one might as well renounce life, and give up the ghost!

Meanwhile the cannonading now redoubled, and with its tragic grumbling

was mingled the dry crackling sound of the musketry; beyond a wooded hillock, which restricted the view toward the southeast, a very thick white smoke spread over the horizon, mounting up into the gray sky. The fight had just been resumed there, and it was getting hot, for soon the ambulances and army-wagons drawn by artillery men began to pass. They were full of the wounded, whose plaintive moans were heard as they passed. They had crowded the least seriously wounded ones into the omnibus, which went at a foot pace, but the road had been broken up by the bad weather, and it was pitiful to behold these heads shaken as they passed over each rut. The sight of the dying extended upon bloody mattresses was still more lugubrious to see. The frightful procession of the slaughtered went slowly toward the city to the hospitals, but the carriages sometimes stopped, only a hundred steps from the position occupied by the National Guards, before a house where a provisional hospital had been established, and left their least transportable ones there. The morbid but powerful attraction that horrible sights exert over a man urged Amedee Violette to this spot. This house had been spared from bombardment and protected from pillage and fire by the Geneva flag; it was a small cottage which realized the dream of every shopkeeper after he has made his fortune. Nothing was lacking, not even the earthen lions at the steps, or the little garden with its glittering weather-vane, or the rock-work basin for goldfish. On warm days the past summer passers-by might have seen very often, under the green arbor, bourgeoisie in their shirt-sleeves and women in light dresses eating melons together. The poet's imagination fancied at once this picture of a Parisian's Sunday, when suddenly a young assistant appeared at an open window on the first floor, wiping his hands upon his blood-stained apron. He leaned out and called to a hospital attendant, that Amedee had not noticed before, who was cutting linen upon a table in the garden:

"Well, Vidal, you confounded dawdler," exclaimed he, impatiently, "are those bandages ready? Good God! are we to have them to-day or tomorrow?"

"Make room, if you please!" said at this moment a voice at Amedee's elbow, who stepped aside for two stretchers borne by four brothers of the Christian doctrine to pass. The poet gave a start and a cry of terror. He recognized in the two wounded men Maurice Roger and Colonel Lantz.

Wounded, both of them, yes! and mortally. Only one hour ago.

Affairs had turned out badly for us down there, then, on the borders of the Marne. They did a foolish thing to rest one day and give the enemy time to concentrate his forces; when they wished to renew the attack they dashed against vast numbers and formidable artillery. Two generals killed! So many brave men sacrificed! Now they beat a retreat once more and lose the ground. One of the chief generals, with lowered head and drooping shoulders, more from discouragement than fatigue, stood glass in hand, observing from a distance our lines, which were breaking.

"If we could fortify ourselves there at least," said he, pointing to an eminence which overlooked the river, "and establish a redoubt--in one night with a hundred picks it could be done. I do not believe that the

enemy's fire could reach this position--it is a good one."

"We could go there and see, General," said some one, very quietly.

It was Pere Lantz, the "old dolphin," who was standing there with Maurice beside him and three or four of the auxiliary engineers; and, upon my word, in spite of his cap, which seemed to date from the time of Horace Vernet's "Smala," the poor man, with his glasses upon his nose, long cloak, and pepper colored beard, had no more prestige than a policeman in a public square, one of those old fellows who chase children off the grass, threatening them with their canes.

"When I say that the German artillery will not reach there," murmured the head general, "I am not sure of it. But you are right, Colonel. We must see. Send two of your men."

"With your permission, General," said Pere Lantz, "I will go myself."  
Maurice bravely added at once:

"Not without me, Colonel!"

"As you please," said the General, who had already pointed his glass upon another point of the battlefield.

Followed by the only son of his companion in arms in Africa and the Crimea, this office clerk and dauber in watercolors walked to the front as tranquilly as he would have gone to the minister's office with his umbrella under his arm. At the very moment when the two officers reached the plateau, a projectile from the Prussian batteries fell upon a chest and blew it up with a frightful uproar. The dead and wounded were heaped upon the ground. Pere Lantz saw the foot-soldiers fleeing, and the artillery men harnessing their wagons.

"What!" exclaimed he, rising up to his full height, "do they abandon the position?"

The Colonel's face was transfigured; opening wide his long cloak and showing his black velvet plastron upon which shone his commander's cross, he drew his sword, and, putting his cap upon the tip of it, bareheaded, with his gray hair floating in the wind, with open arms he threw himself before the runaways.

"Halt!" he commanded, in a thundering tone. "Turn about, wretches, turn about! You are here at a post of honor. Form again, my men! Gunners, to your places! Long life to France!"

Just then a new shell burst at the feet of the Colonel and of Maurice, and they both fell to the ground.

Amedee, staggering with emotion and a heart bursting with grief and fear, entered the hospital behind the two litters.

"Put them in the dining-room," said one of the brothers. "There is nobody there. The doctor will come immediately."

The young man with the bloody apron came in at once, and after a look at the wounded man he gave a despairing shake of the head, and, shrugging his shoulders, said:

"There is nothing to be done they will not last long."

In fact, the Colonel was dying. They had thrown an old woollen covering over him through which the hemorrhage showed itself by large stains of blood which were constantly increasing and penetrating the cloth. The wounded man seemed to be coming out of his faint; he half opened his eyes, and his lips moved.

The doctor, who had just come in, came up to the litter upon which the old officer was lying and leaned over him.

"Did you wish to say anything?" he asked.

The old Colonel, without moving his head, turned his sad gaze upon the surgeon, oh! so sad, and in a voice scarcely to be heard he murmured:

"Three daughters--to marry--without a dowry! Three--three--!"

Then he heaved a deep sigh, his blue eyes paled and became glassy. Colonel Lantz was dead.

Do not despair, old military France! You will always have these simple-hearted soldiers who are ready to sacrifice themselves for your flag, ready to serve you for a morsel of bread, and to die for you, bequeathing their widows and orphans to you! Do not despair, old France of the one hundred years' war and of '92!

The brothers, who wore upon their black robes the red Geneva cross, were kneeling around the body and praying in a low tone. The assistant surgeon noticed Amedee Violette for the first time, standing motionless in a corner of the room.

"What are you doing here?" he asked him, brusquely.

"I am this poor officer's friend," Amedee replied, pointing to Maurice.

"So be it! stay with him--if he asks for a drink you have the tea there upon the stove. You, gentlemen," added he, addressing the brothers, who arose after making the sign of the cross, "you will return to the battlefield, I suppose?"

They silently bowed their heads, the eldest of them closed the dead man's eyes. As they were all going out together, the assistant surgeon said to them, in a petulant tone of voice:

"Try to bring me some not quite so much used up."

Maurice Roger was about to die, too. His shirt was stained with blood, and a stream ran down from his forehead upon his blond moustache, but he was still beautiful in his marble-like pallor. Amedee carefully raised up one of the wounded man's arms and placed it upon the stretcher, keeping his friend's hand in his own. Maurice moved slightly at the touch, and ended by opening his eyes.

"Ah, how thirsty I am!" he groaned.

Amedee went to the stove and got the pot of tea, and leaned over to help the unfortunate man drink it. Maurice looked at him with surprise. He recognized Amedee.

"You, Amedee!--where am I, then?"

He attempted in vain to rise. His head dropped slightly to the left, and he saw, not two steps from him, the lifeless body of his old colonel, with eyes closed and features already calmed by the first moments of perfect repose.

"My Colonel!" said he. "Ah! I understand--I remember--! How they ran away--miserable cowards! But you, Amedee? Why are you here--?"

His friend could not restrain his tears, and Maurice murmured:

"Done for, am I not?"

"No, no!" exclaimed Amedee, with animation. "They are going to dress your wounds at once--They will come soon! Courage, my good Maurice! Courage!"

Suddenly the wounded man had a terrible chill; his teeth chattered, and he said again:

"I am thirsty!--something to drink, my friend!--give me something to drink!"

A few swallows of tea calmed him a little. He closed his eyes as if to rest, but a moment after he opened them, and, fixing them upon his friend's face, he said to him in a faint voice:

"You know--Maria, my wife--marry her--I confide them to you--she and my son--"

Then, doubtless tired out by the fatigue of having spoken these words, he seemed to collapse and sink down into the litter, which was saturated now with his blood. A moment later he began to pant for breath. Amedee knelt by his side, and tears fell upon his hands, while between the dying man's gasps he could hear in the distance, upon the battlefield, the uninterrupted rumbling of the cannon as it mowed down others.

## CHAPTER XVII

### "WHEN YOUTH, THE DREAM, DEPARTS"

The leaves are falling!

This October afternoon is deliciously serene, there is not a cloud in the grayish-blue sky, where the sun, which has shed a pure and steady light since morning, has begun majestically to decline, like a good king who has grown old after a long and prosperous reign. How soft the air is! How calm and fresh! This is certainly one of the most beautiful of autumn days. Below, in the valley, the river sparkles like liquid silver, and the trees which crown the hill-tops are of a lurid gold and copper color. The distant panorama of Paris is grand and charming, with all its noted edifices and the dome of the Invalides shining like gold outlined upon the horizon. As a loving and coquettish woman, who wishes to be regretted, gives at the moment of departure her most intoxicating smile to a friend, so the close of autumn had put on for one of her last days all her splendid charms.

But the leaves are falling!

Amedee Violette is walking alone in his garden at Meudon. It is his country home, where he has lived for eight years. A short time after the close of the war he married Maurice's widow. He is walking upon the terrace planted with lindens that are now more than half-despoiled of their leaves, admiring the beautiful picture and thinking.

He is celebrated, he has worked hard and has built up a reputation by good, sincere books, as a poet. Doubtless, some persons are still jealous of him, and he is often treated with injustice, but he is estimated by the dignity of his life, which his love of art fills entirely, and he occupies a superior position in literature. Although his resources are modest, they are sufficient to exempt him from anxieties of a trivial nature. Living far from society, in the close intimacy of those that he loves, he does not know the miseries of ambition and vanity. Amedee Violette should be happy.

His old friend, Paul Sillery, who breakfasted with him that morning in Meudon, is condemned to daily labor and the exhausting life of a journalist; and when he was seated in the carriage which took him back to Paris that morning, to forced labor, to the article to be knocked off for tomorrow, in the midst of the racket and chattering of an editor's office, beside an interrupted cigar laid upon the edge of a table, he heaved a deep sigh as he thought of Amedee.

Ah, this Violette was to be envied! With money, home, and a family, he was not obliged to disseminate his ideas right and left. He had leisure, and could stop when he was not in the spirit of writing; he could think before he wrote and do some good work. It was not astonishing, to be sure, that he produced veritable works of art when he is cheered by the

atmosphere of affection. First, he adores his wife, that is easily seen, and he looks upon Maurice's little son as his own, the little fellow is so pretty and attractive with his long, light curls. Certainly, one can see that Madame Violette has a never-to-be-forgotten grief, but what a kind and grateful glance she gives her husband! Could anything be more touching than Louise Gerard, that excellent old maid, the life of the house, who has the knack of making pleasing order and elegant comfort reign in the house, while she surrounds her mother, the paralytic Grandmother Gerard, with every care? Truly, Amedee has arranged his life well. He loves and is loved: he has procured for mind and body valuable and certain customs. He is a wise and fortunate man.

While Paul Sillery, buried in the corner of a carriage, allowed himself to be almost carried away by jealousy of his friend, Amedee, detained by the charm of this beautiful day which is drawing to a close, walks with slow, lingering steps under the lindens on the terrace.

The leaves are falling around him!

A very slight breeze is rising, the blue sky is fading a little below; in the nearest Paris suburb the windows are shining in the oblique rays of the setting sun. It will soon be night, and upon this carpet of dead leaves, which crackle under the poet's tread, other leaves will fall. They fall rarely, slowly, but continually. The frost of the night before has blighted them all. Dried up and rusty, they barely hang to the trees, so that the slightest wind that passes over them gathers them one after another, detaching them from their branches; whirling an instant in the golden light, they at last rejoin, with a sad little sound, their withered sisters, who sprinkle the gravel walks. The leaves fall, the leaves fall!

Amedee Violette is filled with melancholy.

He ought to be happy. What can he reproach destiny with? Has he not the one he always desired for his wife? Is she not the sweetest and best of companions for him? Yes! but he knows very well that she consented to marry him in order to obey Maurice's last wish, he knows very well that Maria's heart is buried in the soldier's grave at Champigny. She has set apart a sanctuary within herself where burns, as a perpetual light, the remembrance of the adored dead, of the man to whom she gave herself without reserve, the father of her son, the hero who tore himself from her arms to shed his blood for his country.

Amedee may be certain of the gratitude and devotion of his wife, but he never will have her love, for Maurice, a posthumous rival, rises between them. Ah, this Maurice! He had loved Maria very little or not very faithfully! She should remember that he had first betrayed her, that but for Amedee he would have abandoned her and she never would have been his wife. If she knew that in Paris when she was far away he had deceived her! But she never would know anything of it, for Amedee has too much delicacy to hurt the memory of the dead, and he respects and even admires this fidelity of illusion and love in Maria. He suffers from it. The one to whom he has given his name, his heart, and his life, is

inconsolable, and he must be resigned to it. Although remarried, she is a widow at the bottom of her heart, and it is in vain that she puts on bright attire, her eyes and her smile are in mourning forever.

How could she forget her Maurice when he is before her every day in her son, who is also named Maurice and whose bright, handsome face strikingly resembles his father's? Amedee feels a presentiment that in a few years this child will be another Maurice, with the same attractions and vices. The poet does not forget that his dying friend confided the orphan to him, and he endeavors to be kind and good to him and to bring him up well. He sometimes has a feeling of sorrow when he discovers the same instincts and traits in the child as in the man whom he had so dearly loved and who had made him such trouble; in spite of all, he can not feel the sentiments of a father for another's son. His own union has been sterile.

Poor Amedee! Yet he is envied! The little joy that he has is mingled with grief and sorrow, and he dares not confide it to the excellent Louise--who suspects it, however--whose old and secret attachment for him he surmises now, and who is the good genius of his household. Had he only realized it before! It might have been happiness, genuine happiness for him!

The leaves fall! the leaves fall!

After breakfast, while they were smoking their cigars and walking along beside the masses of dahlias, upon which the large golden spider had spun its silvery web, Amedee Violette and Paul Sillery had talked of times past and the comrades of their youth. It was not a very gay conversation, for since then there had been the war, the Commune. How many were dead! How many had disappeared! And, then, this retrospective review proves to one that one can be entirely deceived as to certain people, and that chance is master.

Such an one, whom they had once considered as a great prose writer, as the leader of a sect, and whose doctrines of art five or six faithful disciples spread while copying his waistcoats and even imitating his manner of speaking with closed teeth, is reduced to writing stories for obscene journals. "Chose," the fiery revolutionist, had obtained a good place; and the modest "Machin," a man hardly noticed in the clubs, had published two exquisite books, genuine works of art.

All of the "beards" and "long-haired" men had taken unexpected paths. But the politicians, above all, were astonishing in the variety of their destinies. Among the cafe's frequenters at the hour for absinthe one could count eight deputies, three ministers, two ambassadors, one treasurer, and thirty exiles at Noumea awaiting the long-expected amnesty. The most interesting, everything considered, is that imbecile, that old fanatic of a Dubief, the man that never drank anything but sweetened water; for he, at least, was shot on the barricades by the Versailles soldiers.

One person of whom the very thought disgusted the two friends was that

jumping-jack of an Arthur Papillon. Universal suffrage, with its accustomed intelligence, had not failed to elect this nonentity and bombastic fool, and to-day he flounders about like a fish out of water in the midst of this political cesspool. Having been enriched by a large dowry, he has been by turns deputy, secretary, vice-president, president, head of committees, under secretary of State, in one word, everything that it was possible to be. For the time being he rants against the clergy, and his wife, who is ugly, rich, and pious, has just put their little girl into the Oiseaux school. He has not yet become minister, but rest assured he will reach that in time. He is very vain, full of confidence in himself, not more honest than necessary, and very obtrusive. Unless in the meantime they decide to establish a rotation providing that all the deputies be ministers by turns, Arthur Papillon is the inevitable, necessary man mentioned. In such a case, this would be terrible, for his eloquence would flow in torrents, and he would be one of the most agitating of microbes in the parliamentary culture.

And Jocquelet? Ah! the two friends only need to speak his name to burst into peals of laughter, for the illustrious actor now fills the universe with his glory and ridiculousness. Jocquelet severed the chain some time ago which bound him to the Parisian theatres. Like the tricolored flag, he has made the tour of Europe several times; like the English standard, he has crossed every ocean. He is the modern Wandering Actor, and the capitals of the Old World and both Americas watch breathless with desire for him to deign to shower over them the manna of his monologues. At Chicago, they detached his locomotive, and he intended, at the sight of this homage proportioned to his merits, to become a naturalized American citizen. But they proposed a new tour for him in old Europe, and out of filial remembrance he consented to return once more among us. As usual, he gathered a cartload of gold and laurels. He was painfully surprised upon reaching Stockholm by water not to be greeted by the squadrons with volleys of artillery, as was once done in honor of a famous cantatrice. Let Diplomacy look sharp! Jocquelet is indifferent to the court of Sweden!

After Paul Sillery's departure Amedee turned over in his mind various other recollections of former days. He has been a trifle estranged from Madame Roger since his marriage to Maria, but he sometimes takes little Maurice to see her. She has sheltered and given each of Colonel Lantz's daughters a dowry. Pretty Rosine Combarieu's face rises up before him, his childhood's companion, whom he met at Bullier's and never has seen since. What has become of the poor little creature? Amedee almost hopes that she is dead. Ah, how sad these old memories are in the autumn, when the leaves are falling and the sun is setting!

It has set, it has plunged beneath the horizon, and suddenly all is dark. Over the darkened landscape in the vast pearl-colored sky spreads the melancholy chill which follows the farewell of day. The white smoke from the city has turned gray, the river is like a dulled mirror. A moment ago, in the sun's last rays, the dead leaves, as they fell, looked like a golden rain, now they seem a dark snow.

Where are all your illusions and hopes of other days, Amedee Violette?

You think this evening of the rapid flight of years, of the snowy flakes of winter which are beginning to fall on your temples. You have the proof to-day of the impossibility of absolutely requited love in this world. You know that happiness, or what is called so, exists only by snatches and lasts only a moment, and how commonplace it often is and how sad the next day! You depend upon your art for consolation. Oppressed by the monotonous ennui of living, you ask for the forgetfulness that only the intoxication of poetry and dreams can give you. Alas! Poor sentimentalist, your youth is ended!

And still the leaves fall!

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

Egotists and cowards always have a reason for everything  
Eternally condemned to kill each other in order to live  
God forgive the timid and the prattler!  
Happiness exists only by snatches and lasts only a moment  
He almost regretted her  
He does not know the miseries of ambition and vanity  
How sad these old memories are in the autumn  
Never travel when the heart is troubled!  
Not more honest than necessary  
Poor France of Jeanne d'Arc and of Napoleon  
Redouble their boasting after each defeat  
Take their levity for heroism  
The leaves fall! the leaves fall!  
Universal suffrage, with its accustomed intelligence  
Were certain against all reason

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