



# INTERNATIONAL SHORT STORIES FRENCH

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# **INTERNATIONAL SHORT STORIES**

***FRENCH STORIES***

**By Various Authors**

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## A PIECE OF BREAD By Francois Coppee

The young Duc de Hardimont happened to be at Aix in Savoy, whose waters he hoped would benefit his famous mare, Perichole, who had become wind-broken since the cold she had caught at the last Derby,—and was finishing his breakfast while glancing over the morning paper, when he read the news of the disastrous engagement at Reichshoffen.

He emptied his glass of chartreuse, laid his napkin upon the restaurant table, ordered his valet to pack his trunks, and two hours later took the express to Paris; arriving there, he hastened to the recruiting office and enlisted in a regiment of the line.

In vain had he led the enervating life of a fashionable swell—that was the word of the time—and had knocked about race-course stables from the age of nineteen to twenty-five. In circumstances like these, he could not forget that Enguerrand de Hardimont died of the plague at Tunis the same day as Saint Louis, that Jean de Hardimont commanded the Free Companies under Du Guesclin, and that Francois-Henri de Hardimont was killed at Fontenoy with “Red” Maison. Upon learning that France had lost a battle on French soil, the young duke felt the blood mount to his face, giving him a horrible feeling of suffocation.

And so, early in November, 1870, Henri de Hardimont returned to Paris with his regiment, forming part of Vinoy’s corps, and his company being the advance guard before the redoubt of Hautes Bruyères, a position fortified in haste, and which protected the cannon of Fort Bicêtre.

It was a gloomy place; a road planted with clusters of broom, and broken up into muddy ruts, traversing the leprous fields of the neighborhood; on the border stood an abandoned tavern, a tavern with arbors, where the soldiers had established their post. They had fallen back here a few days before; the grape-shot had broken down some of the young trees, and all of them bore upon their bark the white scars of bullet wounds. As for the house, its appearance made one shudder; the roof had been torn by a shell, and the walls seemed whitewashed with blood. The torn and shattered arbors under their network of twigs, the rolling of an upset cask, the high swing whose wet rope groaned in the damp wind, and the inscriptions over the door, furrowed by bullets; “Cabinets de société—Absinthe—Vermouth—Vin à 60 cent. le litre”—encircling a dead rabbit painted over two billiard cues tied in a cross by a ribbon,—all this recalled with cruel irony the popular entertainment of former days. And over all, a wretched winter sky, across which rolled heavy leaden clouds, an odious sky, angry and hateful.

At the door of the tavern stood the young duke, motionless, with his gun in his shoulder-belt, his cap over his eyes, his benumbed hands in the pockets of his red trousers, and shivering in his sheepskin coat. He gave himself up to his sombre thoughts, this defeated soldier, and looked with sorrowful eyes toward a line of hills, lost in the fog, where could be seen each moment, the flash and smoke of a Krupp gun, followed by a report.

Suddenly he felt hungry.

Stooping, he drew from his knapsack, which stood near him leaning against the wall, a piece of ammunition bread, and as he had lost his knife, he bit off a morsel and slowly ate it.

But after a few mouthfuls, he had enough of it; the bread was hard and had a bitter taste. No fresh would be given until the next morning's distribution, so the commissary officer had willed it. This was certainly a very hard life sometimes. The remembrance of former breakfasts came to him, such as he had called "hygienic," when, the day after too over-heating a supper, he would seat himself by a window on the ground floor of the Café-Anglais, and be served with a cutlet, or buttered eggs with asparagus tips, and the butler, knowing his tastes, would bring him a fine bottle of old Léoville, lying in its basket, and which he would pour out with the greatest care. The deuce take it! That was a good time, all the same, and he would never become accustomed to this life of wretchedness.

And, in a moment of impatience, the young man threw the rest of his bread into the mud.

At the same moment a soldier of the line came from the tavern, stooped and picked up the bread, drew back a few steps, wiped it with his sleeve and began to devour it eagerly.

Henri de Hardimont was already ashamed of his action, and now with a feeling of pity, watched the poor devil who gave proof of such a good appetite. He was a tall, large young fellow, but badly made; with feverish eyes and a hospital beard, and so thin that his shoulder-blades stood out beneath his well-worn cape.

"You are very hungry?" he said, approaching the soldier.

"As you see," replied the other with his mouth full.

"Excuse me then. For if I had known that you would like the bread, I would not have thrown it away."

“It does not harm it,” replied the soldier, “I am not dainty.”

“No matter,” said the gentleman, “it was wrong to do so, and I reproach myself. But I do not wish you to have a bad opinion of me, and as I have some old cognac in my can, let us drink a drop together.”

The man had finished eating. The duke and he drank a mouthful of brandy; the acquaintance was made.

“What is your name?” asked the soldier of the line.

“Hardimont,” replied the duke, omitting his title. “And yours?”

“Jean-Victor—I have just entered this company—I am just out of the ambulance—I was wounded at Châtillon—oh! but it was good in the ambulance, and in the infirmary they gave me horse bouillon. But I had only a scratch, and the major signed my dismissal. So much the worse for me! Now I am going to commence to be devoured by hunger again—for, believe me, if you will, comrade, but, such as you see me, I have been hungry all my life.”

The words were startling, especially to a Sybarite who had just been longing for the kitchen of the Café-Anglais, and the Duc de Hardimont looked at his companion in almost terrified amazement. The soldier smiled sadly, showing his hungry, wolf-like teeth, as white as his sickly face, and, as if understanding that the other expected something further in the way of explanation or confidence:

“Come,” said he, suddenly ceasing his familiar way of speaking, doubtless divining that his companion belonged to the rich and happy; “let us walk along the road to warm our feet, and I will tell you things, which probably you have never heard of—I am called Jean-Victor, that is all, for I am a foundling, and my only happy remembrance is of my earliest childhood, at the Asylum. The sheets were white on our little beds in the dormitory; we played in a garden under large trees, and a kind Sister took care of us, quite young and as pale as a wax-taper—she died afterwards of lung trouble—I was her favorite, and would rather walk by her than play with the other children, because she used to draw me to her side and lay her warm thin hand on my forehead. But when I was twelve years old, after my first communion, there was nothing but poverty. The managers put me as apprentice with a chair mender in Faubourg Saint-Jacques. That is not a trade, you know, it is impossible to earn one’s living at it, and as proof of it, the greater part of the time the master was only able to engage the poor little blind boys from the Blind Asylum. It was there that I began to suffer with hunger. The master and mistress, two old Limousins—afterwards murdered, were terrible misers, and the bread, cut in tiny pieces for each meal,

was kept under lock and key the rest of the time. You should have seen the mistress at supper time serving the soup, sighing at each ladleful she dished out. The other apprentices, two blind boys, were less unhappy; they were not given more than I, but they could not see the reproachful look the wicked woman used to give me as she handed me my plate. And then, unfortunately, I was always so terribly hungry. Was it my fault, do you think? I served there for three years, in a continual fit of hunger. Three years! And one can learn the work in one month. But the managers could not know everything, and had no suspicion that the children were abused. Ah! you were astonished just now when you saw me take the bread out of the mud? I am used to that for I have picked up enough of it; and crusts from the dust, and when they were too hard and dry, I would soak them all night in my basin. I had windfalls sometimes, such as pieces of bread nibbled at the ends, which the children would take out of their baskets and throw on the sidewalks as they came from school. I used to try to prowl around there when I went on errands. At last my time was ended at this trade by which no man can support himself. Well, I did many other things, for I was willing enough to work. I served the masons; I have been shop-boy, floor-polisher, I don't know what all! But, pshaw; to-day, work is lacking, another time I lose my place: Briefly, I never have had enough to eat. Heavens! how often have I been crazy with hunger as I have passed the bakeries! Fortunately for me; at these times I have always remembered the good Sister at the Asylum, who so often told me to be honest, and I seemed to feel her warm little hand upon my forehead. At last, when I was eighteen I enlisted; you know as well as I do, that the trooper has only just enough. Now,—I could almost laugh—here is the siege and famine! You see, I did not lie, when I told you, just now that I have always, always, been hungry!”

The young duke had a kind heart and was profoundly moved by this terrible story, told him by a man like himself, by a soldier whose uniform made him his equal. It was even fortunate for the phlegm of this dandy, that the night wind dried the tears which dimmed his eyes.

“Jean-Victor,” said he, ceasing in his turn, by a delicate tact, to speak familiarly to the foundling, “if we survive this dreadful war, we will meet again, and I hope that I may be useful to you. But, in the meantime, as there is no bakery but the commissary, and as my ration of bread is twice too large for my delicate appetite,—it is understood, is it not?—we will share it like good comrades.”

It was strong and hearty, the hand-clasp which followed: then, harassed and worn by their frequent watches and alarms, as night fell, they returned to the tavern, where twelve soldiers were sleeping on the straw; and throwing themselves down side by side, they were soon sleeping soundly.



Toward midnight Jean-Victor awoke, being hungry probably. The wind had scattered the clouds, and a ray of moonlight made its way into the room through a hole in the roof, lighting up the handsome blonde head of the young duke, who was sleeping like an Endymion.

Still touched by the kindness of his comrade, Jean-Victor was gazing at him with admiration, when the sergeant of the platoon opened the door and called the five men who were to relieve the sentinels of the out-posts. The duke was of the number, but he did not waken when his name was called.

“Hardimont, stand up!” repeated the non-commissioned officer.

“If you are willing, sergeant,” said Jean-Victor rising, “I will take his duty, he is sleeping so soundly—and he is my comrade.”

“As you please.”

The five men left, and the snoring recommenced.

But half an hour later the noise of near and rapid firing burst upon the night. In an instant every man was on his feet, and each with his hand on the chamber of his gun, stepped cautiously out, looking earnestly along the road, lying white in the moonlight.

“What time is it?” asked the duke. “I was to go on duty to-night.”

“Jean-Victor went in your place.”

At that moment a soldier was seen running toward them along the road.

“What is it?” they cried as he stopped, out of breath.

“The Prussians have attacked us, let us fall back to the redoubt.”

“And your comrades?”

“They are coming—all but poor Jean-Victor.”

“Where is he?” cried the duke.

“Shot through the head with a bullet—died without a word!—ough!”

One night last winter, the Duc de Hardimont left his club about two o’clock in the morning, with his neighbor, Count de Saulnes; the duke had lost some hundred louis, and had a slight headache.

“If you are willing, André,” he said to his companion, “we will go home on foot—I need the air.”

“Just as you please, I am willing, although the walking may be bad.”

They dismissed their coupés, turned up the collars of their overcoats, and set off toward the Madeleine. Suddenly an object rolled before the duke which he had struck with the toe of his boot; it was a large piece of bread spattered with mud.

Then to his amazement, Monsieur de Saulnes saw the Duc de Hardimont pick up the piece of bread, wipe it carefully with his handkerchief embroidered with his armorial bearings, and place it on a bench, in full view under the gaslight.

“What did you do that for?” asked the count, laughing heartily, “are you crazy?”

“It is in memory of a poor fellow who died for me,” replied the duke in a voice which trembled slightly, “do not laugh, my friend, it offends me.”

## THE ELIXIR OF LIFE By Honore De Balzac

In a sumptuous palace of Ferrara, one winter evening, Don Juan Belvidéro was entertaining a prince of the house of Este. In those days a banquet was a marvelous affair, which demanded princely riches or the power of a nobleman. Seven pleasure-loving women chatted gaily around a table lighted by perfumed candles, surrounded by admirable works of art whose white marble stood out against the walls of red stucco and contrasted with the rich Turkey carpets. Clad in satin, glittering with gold and laden with gems which sparkled only less brilliantly than their eyes, they all told of passions, intense, but of various styles, like their beauty. They differed neither in their words nor their ideas; but an expression, a look, a motion or an emphasis served as a commentary, unrestrained, licentious, melancholy or bantering, to their words.

One seemed to say: "My beauty has power to rekindle the frozen heart of age." Another: "I love to repose on soft cushions and think with rapture of my adorers." A third, a novice at these fêtes, was inclined to blush. "At the bottom of my heart I feel compunction," she seemed to say. "I am a Catholic and I fear hell; but I love you so—ah, so dearly—that I would sacrifice eternity to you!" The fourth, emptying a cup of Chian wine, cried: "Hurrah, for pleasure! I begin a new existence with each dawn. Forgetful of the past, still intoxicated with the violence of yesterday's pleasures, I embrace a new life of happiness, a life filled with love."

The woman sitting next to Belvidéro looked at him with flashing eyes. She was silent. "I should have no need to call on a bravo to kill my lover if he abandoned me." Then she had laughed; but a comfit dish of marvelous workmanship was shattered between her nervous fingers.

"When are you to be grand duke?" asked the sixth of the prince, with an expression of murderous glee on her lips and a look of Bacchanalian frenzy in her eyes.

"And when is your father going to die?" said the seventh, laughing and throwing her bouquet to Don Juan with maddening coquetry. She was an innocent young girl who was accustomed to play with sacred things.

"Oh, don't speak of it!" cried the young and handsome Don Juan. "There is only one immortal father in the world, and unfortunately he is mine!"

The seven women of Ferrara, the friends of Don Juan, and the prince himself gave an exclamation of horror. Two hundred years later, under Louis XV, well-bred persons would have laughed at this sally. But perhaps at the beginning of an orgy the mind had still an unusual degree of lucidity. Despite the heat of the

candles, the intensity of the emotions, the gold and silver vases, the fumes of wine, despite the vision of ravishing women, perhaps there still lurked in the depths of the heart a little of that respect for things human and divine which struggles until the revel has drowned it in floods of sparkling wine. Nevertheless, the flowers were already crushed, the eyes were steeped with drink, and intoxication, to quote Rabelais, had reached even to the sandals. In the pause that followed a door opened, and, as at the feast of Balthazar, God manifested himself. He seemed to command recognition now in the person of an old, white-haired servant with unsteady gait and drawn brows; he entered with gloomy mien and his look seemed to blight the garlands, the ruby cups, the pyramids of fruits, the brightness of the feast, the glow of the astonished faces and the colors of the cushions dented by the white arms of the women; then he cast a pall over this folly by saying, in a hollow voice, the solemn words: "Sir, your father is dying!"

Don Juan rose, making a gesture to his guests, which might be translated: "Excuse me, this does not happen every day."

Does not the death of a parent often overtake young people thus in the fulness of life, in the wild enjoyment of an orgy? Death is as unexpected in her caprices as a woman in her fancies, but more faithful—Death has never duped any one.

When Don Juan had closed the door of the banquet hall and walked down the long corridor, which was both cold and dark, he compelled himself to assume a mask, for, in thinking of his rôle of son, he had cast off his merriment as he threw down his napkin. The night was black. The silent servant who conducted the young man to the death chamber, lighted the way so insufficiently that Death, aided by the cold, the silence, the gloom, perhaps by a reaction of intoxication, was able to force some reflections into the soul of the spendthrift; he examined his life, and became thoughtful, like a man involved in a lawsuit when he sets out for the court of justice.

Bartholomeo Belvidéro, the father of Don Juan, was an old man of ninety, who had devoted the greater part of his life to business. Having traveled much in Oriental countries he had acquired there great wealth and learning more precious, he said, than gold or diamonds, to which he no longer gave more than a passing thought. "I value a tooth more than a ruby," he used to say, smiling, "and power more than knowledge." This good father loved to hear Don Juan relate his youthful adventures, and would say, banteringly, as he lavished money upon him: "Only amuse yourself, my dear child!" Never did an old man find such pleasure in watching a young man. Paternal love robbed age of its terrors in the delight of contemplating so brilliant a life.

At the age of sixty, Belvidéro had become enamored of an angel of peace and beauty. Don Juan was the sole fruit of this late love. For fifteen years the good man had mourned the loss of his dear Juana. His many servants and his son attributed the strange habits he had contracted to this grief. Bartholomeo lodged himself in the most uncomfortable wing of his palace and rarely went out, and even Don Juan could not intrude into his father's apartment without first obtaining permission. If this voluntary recluse came or went in the palace or in the streets of Ferrara he seemed to be searching for something which he could not find. He walked dreamily, undecidedly, preoccupied like a man battling with an idea or with a memory. While the young man gave magnificent entertainments and the palace re-echoed his mirth, while the horses pawed the ground in the courtyard and the pages quarreled at their game of dice on the stairs, Bartholomeo ate seven ounces of bread a day and drank water. If he asked for a little poultry it was merely that he might give the bones to a black spaniel, his faithful companion. He never complained of the noise. During his illness if the blast of horns or the barking of dogs interrupted his sleep, he only said: "Ah, Don Juan has come home." Never before was so untroublesome and indulgent a father to be found on this earth; consequently young Belvidéro, accustomed to treat him without ceremony, had all the faults of a spoiled child. His attitude toward Bartholomeo was like that of a capricious woman toward an elderly lover, passing off an impertinence with a smile, selling his good humor and submitting to be loved. In calling up the picture of his youth, Don Juan recognized that it would be difficult to find an instance in which his father's goodness had failed him. He felt a newborn remorse while he traversed the corridor, and he very nearly forgave his father for having lived so long. He reverted to feelings of filial piety, as a thief returns to honesty in the prospect of enjoying a well-stolen million.

Soon the young man passed into the high, chill rooms of his father's apartment. After feeling a moist atmosphere and breathing the heavy air and the musty odor which is given forth by old tapestries and furniture covered with dust, he found himself in the antique room of the old man, in front of a sick bed and near a dying fire. A lamp standing on a table of Gothic shape shed its streams of uneven light sometimes more, sometimes less strongly upon the bed and showed the form of the old man in ever-varying aspects. The cold air whistled through the insecure windows, and the snow beat with a dull sound against the panes.

This scene formed so striking a contrast to the one which Don Juan had just left that he could not help shuddering. He felt cold when, on approaching the bed, a sudden flare of light, caused by a gust of wind, illumined his father's face. The features were distorted; the skin, clinging tightly to the bones, had a

greenish tint, which was made the more horrible by the whiteness of the pillows on which the old man rested; drawn with pain, the mouth, gaping and toothless, gave breath to sighs which the howling of the tempest took up and drew out into a dismal wail. In spite of these signs of dissolution an incredible expression of power shone in the face. The eyes, hallowed by disease, retained a singular steadiness. A superior spirit was fighting there with death. It seemed as if Bartholomeo sought to kill with his dying look some enemy seated at the foot of his bed. This gaze, fixed and cold, was made the more appalling by the immobility of the head, which was like a skull standing on a doctor's table. The body, clearly outlined by the coverlet, showed that the dying man's limbs preserved the same rigidity. All was dead, except the eyes. There was something mechanical in the sounds which came from the mouth. Don Juan felt a certain shame at having come to the deathbed of his father with a courtesan's bouquet on his breast, bringing with him the odors of a banquet and the fumes of wine.

"You were enjoying yourself!" cried the old man, on seeing his son.

At the same moment the pure, high voice of a singer who entertained the guests, strengthened by the chords of the viol by which she was accompanied, rose above the roar of the storm and penetrated the chamber of death. Don Juan would gladly have shut out this barbarous confirmation of his father's words.

Bartholomeo said: "I do not grudge you your pleasure, my child."

These words, full of tenderness, pained Don Juan, who could not forgive his father for such goodness.

"What, sorrow for me, father!" he cried.

"Poor Juanino," answered the dying man, "I have always been so gentle toward you that you could not wish for my death?"

"Oh!" cried Don Juan, "if it were possible to preserve your life by giving you a part of mine!" ("One can always say such things," thought the spendthrift; "it is as if I offered the world to my mistress.")

The thought had scarcely passed through his mind when the old spaniel whined. This intelligent voice made Don Juan tremble. He believed that the dog understood him.

"I knew that I could count on you, my son," said the dying man. "There, you shall be satisfied. I shall live, but without depriving you of a single day of your life."

“He raves,” said Don Juan to himself.

Then he said, aloud: “Yes, my dearest father, you will indeed live as long as I do, for your image will be always in my heart.”

“It is not a question of that sort of life,” said the old nobleman, gathering all his strength to raise himself to a sitting posture, for he was stirred by one of those suspicions which are only born at the bedside of the dying. “Listen, my son,” he continued in a voice weakened by this last effort. “I have no more desire to die than you have to give up your lady loves, wine, horses, falcons, hounds and money——”

“I can well believe it,” thought his son, kneeling beside the pillow and kissing one of Bartholomeo’s cadaverous hands. “But, father,” he said aloud, “my dear father, we must submit to the will of God!”

“God! I am also God!” growled the old man.

“Do not blaspheme!” cried the young man, seeing the menacing expression which was overspreading his father’s features. “Be careful what you say, for you have received extreme unction and I should never be consoled if you were to die in a state of sin.”

“Are you going to listen to me?” cried the dying man, gnashing his toothless jaws.

Don Juan held his peace. A horrible silence reigned. Through the dull wail of the snowstorm came again the melody of the viol and the heavenly voice, faint as the dawning day.

The dying man smiled.

“I thank you for having brought singers and music! A banquet, young and beautiful women, with dark locks, all the pleasures of life. Let them remain. I am about to be born again.”

“The delirium is at its height,” said Don Juan to himself.

“I have discovered a means of resuscitation. There, look in the drawer of the table—you open it by pressing a hidden spring near the griffin.”

“I have it, father.”

“Good! Now take out a little flask of rock crystal.”

“Here it is.”

“I have spent twenty years in——”

At this point the old man felt his end approaching, and collected all his energy to say:

“As soon as I have drawn my last breath rub me with this water and I shall come to life again.”

“There is very little of it,” replied the young man.

Bartholomeo was no longer able to speak, but he could still hear and see. At these words he turned his head toward Don Juan with a violent wrench. His neck remained twisted like that of a marble statue doomed by the sculptor’s whim to look forever sideways, his staring eyes assumed a hideous fixity. He was dead, dead in the act of losing his only, his last illusion. In seeking a shelter in his son’s heart he had found a tomb more hollow than those which men dig for their dead. His hair, too, had risen with horror and his tense gaze seemed still to speak. It was a father rising in wrath from his sepulchre to demand vengeance of God.

“There, the good man is done for!” exclaimed Don Juan.

Intent upon taking the magic crystal to the light of the lamp, as a drinker examines his bottle at the end of a repast, he had not seen his father’s eye pale. The cowering dog looked alternately at his dead master and at the elixir, as Don Juan regarded by turns his father and the phial. The lamp threw out fitful waves of light. The silence was profound, the viol was mute. Belvidéro thought he saw his father move, and he trembled. Frightened by the tense expression of the accusing eyes, he closed them, just as he would have pushed down a window-blind on an autumn night. He stood motionless, lost in a world of thought.

Suddenly a sharp creak, like that of a rusty spring, broke the silence. Don Juan, in his surprise, almost dropped the flask. A perspiration, colder than the steel of a dagger, oozed out from his pores. A cock of painted wood came forth from a clock and crowed three times. It was one of those ingenious inventions by which the savants of that time were awakened at the hour fixed for their work. Already the daybreak reddened the casement. The old timepiece was more faithful in its master’s service than Don Juan had been in his duty to Bartholomeo. This instrument was composed of wood, pulleys, cords and wheels, while he had that mechanism peculiar to man, called a heart.

In order to run no further risk of losing the mysterious liquid the skeptical Don Juan replaced it in the drawer of the little Gothic table. At this solemn moment he heard a tumult in the corridor. There were confused voices, stifled laughter, light footsteps, the rustle of silk, in short, the noise of a merry troop trying to collect itself in some sort of order. The door opened and the prince,



the seven women, the friends of Don Juan and the singers, appeared, in the fantastic disorder of dancers overtaken by the morning, when the sun disputes the paling light of the candles. They came to offer the young heir the conventional condolences.

“Oh, oh, is poor Don Juan really taking this death seriously?” said the prince in la Brambilla’s ear.

“Well, his father was a very good man,” she replied.

Nevertheless, Don Juan’s nocturnal meditations had printed so striking an expression upon his face that it commanded silence. The men stopped, motionless. The women, whose lips had been parched with wine, threw themselves on their knees and began to pray. Don Juan could not help shuddering as he saw this splendor, this joy, laughter, song, beauty, life personified, doing homage thus to Death. But in this adorable Italy religion and revelry were on such good terms that religion was a sort of debauch and debauch religion. The prince pressed Don Juan’s hand affectionately, then all the figures having given expression to the same look, half-sympathy, half-indifference, the phantasmagoria disappeared, leaving the chamber empty. It was, indeed, a faithful image of life! Going down the stairs the prince said to la Rivabarella:

“Heigho! who would have thought Don Juan a mere boaster of impiety? He loved his father, after all!”

“Did you notice the black dog?” asked la Brambilla.

“He is immensely rich now,” sighed Bianca Cavatolini.

“What is that to me?” cried the proud Veronese, she who had broken the comfit dish.

“What is that to you?” exclaimed the duke. “With his ducats he is as much a prince as I am!”

At first Don Juan, swayed by a thousand thoughts, wavered toward many different resolutions. After having ascertained the amount of the wealth amassed by his father, he returned in the evening to the death chamber, his soul puffed up with a horrible egoism. In the apartment he found all the servants of the household busied in collecting the ornaments for the bed of state on which “feu monseigneur” would lie to-morrow—a curious spectacle which all Ferrara would come to admire. Don Juan made a sign and the servants stopped at once, speechless and trembling.

“Leave me alone,” he said in an altered voice, “and do not return until I go out again.”

When the steps of the old servant, who was the last to leave, had died away on the stone flooring, Don Juan locked the door hastily, and, sure that he was alone, exclaimed:

“Now, let us try!”

The body of Bartholomeo lay on a long table. To hide the revolting spectacle of a corpse whose extreme decrepitude and thinness made it look like a skeleton, the embalmers had drawn a sheet over the body, which covered all but the head. This mummy-like figure was laid out in the middle of the room, and the linen, naturally clinging, outlined the form vaguely, but showing its stiff, bony thinness. The face already had large purple spots, which showed the urgency of completing the embalming. Despite the skepticism with which Don Juan was armed, he trembled as he uncorked the magic phial of crystal. When he stood close to the head he shook so that he was obliged to pause for a moment. But this young man had allowed himself to be corrupted by the customs of a dissolute court. An idea worthy of the Duke of Urbino came to him, and gave him a courage which was spurred on by lively curiosity. It seemed as if the demon had whispered the words which resounded in his heart: “Bathe an eye!” He took a piece of linen and, after having moistened it sparingly with the precious liquid, he passed it gently over the right eyelid of the corpse. The eye opened!

“Ah!” said Don Juan, gripping the flask in his hand as we clutch in our dreams the branch by which we are suspended over a precipice.

He saw an eye full of life, a child’s eye in a death’s head, the liquid eye of youth, in which the light trembled. Protected by beautiful black lashes, it scintillated like one of those solitary lights which travelers see in lonely places on winter evenings. It seemed as if the glowing eye would pierce Don Juan. It thought, accused, condemned, threatened, judged, spoke—it cried, it snapped at him! There was the most tender supplication, a royal anger, then the love of a young girl imploring mercy of her executioners. Finally, the awful look that a man casts upon his fellow-men on his way to the scaffold. So much life shone in this fragment of life that Don Juan recoiled in terror. He walked up and down the room, not daring to look at the eye, which stared back at him from the ceiling and from the hangings. The room was sown with points full of fire, of life, of intelligence. Everywhere gleamed eyes which shrieked at him.

“He might have lived a hundred years longer!” he cried involuntarily when, led in front of his father by some diabolical influence, he contemplated the luminous spark.

Suddenly the intelligent eye closed, and then opened again abruptly, as if assenting. If a voice had cried, “Yes,” Don Juan could not have been more startled.

“What is to be done?” he thought

He had the courage to try to close this white eyelid, but his efforts were in vain.

“Shall I crush it out? Perhaps that would be parricide?” he asked himself.

“Yes,” said the eye, by means of an ironical wink.

“Ah!” cried Don Juan, “there is sorcery in it!”

He approached the eye to crush it. A large tear rolled down the hollow cheek of the corpse and fell on Belvidéro’s hand.

“It is scalding!” he cried, sitting down.

This struggle had exhausted him, as if, like Jacob, he had battled with an angel.

At last he arose, saying: “So long as there is no blood—”

Then, collecting all the courage needed for the cowardly act, he crushed out the eye, pressing it in with the linen without looking at it. A deep moan, startling and terrible, was heard. It was the poor spaniel, who died with a howl.

“Could he have been in the secret?” Don Juan wondered, surveying the faithful animal.

Don Juan was considered a dutiful son. He raised a monument of white marble over his father’s tomb, and employed the most prominent artists of the time to carve the figures. He was not altogether at ease until the statue of his father, kneeling before Religion, imposed its enormous weight on the grave, in which he had buried the only regret that had ever touched his heart, and that only in moments of physical depression.

On making an inventory of the immense wealth amassed by the old Orientalist, Don Juan became avaricious. Had he not two human lives in which he should need money? His deep, searching gaze penetrated the principles of social life, and he understood the world all the better because he viewed it

across a tomb. He analyzed men and things that he might have done at once with the past, represented by history, with the present, expressed by the law, and with the future revealed by religion. He took soul and matter, threw them into a crucible, and found nothing there, and from that time forth he became Don Juan.

Master of the illusions of life he threw himself—young and beautiful—into life; despising the world, but seizing the world. His happiness could never be of that bourgeois type which is satisfied by boiled beef, by a welcome warming-pan in winter, a lamp at night and new slippers at each quarter. He grasped existence as a monkey seizes a nut, peeling off the coarse shell to enjoy the savory kernel. The poetry and sublime transports of human passion touched no higher than his instep. He never made the mistake of those strong men who, imagining that little Souls believe in the great, venture to exchange noble thoughts of the future for the small coin of our ideas of life. He might, like them, have walked with his feet on earth and his head among the clouds, but he preferred to sit at his ease and sear with his kisses the lips of more than one tender, fresh and sweet woman. Like Death, wherever he passed, he devoured all without scruple, demanding a passionate, Oriental love and easily won pleasure. Loving only woman in women, his soul found its natural trend in irony.

When his inamoratas mounted to the skies in an ecstasy of bliss, Don Juan followed, serious, unreserved, sincere as a German student. But he said “I” while his lady love, in her folly, said “we.” He knew admirably how to yield himself to a woman’s influence. He was always clever enough to make her believe that he trembled like a college youth who asks his first partner at a ball: “Do you like dancing?” But he could also be terrible when necessary; he could draw his sword and destroy skilled soldiers. There was banter in his simplicity and laughter in his tears, for he could weep as well as any woman who says to her husband: “Give me a carriage or I shall pine to death.”

For merchants the world means a bale of goods or a quantity of circulating notes; for most young men it is a woman; for some women it is a man; for certain natures it is society, a set of people, a position, a city; for Don Juan the universe was himself! Noble, fascinating and a model of grace, he fastened his bark to every bank; but he allowed himself to be carried only where he wished to go. The more he saw the more skeptical he became. Probing human nature he soon guessed that courage was rashness; prudence, cowardice; generosity, shrewd calculation; justice, a crime; delicacy, pusillanimity; honesty, policy; and by a singular fatality he perceived that the persons who were really honest, delicate, just, generous, prudent and courageous received no consideration at the hands of their fellows.

“What a cheerless jest!” he cried. “It does not come from a god!”

And then, renouncing a better world, he showed no mark of respect to holy things and regarded the marble saints in the churches merely as works of art. He understood the mechanism of human society, and never offended too much against the current prejudices, for the executioners had more power than he; but he bent the social laws to his will with the grace and wit that are so well displayed in his scene with M. Dimanche. He was, in short, the embodiment of Molière’s Don Juan, Goethe’s Faust, Byron’s Manfred, and Maturin’s Melmoth—grand pictures drawn by the greatest geniuses of Europe, and to which neither the harmonies of Mozart nor the lyric strains of Rossini are lacking. Terrible pictures in which the power of evil existing in man is immortalized, and which are repeated from one century to another, whether the type come to parley with mankind by incarnating itself in Mirabeau, or be content to work in silence, like Bonaparte; or to goad on the universe by sarcasm, like the divine Rabelais; or again, to laugh at men instead of insulting things, like Maréchal de Richelieu; or, still better, perhaps, if it mock both men and things, like our most celebrated ambassador.

But the deep genius of Don Juan incorporated in advance all these. He played with everything. His life was a mockery, which embraced men, things, institutions, ideas. As for eternity, he had chatted for half an hour with Pope Julius II., and at the end of the conversation he said, laughing:

“If it were absolutely necessary to choose, I should rather believe in God than in the devil; power combined with goodness has always more possibilities than the spirit of evil.”

“Yes; but God wants one to do penance in this world.”

“Are you always thinking of your indulgences?” replied Belvidéro. “Well, I have a whole existence in reserve to repent the faults of my first life.”

“Oh, if that is your idea of old age,” cried the Pope, “you are in danger of being canonized.”

“After your elevation to the papacy, one may expect anything.”

And then they went to watch the workmen engaged in building the huge basilica consecrated to St. Peter.

“St. Peter is the genius who gave us our double power,” said the Pope to Don Juan, “and he deserves this monument. But sometimes at night I fancy that a deluge will pass a sponge over all this, and it will need to be begun over again.”

Don Juan and the Pope laughed. They understood each other. A fool would have gone next day to amuse himself with Julius II at Raphael's house or in the delightful Villa Madama; but Belvidéro went to see him officiate in his pontifical capacity, in order to convince himself of his suspicions. Under the influence of wine della Rovere would have been capable of forgetting himself and criticising the Apocalypse.

When Don Juan reached the age of sixty he went to live in Spain. There, in his old age, he married a young and charming Andalusian. But he was intentionally neither a good father nor a good husband. He had observed that we are never so tenderly loved as by the women to whom we scarcely give a thought. Doña Elvira, piously reared by an old aunt in the heart of Andalusia in a castle several leagues from San Lucas, was all devotion and meekness. Don Juan saw that this young girl was a woman to make a long fight with a passion before yielding to it, so he hoped to keep from her any love but his until after his death. It was a serious jest, a game of chess which he had reserved for his old age.

Warned by his father's mistakes, he determined to make the most trifling acts of his old age contribute to the success of the drama which was to take place at his deathbed. Therefore, the greater part of his wealth lay buried in the cellars of his palace at Ferrara, whither he seldom went. The rest of his fortune was invested in a life annuity, so that his wife and children might be interested in keeping him alive. This was a species of cleverness which his father should have practiced; but this Machiavellian scheme was unnecessary in his case. Young Philippe Belvidéro, his son, grew up a Spaniard as conscientiously religious as his father was impious, on the principle of the proverb: "A miserly father, a spendthrift son."

The Abbot of San Lucas was selected by Don Juan to direct the consciences of the Duchess of Belvidéro and of Philippe. This ecclesiastic was a holy man, of fine carriage, well proportioned, with beautiful black eyes and a head like Tiberius. He was wearied with fasting, pale and worn, and continually battling with temptation, like all recluses. The old nobleman still hoped perhaps to be able to kill a monk before finishing his first lease of life. But, whether the Abbot was as clever as Don Juan, or whether Doña Elvira had more prudence or virtue than Spain usually accords to women, Don Juan was obliged to pass his last days like a country parson, without scandal. Sometimes he took pleasure in finding his wife and son remiss in their religious duties, and insisted imperiously that they should fulfil all the obligations imposed upon the faithful by the court of Rome. He was never so happy as when listening to the gallant Abbot of San Lucas, Doña Elvira and Philippe engaged in arguing a case of conscience.

Nevertheless, despite the great care which the lord of Belvidéro bestowed upon his person, the days of decrepitude arrived. With this age of pain came cries of helplessness, cries made the more piteous by the remembrance of his impetuous youth and his ripe maturity. This man, for whom the last jest in the farce was to make others believe in the laws and principles at which he scoffed, was compelled to close his eyes at night upon an uncertainty. This model of good breeding, this duke spirited in an orgy, this brilliant courtier, gracious toward women, whose hearts he had wrung as a peasant bends a willow wand, this man of genius, had an obstinate cough, a troublesome sciatica and a cruel gout. He saw his teeth leave him, as, at the end of an evening, the fairest, best dressed women depart one by one, leaving the ballroom deserted and empty. His bold hands trembled, his graceful limbs tottered, and then one night apoplexy turned its hooked and icy fingers around his throat. From this fateful day he became morose and harsh. He accused his wife and son of being insincere in their devotion, charging that their touching and gentle care was showered upon him so tenderly only because his money was all invested. Elvira and Philippe shed bitter tears, and redoubled their caresses to this malicious old man, whose broken voice would become affectionate to say:

“My friends, my dear wife, you will forgive me, will you not? I torment you sometimes. Ah, great God, how canst Thou make use of me thus to prove these two angelic creatures! I, who should be their joy, am their bane!”

It was thus that he held them at his bedside, making them forget whole months of impatience and cruelty by one hour in which he displayed to them the new treasures of his favor and a false tenderness. It was a paternal system which succeeded infinitely better than that which his father had formerly employed toward him. Finally he reached such a state of illness that manoeuvres like those of a small boat entering a dangerous canal were necessary in order to put him to bed.

Then the day of death came. This brilliant and skeptical man, whose intellect only was left unimpaired by the general decay, lived between a doctor and a confessor, his two antipathies. But he was jovial with them. Was there not a bright light burning for him behind the veil of the future? Over this veil, leaden and impenetrable to others, transparent to him, the delicate and bewitching delights of youth played like shadows.

It was on a beautiful summer evening that Don Juan felt the approach of death. The Spanish sky was gloriously clear, the orange trees perfumed the air and the stars cast a fresh glowing light. Nature seemed to give pledges of his resurrection. A pious and obedient son regarded him with love and respect.

About eleven o'clock he signified his wish to be left alone with this sincere being.

"Philippe," he began, in a voice so tender and affectionate that the young man trembled and wept with happiness, for his father had never said "Philippe" like this before. "Listen to me, my son," continued the dying man. "I have been a great sinner, and all my life I have thought about death. Formerly I was the friend of the great Pope Julius II. This illustrious pontiff feared that the excessive excitability of my feelings would cause me to commit some deadly sin at the moment of my death, after I had received the blessed ointment. He made me a present of a flask of holy water that gushed forth from a rock in the desert. I kept the secret of the theft of the Church's treasure, but I am authorized to reveal the mystery to my son 'in articulo mortis.' You will find the flask in the drawer of the Gothic table which always stands at my bedside. The precious crystals may be of service to you also, my dearest Philippe. Will you swear to me by your eternal salvation that you will carry out my orders faithfully?"

Philippe looked at his father. Don Juan was too well versed in human expression not to know that he could die peacefully in perfect faith in such a look, as his father had died in despair at his own expression.

"You deserve a different father," continued Don Juan. "I must acknowledge that when the estimable Abbot of San Lucas was administering the viaticum I was thinking of the incompatibility of two so wide-spreading powers as that of the devil and that of God."

"Oh, father!"

"And I said to myself that when Satan makes his peace he will be a great idiot if he does not bargain for the pardon of his followers. This thought haunted me. So, my child, I shall go to hell if you do not carry out my wishes."

"Oh, tell them to me at once, father!"

"As soon as I have closed my eyes," replied Don Juan, "and that may be in a few minutes, you must take my body, still warm, and lay it on a table in the middle of the room. Then put out the lamp—the light of the stars will be sufficient. You must take off my clothes, and while you recite 'Paters' and 'Aves' and uplift your soul to God, you must moisten my eyes, my lips, all my head first, and then my body, with this holy water. But, my dear son, the power of God is great. You must not be astonished at anything."

At this point Don Juan, feeling the approach of death, added in a terrible voice: "Be careful of the flask!"



Then he died gently in the arms of his son, whose tears fell upon his ironical and sallow face.

It was nearly midnight when Don Philippe Belvidéro placed his father's corpse on the table. After kissing the stern forehead and the gray hair he put out the lamp. The soft rays of the moonlight which cast fantastic reflections over the scenery allowed the pious Philippe to discern his father's body dimly, as something white in the midst of the darkness. The young man moistened a cloth in the liquid and then, deep in prayer, he faithfully anointed the revered head. The silence was intense. Then he heard indescribable rustlings, but he attributed them to the wind among the tree-tops. When he had bathed the right arm he felt himself rudely seized at the back of the neck by an arm, young and vigorous—the arm of his father! He gave a piercing cry, and dropped the phial, which fell on the floor and broke. The liquid flowed out.

The whole household rushed in, bearing torches. The cry had aroused and frightened them as if the trumpet of the last judgment had shaken the world. The room was crowded with people. The trembling throng saw Don Philippe, fainting, but held up by the powerful arm of his father, which clutched his neck. Then they saw a supernatural sight, the head of Don Juan, young and beautiful as an Antinoüs, a head with black hair, brilliant eyes and crimson lips, a head that moved in a blood-curdling manner without being able to stir the skeleton to which it belonged.

An old servant cried: “A miracle!”

And all the Spaniards repeated: “A miracle!”

Too pious to admit the possibility of magic, Doña Elvira sent for the Abbot of San Lucas. When the priest saw the miracle with his own eyes he resolved to profit by it, like a man of sense, and like an abbot who asked nothing better than to increase his revenues. Declaring that Don Juan must inevitably be canonized, he appointed his monastery for the ceremony of the apotheosis. The monastery, he said, should henceforth be called “San Juan de Lucas.” At these words the head made a facetious grimace.

The taste of the Spaniards for this sort of solemnities is so well known that it should not be difficult to imagine the religious spectacle with which the abbey of San Lucas celebrated the translation of “the blessed Don Juan Belvidéro” in its church. A few days after the death of this illustrious nobleman, the miracle of his partial resurrection had been so thoroughly spread from village to village throughout a circle of more than fifty leagues round San Lucas that it was as good as a play to see the curious people on the road. They came from all sides, drawn by the prospect of a “Te Deum” chanted by the light of burning torches.

The ancient mosque of the monastery of San Lucas, a wonderful building, erected by the Moors, which for three hundred years had resounded with the name of Jesus Christ instead of Allah, could not hold the crowd which was gathered to view the ceremony. Packed together like ants, the hidalgos in velvet mantles and armed with their good swords stood round the pillars, unable to find room to bend their knees, which they never bent elsewhere. Charming peasant women, whose dresses set off the beautiful lines of their figures, gave their arms to white-haired old men. Youths with glowing eyes found themselves beside old women decked out in gala dress. There were couples trembling with pleasure, curious-fiancées, led thither by their sweethearts, newly married couples and frightened children, holding one another by the hand. All this throng was there, rich in colors, brilliant in contrast, laden with flowers, making a soft tumult in the silence of the night. The great doors of the church opened.

Those who, having come too late, were obliged to stay outside, saw in the distance, through the three open doors, a scene of which the tawdry decorations of our modern operas can give but a faint idea. Devotees and sinners, intent upon winning the favor of a new saint, lighted thousands of candles in his honor inside the vast church, and these scintillating lights gave a magical aspect to the edifice. The black arcades, the columns with their capitals, the recessed chapels glittering with gold and silver, the galleries, the Moorish fretwork, the most delicate features of this delicate carving, were all revealed in the dazzling brightness like the fantastic figures which are formed in a glowing fire. It was a sea of light, surmounted at the end of the church by the gilded choir, where the high altar rose in glory, which rivaled the rising sun. But the magnificence of the golden lamps, the silver candlesticks, the banners, the tassels, the saints and the “ex voto” paled before the reliquary in which Don Juan lay. The body of the blasphemer was resplendent with gems, flowers, crystals, diamonds, gold, and plumes as white as the wings of a seraphim; it replaced a picture of Christ on the altar. Around him burned wax candles, which threw out waves of light. The good Abbot of San Lucas, clad in his pontifical robes, with his jeweled mitre, his surplice and his golden crozier reclined, king of the choir, in a large armchair, amid all his clergy, who were impassive men with silver hair, and who surrounded him like the confessing saints whom the painters group round the Lord. The precentor and the dignitaries of the order, decorated with the glittering insignia of their ecclesiastical vanities, came and went among the clouds of incense like planets revolving in the firmament.

When the hour of triumph was come the chimes awoke the echoes of the countryside, and this immense assembly raised its voice to God in the first cry of praise which begins the “Te Deum.”

Sublime exultation! There were voices pure and high, ecstatic women's voices, blended with the deep sonorous tones of the men, thousands of voices so powerful that they drowned the organ in spite of the bellowing of its pipes. The shrill notes of the choir-boys and the powerful rhythm of the basses inspired pretty thoughts of the combination of childhood and strength in this delightful concert of human voices blended in an outpouring of love.

“Te Deum laudamus!”

In the midst of this cathedral, black with kneeling men and women, the chant burst forth like a light which gleams suddenly in the night, and the silence was broken as by a peal of thunder. The voices rose with the clouds of incense which threw diaphanous, bluish veils over the quaint marvels of the architecture. All was richness, perfume, light and melody.

At the moment at which this symphony of love and gratitude rolled toward the altar, Don Juan, too polite not to express his thanks and too witty not to appreciate a jest, responded by a frightful laugh, and straightened up in his reliquary. But, the devil having given him a hint of the danger he ran of being taken for an ordinary man, for a saint, a Boniface or a Pantaléon, he interrupted this harmony of love by a shriek in which the thousand voices of hell joined. Earth lauded, heaven condemned. The church trembled on its ancient foundations.

“Te Deum laudamus!” sang the crowd.

“Go to the devil, brute beasts that you are! ‘Carajos demonios!’ Beasts! what idiots you are with your God!”

And a torrent of curses rolled forth like a stream of burning lava at an eruption of Vesuvius.

“Deus sabaoth! sabaoth’!” cried the Christians.

Then the living arm was thrust out of the reliquary and waved threateningly over the assembly with a gesture full of despair and irony.

“The saint is blessing us!” said the credulous old women, the children and the young maids.

It is thus that we are often deceived in our adorations. The superior man mocks those who compliment him, and compliments those whom he mocks in the depths of his heart.

When the Abbot, bowing low before the altar, chanted: “Sancte Johannes, ora pro nobis’!” he heard distinctly: “O coglione’!”

“What is happening up there?” cried the superior, seeing the reliquary move.

“The saint is playing devil!” replied the Abbot.

At this the living head tore itself violently away from the dead body and fell upon the yellow pate of the priest.

“Remember, Doña Elvira!” cried the head, fastening its teeth in the head of the Abbot.

The latter gave a terrible shriek, which threw the crowd into a panic. The priests rushed to the assistance of their chief.

“Imbecile! Now say that there is a God!” cried the voice, just as the Abbot expired.

## THE AGE FOR LOVE By Paul Bourget

When I submitted the plan of my Inquiry Upon the Age for Love to the editor-in-chief of the Boulevard, the highest type of French literary paper, he seemed astonished that an idea so journalistic—that was his word—should have been evolved from the brain of his most recent acquisition. I had been with him two weeks and it was my first contribution. “Give me some details, my dear Labarthe,” he said, in a somewhat less insolent manner than was his wont. After listening to me for a few moments he continued: “That is good. You will go and interview certain men and women, first upon the age at which one loves the most, next upon the age when one is most loved? Is that your idea? And now to whom will you go first?”

“I have prepared a list,” I replied, and took from my pocket a sheet of paper. I had jotted down the names of a number of celebrities whom I proposed to interview on this all-important question, and I began to read over my list. It contained two ex-government officials, a general, a Dominican father, four actresses, two café-concert singers, four actors, two financiers, two lawyers, a surgeon and a lot of literary celebrities. At some of the names my chief would nod his approval, at others he would say curtly, with an affectation of American manners, “Bad; strike it off,” until I came to the name I had kept for the last, that of Pierre Fauchery, the famous novelist.

“Strike that off,” he said, shrugging his shoulders. “He is not on good terms with us.”

“And yet,” I suggested, “is there any one whose opinion would be of greater interest to reading men as well as to women? I had even thought of beginning with him.”

“The devil you had!” interrupted the editor-in-chief. “It is one of Fauchery’s principles not to see any reporters. I have sent him ten if I have one, and he has shown them all the door. The Boulevard does not relish such treatment, so we have given him some pretty hard hits.”

“Nevertheless, I will have an interview with Fauchery for the Boulevard,” was my reply. “I am sure of it.”

“If you succeed,” he replied, “I’ll raise your salary. That man makes me tired with his scorn of newspaper notoriety. He must take his share of it, like the rest. But you will not succeed. What makes you think you can?”

“Permit me to tell you my reason later. In forty-eight hours you will see whether I have succeeded or not.”

“Go and do not spare the fellow.”

Decidedly. I had made some progress as a journalist, even in my two weeks' apprenticeship, if I could permit Pascal to speak in this way of the man I most admired among living writers. Since that not far-distant time when, tired of being poor, I had made up my mind to cast my lot with the multitude in Paris, I had tried to lay aside my old self, as lizards do their skins, and I had almost succeeded. In a former time, a former time that was but yesterday, I knew—for in a drawer full of poems, dramas and half-finished tales I had proof of it—that there had once existed a certain Jules Labarthe who had come to Paris with the hope of becoming a great man. That person believed in Literature with a capital “L;” in the Ideal, another capital; in Glory, a third capital. He was now dead and buried. Would he some day, his position assured, begin to write once more from pure love of his art? Possibly, but for the moment I knew only the energetic, practical Labarthe, who had joined the procession with the idea of getting into the front rank, and of obtaining as soon as possible an income of thirty thousand francs a year. What would it matter to this second individual if that vile Pascal should boast of having stolen a march on the most delicate, the most powerful of the heirs of Balzac, since I, the new Labarthe, was capable of looking forward to an operation which required about as much delicacy as some of the performances of my editor-in-chief? I had, as a matter of fact, a sure means of obtaining the interview. It was this: When I was young and simple I had sent some verses and stories to Pierre Fauchery, the same verses and stories the refusal of which by four editors had finally made me decide to enter the field of journalism. The great writer was traveling at this time, but he had replied to me. I had responded by a letter to which he again replied, this time with an invitation to call upon him. I went I did not find him. I went again. I did not find him that time. Then a sort of timidity prevented my returning to the charge. So I had never met him. He knew me only as the young Elia of my two epistles. This is what I counted upon to extort from him the favor of an interview which he certainly would refuse to a mere newspaper man. My plan was simple; to present myself at his house, to be received, to conceal my real occupation, to sketch vaguely a subject for a novel in which there should occur a discussion upon the Age for Love, to make him talk and then when he should discover his conversation in print—here I began to feel some remorse. But I stifled it with the terrible phrase, “the struggle for life,” and also by the recollection of numerous examples culled from the firm with which I now had the honor of being connected.

The morning after I had had this very literary conversation with my honorable director, I rang at the door of the small house in the Rue Desbordes-Valmore where Pierre Fauchery lived, in a retired corner of Passy. Having

taken up my pen to tell a plain unvarnished tale I do not see how I can conceal the wretched feeling of pleasure which, as I rang the bell, warmed my heart at the thought of the good joke I was about to play on the owner of this peaceful abode.

Even after making up one's mind to the sacrifices I had decided upon, there is always left a trace of envy for those who have triumphed in the melancholy struggle for literary supremacy. It was a real disappointment to me when the servant replied, ill-humoredly, that M. Fauchery was not in Paris. I asked when he would return. The servant did not know. I asked for his address. The servant did not know that. Poor lion, who thought he had secured anonymity for his holiday! A half-hour later I had discovered that he was staying for the present at the Château de Proby, near Nemours. I had merely had to make inquiries of his publisher. Two hours later I bought my ticket at the Gare de Lyon for the little town chosen by Balzac as the scene for his delicious story of Ursule Mirouet. I took a traveling bag and was prepared to spend the night there. In case I failed to see the master that afternoon I had decided to make sure of him the next morning. Exactly seven hours after the servant, faithful to his trust, had declared that he did not know where his master was staying, I was standing in the hall of the château waiting for my card to be sent up. I had taken care to write on it a reminder of our conversation of the year before, and this time, after a ten-minute wait in the hall, during which I noticed with singular curiosity and *malice* two very elegant and very pretty young women going out for a walk, I was admitted to his presence. "Aha," I said to myself, "this then is the secret of his exile; the interview promises well!"

The novelist received me in a cosy little room, with a window opening onto the park, already beginning to turn yellow with the advancing autumn. A wood fire burned in the fireplace and lighted up the walls which were hung with flowered cretonne and on which could be distinguished several colored English prints representing cross-country rides and the jumping of hedges. Here was the worldly environment with which Fauchery is so often reproached. But the books and papers that littered the table bore witness that the present occupant of this charming retreat remained a substantial man of letters. His habit of constant work was still further attested by his face, which I admit, gave me all at once a feeling of remorse for the trick I was about to play him. If I had found him the snobbish pretender whom the weekly newspapers were in the habit of ridiculing, it would have been a delight to outwit his diplomacy. But no! I saw, as he put down his pen to receive me, a man about fifty-seven years old, with a face that bore the marks of reflection, eyes tired from sleeplessness, a brow heavy with thought, who said as he pointed to an easy chair, "You will excuse me, my dear confrère, for keeping you waiting." I, his dear confrère! Ah! if he

had known! “You see,” and he pointed to the page still wet with ink, “that man cannot be free from the slavery of furnishing copy. One has less facility at my age than at yours. Now, let us speak of yourself. How do you happen to be at Nemours? What have you been doing since the story and the verses you were kind enough to send me?”

It is vain to try to sacrifice once for all one’s youthful ideals. When a man has loved literature as I loved it at twenty, he cannot be satisfied at twenty-six to give up his early passion, even at the bidding of implacable necessity. So Pierre Fauchery remembered my poor verses! He had actually read my story! His allusion proved it. Could I tell him at such a moment that since the creation of those first works I had despaired of myself, and that I had changed my gun to the other shoulder? The image of the Boulevard office rose suddenly before me. I heard the voice of the editor-in-chief saying, “Interview Fauchery? You will never accomplish that;” so, faithful to my self-imposed rôle, I replied, “I have retired to Nemours to work upon a novel called *The Age for Love*, and it is on this subject that I wished to consult you, my dear master.”

It seemed to me—it may possibly have been an illusion—that at the announcement of the so-called title of my so-called novel, a smile and a shadow flitted over Fauchery’s eyes and mouth. A vision of the two young women I had met in the hall came back to me. Was the author of so many great masterpieces of analysis about to live a new book before writing it? I had no time to answer this question, for, with a glance at an onyx vase containing some cigarettes of Turkish tobacco, he offered me one, lighted one himself and began first to question, then to reply to me. I listened while he thought aloud and had almost forgotten my Machiavellian combination, so keen was my relish of the joyous intimacy of this communion with a mind I had passionately loved in his works. He was the first of the great writers of our day whom I had thus approached on something like terms of intimacy. As we talked I observed the strange similarity between his spoken and his written words. I admired the charming simplicity with which he abandoned himself to the pleasures of imagination, his superabundant intelligence, the liveliness of his impressions and his total absence of arrogance and of pose.

“There is no such thing as an age for love,” he said in substance, “because the man capable of loving—in the complex and modern sense of love as a sort of ideal exaltation—never ceases to love. I will go further; he never ceases to love the same person. You know the experiment that a contemporary physiologist tried with a series of portraits to determine in what the indefinable resemblances called family likeness consisted? He took photographs of twenty persons of the same blood, then he photographed these photographs on the same plate, one over the other. In this way he discovered the common features



which determined the type. Well, I am convinced that if we could try a similar experiment and photograph one upon another the pictures of the different women whom the same man has loved or thought he had loved in the course of his life we should discover that all these women resembled one another. The most inconsistent have cherished one and the same being through five or six or even twenty different embodiments. The main point is to find out at what age they have met the woman who approaches nearest to the one whose image they have constantly borne within themselves. For them that would be the age for love.

“The age for being loved?” he continued. “The deepest of all the passions I have ever known a man to inspire was in the case of one of my masters, a poet, and he was sixty years old at the time. It is true that he still held himself as erect as a young man, he came and went with a step as light as yours, he conversed like Rivarol, he composed verses as beautiful as De Vigny’s. He was besides very poor, very lonely and very unhappy, having lost one after another, his wife and his children. You remember the words of Shakespeare’s Moor: ‘She loved me for the dangers I had passed, and I loved her that she did pity them.’

“So it was that this great artist inspired in a beautiful, noble and wealthy young Russian woman, a devotion so passionate that because of him she never married. She found a way to take care of him, day and night, in spite of his family, during his last illness, and at the present time, having bought from his heirs all of the poet’s personal belongings, she keeps the apartment where he lived just as it was at the time of his death. That was years ago. In her case she found in a man three times her own age the person who corresponded to a certain ideal which she carried in her heart. Look at Goethe, at Lamartine and at many others! To depict feelings on this high plane, you must give up the process of minute and insignificant observation which is the bane of the artists of to-day. In order that a sixty-year-old lover should appear neither ridiculous nor odious you must apply to him what the elder Corneille so proudly said of himself in his lines to the marquise:

*“Cependant, j’ai quelques charmes  
Qui sont assez éclatants  
Pour n’avoir pas trop d’alarmes  
De ces ravages du temps.”*

“Have the courage to analyze great emotions to create characters who shall be lofty and true. The whole art of the analytical novel lies there.”

As he spoke the master had such a light of intellectual certainty in his eyes that to me he seemed the embodiment of one of those great characters he had

been urging me to describe. It made me feel that the theory of this man, himself almost a sexagenarian, that at any age one may inspire love, was not unreasonable! The contrast between the world of ideas in which he moved and the atmosphere of the literary shop in which for the last few months I had been stifling was too strong. The dreams of my youth were realized in this man whose gifts remained unimpaired after the production of thirty volumes and whose face, growing old, was a living illustration of the beautiful saying: "Since we must wear out, let us wear out nobly." His slender figure bespoke the austerity of long hours of work; his firm mouth showed his decision of character; his brow, with its deep furrows, had the paleness of the paper over which he so often bent; and yet, the refinement of his hands, so well cared for, the sober elegance of his dress and an aristocratic air that was natural to him showed that the finer professional virtues had been cultivated in the midst of a life of frivolous temptations. These temptations had been no more of a disturbance to his ethical and spiritual nature than the academic honors, the financial successes, the numerous editions that had been his. Withal he was an awfully good fellow, for, after having talked at great length with me, he ended by saying, "Since you are staying in Nemours I hope to see you often, and to-day I cannot let you go without presenting you to my hostess."

What could I say? This was the way in which a mere reporter on the Boulevard found himself installed at a five-o'clock tea-table in the salon of a château, where surely no newspaper man had ever before set foot and was presented as a young poet and novelist of the future to the old Marquise de Proby, whose guest the master was. This amiable white-haired dowager questioned me upon my alleged work and I replied equivocally, with blushes, which the good lady must have attributed to bashful timidity. Then, as though some evil genius had conspired to multiply the witnesses of my bad conduct, the two young women whom I had seen going out, returned in the midst of my unlooked-for visit. Ah, my interview with this student of femininity upon the Age for Love was about to have a living commentary! How it would illumine his words to hear him conversing with these new arrivals! One was a young girl of possibly twenty—a Russian if I rightly understood the name. She was rather tall, with a long face lighted up by two very gentle black eyes, singular in their fire and intensity. She bore a striking resemblance to the portrait attributed to Froncia in the Salon Carré of the Louvre which goes by the name of the "Man in Black," because the color of his clothes and his mantle. About her mouth and nostrils was that same subdued nervousness, that same restrained feverishness which gives to the portrait its striking qualities. I had not been there a quarter of an hour before I had guessed from the way she watched and listened to Fauchery what a passionate interest the old master inspired in her. When he spoke she paid rapt attention. When she spoke to him, I felt her voice shiver, if

I may use the word, and he, he glorious writer, surfeited with triumphs, exhausted by his labors, seemed, as soon as he felt the radiance of her glance of ingenuous idolatry, to recover that vivacity, that elasticity of impression, which is the sovereign grace of youthful lovers.

“I understand now why he cited Goethe and the young girl of Marienbad,” said I to myself with a laugh, as my hired carriage sped on toward Nemours. “He was thinking of himself. He is in love with that child, and she is in love with him. We shall hear of his marrying her. There’s a wedding that will call forth copy, and when Pascal hears that I witnessed the courtship—but just now I must think of my interview. Won’t Fauchery be surprised to read it day after to-morrow in his paper? But does he read the papers? It may not be right but what harm will it do him? Besides, it’s a part of the struggle for life.” It was by such reasoning, I remember, the reasoning of a man determined to arrive that I tried to lull to sleep the inward voice that cried, “You have no right to put on paper, to give to the public what this noble writer said to you, supposing that he was receiving a poet, not a reporter.” But I heard also the voice of my chief saying, “You will never succeed.” And this second voice, I am ashamed to confess, triumphed over the other with all the more ease because I was obliged to do something to kill time. I reached Nemours too late for the train which would have brought me back to Paris about dinner time. At the old inn they gave me a room which was clean and quiet, a good place to write, so I spent the evening until bedtime composing the first of the articles which were to form my inquiry. I scribbled away under the vivid impressions of the afternoon, my powers as well as my nerves spurred by a touch of remorse. Yes, I scribbled four pages which would have been no disgrace to the *Journal des Goncourts*, that exquisite manual of the perfect reporter. It was all there, my journey, my arrival at the chateau, a sketch of the quaint eighteenth century building, with its fringe of trees and its well-kept walks, the master’s room, the master himself and his conversation; the tea at the end and the smile of the old novelist in the midst of a circle of admirers, old and young. It lacked only a few closing lines. “I will add these in the morning,” I thought, and went to bed with a feeling of duty performed, such is the nature of a writer. Under the form of an interview I had done, and I knew it, the best work of my life.

What happens while we sleep? Is there, unknown to us, a secret and irresistible ferment of ideas while our senses are closed to the impressions of the outside world? Certain it is that on awakening I am apt to find myself in a state of mind very different from that in which I went to sleep. I had not been awake ten minutes before the image of Pierre Fauchery came up before me, and at the same time the thought that I had taken a base advantage of the kindness of his reception of me became quite unbearable. I felt a passionate longing to

see him again, to ask his pardon for my deception. I wished to tell him who I was, with what purpose I had gone to him and that I regretted it. But there was no need of a confession. It would be enough to destroy the pages I had written the night before. With this idea I arose. Before tearing them up, I reread them. And then—any writer will understand me—and then they seemed to me so brilliant that I did not tear them up. Fauchery is so intelligent, so generous, was the thought that crossed my mind. What is there in this interview, after all, to offend him? Nothing, absolutely nothing. Even if I should go to him again this very morning, tell him my story and that upon the success of my little inquiry my whole future as a journalist might depend? When he found that I had had five years of poverty and hard work without accomplishing anything, and that I had had to go onto a paper in order to earn the very bread I ate, he would pardon me, he would pity me and he would say, “Publish your interview.” Yes, but what if he should forbid my publishing it? But no, he would not do that.

I passed the morning in considering my latest plan. A certain shyness made it very painful to me. But it might at the same time conciliate my delicate scruples, my “amour-propre” as an ambitious chronicler, and the interests of my pocket-book. I knew that Pascal had the name of being very generous with an interview article if it pleased him. And besides, had he not promised me a reward if I succeeded with Fauchery? In short, I had decided to try my experiment, when, after a hasty breakfast, I saw, on stepping into the carriage I had had the night before, a victoria with coat-of-arms drive rapidly past and was stunned at recognizing Fauchery himself, apparently lost in a gloomy reverie that was in singular contrast to his high spirits of the night before. A small trunk on the coachman’s seat was a sufficient indication that he was going to the station. The train for Paris left in twelve minutes, time enough for me to pack my things pell-mell into my valise and hurriedly to pay my bill. The same carriage which was to have taken me to the Château de Proby carried me to the station at full speed, and when the train left I was seated in an empty compartment opposite the famous writer, who was saying to me, “You, too, deserting Nemours? Like me, you work best in Paris.”

The conversation begun in this way, might easily have led to the confession I had resolved to make. But in the presence of my unexpected companion I was seized with an unconquerable shyness, moreover he inspired me with a curiosity which was quite equal to my shyness. Any number of circumstances, from a telegram from a sick relative to the most commonplace matter of business, might have explained his sudden departure from the château where I had left him so comfortably installed the night before. But that the expression of his face should have changed as it had, that in eighteen hours he should have become the careworn, discouraged being he now seemed, when I had left him

so pleased with life, so happy, so assiduous in his attentions to that pretty girl. Mademoiselle de Russaie, who loved him and whom he seemed to love, was a mystery which took complete possession of me, this time without any underlying professional motive. He was to give me the key before we reached Paris. At any rate I shall always believe that part of his conversation was in an indirect way a confidence. He was still unstrung by the unexpected incident which had caused both his hasty departure and the sudden metamorphosis in what he himself, if he had been writing, would have called his “intimate heaven.” The story he told me was “*per sfogarsi*,” as Bayle loved to say; his idea was that I would not discover the real hero. I shall always believe that it was his own story under another name, and I love to believe it because it was so exactly his way of looking at things. It was apropos of the supposed subject of my novel—oh, irony!—apropos of the real subject of my interview that he began.

“I have been thinking about our conversation and about your book, and I am afraid that I expressed myself badly yesterday. When I said that one may love and be loved at any age I ought to have added that sometimes this love comes too late. It comes when one no longer has the right to prove to the loved one how much she is loved, except by love’s sacrifice. I should like to share with you a human document, as they say to-day, which is in itself a drama with a *dénouement*. But I must ask you not to use it, for the secret is not my own.” With the assurance of my discretion he went on: “I had a friend, a companion of my own age, who, when he was twenty, had loved a young girl. He was poor, she was rich. Her family separated them. The girl married some one else and almost immediately afterward she died. My friend lived. Some day you will know for yourself that it is almost as true to say that one recovers from all things as that there is nothing which does not leave its scar. I had been the confidant of his serious passion, and I became the confidant of the various affairs that followed that first ineffaceable disappointment. He felt, he inspired, other loves. He tasted other joys. He endured other sorrows, and yet when we were alone and when we touched upon those confidences that come from the heart’s depths, the girl who was the ideal of his twentieth year reappeared in his words. How many times he has said to me, ‘In others I have always looked for her and as I have never found her, I have never truly loved any one but her.’”

“And had she loved him?” I interrupted.

“He did not think so,” replied Fauchery. “At least she had never told him so. Well, you must now imagine my friend at my age or almost there. You must picture him growing gray, tired of life and convinced that he had at last discovered the secret of peace. At this time he met, while visiting some relatives in a country house, a mere girl of twenty, who was the image, the

haunting image of her whom he had hoped to marry thirty years before. It was one of those strange resemblances which extend from the color of the eyes to the ‘timbre’ of the voice, from the smile to the thought, from the gestures to the finest feelings of the heart. I could not, in a few disjointed phrases describe to you the strange emotions of my friend. It would take pages and pages to make you understand the tenderness, both present and at the same time retrospective, for the dead through the living; the hypnotic condition of the soul which does not know where dreams and memories end and present feeling begins; the daily commingling of the most unreal thing in the world, the phantom of a lost love, with the freshest, the most actual, the most irresistibly naïve and spontaneous thing in it, a young girl. She comes, she goes, she laughs, she sings, you go about with her in the intimacy of country life, and at her side walks one long dead. After two weeks of almost careless abandon to the dangerous delights of this inward agitation imagine my friend entering by chance one morning one of the less frequented rooms of the house, a gallery, where, among other pictures, hung a portrait of himself, painted when he was twenty-five. He approaches the portrait abstractedly. There had been a fire in the room, so that a slight moisture dimmed the glass which protected the pastel, and on this glass, because of this moisture, he sees distinctly the trace of two lips which had been placed upon the eyes of the portrait, two small delicate lips, the sight of which makes his heart beat. He leaves the gallery, questions a servant, who tells him that no one but the young woman he has in mind has been in the room that morning.”

“What then?” I asked, as he paused.

“My friend returned to the gallery, looked once more at the adorable imprint of the most innocent, the most passionate of caresses. A mirror hung near by, where he could compare his present with his former face, the man he was with the man he had been. He never told me and I never asked what his feelings were at that moment. Did he feel that he was too culpable to have inspired a passion in a young girl whom he would have been a fool, almost a criminal, to marry? Did he comprehend that through his age which was so apparent, it was his youth which this child loved? Did he remember, with a keenness that was all too sad, that other, who had never given him a kiss like that at a time when he might have returned it? I only know that he left the same day, determined never again to see one whom he could no longer love as he had loved the other, with the hope, the purity, the soul of a man of twenty.”

A few hours after this conversation, I found myself once more in the office of the Boulevard, seated in Pascal’s den, and he was saying, “Already? Have you accomplished your interview with Pierre Fauchery?”

“He would not even receive me,” I replied, boldly.

“What did I tell you?” he sneered, shrugging his big shoulders. “We’ll get even with him on his next volume. But you know, Labarthe, as long as you continue to have that innocent look about you, you can’t expect to succeed in newspaper work.”

I bore with the ill-humor of my chief. What would he have said if he had known that I had in my pocket an interview and in my head an anecdote which were material for a most successful story? And he has never had either the interview or the story. Since then I have made my way in the line where he said I should fail. I have lost my innocent look and I earn my thirty thousand francs a year, and more. I have never had the same pleasure in the printing of the most profitable, the most brilliant article that I had in consigning to oblivion the sheets relating my visit to Nemours. I often think that I have not served the cause of letters as I wanted to, since, with all my laborious work I have never written a book. And yet when I recall the irresistible impulse of respect which prevented me from committing toward a dearly loved master a most profitable but infamous indiscretion, I say to myself, “If you have not served the cause of letters, you have not betrayed it.” And this is the reason, now that Fauchery is no longer of this world, that it seems to me that the time has come for me to relate my first interview. There is none of which I am more proud.

## MATEO FALCONE By Prosper Merimee

On leaving Porto-Vecchio from the northwest and directing his steps towards the interior of the island, the traveller will notice that the land rises rapidly, and after three hours' walking over tortuous paths obstructed by great masses of rock and sometimes cut by ravines, he will find himself on the border of a great *mâquis*. The *mâquis* is the domain of the Corsican shepherds and of those who are at variance with justice. It must be known that, in order to save himself the trouble of manuring his field, the Corsican husbandman sets fire to a piece of woodland. If the flame spread farther than is necessary, so much the worse! In any case he is certain of a good crop from the land fertilized by the ashes of the trees which grow upon it. He gathers only the heads of his grain, leaving the straw, which it would be unnecessary labor to cut. In the following spring the roots that have remained in the earth without being destroyed send up their tufts of sprouts, which in a few years reach a height of seven or eight feet. It is this kind of tangled thicket that is called a *mâquis*. They are made up of different kinds of trees and shrubs, so crowded and mingled together at the caprice of nature that only with an axe in hand can a man open a passage through them, and *mâquis* are frequently seen so thick and bushy that the wild sheep themselves cannot penetrate them.

If you have killed a man, go into the *mâquis* of Porto-Vecchio. With a good gun and plenty of powder and balls, you can live there in safety. Do not forget a brown cloak furnished with a hood, which will serve you for both cover and mattress. The shepherds will give you chestnuts, milk and cheese, and you will have nothing to fear from justice nor the relatives of the dead except when it is necessary for you to descend to the city to replenish your ammunition.

When I was in Corsica in 18—, Mateo Falcone had his house half a league from this *mâquis*. He was rich enough for that country, living in noble style—that is to say, doing nothing—on the income from his flocks, which the shepherds, who are a kind of nomads, lead to pasture here and there on the mountains. When I saw him, two years after the event that I am about to relate, he appeared to me to be about fifty years old or more. Picture to yourself a man, small but robust, with curly hair, black as jet, an aquiline nose, thin lips, large, restless eyes, and a complexion the color of tanned leather. His skill as a marksman was considered extraordinary even in his country, where good shots are so common. For example, Mateo would never fire at a sheep with buckshot; but at a hundred and twenty paces, he would drop it with a ball in the head or shoulder, as he chose. He used his arms as easily at night as during the day. I was told this feat of his skill, which will, perhaps, seem impossible to those who have not travelled in Corsica. A lighted candle was placed at eighty paces,



behind a paper transparency about the size of a plate. He would take aim, then the candle would be extinguished, and, at the end of a moment, in the most complete darkness, he would fire and hit the paper three times out of four.

With such a transcendent accomplishment, Mateo Falcone had acquired a great reputation. He was said to be as good a friend as he was a dangerous enemy; accommodating and charitable, he lived at peace with all the world in the district of Porto-Vecchio. But it is said of him that in Corte, where he had married his wife, he had disembarrassed himself very vigorously of a rival who was considered as redoubtable in war as in love; at least, a certain gun-shot which surprised this rival as he was shaving before a little mirror hung in his window was attributed to Mateo. The affair was smoothed over and Mateo was married. His wife Giuseppa had given him at first three daughters (which infuriated him), and finally a son, whom he named Fortunato, and who became the hope of his family, the inheritor of the name. The daughters were well married: their father could count at need on the poignards and carbines of his sons-in-law. The son was only ten years old, but he already gave promise of fine attributes.

On a certain day in autumn, Mateo set out at an early hour with his wife to visit one of his flocks in a clearing of the *mâquis*. The little Fortunato wanted to go with them, but the clearing was too far away; moreover, it was necessary some one should stay to watch the house; therefore the father refused: it will be seen whether or not he had reason to repent.

He had been gone some hours, and the little Fortunato was tranquilly stretched out in the sun, looking at the blue mountains, and thinking that the next Sunday he was going to dine in the city with his uncle, the Caporal [Note: Civic Official], when he was suddenly interrupted in his meditations by the firing of a musket. He got up and turned to that side of the plain whence the noise came. Other shots followed, fired at irregular intervals, and each time nearer; at last, in the path which led from the plain to Mateo's house, appeared a man wearing the pointed hat of the mountaineers, bearded, covered with rags, and dragging himself along with difficulty by the support of his gun. He had just received a wound in his thigh.

This man was an outlaw, who, having gone to the town by night to buy powder, had fallen on the way into an ambuscade of Corsican light-infantry. After a vigorous defense he was fortunate in making his retreat, closely followed and firing from rock to rock. But he was only a little in advance of the soldiers, and his wound prevented him from gaining the *mâquis* before being overtaken.

He approached Fortunato and said: "You are the son of Mateo Falcone?"—"Yes."

"I am Gianetto Saupiero. I am followed by the yellow-collars [Note: Slang for Gendarmes.]. Hide me, for I can go no farther."

"And what will my father say if I hide you without his permission?"

"He will say that you have done well."

"How do you know?"

"Hide me quickly; they are coming."

"Wait till my father gets back."

"How can I wait? Malediction! They will be here in five minutes. Come, hide me, or I will kill you."

Fortunato answered him with the utmost coolness:

"Your gun is empty, and there are no more cartridges in your belt."

"I have my stiletto."

"But can you run as fast as I can?"

He gave a leap and put himself out of reach.

"You are not the son of Mateo Falcone! Will you then let me be captured before your house?"

The child appeared moved.

"What will you give me if I hide you?" said he, coming nearer.

The outlaw felt in a leather pocket that hung from his belt, and took out a five-franc piece, which he had doubtless saved to buy ammunition with. Fortunato smiled at the sight of the silver piece; he snatched it, and said to Gianetto:

"Fear nothing."

Immediately he made a great hole in a pile of hay that was near the house. Gianetto crouched down in it and the child covered him in such a way that he could breathe without it being possible to suspect that the hay concealed a man. He bethought himself further, and, with the subtlety of a tolerably ingenious savage, placed a cat and her kittens on the pile, that it might not appear to have been recently disturbed. Then, noticing the traces of blood on the path near the

house, he covered them carefully with dust, and, that done, he again stretched himself out in the sun with the greatest tranquillity.

A few moments afterwards, six men in brown uniforms with yellow collars, and commanded by an Adjutant, were before Mateo's door. This Adjutant was a distant relative of Falcone's. (In Corsica the degrees of relationship are followed much further than elsewhere.) His name was Tiodoro Gamba; he was an active man, much dreaded by the outlaws, several of whom he had already entrapped.

"Good day, little cousin," said he, approaching Fortunato; "how tall you have grown. Have you seen a man go past here just now?"

"Oh! I am not yet so tall as you, my cousin," replied the child with a simple air.

"You soon will be. But haven't you seen a man go by here, tell me?"

"If I have seen a man go by?"

"Yes, a man with a pointed hat of black velvet, and a vest embroidered with red and yellow."

"A man with a pointed hat, and a vest embroidered with red and yellow?"

"Yes, answer quickly, and don't repeat my questions?"

"This morning the curé passed before our door on his horse, Piero. He asked me how papa was, and I answered him—"

"Ah, you little scoundrel, you are playing sly! Tell me quickly which way Gianetto went? We are looking for him, and I am sure he took this path."

"Who knows?"

"Who knows? It is I know that you have seen him."

"Can any one see who passes when they are asleep?"

"You were not asleep, rascal; the shooting woke you up."

"Then you believe, cousin, that your guns make so much noise? My father's carbine has the advantage of them."

"The devil take you, you cursed little scapegrace! I am certain that you have seen Gianetto. Perhaps, even, you have hidden him. Come, comrades, go into the house and see if our man is there. He could only go on one foot, and the

knave has too much good sense to try to reach the m<sup>a</sup>quis limping like that. Moreover, the bloody tracks stop here.”

“And what will papa say?” asked Fortunato with a sneer; “what will he say if he knows that his house has been entered while he was away?”

“You rascal!” said the Adjutant, taking him by the ear, “do you know that it only remains for me to make you change your tone? Perhaps you will speak differently after I have given you twenty blows with the flat of my sword.”

Fortunato continued to sneer.

“My father is Mateo Falcone,” said he with emphasis.

“You little scamp, you know very well that I can carry you off to Corte or to Bastia. I will make you lie in a dungeon, on straw, with your feet in shackles, and I will have you guillotined if you don’t tell me where Gianetto is.”

The child burst out laughing at this ridiculous menace. He repeated:

“My father is Mateo Falcone.”

“Adjutant,” said one of the soldiers in a low voice, “let us have no quarrels with Mateo.”

Gamba appeared evidently embarrassed. He spoke in an undertone with the soldiers who had already visited the house. This was not a very long operation, for the cabin of a Corsican consists only of a single square room, furnished with a table, some benches, chests, housekeeping utensils and those of the chase. In the meantime, little Fortunato petted his cat and seemed to take a wicked enjoyment in the confusion of the soldiers and of his cousin.

One of the men approached the pile of hay. He saw the cat, and gave the pile a careless thrust with his bayonet, shrugging his shoulders as if he felt that his precaution was ridiculous. Nothing moved; the boy’s face betrayed not the slightest emotion.

The Adjutant and his troop were cursing their luck. Already they were looking in the direction of the plain, as if disposed to return by the way they had come, when their chief, convinced that menaces would produce no impression on Falcone’s son, determined to make a last effort, and try the effect of caresses and presents.

“My little cousin,” said he, “you are a very wide-awake little fellow. You will get along. But you are playing a naughty game with me; and if I wasn’t

afraid of making trouble for my cousin, Mateo, the devil take me! but I would carry you off with me.”

“Bah!”

“But when my cousin comes back I shall tell him about this, and he will whip you till the blood comes for having told such lies.”

“You don’t say so!”

“You will see. But hold on!—be a good boy and I will give you something.”

“Cousin, let me give you some advice: if you wait much longer Gianetto will be in the mâquis and it will take a smarter man than you to follow him.”

The Adjutant took from his pocket a silver watch worth about ten crowns, and noticing that Fortunato’s eyes sparkled at the sight of it, said, holding the watch by the end; of its steel chain:

“Rascal! you would like to have such a watch as that hung around your neck, wouldn’t you, and to walk in the streets of Porto-Vecchio proud as a peacock? People would ask you what time it was, and you would say: ‘Look at my watch.’”

“When I am grown up, my uncle, the Caporal, will give me a watch.”

“Yes; but your uncle’s little boy has one already; not so fine as this either. But then, he is younger than you.”

The child sighed.

“Well! Would you like this watch, little cousin?”

Fortunato, casting sidelong glances at the watch, resembled a cat that has been given a whole chicken. It feels that it is being made sport of, and does not dare to use its claws; from time to time it turns its eyes away so as not to be tempted, licking its jaws all the while, and has the appearance of saying to its master, “How cruel your joke is!”

However, the Adjutant seemed in earnest in offering his watch. Fortunato did not reach out his hand for it, but said with a bitter smile:

“Why do you make fun of me?”

“Good God! I am not making fun of you. Only tell me where Gianetto is and the watch is yours.”

Fortunato smiled incredulously, and fixing his black eyes on those of the Adjutant tried to read there the faith he ought to have had in his words.

“May I lose my epaulettes,” cried the Adjutant, “if I do not give you the watch on this condition. These comrades are witnesses; I can not deny it.”

While speaking he gradually held the watch nearer till it almost touched the child’s pale face, which plainly showed the struggle that was going on in his soul between covetousness and respect for hospitality. His breast swelled with emotion; he seemed about to suffocate. Meanwhile the watch was slowly swaying and turning, sometimes brushing against his cheek. Finally, his right hand was gradually stretched toward it; the ends of his fingers touched it; then its whole weight was in his hand, the Adjutant still keeping hold of the chain. The face was light blue; the cases newly burnished. In the sunlight it seemed to be all on fire. The temptation was too great. Fortunato raised his left hand and pointed over his shoulder with his thumb at the hay against which he was reclining. The Adjutant understood him at once. He dropped the end of the chain and Fortunato felt himself the sole possessor of the watch. He sprang up with the agility of a deer and stood ten feet from the pile, which the soldiers began at once to overturn.

There was a movement in the hay, and a bloody man with a poignard in his hand appeared. He tried to rise to his feet, but his stiffened leg would not permit it and he fell. The Adjutant at once grappled with him and took away his stiletto. He was immediately secured, notwithstanding his resistance.

Gianetto, lying on the earth and bound like a fagot, turned his head towards Fortunato, who had approached.

“Son of—!” said he, with more contempt than anger.

The child threw him the silver piece which he had received, feeling that he no longer deserved it; but the outlaw paid no attention to the movement, and with great coolness said to the Adjutant:

“My dear Gamba, I cannot walk; you will be obliged to carry me to the city.”

“Just now you could run faster than a buck,” answered the cruel captor; “but be at rest. I am so pleased to have you that I would carry you a league on my back without fatigue. Besides, comrade, we are going to make a litter for you with your cloak and some branches, and at the Crespoli farm we shall find horses.”

“Good,” said the prisoner, “You will also put a little straw on your litter that I may be more comfortable.”

While some of the soldiers were occupied in making a kind of stretcher out of some chestnut boughs and the rest were dressing Gianetto's wound, Mateo Falcone and his wife suddenly appeared at a turn in the path that led to the m<sup>â</sup>quis. The woman was staggering under the weight of an enormous sack of chestnuts, while her husband was sauntering along, carrying one gun in his hands, while another was slung across his shoulders, for it is unworthy of a man to carry other burdens than his arms.

At the sight of the soldiers Mateo's first thought was that they had come to arrest him. But why this thought? Had he then some quarrels with justice? No. He enjoyed a good reputation. He was said to have a particularly good name, but he was a Corsican and a highlander, and there are few Corsican highlanders who, in scrutinizing their memory, can not find some peccadillo, such as a gunshot, dagger-thrust, or similar trifles. Mateo more than others had a clear conscience; for more than ten years he had not pointed his carbine at a man, but he was always prudent, and put himself into a position to make a good defense if necessary. "Wife," said he to Giuseppa, "put down the sack and hold yourself ready."

She obeyed at once. He gave her the gun that was slung across his shoulders, which would have bothered him, and, cocking the one he held in his hands, advanced slowly towards the house, walking among the trees that bordered the road, ready at the least hostile demonstration, to hide behind the largest, whence he could fire from under cover. His wife followed closely behind, holding his reserve weapon and his cartridge-box. The duty of a good housekeeper, in case of a fight, is to load her husband's carbines.

On the other side the Adjutant was greatly troubled to see Mateo advance in this manner, with cautious steps, his carbine raised, and his finger on the trigger.

"If by chance," thought he, "Mateo should be related to Gianetto, or if he should be his friend and wish to defend him, the contents of his two guns would arrive amongst us as certainly as a letter in the post; and if he should see me, notwithstanding the relationship!"

In this perplexity he took a bold step. It was to advance alone towards Mateo and tell him of the affair while accosting him as an old acquaintance, but the short space that separated him from Mateo seemed terribly long.

"Hello! old comrade," cried he. "How do you do, my good fellow? It is I, Gamba, your cousin."

Without answering a word, Mateo stopped, and in proportion as the other spoke, slowly raised the muzzle of his gun so that it was pointing upward when the Adjutant joined him.

“Good-day, brother,” said the Adjutant, holding out his hand. “It is a long time since I have seen you.”

“Good-day, brother.”

“I stopped while passing, to say good-day to you and to cousin Pepa here. We have had a long journey to-day, but have no reason to complain, for we have captured a famous prize. We have just seized Gianetto Saupiero.”

“God be praised!” cried Giuseppa. “He stole a milch goat from us last week.”

These words reassured Gamba.

“Poor devil!” said Mateo, “he was hungry.”

“The villain fought like a lion,” continued the Adjutant, a little mortified. “He killed one of my soldiers, and not content with that, broke Caporal Chardon’s arm; but that matters little, he is only a Frenchman. Then, too, he was so well hidden that the devil couldn’t have found him. Without my little cousin, Fortunato, I should never have discovered him.”

“Fortunato!” cried Mateo.

“Fortunato!” repeated Giuseppa.

“Yes, Gianetto was hidden under the hay-pile yonder, but my little cousin showed me the trick. I shall tell his uncle, the Caporal, that he may send him a fine present for his trouble. Both his name and yours will be in the report that I shall send to the Attorney-general.”

“Malediction!” said Mateo in a low voice.

They had rejoined the detachment. Gianetto was already lying on the litter ready to set out. When he saw Mateo and Gamba in company he smiled a strange smile, then, turning his head towards the door of the house, he spat on the sill, saying:

“House of a traitor.”

Only a man determined to die would dare pronounce the word traitor to Falcone. A good blow with the stiletto, which there would be no need of repeating, would have immediately paid the insult. However, Mateo made no



other movement than to place his hand on his forehead like a man who is dazed.

Fortunato had gone into the house when his father arrived, but now he reappeared with a bowl of milk which he handed with downcast eyes to Gianetto.

“Get away from me!” cried the outlaw, in a loud voice. Then, turning to one of the soldiers, he said:

“Comrade, give me a drink.”

The soldier placed his gourd in his hands, and the prisoner drank the water handed to him by a man with whom he had just exchanged bullets. He then asked them to tie his hands across his breast instead of behind his back.

“I like,” said he, “to lie at my ease.”

They hastened to satisfy him; then the Adjutant gave the signal to start, said adieu to Mateo, who did not respond, and descended with rapid steps towards the plain.

Nearly ten minutes elapsed before Mateo spoke. The child looked with restless eyes, now at his mother, now at his father, who was leaning on his gun and gazing at him with an expression of concentrated rage.

“You begin well,” said Mateo at last with a calm voice, but frightful to one who knew the man.

“Oh, father!” cried the boy, bursting into tears, and making a forward movement as if to throw himself on his knees. But Mateo cried, “Away from me!”

The little fellow stopped and sobbed, immovable, a few feet from his father.

Giuseppa drew near. She had just discovered the watch-chain, the end of which was hanging out of Fortunato’s jacket.

“Who gave you that watch?” demanded she in a severe tone.

“My cousin, the Adjutant.”

Falcone seized the watch and smashed it in a thousand pieces against a rock.

“Wife,” said he, “is this my child?”

Giuseppa’s cheeks turned a brick-red.

“What are you saying, Mateo? Do you know to whom you speak?”

“Very well, this child is the first of his race to commit treason.”

Fortunato’s sobs and gasps redoubled as Falcone kept his lynx-eyes upon him. Then he struck the earth with his gun-stock, shouldered the weapon, and turned in the direction of the mâquis, calling to Fortunato to follow. The boy obeyed. Giuseppa hastened after Mateo and seized his arm.

“He is your son,” said she with a trembling voice, fastening her black eyes on those of her husband to read what was going on in his heart.

“Leave me alone,” said Mateo, “I am his father.”

Giuseppa embraced her son, and bursting into tears entered the house. She threw herself on her knees before an image of the Virgin and prayed ardently. In the meanwhile Falcone walked some two hundred paces along the path and only stopped when he reached a little ravine which he descended. He tried the earth with the butt-end of his carbine, and found it soft and easy to dig. The place seemed to be convenient for his design.

“Fortunato, go close to that big rock there.”

The child did as he was commanded, then he kneeled.

“Say your prayers.”

“Oh, father, father, do not kill me!”

“Say your prayers!” repeated Mateo in a terrible voice.

The boy, stammering and sobbing, recited the Pater and the Credo. At the end of each prayer the father loudly answered, “Amen!”

“Are those all the prayers you know?”

“Oh! father, I know the Ave Maria and the litany that my aunt taught me.”

“It is very long, but no matter.”

The child finished the litany in a scarcely audible tone.

“Are you finished?”

“Oh! my father, have mercy! Pardon me! I will never do so again. I will beg my cousin, the Caporal, to pardon Gianetto.”

He was still speaking. Mateo raised his gun, and, taking aim, said:

“May God pardon you!”

The boy made a desperate effort to rise and grasp his father’s knees, but there was not time. Mateo fired and Fortunato fell dead.

Without casting a glance on the body, Mateo returned to the house for a spade with which to bury his son. He had gone but a few steps when he met Giuseppa, who, alarmed by the shot, was hastening hither.

“What have you done?” cried she.

“Justice.”

“Where is he?”

“In the ravine. I am going to bury him. He died a Christian. I shall have a mass said for him. Have my son-in-law, Tiodoro Bianchi, sent for to come and live with us.”

## THE MIRROR By Catulle Mendes

There was once a kingdom where mirrors were unknown. They had all been broken and reduced to fragments by order of the queen, and if the tiniest bit of looking-glass had been found in any house, she would not have hesitated to put all the inmates to death with the most frightful tortures.

Now for the secret of this extraordinary caprice. The queen was dreadfully ugly, and she did not wish to be exposed to the risk of meeting her own image; and, knowing herself to be hideous, it was a consolation to know that other women at least could not see that they were pretty.

You may imagine that the young girls of the country were not at all satisfied. What was the use of being beautiful if you could not admire yourself?

They might have used the brooks and lakes for mirrors; but the queen had foreseen that, and had hidden all of them under closely joined flagstones. Water was drawn from wells so deep that it was impossible to see the liquid surface, and shallow basins must be used instead of buckets, because in the latter there might be reflections.

Such a dismal state of affairs, especially for the pretty coquettes, who were no more rare in this country than in others.

The queen had no compassion, being well content that her subjects should suffer as much annoyance from the lack of a mirror as she felt at the sight of one.

However, in a suburb of the city there lived a young girl called Jacinta, who was a little better off than the rest, thanks to her sweetheart, Valentin. For if someone thinks you are beautiful, and loses no chance to tell you so, he is almost as good as a mirror.

“Tell me the truth,” she would say; “what is the color of my eyes?”

“They are like dewy forget-me-nots.”

“And my skin is not quite black?”

“You know that your forehead is whiter than freshly fallen snow, and your cheeks are like blush roses.”

“How about my lips?”

“Cherries are pale beside them.”

“And my teeth, if you please?”

“Grains of rice are not as white.”

“But my ears, should I be ashamed of them?”

“Yes, if you would be ashamed of two little pink shells among your pretty curls.”

And so on endlessly; she delighted, he still more charmed, for his words came from the depth of his heart and she had the pleasure of hearing herself praised, he the delight of seeing her. So their love grew more deep and tender every hour, and the day that he asked her to marry him she blushed certainly, but it was not with anger. But, unluckily, the news of their happiness reached the wicked queen, whose only pleasure was to torment others, and Jacinta more than anyone else, on account of her beauty.

A little while before the marriage Jacinta was walking in the orchard one evening, when an old crone approached, asking for alms, but suddenly jumped back with a shriek as if she had stepped on a toad, crying: “Heavens, what do I see?”

“What is the matter, my good woman? What is it you see? Tell me.”

“The ugliest creature I ever beheld.”

“Then you are not looking at me,” said Jacinta, with innocent vanity.

“Alas! yes, my poor child, it is you. I have been a long time on this earth, but never have I met anyone so hideous as you!”

“What! am I ugly?”

“A hundred times uglier than I can tell you.”

“But my eyes—”

“They are a sort of dirty gray; but that would be nothing if you had not such an outrageous squint!”

“My complexion—”

“It looks as if you had rubbed coal-dust on your forehead and cheeks.”

“My mouth—”

“It is pale and withered, like a faded flower.”

“My teeth—”

“If the beauty of teeth is to be large and yellow, I never saw any so beautiful as yours.”

“But, at least, my ears—”

“They are so big, so red, and so misshapen, under your coarse elf-locks, that they are revolting. I am not pretty myself, but I should die of shame if mine were like them.” After this last blow, the old witch, having repeated what the queen had taught her, hobbled off, with a harsh croak of laughter, leaving poor Jacinta dissolved in tears, prone on the ground beneath the apple-trees.

Nothing could divert her mind from her grief. “I am ugly—I am ugly,” she repeated constantly. It was in vain that Valentin assured and reassured her with the most solemn oaths. “Let me alone; you are lying out of pity. I understand it all now; you never loved me; you are only sorry for me. The beggar woman had no interest in deceiving me. It is only too true—I am ugly. I do not see how you can endure the sight of me.”

To undeceive her, he brought people from far and near; every man declared that Jacinta was created to delight the eyes; even the women said as much, though they were less enthusiastic. But the poor child persisted in her conviction that she was a repulsive object, and when Valentin pressed her to name their wedding-day—“I, your wife!” cried she. “Never! I love you too dearly to burden you with a being so hideous as I am.” You can fancy the despair of the poor fellow so sincerely in love. He threw himself on his knees; he prayed; he supplicated; she answered still that she was too ugly to marry him.

What was he to do? The only way to give the lie to the old woman and prove the truth to Jacinta was to put a mirror before her. But there was no such thing in the kingdom, and so great was the terror inspired by the queen that no workman dared make one.

“Well, I shall go to Court,” said the lover, in despair. “Harsh as our mistress is, she cannot fail to be moved by the tears and the beauty of Jacinta. She will retract, for a few hours at least, this cruel edict which has caused our trouble.”

It was not without difficulty that he persuaded the young girl to let him take her to the palace. She did not like to show herself, and asked of what use would be a mirror, only to impress her more deeply with her misfortune; but when he wept, her heart was moved, and she consented, to please him.

“What is all this?” said the wicked queen. “Who are these people? and what do they want?”

“Your Majesty, you have before you the most unfortunate lover on the face of the earth.”

“Do you consider that a good reason for coming here to annoy me?”

“Have pity on me.”

“What have I to do with your love affairs?”

“If you would permit a mirror——”

The queen rose to her feet, trembling with rage. “Who dares to speak to me of a mirror?” she said, grinding her teeth.

“Do not be angry, your Majesty, I beg of you, and deign to hear me. This young girl whom you see before you, so fresh and pretty, is the victim of a strange delusion. She imagines that she is ugly.”

“Well,” said the queen, with a malicious grin, “she is right. I never saw a more hideous object.”

Jacinta, at these cruel words, thought she would die of mortification. Doubt was no longer possible, she must be ugly. Her eyes closed, she fell on the steps of the throne in a deadly swoon.

But Valentin was affected very differently. He cried out loudly that her Majesty must be mad to tell such a lie. He had no time to say more. The guards seized him, and at a sign from the queen the headsman came forward. He was always beside the throne, for she might need his services at any moment.

“Do your duty,” said the queen, pointing out the man who had insulted her. The executioner raised his gleaming axe just as Jacinta came to herself and opened her eyes. Then two shrieks pierced the air. One was a cry of joy, for in the glittering steel Jacinta saw herself, so charmingly pretty—and the other a scream of anguish, as the wicked soul of the queen took flight, unable to bear the sight of her face in the impromptu mirror.

## MY NEPHEW JOSEPH By Ludovic Halevy

*(Scene passes at Versailles; two old gentlemen are conversing, seated on a bench in the King's garden.)*

Journalism, my dear Monsieur, is the evil of the times. I tell you what, if I had a son, I would hesitate a long while before giving him a literary education. I would have him learn chemistry, mathematics, fencing, cosmography, swimming, drawing, but not composition—no, not composition. Then, at least, he would be prevented from becoming a journalist. It is so easy, so tempting. They take pen and paper and write, it doesn't matter what, apropos to it doesn't matter what, and you have a newspaper article. In order to become a watchmaker, a lawyer, an upholsterer, in short, all the liberal arts, study, application, and a special kind of knowledge are necessary; but nothing like that is required for a journalist."

"You are perfectly right, my dear Monsieur, the profession of journalism should be restricted by examinations, the issuing of warrants, the granting of licenses—"

"And they could pay well for their licenses, these gentlemen. Do you know that journalism is become very profitable? There are some young men in it who, all at once, without a fixed salary, and no capital whatever, make from ten, twenty to thirty thousand francs a year."

"Now, that is strange! But how do they become journalists?"

"Ah! It appears they generally commence by being reporters. Reporters slip in everywhere, in official gatherings, and theatres, never missing a first night, nor a fire, nor a great ball, nor a murder."

"How well acquainted you are with all this!"

"Yes, very well acquainted. Ah! Mon Dieu! You are my friend, you will keep my secret, and if you will not repeat this in Versailles—I will tell you how it is—we have one in the family."

"One what?"

"A reporter."

"A reporter in your family, which always seemed so united! How can that be?"

"One can almost say that the devil was at the bottom of it. You know my nephew Joseph—"



“Little Joseph! Is he a reporter?”

“Yes.”

“Little Joseph, I can see him in the park now, rolling a hoop, bare-legged, with a broad white collar, not more than six or seven years ago—and now he writes for newspapers!”

“Yes, newspapers! You know my brother keeps a pharmacy in the Rue Montorgueil, an old and reliable firm, and naturally my brother said to himself, ‘After me, my son.’ Joseph worked hard at chemistry, followed the course of study, and had already passed an examination. The boy was steady and industrious, and had a taste for the business. On Sundays for recreation he made tinctures, prepared prescriptions, pasted the labels and rolled pills. When, as misfortune would have it, a murder was committed about twenty feet from my brother’s pharmacy—”

“The murder of the Rue Montorgueil—that clerk who killed his sweetheart, a little brewery maid?”

“The very same. Joseph was attracted by the cries, saw the murderer arrested, and after the police were gone stayed there in the street, talking and jabbering. The Saturday before, Joseph had a game of billiards with the murderer.”

“With the murderer!”

“Oh! accidentally—he knew him by sight, went to the same café, that’s all, and they had played at pool together, Joseph and the murderer—a man named Nicot. Joseph told this to the crowd, and you may well imagine how important that made him, when suddenly a little blond man seized him. ‘You know the murderer?’ ‘A little, not much; I played pool with him.’ ‘And do you know the motive of the crime?’ ‘It was love, Monsieur, love; Nicot had met a girl, named Eugénie—’ ‘You knew the victim, too?’ ‘Only by sight, she was there in the café the night we played.’ ‘Very well; but don’t tell that to anybody; come, come, quick.’ He took possession of Joseph and made him get into a cab, which went rolling off at great speed down the Boulevard des Italiens. Ten minutes after, Joseph found himself in a hall where there was a big table, around which five or six young men were writing. ‘Here is a fine sensation,’ said the little blond on entering. ‘The best kind of a murder! a murder for love, in the Rue Montorgueil, and I have here the murderer’s most intimate friend.’ ‘No, not at all,’ cried Joseph, ‘I scarcely know him.’ ‘Be still,’ whispered the little blond to Joseph; then he continued, ‘Yes, his most intimate friend. They were brought up together, and a quarter of an hour before the crime was committed were playing billiards. The murderer won, he was perfectly calm——’ ‘That’s not it,

it was last Saturday that I played with——’ ‘Be still, will you! A quarter of an hour, it is more to the point. Let’s go. Come, come.’ He took Joseph into a small room where they were alone, and said to him: ‘That affair ought to make about a hundred lines—you talk—I’ll write—there will be twenty francs for you.’ ‘Twenty francs!’ ‘Yes, and here they are in advance; but be quick, to business!’ Joseph told all he knew to the gentleman—how an old and retired Colonel, who lived in the house where the murder was committed, was the first to hear the victim’s cries; but he was paralyzed in both limbs, this old Colonel, and could only ring for the servant, an old cuirassier, who arrested the assassin. In short, with all the information concerning the game of billiards, Eugénie and the paralytic old Colonel, the man composed his little article, and sent Joseph away with twenty francs. Do you think it ended there?”

“I don’t think anything—I am amazed! Little Joseph a reporter!”

“Hardly had Joseph stepped outside, when another man seized him—a tall, dark fellow. ‘I’ve been watching for you,’ he said to Joseph. ‘You were present when the murder was committed in the Rue Montorgueil!’ ‘Why, no, I was not present——’ ‘That will do. I am well informed, come.’ ‘Where to?’ ‘To my newspaper office.’ ‘What for?’ ‘To tell me about the murder.’ ‘But I’ve already told all I know, there, in that house.’ ‘Come, you will still remember a few more little incidents—and I will give you twenty francs.’ ‘Twenty francs!’ ‘Come, come.’ Another hall, another table, more young men writing, and again Joseph was interrogated. He recommenced the history of the old Colonel. ‘Is that what you told them down there?’ inquired the tall, dark man of Joseph. ‘Yes, Monsieur.’ ‘That needs some revision, then.’ And the tall, dark man made up a long story. How this old Colonel had been paralyzed for fourteen years, but on hearing the victim’s heartrending screams, received such a shock that all at once, as if by a miracle, had recovered the use of his legs; and it was he who had started out in pursuit of the murderer and had him arrested.

“While dashing this off with one stroke of his pen, the man exclaimed: ‘Good! this is perfect! a hundred times better than the other account.’ ‘Yes,’ said Joseph, ‘but it is not true.’ ‘Not true for you, because you are acquainted with the affair; but for our hundred thousand readers, who do not know about it, it will be true enough. They were not there, those hundred thousand readers. What do they want? A striking account—well! they shall have it!’ And thereupon he discharged Joseph, who went home with his forty francs, and who naturally did not boast of his escapade. It is only of late that he has acknowledged it. However, from that day Joseph has shown less interest in the pharmacy. He bought a number of penny papers, and shut himself up in his room to write—no one knows what. At last he wore a business-like aspect,

which was very funny. About six months ago I went to Paris to collect the dividends on my Northern stock.”

“The Northern is doing very well; it went up this week——”

“Oh! it’s good stock. Well, I had collected my dividends and had left the Northern Railway Station. It was beautiful weather, so I walked slowly down the Rue Lafayette. (I have a habit of strolling a little in Paris after I have collected my dividends.) When at the corner of the Faubourg Montmartre, whom should I see but my nephew, Joseph, all alone in a victoria, playing the fine gentleman. I saw very well that he turned his head away, the vagabond! But I overtook the carriage and stopped the driver. ‘What are you doing there?’ ‘A little drive, uncle.’ ‘Wait, I will go with you,’ and in I climbed. ‘Hurry up,’ said the driver, ‘or I’ll lose the trail.’ ‘What trail?’ ‘Why, the two cabs we are following.’ The man drove at a furious rate, and I asked Joseph why he was there in that victoria, following two cabs. ‘Mon Dieu, uncle,’ he replied, ‘there was a foreigner, a Spaniard, who came to our place in the Rue Montorgueil and bought a large amount of drugs, and has not paid us, so I am going after him to find out if he has not given us a wrong address.’ ‘And that Spaniard is in both the cabs?’ ‘No, uncle, he is only in one, the first.’ ‘And who is in the second?’ ‘I don’t know, probably another creditor, like myself, in pursuit of the Spaniard.’ ‘Well, I am going to stay with you; I have two hours to myself before the train leaves at five o’clock and I adore this sort of thing, riding around Paris in an open carriage. Let’s follow the Spaniard!’ And then the chase commenced, down the boulevards, across the squares, through the streets, the three drivers cracking their whips and urging their horses on. This man-hunt began to get exciting. It recalled to my mind the romances in the *Petit Journal*. Finally, in a little street, belonging to the Temple Quarter, the first cab stopped.”

“The Spaniard?”

“Yes. A man got out of it—he had a large hat drawn down over his eyes and a big muffler wrapped about his neck. Presently three gentlemen, who had jumped from the second cab, rushed upon that man. I wanted to do the same, but Joseph tried to prevent me. ‘Don’t stir, uncle!’ ‘Why not? But they are going to deprive us of the Spaniard!’ And I dashed forward. ‘Take care, uncle, don’t be mixed up in that affair.’ But I was already gone. When I arrived they were putting the handcuffs on the Spaniard. I broke through the crowd which had collected, and cried, ‘Wait, Messieurs, wait; I also demand a settlement with this man.’ They made way for me. ‘You know this man?’ asked one of the gentlemen from the second cab, a short, stout fellow. ‘Perfectly; he is a Spaniard.’ ‘I a Spaniard!’ ‘Yes, a Spaniard.’ ‘Good,’ said the short, stout man,

‘Here’s the witness!’ and, addressing himself to one of the men, ‘Take Monsieur to the Prefecture immediately.’ ‘But I have not the time; I live in Versailles; my wife expects me by the five o’clock train, and we have company to dinner, and I must take home a pie. I will come back to-morrow at any hour you wish.’ ‘No remarks,’ said the short, stout man, ‘but be off; I am the Police Commissioner.’ ‘But, Monsieur the Commissioner, I know nothing about it; it is my nephew Joseph who will tell you,’ and I called ‘Joseph! Joseph!’ but no Joseph came.”

“He had decamped?”

“With the victoria. They packed me in one of the two cabs with the detective, a charming man and very distinguished. Arriving at the Prefecture, they deposited me in a small apartment filled with vagabonds, criminals, and low, ignorant people. An hour after they came for me in order to bring me up for examination.”

“You were brought up for examination?”

“Yes, my dear Monsieur, I was. A policeman conducted me through the Palais de Justice, before the magistrate, a lean man, who asked me my name and address. I replied that I lived in Versailles, and that I had company to dinner; he interrupted me, ‘You know the prisoner?’ pointing to the man with the muffler, ‘Speak up.’ But he questioned me so threateningly that I became disconcerted, for I felt that he was passing judgment upon me. Then in my embarrassment the words did not come quickly. I finished, moreover, by telling him that I knew the man without knowing him; then he became furious: ‘What’s that you say? You know a man without knowing him! At least explain yourself!’ I was all of a tremble, and said that I knew he was a Spaniard, but the man replied that he was not a Spaniard. ‘Well, well,’ said the Judge. ‘Denial, always denial; it is your way.’ ‘I tell you that my name is Rigaud, and that I was born in Josey, in Josas; they are not Spaniards that are born in Josey, in Josas.’ ‘Always contradiction; very good, very good!’ And the Judge addressed himself to me. ‘Then this man is a Spaniard?’ ‘Yes, Monsieur the Judge, so I have been told.’ ‘Do you know anything more about him?’ ‘I know he made purchases at my brother’s pharmacy in the Rue Montorgueil.’ ‘At a pharmacy! and he bought, did he not, some chlorate of potash, azotite of potash, and sulphur powder; in a word, materials to manufacture explosives.’ ‘I don’t know what he bought. I only know that he did not pay, that’s all.’ ‘Parbleau! Anarchists never pay—’ ‘I did not need to pay. I never bought chlorate of potash in the Rue Montorgueil,’ cried the man; but the Judge exclaimed, louder still, ‘Yes, it is your audacious habit of lying, but I will sift this matter to the bottom; sift it, do you understand. And now why is that muffler on in the month

of May?’ ‘I have a cold,’ replied the other. ‘Haven’t I the right to have a cold?’ ‘That is very suspicious, very suspicious. I am going to send for the druggist in the Rue Montorgueil!’”

“Then they sent for your brother?”

“Yes; I wanted to leave, tried to explain to the Judge that my wife was expecting me in Versailles, that I had already missed the five o’clock train, that I had company to dinner, and must bring home a pie. ‘You shall not go,’ replied the Judge, ‘and cease to annoy me with your dinner and your pie; I will need you for a second examination. The affair is of the gravest sort.’ I tried to resist, but they led me away somewhat roughly, and thrust me again into the little apartment with the criminals. After waiting an hour I was brought up for another examination. My brother was there. But we could not exchange two words, for he entered the courtroom by one door and I by another. All this was arranged perfectly. The man with the muffler was again brought out. The Judge addressed my brother. ‘Do you recognize the prisoner?’ ‘No.’ ‘Ah! you see he does not know me!’ ‘Be silent!’ said the Judge, and he continued talking excitedly: ‘You know the man?’ ‘Certainly not.’ ‘Think well; you ought to know him.’ ‘I tell you, no.’ ‘I tell you, yes, and that he bought some chlorate of potash from you.’ ‘No!’ ‘Ah!’ cried the Judge, in a passion. ‘Take care, weigh well your words; you are treading on dangerous ground.’ ‘I!’ exclaimed my brother. ‘Yes, for there is your brother; you recognize him, I think.’ ‘Yes, I recognize him.’ ‘That is fortunate. Well, your brother there says that man owes you money for having bought at your establishment—I specify—materials to manufacture explosives.’ ‘But you did not say that.’ ‘No, I wish to re-establish the facts.’ But that Judge would give no one a chance to speak. ‘Don’t interrupt me. Who is conducting this examination, you or I?’ ‘You, Monsieur the Judge?’ ‘Well, at all events, you said the prisoner owed your brother some money.’ ‘That I acknowledge.’ ‘But who told you all this?’ asked my brother. ‘Your son, Joseph!’ ‘Joseph!’ ‘He followed the man for the sake of the money, which he owed you for the drugs.’ ‘I understand nothing of all this,’ said my brother; ‘Neither do I,’ said the man with the muffler; ‘Neither do I,’ I repeated in my turn; ‘Neither do I any more,’ cried the Judge; ‘Or rather, yes, there is something that I understand very well; we have captured a gang, all these men understand one another, and side with one another; they are a band of Anarchists!’ ‘That is putting it too strong,’ I protested to the Judge, ‘I, a landowner, an Anarchist! Can a man be an Anarchist when he owns a house on the Boulevard de la Reine at Versailles and a cottage at Houlgate, Calvados? These are facts.’”

“That was well answered.”

“But this Judge would not listen to anything. He said to my brother, ‘Where does your son live?’ ‘With me in the Rue Montorgueil.’ ‘Well, he must be sent for; and in the meanwhile, these two brothers are to be placed in separate cells.’ Then, losing patience, I cried that this was infamy! But I felt myself seized and dragged through the corridors and locked in a little box four feet square. In there I passed three hours.”

“Didn’t they find your nephew Joseph?”

“No, it was not that. It was the Judge. He went off to his dinner, and took his time about it! Finally, at midnight, they had another examination. Behold all four of us before the Judge! The man with the muffler, myself, my brother and Joseph. The Judge began, addressing my nephew: ‘This man is indeed your father?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘This man is indeed your uncle?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘And that man is indeed the Spaniard who purchased some chlorate of potash from you?’ ‘No.’ ‘What! No?’ ‘There,’ exclaimed the fellow with the muffler. ‘You can see now that these men do not know me.’ ‘Yes, yes,’ answered the Judge, not at all disconcerted. ‘Denial again! Let’s see, young man, did you not say to your uncle——’ ‘Yes, Monsieur the Judge, that is true.’ ‘Ah! the truth! Here is the truth!’ exclaimed the Judge, triumphantly. ‘Yes, I told my uncle that the man purchased drugs from us, but that is not so.’ ‘Why isn’t it?’ ‘Wait, I will tell you. Unknown to my family I am a journalist.’ ‘Journalist! My son a journalist! Don’t believe that, Monsieur the Judge, my son is an apprentice in a pharmacy.’ ‘Yes, my nephew is an apprentice in a pharmacy,’ I echoed. ‘These men contradict themselves; this is a gang, decidedly a gang—are you a journalist, young man, or an apprentice in a pharmacy?’ ‘I am both.’ ‘That is a lie!’ cried my brother, now thoroughly angry. ‘And for what newspaper do you write?’ ‘For no paper at all,’ replied my brother, ‘I know that, for he is not capable.’ ‘I do not exactly write, Monsieur the Judge; I procure information; I am a reporter.’ ‘Reporter! My son a reporter? What’s that he says?’ ‘Will you be still!’ cried the Judge. ‘For what newspaper are you a reporter?’ Joseph told the name of the paper. ‘Well,’ resumed the Judge, ‘we must send for the chief editor immediately—immediately, he must be awakened and brought here. I will pass the night at court. I’ve discovered a great conspiracy. Lead these men away and keep them apart.’ The Judge beamed, for he already saw himself Court Counsellor. They brought us back, and I assure you I no longer knew where I was. I came and went up and down the staircases and through the corridors. If anyone had asked me at the time if I were an accomplice of Ravachol, I would have answered, ‘Probably.’”

“When did all this take place?”

“One o’clock in the morning; and the fourth examination did not take place until two. But, thank Heaven! in five minutes it was all made clear. The editor of the newspaper arrived, and burst into a hearty laugh when he learned of the condition of affairs; and this is what he told the Judge. My nephew had given them the particulars of a murder, and had been recompensed for it, and then the young man had acquired a taste for that occupation, and had come to apply for the situation. They had found him clear-headed, bold, and intelligent, and had sent him to take notes at the executions, at fires, etc., and the morning after the editor had a good idea. ‘The detectives were on the lookout for Anarchists, so I sent my reporters on the heels of each detective, and in this way I would be the first to hear of all the arrests. Now, you see, it all explains itself; the detective followed an Anarchist.’”

“And your nephew Joseph followed the detective?”

“Yes, but he dared not tell the truth, so he told me he was one of papa’s debtors.’ The man with the muffler was triumphant. ‘Am I still a Spaniard?’ ‘No, well and good,’ replied the Judge. ‘But an Anarchist is another thing.’ And in truth he was; but he only held one, that Judge, and was so vexed because he believed he had caught a whole gang, and was obliged to discharge us at four o’clock in the morning. I had to take a carriage to return to Versailles—got one for thirty francs. But found my poor wife in such a state!”

“And your nephew still clings to journalism?”

“Yes, and makes money for nothing but to ride about Paris that way in a cab, and to the country in the railway trains. The newspaper men are satisfied with him.”

“What does your brother say to all this?”

“He began by turning him out of doors. But when he knew that some months he made two and three hundred francs, he softened; and then Joseph is as cute as a monkey. You know my brother invented a cough lozenge, ‘Dervishes’ lozenges’?”

“Yes, you gave me a box of them.”

“Ah! so I did. Well, Joseph found means to introduce into the account of a murderer’s arrest an advertisement of his father’s lozenges.”—“How did he do it?”

“He told how the murderer was hidden in a panel, and that he could not be found. But having the influenza, had sneezed, and that had been the means of his capture. And Joseph added that this would not have happened to him had he

taken the Dervishes Lozenges. You see that pleased my brother so much that he forgave him. Ah! there is my wife coming to look for me. Not a word of all this! It is not necessary to repeat that there is a reporter in the family, and there is another reason for not telling it. When I want to sell off to the people of Versailles, I go and find Joseph and tell him of my little plan. He arranges everything for me as it should be, puts it in the paper quietly, and they don't know how it comes there!"



## A FOREST BETROTHAL By Erckmann-Chatrian

One day in the month of June, 1845, Master Zacharias' fishing-basket was so full of salmon-trout, about three o'clock in the afternoon, that the good man was loath to take any more; for, as Pathfinder says: "We must leave some for to-morrow!" After having washed his in a stream and carefully covered them with field-sorrel and rowell, to keep them fresh; after having wound up his line and bathed his hands and face; a sense of drowsiness tempted him to take a nap in the heather. The heat was so excessive that he preferred to wait until the shadows lengthened before reclimbing the steep ascent of Bigelberg.

Breaking his crust of bread and wetting his lips with a draught of Rikevir, he climbed down fifteen or twenty steps from the path and stretched himself on the moss-covered ground, under the shade of the pine-trees; his eyelids heavy with sleep.

A thousand animate creatures had lived their long life of an hour, when the judge was wakened by the whistle of a bird, which sounded strange to him. He sat up to look around, and judge his surprise; the so-called bird was a young girl of seventeen or eighteen years of age; fresh, with rosy cheeks and vermilion lips, brown hair, which hung in two long tresses behind her. A short poppy-colored skirt, with a tightly-laced bodice, completed her costume. She was a young peasant, who was rapidly descending the sandy path down the side of Bigelberg, a basket poised on her head, and her arms a little sunburned, but plump, were gracefully resting on her hips.

"Oh, what a charming bird; but she whistles well and her pretty chin, round like a peach, is sweet to look upon."

Mr. Zacharias was all emotion—a rush of hot blood, which made his heart beat, as it did at twenty, coursed through his veins. Blushing, he arose to his feet.

"Good-day, my pretty one!" he said.

The young girl stopped short—opened her big eyes and recognized him (for who did not know the dear old Judge Zacharias in that part of the country?).

"Ah!" she said, with a bright smile, "it is Mr. Zacharias Seiler!"

The old man approached her—he tried to speak—but all he could do was to stammer a few unintelligible words, just like a very young man—his embarrassment was so great that he completely disconcerted the young girl. At last he managed to say:

“Where are you going through the forest at this hour, my dear child?”

She stretched out her hand and showed him, way at the end of the valley, a forester’s house.

“I am returning to my father’s house, the Corporal Yeri Foerster. You know him, without doubt, Monsieur le Juge.”

“What, are you our brave Yeri’s daughter? Ah, do I know him? A very worthy man. Then you are little Charlotte of whom he has often spoken to me when he came with his official reports?”

“Yes, Monsieur; I have just come from the town and am returning home.”

“That is a very pretty bunch of Alpine berries you have,” exclaimed the old man.

She detached the bouquet from her belt and tendered it to him.

“If it would please you, Monsieur Seiler.”

Zacharias was touched.

“Yes, indeed,” he said, “I will accept it, and I will accompany you home. I am anxious to see this brave Foerster again. He must be getting old by now.”

“He is about your age, Monsieur le Juge,” said Charlotte innocently, “between fifty-five and sixty years of age.”

This simple speech recalled the good man to his senses, and as he walked beside her he became pensive.

What was he thinking of? Nobody could tell; but how many times, how many times has it happened that a brave and worthy man, thinking that he had fulfilled all his duties, finds that he has neglected the greatest, the most sacred, the most beautiful of all—that of love. And what it costs him to think of it when it is too late.

Soon Mr. Zacharias and Charlotte came to the turn of the valley where the path spanned a little pond by means of a rustic bridge, and led straight to the corporal’s house. They could now see Yeri Foerster, his large felt hat decorated with a twig of heather, his calm eyes, his brown cheeks and grayish hair, seated on the stone bench near his doorway; two beautiful hunting dogs, with reddish-brown coats, lay at his feet, and the high vine arbor behind him rose to the peak of the gable roof.

The shadows on Romelstein were lengthening and the setting sun spread its purple fringe behind the high fir-trees on Alpnach.

The old corporal, whose eyes were as piercing as an eagle's, recognized Monsieur Zacharias and his daughter from afar. He came toward them, lifting his felt hat respectfully.

"Welcome, Monsieur le Juge," he said in the frank and cordial voice of a mountaineer; "what happy circumstance has procured me the honor of a visit?"

"Master Yeri," replied the good man, "I am belated in your mountains. Have you a vacant corner at your table and a bed at the disposition of a friend?"

"Ah!" cried the corporal, "if there were but one bed in the house, should it not be at the service of the best, the most honored of our ex-magistrates of Stantz? Monsieur Seiler, what an honor you confer on Yeri Foerster's humble home."

"Christine, Christine! Monsieur le Juge Zacharias Seiler wishes to sleep under our roof to-night."

Then a little old woman, her face wrinkled like a vine leaf, but still fresh and laughing, her head crowned by a cap with wide black ribbons, appeared on the threshold and disappeared again, murmuring:

"What? Is it possible? Monsieur le Juge!"

"My good people," said Mr. Zacharias, "truly you do me too much honor—I hope—"

"Monsieur le Juge, if you forget the favors you have done to others, they remember them."

Charlotte placed her basket on the table, feeling very proud at having been the means of bringing so distinguished a visitor to the house. She took out the sugar, the coffee and all the little odds and ends of household provisions which she had purchased in the town. And Zacharias, gazing at her pretty profile, felt himself agitated once more, his poor old heart beat more quickly in his bosom and seemed to say to him: "This is love, Zacharias! This is love! This is love!"

To tell you the truth, my dear friends, Mr. Seiler spent the evening with the Head Forester, Yeri Foerster, perfectly oblivious to the fact of Therese's uneasiness, to his promise to return before seven o'clock, to all his old habits of order and submission.

Picture to yourself the large room, the time-browned rafters of the ceiling, the windows opened on the silent valley, the round table in the middle of the room, covered with a white cloth, with red stripes running through it; the light from the lamp, bringing out more clearly the grave faces of Zacharias and Yeri, the rosy, laughing features of Charlotte, and Dame Christine's little cap, with long fluttering streamers. Picture to yourself the soup-tureen, with gayly-flowered bowl, from which arose an appetising odor, the dish of trout garnished with parsley, the plates filled with fruits and little meal cakes as yellow as gold; then worthy Father Zacharias, handing first one and then the other of the plates of fruit and cakes to Charlotte, who lowered her eyes, frightened at the old man's compliments and tender speeches.

Yeri was quite puffed up at his praise, but Dame Christine said: "Ah, Monsieur le Juge! You are too good. You do not know how much trouble this little girl gives us, or how headstrong she is when she wants anything. You will spoil her with so many compliments."

To which speech Mr. Zacharias made reply:

"Dame Christine, you possess a treasure! Mademoiselle Charlotte merits all the good I have said of her."

Then Master Yeri, raising his glass, cried out: "Let us drink to the health of our good and venerated Judge Zacharias Seiler!"

The toast was drunk with a will.

Just then the clock, in its hoarse voice, struck the hour of eleven. Out of doors there was the great silence of the forest, the grasshopper's last cry, the vague murmur of the river. As the hour sounded, they rose, preparatory to retiring. How fresh and agile he felt! With what ardor, had he dared, would he not have pressed a kiss upon Charlotte's little hand! Oh, but he must not think of that now! Later on, perhaps!

"Come, Master Yeri," he said, "it is bedtime. Good-night, and many thanks for your hospitality."

"At what hour do you wish to rise, Monsieur?" asked Christine.

"Oh!" he replied gazing at Charlotte, "I am an early bird. I do not feel my age, though perhaps you might not think so. I rise at five o'clock."

"Like me, Monsieur Seiler," cried the Head Forester. I rise before daybreak; but I must confess it is tiresome all the same—we are no longer young. Ha! Ha!"

“Bah! I have never had anything ail me, Master Forester; I have never been more vigorous or more nimble.”

And suiting his actions to his words, he ran briskly up the steep steps of the staircase. Really Mr. Zacharias was no more than twenty; but his twenty years lasted about twenty minutes, and once nestled in the large canopied bed, with the covers drawn up to his chin and his handkerchief tied around his head, in lieu of a nightcap, he said to himself:

“Sleep Zacharias! Sleep! You have great need of rest; you are very tired.”

And the good man slept until nine o’clock. The forester returning from his rounds, uneasy at his non-appearance, went up to his room and wished him good morning. Then seeing the sun high in the heavens, hearing the birds warbling in the foliage, the Judge, ashamed of his boastfulness of the previous night, arose, alleging as an excuse for his prolonged slumbers, the fatigue of fishing and the length of the supper of the evening before.

“Ah, Monsieur Seiler,” said the forester, “it is perfectly natural; I would love dearly myself to sleep in the mornings, but I must always be on the go. What I want is a son-in-law, a strong youth to replace me; I would voluntarily give him my gun and my hunting pouch.”

Zacharias could not restrain a feeling of great uneasiness at these words. Being dressed, he descended in silence. Christine was waiting with his breakfast; Charlotte had gone to the hay field.

The breakfast was short, and Mr. Seiler having thanked these good people for their hospitality, turned his face toward Stantz; he became pensive, as he thought of the worry to which Mademoiselle Therèse had been subjected; yet he was not able to tear his hopes from his heart, nor the thousand charming illusions, which came to him like a latecomer in a nest of warblers.

By Autumn he had fallen so into the habit of going to the forester’s house that he was oftener there than at his own; and the Head Forester, not knowing to what love of fishing to attribute these visits, often found himself embarrassed at being obliged to refuse the multiplicity of presents which the worthy ex-magistrate (he himself being very much at home) begged of him to accept in compensation for his daily hospitality.

Besides, Mr. Seiler wished to share all his occupations, following him in his rounds in the Grinderwald and Entilbach.

Yeri Foerster often shook his head, saying: “I never knew a more honest or better judge than Mr. Zacharias Seiler. When I used to bring my reports to him,

formerly, he always praised me, and it is to him that I owe my raise to the rank of Head Forester. But,” he added to his wife, “I am afraid the poor man is a little out of his head. Did he not help Charlotte in the hay field, to the infinite enjoyment of the peasants? Truly, Christine, it is not right; but then I dare not say so to him, he is so much above us. Now he wants me to accept a pension—and such a pension—one hundred florins a month. And that silk dress he gave Charlotte on her birthday. Do young girls wear silk dresses in our valley? Is a silk dress the thing for a forester’s daughter?”

“Leave him alone,” said the wife. “He is contented with a little milk and meal. He likes to be with us; it is a change from his lonesome city life, with no one to talk to but his old governess; whilst here the little one looks after him. He likes to talk to her. Who knows but he may end by adopting her and leave her something in his will?”

The Head Forester, not knowing what to say, shrugged his shoulders; his good judgment told him there was some mystery, but he never dreamed of suspecting the good man’s whole folly.

One fine morning a wagon slowly wended its way down the sides of Bigelberg loaded with three casks of old Rikevir wine. Of all the presents that could be given to him this was the most acceptable, for Yeri Foerster loved, above everything else, a good glass of wine.

“That warms one up,” he would say, laughing. And when he had tasted this wine he could not help saying:

“Mr. Zacharias is really the best man in the world. Has he not filled my cellar for me? Charlotte, go and gather the prettiest flowers in the garden; cut all the roses and the jasmine, make them into a bouquet, and when he comes you will present them to him yourself. Charlotte! Charlotte! Hurry up, here he comes with his long pole.”

At this moment the old man appeared descending the hillside in the shade of the pines with a brisk step.

As far off as Yeri could make himself heard, he called out, his glass in his hand:

“Here is to the best man I know! Here is to our benefactor.”

And Zacharias smiled. Dame Christine had already commenced preparations for dinner; a rabbit was turning at the spit and the savory odor of the soup whetted Mr. Seiler’s appetite.

The old Judge's eyes brightened when he saw Charlotte in her short poppy-colored skirt, her arms bare to the elbow, running here and there in the garden paths gathering the flowers, and when he saw her approaching him with her huge bouquet, which she humbly presented to him with downcast eyes.

"Monsieur le Juge, will you deign to accept this bouquet from your little friend Charlotte?"

A sudden blush overspread his venerable cheeks, and as she stooped to kiss his hand, he said:

"No, no, my dear child; accept rather from your old friend, your best friend, a more tender embrace."

He kissed both her burning cheeks. The Head Forester laughing heartily, cried out:

"Monsieur Seiler, come and sit down under the acacia tree and drink some of your own wine. Ah, my wife is right when she calls you our benefactor."

Mr. Zacharias seated himself at the little round table, placing his pole behind him; Charlotte sat facing him, Yeri Foerster was on his right; then dinner was served and Mr. Seiler started to speak of his plans for the future.

He was wealthy and had inherited a fine fortune from his parents. He wished to buy some few hundred acres of forest land in the valley, and build in the midst a forester's lodge. "We would always be together," he said turning to Yeri Foerster, "sometimes you at my house, sometimes I at yours."

Christine gave her advice, and they chatted, planning now one thing, then another. Charlotte seemed perfectly contented, and Zacharias imagined that these simple people understood him.

Thus the time passed, and when night had fallen and they had had a surfeit of Rikevir, of rabbit and of Dame Christine's "koechten" sprinkled with cinnamon. Mr. Seiler, happy and contented, full of joyous hope, ascended to his room, putting off until to-morrow his declaration, not doubting for a moment but that it would be accepted.

About this time of the year the mountaineers from Harberg, Kusnacht and the surrounding hamlets descend from their mountains about one o'clock in the morning and commence to mow the high grass in the valleys. One can hear their monotonous songs in the middle of the night keeping time to the circular movement of the scythes, the jingle of the cattle bells, and the young men's and girls' voices laughing afar in the silence of the night. It is a strange harmony,

especially when the night is clear and there is a bright moon, and the heavy dew falling makes a pitter-patter on the leaves of the great forest trees.

Mr. Zacharias heard nothing of all this, for he was sleeping soundly; but the noise of a handful of peas being thrown against the window waked him suddenly. He listened and heard outside at the bottom of the wall, a “scit! scit!” so softly whispered that you might almost think it the cry of some bird. Nevertheless, the good man’s heart fluttered.

“What is that?” he cried.

After a few seconds’ silence a soft voice replied:

“Charlotte, Charlotte—it is I!”

Zacharias trembled; and as he listened with ears on the alert for each sound, the foliage on the trellis struck against the window and a figure climbed up quietly—oh so quietly—then stopped and stared into the room.

The old man being indignant at this, rose and opened the window, upon which the stranger climbed through noiselessly.

“Do not be frightened, Charlotte,” he said, “I have come to tell you some good news. My father will be here tomorrow.”

He received no response, for the reason that Zacharias was trying to light the lamp.

“Where are you, Charlotte?”

“Here I am,” cried the old man turning with a livid face and gazing fiercely at his rival.

The young man who stood before him was tall and slender, with large, frank, black eyes, brown cheeks, rosy lips, just covered with a little moustache, and a large brown, felt hat, tilted a little to one side.

The apparition of Zacharias stunned him to immovability. But as the Judge was about to cry out, he exclaimed:

“In the name of Heaven, do not call. I am no robber—I love Charlotte!”

“And—she—she?” stammered Zacharias.

“She loves me also! Oh, you need have no fear if you are one of her relations. We were betrothed at the Kusnacht feast. The fiancés of the Grinderwald and the Entilbach have the right to visit in the night. It is a custom of Unterwald. All the Swiss know that.”



“Yeri Foerster—Yeri, Charlotte’s father, never told me.”

“No, he does not know of our betrothal yet,” said the other, in a lower tone of voice; “when I asked his permission last year he told me to wait—that his daughter was too young yet—we were betrothed secretly. Only as I had not the Forester’s consent, I did not come in the night-time. This is the first time. I saw Charlotte in the town; but the time seemed so long to us both that I ended by confessing all to my father, and he has promised to see Yeri tomorrow. Ah, Monsieur, I knew it would give such pleasure to Charlotte that I could not help coming to announce my good news.”

The poor old man fell back in his chair and covered his face with his hands. Oh, how he suffered! What bitter thoughts passed through his brain; what a sad awakening after so many sweet and joyous dreams.

And the young mountaineer was not a whit more comfortable, as he stood leaning against a corner of the wall, his arms crossed over his breast, and the following thoughts running through his head:

“If old Foerster, who does not know of our betrothal, finds me here, he will kill me without listening to one word of explanation. That is certain.”

And he gazed anxiously at the door, his ear on the alert for the least sound.

A few moments afterward, Zacharias lifting his head, as though awakening from a dream, asked him:

“What is your name?”

“Karl Imnant, Monsieur.”

“What is your business?”

“My father hopes to obtain the position of a forester in the Grindewald for me.”

There was a long silence and Zacharias looked at the young man with an envious eye.

“And she loves you?” he asked in a broken voice.

“Oh, yes, Monsieur; we love each other devotedly.”

And Zacharias, letting his eyes fall on his thin legs and his hands wrinkled and veined, murmured:

“Yes, she ought to love him; he is young and handsome.”

And his head fell on his breast again. All at once he arose, trembling in every limb, and opened the window.

“Young man, you have done very wrong; you will never know how much wrong you have really done. You must obtain Mr. Foerster’s consent—but go—go—you will hear from me soon.”

The young mountaineer did not wait for a second invitation; with one bound he jumped to the path below and disappeared behind the grand old trees.

“Poor, poor Zacharias,” the old Judge murmured, “all your illusions are fled.”

At seven o’clock, having regained his usual calmness of demeanor, he descended to the room below, where Charlotte, Dame Christine and Yeri were already waiting breakfast for him. The old man, turning his eyes from the young girl, advanced to the Head Forester, saying:

“My friend, I have a favor to ask of you. You know the son of the forester of the Grinderwald, do you not?”

“Karl Imnant, why yes, sir!”

“He is a worthy young man, and well behaved, I believe.”

“I think so, Monsieur.”

“Is he capable of succeeding his father?”

“Yes, he is twenty-one years old; he knows all about tree-clipping, which is the most necessary thing of all—he knows how to read and how to write; but that is not all; he must have influence.”

“Well, Master Yeri, I still have some influence in the Department of Forests and Rivers. This day fortnight, or three weeks at the latest, Karl Imnant shall be Assistant Forester of the Grinderwald, and I ask the hand of your daughter Charlotte for this brave young man.”

At this request, Charlotte, who had blushed and trembled with fear, uttered a cry and fell back into her mother’s arms.

Her father looking at her severely, said: “What is the matter, Charlotte? Do you refuse?”

“Oh, no, no, father—no!”

“That is as it should be! As for myself, I should never have refused any request of Mr. Zacharias Seiler’s! Come here and embrace your benefactor.”

Charlotte ran toward him and the old man pressed her to his heart, gazing long and earnestly at her, with eyes filled with tears. Then pleading business he started home, with only a crust of bread in his basket for breakfast.

Fifteen days afterward, Karl Innant received the appointment of forester, taking his father's place. Eight days later, he and Charlotte were married.

The guests drank the rich Rikevir wine, so highly esteemed by Yeri Foerster, and which seemed to him to have arrived so opportunely for the feast.

Mr. Zacharias Seiler was not present that day at the wedding, being ill at home. Since then he rarely goes fishing—and then, always to the Brünnen—toward the lake—on the other side of the mountain.

# **ZADIG THE BABYLONIAN By Francois Marie Arouet De Voltaire**

## **THE BLIND OF ONE EYE**

There lived at Babylon, in the reign of King Moabdar, a young man named Zadig, of a good natural disposition, strengthened and improved by education. Though rich and young, he had learned to moderate his passions; he had nothing stiff or affected in his behavior, he did not pretend to examine every action by the strict rules of reason, but was always ready to make proper allowances for the weakness of mankind.

It was matter of surprise that, notwithstanding his sprightly wit, he never exposed by his raillery those vague, incoherent, and noisy discourses, those rash censures, ignorant decisions, coarse jests, and all that empty jingle of words which at Babylon went by the name of conversation. He had learned, in the first book of Zoroaster, that self love is a football swelled with wind, from which, when pierced, the most terrible tempests issue forth.

Above all, Zadig never boasted of his conquests among the women, nor affected to entertain a contemptible opinion of the fair sex. He was generous, and was never afraid of obliging the ungrateful; remembering the grand precept of Zoroaster, "When thou eatest, give to the dogs, should they even bite thee." He was as wise as it is possible for man to be, for he sought to live with the wise.

Instructed in the sciences of the ancient Chaldeans, he understood the principles of natural philosophy, such as they were then supposed to be; and knew as much of metaphysics as hath ever been known in any age, that is, little or nothing at all. He was firmly persuaded, notwithstanding the new philosophy of the times, that the year consisted of three hundred and sixty-five days and six hours, and that the sun was in the center of the world. But when the principal magi told him, with a haughty and contemptuous air, that his sentiments were of a dangerous tendency, and that it was to be an enemy to the state to believe that the sun revolved round its own axis, and that the year had twelve months, he held his tongue with great modesty and meekness.

Possessed as he was of great riches, and consequently of many friends, blessed with a good constitution, a handsome figure, a mind just and moderate, and a heart noble and sincere, he fondly imagined that he might easily be happy. He was going to be married to Semira, who, in point of beauty, birth,

and fortune, was the first match in Babylon. He had a real and virtuous affection for this lady, and she loved him with the most passionate fondness.

The happy moment was almost arrived that was to unite them forever in the bands of wedlock, when happening to take a walk together toward one of the gates of Babylon, under the palm trees that adorn the banks of the Euphrates, they saw some men approaching, armed with sabers and arrows. These were the attendants of young Orcan, the minister's nephew, whom his uncle's creatures had flattered into an opinion that he might do everything with impunity. He had none of the graces nor virtues of Zadig; but thinking himself a much more accomplished man, he was enraged to find that the other was preferred before him. This jealousy, which was merely the effect of his vanity, made him imagine that he was desperately in love with Semira; and accordingly he resolved to carry her off. The ravishers seized her; in the violence of the outrage they wounded her, and made the blood flow from her person, the sight of which would have softened the tigers of Mount Imaus. She pierced the heavens with her complaints. She cried out, "My dear husband! they tear me from the man I adore." Regardless of her own danger, she was only concerned for the fate of her dear Zadig, who, in the meantime, defended himself with all the strength that courage and love could inspire. Assisted only by two slaves, he put the ravishers to flight and carried home Semira, insensible and bloody as she was.

On opening her eyes and beholding her deliverer. "O Zadig!" said she, "I loved thee formerly as my intended husband; I now love thee as the preserver of my honor and my life." Never was heart more deeply affected than that of Semira. Never did a more charming mouth express more moving sentiments, in those glowing words inspired by a sense of the greatest of all favors, and by the most tender transports of a lawful passion.

Her wound was slight and was soon cured. Zadig was more dangerously wounded; an arrow had pierced him near his eye, and penetrated to a considerable depth. Semira wearied Heaven with her prayers for the recovery of her lover. Her eyes were constantly bathed in tears; she anxiously awaited the happy moment when those of Zadig should be able to meet hers; but an abscess growing on the wounded eye gave everything to fear. A messenger was immediately dispatched to Memphis for the great physician Hermes, who came with a numerous retinue. He visited the patient and declared that he would lose his eye. He even foretold the day and hour when this fatal event would happen. "Had it been the right eye," said he, "I could easily have cured it; but the wounds of the left eye are incurable." All Babylon lamented the fate of Zadig, and admired the profound knowledge of Hermes.

In two days the abscess broke of its own accord and Zadig was perfectly cured. Hermes wrote a book to prove that it ought not to have been cured. Zadig did not read it; but, as soon as he was able to go abroad, he went to pay a visit to her in whom all his hopes of happiness were centered, and for whose sake alone he wished to have eyes. Semira had been in the country for three days past. He learned on the road that that fine lady, having openly declared that she had an unconquerable aversion to one-eyed men, had the night before given her hand to Orcan. At this news he fell speechless to the ground. His sorrow brought him almost to the brink of the grave. He was long indisposed; but reason at last got the better of his affliction, and the severity of his fate served to console him.

“Since,” said he, “I have suffered so much from the cruel caprice of a woman educated at court, I must now think of marrying the daughter of a citizen.” He pitched upon Azora, a lady of the greatest prudence, and of the best family in town. He married her and lived with her for three months in all the delights of the most tender union. He only observed that she had a little levity; and was too apt to find that those young men who had the most handsome persons were likewise possessed of most wit and virtue.

## THE NOSE

One morning Azora returned from a walk in a terrible passion, and uttering the most violent exclamations. “What aileth thee,” said he, “my dear spouse? What is it that can thus have discomposed thee?”

“Alas,” said she, “thou wouldst be as much enraged as I am hadst thou seen what I have just beheld. I have been to comfort the young widow Cosrou, who, within these two days, hath raised a tomb to her young husband, near the rivulet that washes the skirts of this meadow. She vowed to heaven, in the bitterness of her grief, to remain at this tomb while the water of the rivulet should continue to run near it.”—“Well,” said Zadig, “she is an excellent woman, and loved her husband with the most sincere affection.”

“Ah,” replied Azora, “didst thou but know in what she was employed when I went to wait upon her!”

“In what, pray, beautiful Azora? Was she turning the course of the rivulet?”

Azora broke out into such long invectives and loaded the young widow with such bitter reproaches, that Zadig was far from being pleased with this ostentation of virtue.

Zadig had a friend named Cador, one of those young men in whom his wife discovered more probity and merit than in others. He made him his confidant, and secured his fidelity as much as possible by a considerable present. Azora, having passed two days with a friend in the country, returned home on the third. The servants told her, with tears in their eyes, that her husband died suddenly the night before; that they were afraid to send her an account of this mournful event; and that they had just been depositing his corpse in the tomb of his ancestors, at the end of the garden.

She wept, she tore her hair, and swore she would follow him to the grave.

In the evening Cador begged leave to wait upon her, and joined his tears with hers. Next day they wept less, and dined together. Cador told her that his friend had left him the greatest part of his estate; and that he should think himself extremely happy in sharing his fortune with her. The lady wept, fell into a passion, and at last became more mild and gentle. They sat longer at supper than at dinner. They now talked with greater confidence. Azora praised the deceased; but owned that he had many failings from which Cador was free.

During supper Cador complained of a violent pain in his side. The lady, greatly concerned, and eager to serve him, caused all kinds of essences to be brought, with which she anointed him, to try if some of them might not possibly ease him of his pain. She lamented that the great Hermes was not still in Babylon. She even condescended to touch the side in which Cador felt such exquisite pain.

“Art thou subject to this cruel disorder?” said she to him with a compassionate air.

“It sometimes brings me,” replied Cador, “to the brink of the grave; and there is but one remedy that can give me relief, and that is to apply to my side the nose of a man who is lately dead.”

“A strange remedy, indeed!” said Azora.

“Not more strange,” replied he, “than the sachels of Arnon against the apoplexy.” This reason, added to the great merit of the young man, at last determined the lady.

“After all,” says she, “when my husband shall cross the bridge Tchinavar, in his journey to the other world, the angel Asrael will not refuse him a passage because his nose is a little shorter in the second life than it was in the first.” She then took a razor, went to her husband’s tomb, bedewed it with her tears, and drew near to cut off the nose of Zadig, whom she found extended at full length in the tomb. Zadig arose, holding his nose with one hand, and, putting back the

razor with the other, "Madam," said he, "don't exclaim so violently against young Cosrou; the project of cutting off my nose is equal to that of turning the course of a rivulet." Zadig found by experience that the first month of marriage, as it is written in the book of Zend, is the moon of honey, and that the second is the moon of wormwood. He was some time after obliged to repudiate Azora, who became too difficult to be pleased; and he then sought for happiness in the study of nature. "No man," said he, "can be happier than a philosopher who reads in this great book which God hath placed before our eyes. The truths he discovers are his own; he nourishes and exalts his soul; he lives in peace; he fears nothing from men; and his tender spouse will not come to cut off his nose."

Possessed of these ideas he retired to a country house on the banks of the Euphrates. There he did not employ himself in calculating how many inches of water flow in a second of time under the arches of a bridge, or whether there fell a cube line of rain in the month of the Mouse more than in the month of the Sheep. He never dreamed of making silk of cobwebs, or porcelain of broken bottles; but he chiefly studied the properties of plants and animals; and soon acquired a sagacity that made him discover a thousand differences where other men see nothing but uniformity.

One day, as he was walking near a little wood, he saw one of the queen's eunuchs running toward him, followed by several officers, who appeared to be in great perplexity, and who ran to and fro like men distracted, eagerly searching for something they had lost of great value. "Young man," said the first eunuch, "hast thou seen the queen's dog?" "It is a female," replied Zadig. "Thou art in the right," returned the first eunuch. "It is a very small she spaniel," added Zadig; "she has lately whelped; she limps on the left forefoot, and has very long ears." "Thou hast seen her," said the first eunuch, quite out of breath. "No," replied Zadig, "I have not seen her, nor did I so much as know that the queen had a dog."

Exactly at the same time, by one of the common freaks of fortune, the finest horse in the king's stable had escaped from the jockey in the plains of Babylon. The principal huntsman and all the other officers ran after him with as much eagerness and anxiety as the first eunuch had done after the spaniel. The principal huntsman addressed himself to Zadig, and asked him if he had not seen the king's horse passing by. "He is the fleetest horse in the king's stable," replied Zadig; "he is five feet high, with very small hoofs, and a tail three feet and a half in length; the studs on his bit are gold of twenty-three carats, and his shoes are silver of eleven pennyweights." "What way did he take? where is he?" demanded the chief huntsman. "I have not seen him," replied Zadig, "and never heard talk of him before."



The principal huntsman and the first eunuch never doubted but that Zadig had stolen the king's horse and the queen's spaniel. They therefore had him conducted before the assembly of the grand desterham, who condemned him to the knout, and to spend the rest of his days in Siberia. Hardly was the sentence passed when the horse and the spaniel were both found. The judges were reduced to the disagreeable necessity of reversing their sentence; but they condemned Zadig to pay four hundred ounces of gold for having said that he had not seen what he had seen. This fine he was obliged to pay; after which he was permitted to plead his cause before the counsel of the grand desterham, when he spoke to the following effect:

“Ye stars of justice, abyss of sciences, mirrors of truth, who have the weight of lead, the hardness of iron, the splendor of the diamond, and many properties of gold: Since I am permitted to speak before this august assembly, I swear to you by Oramades that I have never seen the queen's respectable spaniel, nor the sacred horse of the king of kings. The truth of the matter was as follows: I was walking toward the little wood, where I afterwards met the venerable eunuch, and the most illustrious chief huntsman. I observed on the sand the traces of an animal, and could easily perceive them to be those of a little dog. The light and long furrows impressed on little eminences of sand between the marks of the paws plainly discovered that it was a female, whose dugs were hanging down, and that therefore she must have whelped a few days before. Other traces of a different kind, that always appeared to have gently brushed the surface of the sand near the marks of the forefeet, showed me that she had very long ears; and as I remarked that there was always a slighter impression made on the sand by one foot than the other three, I found that the spaniel of our august queen was a little lame, if I may be allowed the expression.

“With regard to the horse of the king of kings, you will be pleased to know that, walking in the lanes of this wood, I observed the marks of a horse's shoes, all at equal distances. This must be a horse, said I to myself, that gallops excellently. The dust on the trees in the road that was but seven feet wide was a little brushed off, at the distance of three feet and a half from the middle of the road. This horse, said I, has a tail three feet and a half long, which being whisked to the right and left, has swept away the dust. I observed under the trees that formed an arbor five feet in height, that the leaves of the branches were newly fallen; from whence I inferred that the horse had touched them, and that he must therefore be five feet high. As to his bit, it must be gold of twenty-three carats, for he had rubbed its bosses against a stone which I knew to be a touchstone, and which I have tried. In a word, from the marks made by his shoes on flints of another kind, I concluded that he was shod with silver eleven deniers fine.”

All the judges admired Zadig for his acute and profound discernment. The news of this speech was carried even to the king and queen. Nothing was talked of but Zadig in the antechambers, the chambers, and the cabinet; and though many of the magi were of opinion that he ought to be burned as a sorcerer, the king ordered his officers to restore him the four hundred ounces of gold which he had been obliged to pay. The register, the attorneys, and bailiffs went to his house with great formality, to carry him back his four hundred ounces. They only retained three hundred and ninety-eight of them to defray the expenses of justice; and their servants demanded their fees.

Zadig saw how extremely dangerous it sometimes is to appear too knowing, and therefore resolved that on the next occasion of the like nature he would not tell what he had seen.

Such an opportunity soon offered. A prisoner of state made his escape, and passed under the window of Zadig's house. Zadig was examined and made no answer. But it was proved that he had looked at the prisoner from this window. For this crime he was condemned to pay five hundred ounces of gold; and, according to the polite custom of Babylon, he thanked his judges for their indulgence.

"Great God!" said he to himself, "what a misfortune it is to walk in a wood through which the queen's spaniel or the king's horse has passed! how dangerous to look out at a window! and how difficult to be happy in this life!"

### THE ENVIOUS MAN

Zadig resolved to comfort himself by philosophy and friendship for the evils he had suffered from fortune. He had in the suburbs of Babylon a house elegantly furnished, in which he assembled all the arts and all the pleasures worthy the pursuit of a gentleman. In the morning his library was open to the learned. In the evening his table was surrounded by good company. But he soon found what very dangerous guests these men of letters are. A warm dispute arose on one of Zoroaster's laws, which forbids the eating of a griffin. "Why," said some of them, "prohibit the eating of a griffin, if there is no such an animal in nature?" "There must necessarily be such an animal," said the others, "since Zoroaster forbids us to eat it." Zadig would fain have reconciled them by saying, "If there are no griffins, we cannot possibly eat them; and thus either way we shall obey Zoroaster."

A learned man who had composed thirteen volumes on the properties of the griffin, and was besides the chief theurgite, hastened away to accuse Zadig before one of the principal magi, named Yebor, the greatest blockhead and

therefore the greatest fanatic among the Chaldeans. This man would have impaled Zadig to do honors to the sun, and would then have recited the breviary of Zoroaster with greater satisfaction. The friend Cador (a friend is better than a hundred priests) went to Yebor, and said to him, "Long live the sun and the griffins; beware of punishing Zadig; he is a saint; he has griffins in his inner court and does not eat them; and his accuser is an heretic, who dares to maintain that rabbits have cloven feet and are not unclean."

"Well," said Yebor, shaking his bald pate, "we must impale Zadig for having thought contemptuously of griffins, and the other for having spoken disrespectfully of rabbits." Cador hushed up the affair by means of a maid of honor with whom he had a love affair, and who had great interest in the College of the Magi. Nobody was impaled.

This levity occasioned a great murmuring among some of the doctors, who from thence predicted the fall of Babylon. "Upon what does happiness depend?" said Zadig. "I am persecuted by everything in the world, even on account of beings that have no existence." He cursed those men of learning, and resolved for the future to live with none but good company.

He assembled at his house the most worthy men and the most beautiful ladies of Babylon. He gave them delicious suppers, often preceded by concerts of music, and always animated by polite conversation, from which he knew how to banish that affectation of wit which is the surest method of preventing it entirely, and of spoiling the pleasure of the most agreeable society. Neither the choice of his friends nor that of the dishes was made by vanity; for in everything he preferred the substance to the shadow; and by these means he procured that real respect to which he did not aspire.

Opposite to his house lived one Arimazes, a man whose deformed countenance was but a faint picture of his still more deformed mind. His heart was a mixture of malice, pride, and envy. Having never been able to succeed in any of his undertakings, he revenged himself on all around him by loading them with the blackest calumnies. Rich as he was, he found it difficult to procure a set of flatterers. The rattling of the chariots that entered Zadig's court in the evening filled him with uneasiness; the sound of his praises enraged him still more. He sometimes went to Zadig's house, and sat down at table without being desired; where he spoiled all the pleasure of the company, as the harpies are said to infect the viands they touch. It happened that one day he took it in his head to give an entertainment to a lady, who, instead of accepting it, went to sup with Zadig. At another time, as he was talking with Zadig at court, a minister of state came up to them, and invited Zadig to supper without inviting Arimazes. The most implacable hatred has seldom a more solid foundation.

This man, who in Babylon was called the Envious, resolved to ruin Zadig because he was called the Happy. “The opportunity of doing mischief occurs a hundred times in a day, and that of doing good but once a year,” as sayeth the wise Zoroaster.

The envious man went to see Zadig, who was walking in his garden with two friends and a lady, to whom he said many gallant things, without any other intention than that of saying them. The conversation turned upon a war which the king had just brought to a happy conclusion against the prince of Hircania, his vassal. Zadig, who had signalized his courage in this short war, bestowed great praises on the king, but greater still on the lady. He took out his pocket-book, and wrote four lines extempore, which he gave to this amiable person to read. His friends begged they might see them; but modesty, or rather a well-regulated self love, would not allow him to grant their request. He knew that extemporaneous verses are never approved of by any but by the person in whose honor they are written. He therefore tore in two the leaf on which he had wrote them, and threw both the pieces into a thicket of rose-bushes, where the rest of the company sought for them in vain. A slight shower falling soon after obliged them to return to the house. The envious man, who stayed in the garden, continued the search till at last he found a piece of the leaf. It had been torn in such a manner that each half of a line formed a complete sense, and even a verse of a shorter measure; but what was still more surprising, these short verses were found to contain the most injurious reflections on the king. They ran thus:

To flagrant crimes His crown he owes, To peaceful times The worst of foes.

The envious man was now happy for the first time of his life. He had it in his power to ruin a person of virtue and merit. Filled with this fiendlike joy, he found means to convey to the king the satire written by the hand of Zadig, who, together with the lady and his two friends, was thrown into prison.

His trial was soon finished, without his being permitted to speak for himself. As he was going to receive his sentence, the envious man threw himself in his way and told him with a loud voice that his verses were good for nothing. Zadig did not value himself on being a good poet; but it filled him with inexpressible concern to find that he was condemned for high treason; and that the fair lady and his two friends were confined in prison for a crime of which they were not guilty. He was not allowed to speak because his writing spoke for him. Such was the law of Babylon. Accordingly he was conducted to the place of execution, through an immense crowd of spectators, who durst not venture to express their pity for him, but who carefully examined his countenance to see if he died with a good grace. His relations alone were inconsolable, for they could

not succeed to his estate. Three-fourths of his wealth were confiscated into the king's treasury, and the other fourth was given to the envious man.

Just as he was preparing for death the king's parrot flew from its cage and alighted on a rosebush in Zadig's garden. A peach had been driven thither by the wind from a neighboring tree, and had fallen on a piece of the written leaf of the pocketbook to which it stuck. The bird carried off the peach and the paper and laid them on the king's knee. The king took up the paper with great eagerness and read the words, which formed no sense, and seemed to be the endings of verses. He loved poetry; and there is always some mercy to be expected from a prince of that disposition. The adventure of the parrot set him a-thinking.

The queen, who remembered what had been written on the piece of Zadig's pocketbook, caused it to be brought. They compared the two pieces together and found them to tally exactly; they then read the verses as Zadig had wrote them.

<i>TYRANTS ARE PRONE</i>	<i>TO FLAGRANT CRIMES.</i>
<i>TO CLEMENCY</i>	<i>HIS CROWN HE OWES.</i>
<i>TO CONCORD AND</i>	<i>TO PEACEFUL TIMES.</i>
<i>LOVE ONLY IS</i>	<i>THE WORST OF FOES.</i>

The king gave immediate orders that Zadig should be brought before him, and that his two friends and the lady should be set at liberty. Zadig fell prostrate on the ground before the king and queen; humbly begged their pardon for having made such bad verses and spoke with so much propriety, wit, and good sense, that their majesties desired they might see him again. He did himself that honor, and insinuated himself still farther into their good graces. They gave him all the wealth of the envious man; but Zadig restored him back the whole of it. And this instance of generosity gave no other pleasure to the envious man than that of having preserved his estate.

The king's esteem for Zadig increased every day. He admitted him into all his parties of pleasure, and consulted him in all affairs of state. From that time the queen began to regard him with an eye of tenderness that might one day prove dangerous to herself, to the king, her august comfort, to Zadig, and to the kingdom in general. Zadig now began to think that happiness was not so unattainable as he had formerly imagined.

## THE GENEROUS

The time now arrived for celebrating a grand festival, which returned every five years. It was a custom in Babylon solemnly to declare at the end of every five years which of the citizens had performed the most generous action. The grandees and the magi were the judges. The first satrap, who was charged with the government of the city, published the most noble actions that had passed under his administration. The competition was decided by votes; and the king pronounced the sentence. People came to this solemnity from the extremities of the earth. The conqueror received from the monarch's hand a golden cup adorned with precious stones, his majesty at the same time making him this compliment:

“Receive this reward of thy generosity, and may the gods grant me many subjects like to thee.”

This memorable day being come, the king appeared on his throne, surrounded by the grandees, the magi, and the deputies of all nations that came to these games, where glory was acquired not by the swiftness of horses, nor by strength of body, but by virtue. The first satrap recited, with an audible voice, such actions as might entitle the authors of them to this invaluable prize. He did not mention the greatness of soul with which Zadig had restored the envious man his fortune, because it was not judged to be an action worthy of disputing the prize.

He first presented a judge who, having made a citizen lose a considerable cause by a mistake, for which, after all, he was not accountable, had given him the whole of his own estate, which was just equal to what the other had lost.

He next produced a young man who, being desperately in love with a lady whom he was going to marry, had yielded her up to his friend, whose passion for her had almost brought him to the brink of the grave, and at the same time had given him the lady's fortune.

He afterwards produced a soldier who, in the wars of Hircania, had given a still more noble instance of generosity. A party of the enemy having seized his mistress, he fought in her defense with great intrepidity. At that very instant he was informed that another party, at the distance of a few paces, were carrying off his mother; he therefore left his mistress with tears in his eyes and flew to the assistance of his mother. At last he returned to the dear object of his love and found her expiring. He was just going to plunge his sword in his own bosom; but his mother remonstrating against such a desperate deed, and telling

him that he was the only support of her life, he had the courage to endure to live.

The judges were inclined to give the prize to the soldier. But the king took up the discourse and said: "The action of the soldier, and those of the other two, are doubtless very great, but they have nothing in them surprising. Yesterday Zadig performed an action that filled me with wonder. I had a few days before disgraced Coreb, my minister and favorite. I complained of him in the most violent and bitter terms; all my courtiers assured me that I was too gentle and seemed to vie with each other in speaking ill of Coreb. I asked Zadig what he thought of him, and he had the courage to commend him. I have read in our histories of many people who have atoned for an error by the surrender of their fortune; who have resigned a mistress; or preferred a mother to the object of their affection; but never before did I hear of a courtier who spoke favorably of a disgraced minister that labored under the displeasure of his sovereign. I give to each of those whose generous actions have been now recited twenty thousand pieces of gold; but the cup I give to Zadig."

"May it please your majesty," said Zadig, "thysself alone deservest the cup; thou hast performed an action of all others the most uncommon and meritorious, since, notwithstanding thy being a powerful king, thou wast not offended at thy slave when he presumed to oppose thy passion." The king and Zadig were equally the object of admiration. The judge, who had given his estate to his client; the lover, who had resigned his mistress to a friend; and the soldier, who had preferred the safety of his mother to that of his mistress, received the king's presents and saw their names enrolled in the catalogue of generous men. Zadig had the cup, and the king acquired the reputation of a good prince, which he did not long enjoy. The day was celebrated by feasts that lasted longer than the law enjoined; and the memory of it is still preserved in Asia. Zadig said, "Now I am happy at last;" but he found himself fatally deceived.

## THE MINISTER

The king had lost his first minister and chose Zadig to supply his place. All the ladies in Babylon applauded the choice; for since the foundation of the empire there had never been such a young minister. But all the courtiers were filled with jealousy and vexation. The envious man in particular was troubled with a spitting of blood and a prodigious inflammation in his nose. Zadig, having thanked the king and queen for their goodness, went likewise to thank the parrot. "Beautiful bird," said he, "'tis thou that hast saved my life and made me first minister. The queen's spaniel and the king's horse did me a great deal

of mischief; but thou hast done me much good. Upon such slender threads as these do the fates of mortals hang! But,” added he, “this happiness perhaps will vanish very soon.”

“Soon,” replied the parrot.

Zadig was somewhat startled at this word. But as he was a good natural philosopher and did not believe parrots to be prophets, he quickly recovered his spirits and resolved to execute his duty to the best of his power.

He made everyone feel the sacred authority of the laws, but no one felt the weight of his dignity. He never checked the deliberation of the *diran*; and every vizier might give his opinion without the fear of incurring the minister’s displeasure. When he gave judgment, it was not he that gave it, it was the law; the rigor of which, however, whenever it was too severe, he always took care to soften; and when laws were wanting, the equity of his decisions was such as might easily have made them pass for those of Zoroaster. It is to him that the nations are indebted for this grand principle, to wit, that it is better to run the risk of sparing the guilty than to condemn the innocent. He imagined that laws were made as well to secure the people from the suffering of injuries as to restrain them from the commission of crimes. His chief talent consisted in discovering the truth, which all men seek to obscure.

This great talent he put in practice from the very beginning of his administration. A famous merchant of Babylon, who died in the Indies, divided his estate equally between his two sons, after having disposed of their sister in marriage, and left a present of thirty thousand pieces of gold to that son who should be found to have loved him best. The eldest raised a tomb to his memory; the youngest increased his sister’s portion, by giving her part of his inheritance. Everyone said that the eldest son loved his father best, and the youngest his sister; and that the thirty thousand pieces belonged to the eldest.

Zadig sent for both of them, the one after the other. To the eldest he said: “Thy father is not dead; he is recovered of his last illness, and is returning to Babylon,” “God be praised,” replied the young man; “but his tomb cost me a considerable sum.” Zadig afterwards said the same to the youngest. “God be praised,” said he, “I will go and restore to my father all that I have; but I could wish that he would leave my sister what I have given her.” “Thou shalt restore nothing,” replied Zadig, “and thou shalt have the thirty thousand pieces, for thou art the son who loves his father best.”



## THE DISPUTES AND THE AUDIENCES

In this manner he daily discovered the subtilty of his genius and the goodness of his heart. The people at once admired and loved him. He passed for the happiest man in the world. The whole empire resounded with his name. All the ladies ogled him. All the men praised him for his justice. The learned regarded him as an oracle; and even the priests confessed that he knew more than the old archmage Yebor. They were now so far from prosecuting him on account of the griffin, that they believed nothing but what he thought credible.

There had reigned in Babylon, for the space of fifteen hundred years, a violent contest that had divided the empire into two sects. The one pretended that they ought to enter the temple of Mitra with the left foot foremost; the other held this custom in detestation and always entered with the right foot first. The people waited with great impatience for the day on which the solemn feast of the sacred fire was to be celebrated, to see which sect Zadig would favor. All the world had their eyes fixed on his two feet, and the whole city was in the utmost suspense and perturbation. Zadig jumped into the temple with his feet joined together, and afterwards proved, in an eloquent discourse, that the Sovereign of heaven and earth, who accepted not the persons of men, makes no distinction between the right and left foot. The envious man and his wife alleged that his discourse was not figurative enough, and that he did not make the rocks and mountains to dance with sufficient agility.

“He is dry,” said they, “and void of genius: he does not make the flea to fly, and stars to fall, nor the sun to melt wax; he has not the true Oriental style.” Zadig contented himself with having the style of reason. All the world favored him, not because he was in the right road or followed the dictates of reason, or was a man of real merit, but because he was prime vizier.

He terminated with the same happy address the grand difference between the white and the black magi. The former maintained that it was the height of impiety to pray to God with the face turned toward the east in winter; the latter asserted that God abhorred the prayers of those who turned toward the west in summer. Zadig decreed that every man should be allowed to turn as he pleased.

Thus he found out the happy secret of finishing all affairs, whether of a private or a public nature, in the morning. The rest of the day he employed in superintending and promoting the embellishments of Babylon. He exhibited tragedies that drew tears from the eyes of the spectators, and comedies that shook their sides with laughter; a custom which had long been disused, and which his good taste now induced him to revive. He never affected to be more knowing in the polite arts than the artists themselves; he encouraged them by

rewards and honors, and was never jealous of their talents. In the evening the king was highly entertained with his conversation, and the queen still more. "Great minister!" said the king. "Amiable minister!" said the queen; and both of them added, "It would have been a great loss to the state had such a man been hanged."

Never was a man in power obliged to give so many audiences to the ladies. Most of them came to consult him about no business at all, that so they might have some business with him. But none of them won his attention.

Meanwhile Zadig perceived that his thoughts were always distracted, as well when he gave audience as when he sat in judgment. He did not know to what to attribute this absence of mind; and that was his only sorrow.

He had a dream in which he imagined that he laid himself down upon a heap of dry herbs, among which there were many prickly ones that gave him great uneasiness, and that he afterwards reposed himself on a soft bed of roses from which there sprung a serpent that wounded him to the heart with its sharp and venomous tongue. "Alas," said he, "I have long lain on these dry and prickly herbs, I am now on the bed of roses; but what shall be the serpent?"

## JEALOUSY

Zadig's calamities sprung even from his happiness and especially from his merit. He every day conversed with the king and Astarte, his august comfort. The charms of his conversation were greatly heightened by that desire of pleasing, which is to the mind what dress is to beauty. His youth and graceful appearance insensibly made an impression on Astarte, which she did not at first perceive. Her passion grew and flourished in the bosom of innocence. Without fear or scruple, she indulged the pleasing satisfaction of seeing and hearing a man who was so dear to her husband and to the empire in general. She was continually praising him to the king. She talked of him to her women, who were always sure to improve on her praises. And thus everything contributed to pierce her heart with a dart, of which she did not seem to be sensible. She made several presents to Zadig, which discovered a greater spirit of gallantry than she imagined. She intended to speak to him only as a queen satisfied with his services and her expressions were sometimes those of a woman in love.

Astarte was much more beautiful than that Semira who had such a strong aversion to one-eyed men, or that other woman who had resolved to cut off her husband's nose. Her unreserved familiarity, her tender expressions, at which she began to blush; and her eyes, which, though she endeavored to divert them to other objects, were always fixed upon his, inspired Zadig with a passion that

filled him with astonishment. He struggled hard to get the better of it. He called to his aid the precepts of philosophy, which had always stood him in stead; but from thence, though he could derive the light of knowledge, he could procure no remedy to cure the disorders of his lovesick heart. Duty, gratitude, and violated majesty presented themselves to his mind as so many avenging gods. He struggled; he conquered; but this victory, which he was obliged to purchase afresh every moment, cost him many sighs and tears. He no longer dared to speak to the queen with that sweet and charming familiarity which had been so agreeable to them both. His countenance was covered with a cloud. His conversation was constrained and incoherent. His eyes were fixed on the ground; and when, in spite of all his endeavors to the contrary, they encountered those of the queen, they found them bathed in tears and darting arrows of flame. They seemed to say, We adore each other and yet are afraid to love; we both burn with a fire which we both condemn.

Zadig left the royal presence full of perplexity and despair, and having his heart oppressed with a burden which he was no longer able to bear. In the violence of his perturbation he involuntarily betrayed the secret to his friend Cador, in the same manner as a man who, having long supported the fits of a cruel disease, discovers his pain by a cry extorted from him by a more severe fit and by the cold sweat that covers his brow.

“I have already discovered,” said Cador, “the sentiments which thou wouldst fain conceal from thyself. The symptoms by which the passions show themselves are certain and infallible. Judge, my dear Zadig, since I have read thy heart, whether the king will not discover something in it that may give him offense. He has no other fault but that of being the most jealous man in the world. Thou canst resist the violence of thy passion with greater fortitude than the queen because thou art a philosopher, and because thou art Zadig. Astarte is a woman: she suffers her eyes to speak with so much the more imprudence, as she does not as yet think herself guilty. Conscious of her innocence, she unhappily neglects those external appearances which are so necessary. I shall tremble for her so long as she has nothing wherewithal to reproach herself. Were ye both of one mind, ye might easily deceive the whole world. A growing passion, which we endeavor to suppress, discovers itself in spite of all our efforts to the contrary; but love, when gratified, is easily concealed.”

Zadig trembled at the proposal of betraying the king, his benefactor; and never was he more faithful to his prince than when guilty of an involuntary crime against him.

Meanwhile the queen mentioned the name of Zadig so frequently and with such a blushing and downcast look; she was sometimes so lively and

sometimes so perplexed when she spoke to him in the king's presence, and was seized with such deep thoughtfulness at his going away, that the king began to be troubled. He believed all that he saw and imagined all that he did not see. He particularly remarked that his wife's shoes were blue and that Zadig's shoes were blue; that his wife's ribbons were yellow and that Zadig's bonnet was yellow; and these were terrible symptoms to a prince of so much delicacy. In his jealous mind suspicions were turned into certainty.

All the slaves of kings and queens are so many spies over their hearts. They soon observed that Astarte was tender and that Moabdar was jealous. The envious man brought false reports to the king. The monarch now thought of nothing but in what manner he might best execute his vengeance. He one night resolved to poison the queen and in the morning to put Zadig to death by the bowstring. The orders were given to a merciless eunuch, who commonly executed his acts of vengeance. There happened at that time to be in the king's chamber a little dwarf, who, though dumb, was not deaf. He was allowed, on account of his insignificance, to go wherever he pleased, and, as a domestic animal, was a witness of what passed in the most profound secrecy. This little mute was strongly attached to the queen and Zadig. With equal horror and surprise he heard the cruel orders given. But how to prevent the fatal sentence that in a few hours was to be carried into execution! He could not write, but he could paint; and excelled particularly in drawing a striking resemblance. He employed a part of the night in sketching out with his pencil what he meant to impart to the queen. The piece represented the king in one corner, boiling with rage, and giving orders to the eunuch; a bowstring, and a bowl on a table; the queen in the middle of the picture, expiring in the arms of her woman, and Zadig strangled at her feet. The horizon, represented a rising sun, to express that this shocking execution was to be performed in the morning. As soon as he had finished the picture he ran to one of Astarte's women, awakened her, and made her understand that she must immediately carry it to the queen.

At midnight a messenger knocks at Zadig's door, awakes him, and gives him a note from the queen. He doubts whether it is a dream; and opens the letter with a trembling hand. But how great was his surprise! and who can express the consternation and despair into which he was thrown upon reading these words: "Fly this instant, or thou art a dead man. Fly, Zadig, I conjure thee by our mutual love and my yellow ribbons. I have not been guilty, but I find I must die like a criminal."

Zadig was hardly able to speak. He sent for Cador, and, without uttering a word, gave him the note. Cador forced him to obey, and forthwith to take the road to Memphis. "Shouldst thou dare," said he, "to go in search of the queen, thou wilt hasten her death. Shouldst thou speak to the king, thou wilt infallibly

ruin her. I will take upon me the charge of her destiny; follow thy own. I will spread a report that thou hast taken the road to India. I will soon follow thee, and inform thee of all that shall have passed in Babylon.” At that instant, Cador caused two of the swiftest dromedaries to be brought to a private gate of the palace. Upon one of these he mounted Zadig, whom he was obliged to carry to the door, and who was ready to expire with grief. He was accompanied by a single domestic; and Cador, plunged in sorrow and astonishment, soon lost sight of his friend.

This illustrious fugitive arriving on the side of a hill, from whence he could take a view of Babylon, turned his eyes toward the queen’s palace, and fainted away at the sight; nor did he recover his senses but to shed a torrent of tears and to wish for death. At length, after his thoughts had been long engrossed in lamenting the unhappy fate of the loveliest woman and the greatest queen in the world, he for a moment turned his views on himself and cried: “What then is human life? O virtue, how hast thou served me! Two women have basely deceived me, and now a third, who is innocent, and more beautiful than both the others, is going to be put to death! Whatever good I have done hath been to me a continual source of calamity and affliction; and I have only been raised to the height of grandeur, to be tumbled down the most horrid precipice of misfortune.” Filled with these gloomy reflections, his eyes overspread with the veil of grief, his countenance covered with the paleness of death, and his soul plunged in an abyss of the blackest despair, he continued his journey toward Egypt.

### **THE WOMAN BEATEN**

Zadig directed his course by the stars. The constellation of Orion and the splendid Dog Star guided his steps toward the pole of Cassiopeia. He admired those vast globes of light, which appear to our eyes but as so many little sparks, while the earth, which in reality is only an imperceptible point in nature, appears to our fond imaginations as something so grand and noble.

He then represented to himself the human species as it really is, as a parcel of insects devouring one another on a little atom of clay. This true image seemed to annihilate his misfortunes, by making him sensible of the nothingness of his own being, and of that of Babylon. His soul launched out into infinity, and, detached from the senses, contemplated the immutable order of the universe. But when afterwards, returning to himself, and entering into his own heart, he considered that Astarte had perhaps died for him, the universe vanished from his sight, and he beheld nothing in the whole compass of nature but Astarte; expiring and Zadig unhappy. While he thus alternately gave up his mind to this

flux and reflux of sublime philosophy and intolerable grief, he advanced toward the frontiers of Egypt; and his faithful domestic was already in the first village, in search of a lodging.

Upon reaching the village Zadig generously took the part of a woman attacked by her jealous lover. The combat grew so fierce that Zadig slew the lover. The Egyptians were then just and humane. The people conducted Zadig to the town house. They first of all ordered his wounds to be dressed and then examined him and his servant apart, in order to discover the truth. They found that Zadig was not an assassin; but as he was guilty of having killed a man, the law condemned him to be a slave. His two camels were sold for the benefit of the town; all the gold he had brought with him was distributed among the inhabitants; and his person, as well as that of the companion of his journey, was exposed to sale in the marketplace.

An Arabian merchant, named Setoc, made the purchase; but as the servant was fitter for labor than the master, he was sold at a higher price. There was no comparison between the two men. Thus Zadig became a slave subordinate to his own servant. They were linked together by a chain fastened to their feet, and in this condition they followed the Arabian merchant to his house. BY the way Zadig comforted his servant, and exhorted him to patience; but he could not help making, according to his usual custom, some reflections on human life. "I see," said he, "that the unhappiness of my fate hath an influence on thine. Hitherto everything has turned out to me in a most unaccountable manner. I have been condemned to pay a fine for having seen the marks of a spaniel's feet. I thought that I should once have been impaled on account of a griffin. I have been sent to execution for having made some verses in praise of the king. I have been upon the point of being strangled because the queen had yellow ribbons; and now I am a slave with thee, because a brutal wretch beat his mistress. Come, let us keep a good heart; all this perhaps will have an end. The Arabian merchants must necessarily have slaves; and why not me as well as another, since, as well as another, I am a man? This merchant will not be cruel; he must treat his slaves well, if he expects any advantage from them." But while he spoke thus, his heart was entirely engrossed by the fate of the Queen of Babylon.

Two days after, the merchant Setoc set out for Arabia Deserta, with his slaves and his camels. His tribe dwelt near the Desert of Oreb. The journey was long and painful. Setoc set a much greater value on the servant than the master, because the former was more expert in loading the camels; and all the little marks of distinction were shown to him. A camel having died within two days' journey of Oreb, his burden was divided and laid on the backs of the servants; and Zadig had his share among the rest.

Setoc laughed to see all his slaves walking with their bodies inclined. Zadig took the liberty to explain to him the cause, and inform him of the laws of the balance. The merchant was astonished, and began to regard him with other eyes. Zadig, finding he had raised his curiosity, increased it still further by acquainting him with many things that related to commerce, the specific gravity of metals, and commodities under an equal bulk; the properties of several useful animals; and the means of rendering those useful that are not naturally so. At last Setoc began to consider Zadig as a sage, and preferred him to his companion, whom he had formerly so much esteemed. He treated him well and had no cause to repent of his kindness.

## THE STONE

As soon as Setoc arrived among his own tribe he demanded the payment of five hundred ounces of silver, which he had lent to a Jew in presence of two witnesses; but as the witnesses were dead, and the debt could not be proved, the Hebrew appropriated the merchant's money to himself, and piously thanked God for putting it in his power to cheat an Arabian. Setoc imparted this troublesome affair to Zadig, who was now become his counsel.

"In what place," said Zadig, "didst thou lend the five hundred ounces to this infidel?"

"Upon a large stone," replied the merchant, "that lies near Mount Oreb."

"What is the character of thy debtor?" said Zadig. "That of a knave," returned Setoc.

"But I ask thee whether he is lively or phlegmatic, cautious or imprudent?"

"He is, of all bad payers," said Setoc, "the most lively fellow I ever knew."

"Well," resumed Zadig, "allow me to plead thy cause." In effect Zadig, having summoned the Jew to the tribunal, addressed the judge in the following terms: "Pillar of the throne of equity, I come to demand of this man, in the name of my master, five hundred ounces of silver, which he refuses to pay."

"Hast thou any witnesses?" said the judge.

"No, they are dead; but there remains a large stone upon which the money was counted; and if it please thy grandeur to order the stone to be sought for, I hope that it will bear witness. The Hebrew and I will tarry here till the stone arrives; I will send for it at my master's expense."

“With all my heart,” replied the judge, and immediately applied himself to the discussion of other affairs.

When the court was going to break up, the judge said to Zadig. “Well, friend, is not thy stone come yet?”

The Hebrew replied with a smile, “Thy grandeur may stay here till the morrow, and after all not see the stone. It is more than six miles from hence; and it would require fifteen men to move it.”

“Well,” cried Zadig, “did not I say that the stone would bear witness? Since this man knows where it is, he thereby confesses that it was upon it that the money was counted.” The Hebrew was disconcerted, and was soon after obliged to confess the truth. The judge ordered him to be fastened to the stone, without meat or drink, till he should restore the five hundred ounces, which were soon after paid.

The slave Zadig and the stone were held in great repute in Arabia.

### **THE FUNERAL PILE**

Setoc, charmed with the happy issue of this affair, made his slave his intimate friend. He had now conceived as great esteem for him as ever the King of Babylon had done; and Zadig was glad that Setoc had no wife. He discovered in his master a good natural disposition, much probity of heart, and a great share of good sense; but he was sorry to see that, according to the ancient custom of Arabia, he adored the host of heaven; that is, the sun, moon, and stars. He sometimes spoke to him on this subject with great prudence and discretion. At last he told him that these bodies were like all other bodies in the universe, and no more deserving of our homage than a tree or a rock.

“But,” said Setoc, “they are eternal beings; and it is from them we derive all we enjoy. They animate nature; they regulate the seasons; and, besides, are removed at such an immense distance from us that we cannot help revering them.”

“Thou receivest more advantage,” replied Zadig, “from the waters of the Red Sea, which carry thy merchandise to the Indies. Why may not it be as ancient as the stars? And if thou adorest what is placed at a distance from thee, thou oughtest to adore the land of the Gangarides, which lies at the extremity of the earth.”

“No,” said Setoc, “the brightness of the stars commands my adoration.”



At night Zadig lighted up a great number of candles in the tent where he was to sup with Setoc; and the moment his patron appeared, he fell on his knees before these lighted tapers, and said, "Eternal and shining luminaries! be ye always propitious to me." Having thus said, he sat down at table, without taking the least notice of Setoc.

"What art thou doing?" said Setoc to him in amaze.

"I act like thee," replied Zadig, "I adore these candles, and neglect their master and mine." Setoc comprehended the profound sense of this apologue. The wisdom of his slave sunk deep into his soul; he no longer offered incense to the creatures, but adored the eternal Being who made them.

There prevailed at that time in Arabia a shocking custom, sprung originally from Leythia, and which, being established in the Indies by the credit of the Brahmans, threatened to overrun all the East. When a married man died, and his beloved wife aspired to the character of a saint, she burned herself publicly on the body of her husband. This was a solemn feast and was called the Funeral Pile of Widowhood, and that tribe in which most women had been burned was the most respected.

An Arabian of Setoc's tribe being dead, his widow, whose name was Almona, and who was very devout, published the day and hour when she intended to throw herself into the fire, amidst the sound of drums and trumpets. Zadig remonstrated against this horrible custom; he showed Setoc how inconsistent it was with the happiness of mankind to suffer young widows to burn themselves every other day, widows who were capable of giving children to the state, or at least of educating those they already had; and he convinced him that it was his duty to do all that lay in his power to abolish such a barbarous practice.

"The women," said Setoc, "have possessed the right of burning themselves for more than a thousand years; and who shall dare to abrogate a law which time hath rendered sacred? Is there anything more respectable than ancient abuses?"

"Reason is more ancient," replied Zadig; "meanwhile, speak thou to the chiefs of the tribes and I will go to wait on the young widow."

Accordingly he was introduced to her; and, after having insinuated himself into her good graces by some compliments on her beauty and told her what a pity it was to commit so many charms to the flames, he at last praised her for her constancy and courage. "Thou must surely have loved thy husband," said he to her, "with the most passionate fondness."

“Who, I?” replied the lady. “I loved him not at all. He was a brutal, jealous, insupportable wretch; but I am firmly resolved to throw myself on his funeral pile.”

“It would appear then,” said Zadig, “that there must be a very delicious pleasure in being burned alive.”

“Oh! it makes nature shudder,” replied the lady, “but that must be overlooked. I am a devotee, and I should lose my reputation and all the world would despise me if I did not burn myself.”

Zadig having made her acknowledge that she burned herself to gain the good opinion of others and to gratify her own vanity, entertained her with a long discourse, calculated to make her a little in love with life, and even went so far as to inspire her with some degree of good will for the person who spoke to her.

“Alas!” said the lady, “I believe I should desire thee to marry me.”

Zadig’s mind was too much engrossed with the idea of Astarte not to elude this declaration; but he instantly went to the chiefs of the tribes, told them what had passed, and advised them to make a law, by which a widow should not be permitted to burn herself till she had conversed privately with a young man for the space of an hour. Since that time not a single woman hath burned herself in Arabia. They were indebted to Zadig alone for destroying in one day a cruel custom that had lasted for so many ages and thus he became the benefactor of Arabia.

## THE SUPPER

Setoc, who could not separate himself from this man, in whom dwelt wisdom, carried him to the great fair of Balzora, whither the richest merchants in the earth resorted. Zadig was highly pleased to see so many men of different countries united in the same place. He considered the whole universe as one large family assembled at Balzora.

Setoc, after having sold his commodities at a very high price, returned to his own tribe with his friend Zadig; who learned upon his arrival that he had been tried in his absence and was now going to be burned by a slow fire. Only the friendship of Almona saved his life. Like so many pretty women she possessed great influence with the priesthood. Zadig thought it best to leave Arabia.

Setoc was so charmed with the ingenuity and address of Almona that he made her his wife. Zadig departed, after having thrown himself at the feet of his fair deliverer. Setoc and he took leave of each other with tears in their eyes,

swearing an eternal friendship, and promising that the first of them that should acquire a large fortune should share it with the other.

Zadig directed his course along the frontiers of Assyria, still musing on the unhappy Astarte, and reflecting on the severity of fortune which seemed determined to make him the sport of her cruelty and the object of her persecution.

“What,” said he to himself, “four hundred ounces of gold for having seen a spaniel! condemned to lose my head for four bad verses in praise of the king! ready to be strangled because the queen had shoes of the color of my bonnet! reduced to slavery for having succored a woman who was beat! and on the point of being burned for having saved the lives of all the young widows of Arabia!”

## **THE ROBBER**

Arriving on the frontiers which divide Arabia Petraea from Syria, he passed by a pretty strong castle, from which a party of armed Arabians sallied forth. They instantly surrounded him and cried, “All thou hast belongs to us, and thy person is the property of our master.” Zadig replied by drawing his sword; his servant, who was a man of courage, did the same. They killed the first Arabians that presumed to lay hands on them; and, though the number was redoubled, they were not dismayed, but resolved to perish in the conflict. Two men defended themselves against a multitude; and such a combat could not last long.

The master of the castle, whose name was Arbogad, having observed from a window the prodigies of valor performed by Zadig, conceived a high esteem for this heroic stranger. He descended in haste and went in person to call off his men and deliver the two travelers.

“All that passes over my lands,” said he, “belongs to me, as well as what I find upon the lands of others; but thou seemest to be a man of such undaunted courage that I will exempt thee from the common law.” He then conducted him to his castle, ordering his men to treat him well; and in the evening Arbogad supped with Zadig.

The lord of the castle was one of those Arabians who are commonly called robbers; but he now and then performed some good actions amid a multitude of bad ones. He robbed with a furious rapacity, and granted favors with great generosity; he was intrepid in action; affable in company; a debauchee at table, but gay in debauchery; and particularly remarkable for his frank and open

behavior. He was highly pleased with Zadig, whose lively conversation lengthened the repast.

At last Arbogad said to him; "I advise thee to enroll thy name in my catalogue; thou canst not do better; this is not a bad trade; and thou mayest one day become what I am at present."

"May I take the liberty of asking thee," said Zadig, "how long thou hast followed this noble profession?"

"From my most tender youth," replied the lord. "I was a servant to a pretty good-natured Arabian, but could not endure the hardships of my situation. I was vexed to find that fate had given me no share of the earth, which equally belongs to all men. I imparted the cause of my uneasiness to an old Arabian, who said to me: 'My son, do not despair; there was once a grain of sand that lamented that it was no more than a neglected atom in the desert; at the end of a few years it became a diamond; and is now the brightest ornament in the crown of the king of the Indies.' This discourse made a deep impression on my mind. I was the grain of sand, and I resolved to become the diamond. I began by stealing two horses; I soon got a party of companions; I put myself in a condition to rob small caravans; and thus, by degrees, I destroyed the difference which had formerly subsisted between me and other men. I had my share of the good things of this world; and was even recompensed with usury for the hardships I had suffered. I was greatly respected, and became the captain of a band of robbers. I seized this castle by force. The Satrap of Syria had a mind to dispossess me of it; but I was too rich to have any thing to fear. I gave the satrap a handsome present, by which means I preserved my castle and increased my possessions. He even appointed me treasurer of the tributes which Arabia Petraea pays to the king of kings. I perform my office of receiver with great punctuality; but take the freedom to dispense with that of paymaster.

"The grand Desterham of Babylon sent hither a pretty satrap in the name of King Moabdar, to have me strangled. This man arrived with his orders: I was apprised of all; I caused to be strangled in his presence the four persons he had brought with him to draw the noose; after which I asked him how much his commission of strangling me might be worth. He replied, that his fees would amount to about three hundred pieces of gold. I then convinced him that he might gain more by staying with me. I made him an inferior robber; and he is now one of my best and richest officers. If thou wilt take my advice thy success may be equal to his; never was there a better season for plunder, since King Moabdar is killed, and all Babylon thrown into confusion."

"Moabdar killed!" said Zadig, "and what is become of Queen Astarte?"

“I know not,” replied Arbogad. “All I know is, that Moabdar lost his senses and was killed; that Babylon is a scene of disorder and bloodshed; that all the empire is desolated; that there are some fine strokes to be struck yet; and that, for my own part, I have struck some that are admirable.”

“But the queen,” said Zadig; “for heaven’s sake, knowest thou nothing of the queen’s fate?”

“Yes,” replied he, “I have heard something of a prince of Hircania; if she was not killed in the tumult, she is probably one of his concubines; but I am much fonder of booty than news. I have taken several women in my excursions; but I keep none of them. I sell them at a high price, when they are beautiful, without inquiring who they are. In commodities of this kind rank makes no difference, and a queen that is ugly will never find a merchant. Perhaps I may have sold Queen Astarte; perhaps she is dead; but, be it as it will, it is of little consequence to me, and I should imagine of as little to thee.” So saying he drank a large draught which threw all his ideas into such confusion that Zadig could obtain no further information.

Zadig remained for some time without speech, sense, or motion. Arbogad continued drinking; told stories; constantly repeated that he was the happiest man in the world; and exhorted Zadig to put himself in the same condition. At last the soporiferous fumes of the wine lulled him into a gentle repose.

Zadig passed the night in the most violent perturbation. “What,” said he, “did the king lose his senses? and is he killed? I cannot help lamenting his fate. The empire is rent in pieces; and this robber is happy. O fortune! O destiny! A robber is happy, and the most beautiful of nature’s works hath perhaps perished in a barbarous manner or lives in a state worse than death. O Astarte! what is become of thee?”

At daybreak he questioned all those he met in the castle; but they were all busy, and he received no answer. During the night they had made a new capture, and they were now employed in dividing the spoils. All he could obtain in this hurry and confusion was an opportunity of departing, which he immediately embraced, plunged deeper than ever in the most gloomy and mournful reflections.

Zadig proceeded on his journey with a mind full of disquiet and perplexity, and wholly employed on the unhappy Astarte, on the King of Babylon, on his faithful friend Cador, on the happy robber Arbogad; in a word, on all the misfortunes and disappointments he had hitherto suffered.

## THE FISHERMAN

At a few leagues' distance from Arbogad's castle he came to the banks of a small river, still deploring his fate, and considering himself as the most wretched of mankind. He saw a fisherman lying on the brink of the river, scarcely holding, in his weak and feeble hand, a net which he seemed ready to drop, and lifting up his eyes to Heaven.

"I am certainly," said the fisherman, "the most unhappy man in the world. I was universally allowed to be the most famous dealer in cream cheese in Babylon, and yet I am ruined. I had the most handsome wife that any man in my station could have; and by her I have been betrayed. I had still left a paltry house, and that I have seen pillaged and destroyed. At last I took refuge in this cottage, where I have no other resource than fishing, and yet I cannot catch a single fish. Oh, my net! no more will I throw thee into the water; I will throw myself in thy place." So saying, he arose and advanced forward, in the attitude of a man ready to throw himself into the river, and thus to finish his life.

"What!" said Zadig to himself, "are there men as wretched as I?" His eagerness to save the fisherman's life was as this reflection. He ran to him, stopped him, and spoke to him with a tender and compassionate air. It is commonly supposed that we are less miserable when we have companions in our misery. This, according to Zoroaster, does not proceed from *malice*, but necessity. We feel ourselves insensibly drawn to an unhappy person as to one like ourselves. The joy of the happy would be an insult; but two men in distress are like two slender trees, which, mutually supporting each other, fortify themselves against the storm.

"Why," said Zadig to the fisherman, "dost thou sink under thy misfortunes?"

"Because," replied he, "I see no means of relief. I was the most considerable man in the village of Derlback, near Babylon, and with the assistance of my wife I made the best cream cheese in the empire. Queen Astarte and the famous minister Zadig were extremely fond of them."

Zadig, transported, said, "What, knowest thou nothing of the queen's fate?"

"No, my lord," replied the fisherman; "but I know that neither the queen nor Zadig has paid me for my cream cheeses; that I have lost my wife, and am now reduced to despair."

"I flatter myself," said Zadig, "that thou wilt not lose all thy money. I have heard of this Zadig; he is an honest man; and if he returns to Babylon, as he expects, he will give thee more than he owes thee. Believe me, go to Babylon. I

shall be there before thee, because I am on horseback, and thou art on foot. Apply to the illustrious Cador; tell him thou hast met his friend; wait for me at his house; go, perhaps thou wilt not always be unhappy.”

“Oh, powerful Oromazes!” continued he, “thou employest me to comfort this man; whom wilt thou employ to give me consolation?” So saying, he gave the fisherman half the money he had brought from Arabia. The fisherman, struck with surprise and ravished with joy, kissed the feet of the friend of Cador, and said, “Thou art surely an angel sent from Heaven to save me!”

Meanwhile, Zadig continued to make fresh inquiries, and to shed tears. “What, my lord!” cried the fisherman, “art thou then so unhappy, thou who bestowest favors?”

“An hundred times more unhappy than thou art,” replied Zadig.

“But how is it possible,” said the good man, “that the giver can be more wretched than the receiver?”

“Because,” replied Zadig, “thy greatest misery arose from poverty, and mine is seated in the heart.”

“Did Orcan take thy wife from thee?” said the fisherman.

This word recalled to Zadig’s mind the whole of his adventures.

He repeated the catalogue of his misfortunes, beginning with the queen’s spaniel, and ending with his arrival at the castle of the robber Arbogad. “Ah!” said he to the fisherman, “Orcan deserves to be punished; but it is commonly such men as those that are the favorites of fortune. However, go thou to the house of Lord Cador, and there wait my arrival.” They then parted, the fisherman walked, thanking Heaven for the happiness of his condition; and Zadig rode, accusing fortune for the hardness of his lot.

## THE BASILISK

Arriving in a beautiful meadow, he there saw several women, who were searching for something with great application. He took the liberty to approach one of them, and to ask if he might have the honor to assist them in their search. “Take care that thou dost not,” replied the Syrian; “what we are searching for can be touched only by women.”

“Strange,” said Zadig, “may I presume to ask thee what it is that women only are permitted to touch?”

“It is a basilisk,” said she.

“A basilisk, madam! and for what purpose, pray, dost thou seek for a basilisk?”

“It is for our lord and master Ogul, whose cattle thou seest on the bank of that river at the end of the meadow. We are his most humble slaves. The lord Ogul is sick. His physician hath ordered him to eat a basilisk, stewed in rose water; and as it is a very rare animal, and can only be taken by women, the lord Ogul hath promised to choose for his well-beloved wife the woman that shall bring him a basilisk; let me go on in my search; for thou seest what I shall lose if I am prevented by my companions.”

Zadig left her and the other Assyrians to search for their basilisk, and continued to walk in the meadow; when coming to the brink of a small rivulet, he found another lady lying on the grass, and who was not searching for anything. Her person worried to be majestic; but her face was covered with a veil. She was inclined toward the rivulet, and profound sighs proceeded from her mouth. In her hand she held a small rod with which she was tracing characters on the fine sand that lay between the turf and the brook. Zadig had the curiosity to examine what this woman was writing. He drew near; he saw the letter Z, then an A; he was astonished; then appeared a D; he started. But never was surprise equal to his when he saw the last letters of his name.

He stood for some time immovable. At last, breaking silence with a faltering voice: “O generous lady! pardon a stranger, an unfortunate man, for presuming to ask thee by what surprising adventure I here find the name of Zadig traced out by thy divine hand!”

At this voice and these words, the lady lifted up the veil with a trembling hand, looked at Zadig, sent forth a cry of tenderness, surprise and joy, and sinking under the various emotions which at once assaulted her soul, fell speechless into his arms. It was Astarte herself; it was the Queen of Babylon; it was she whom Zadig adored, and whom he had reproached himself for adoring; it was she whose misfortunes he had so deeply lamented, and for whose fate he had been so anxiously concerned.

He was for a moment deprived of the use of his senses, when he had fixed his eyes on those of Astarte, which now began to open again with a languor mixed with confusion and tenderness: “O ye immortal powers!” cried he, “who preside over the fates of weak mortals, do ye indeed restore Astarte to me! at what a time, in what a place, and in what a condition do I again behold her!” He fell on his knees before Astarte and laid his face in the dust at her feet. The Queen of Babylon raised him up, and made him sit by her side on the brink of the rivulet. She frequently wiped her eyes, from which the tears continued to



flow afresh. She twenty times resumed her discourse, which her sighs as often interrupted; she asked by what strange accident they were brought together, and suddenly prevented his answers by other questions; she waived the account of her own misfortunes, and desired to be informed of those of Zadig.

At last, both of them having a little composed the tumult of their souls, Zadig acquainted her in a few words by what adventure he was brought into that meadow. "But, O unhappy and respectable queen! by what means do I find thee in this lonely place, clothed in the habit of a slave, and accompanied by other female slaves, who are searching for a basilisk, which, by order of the physician, is to be stewed in rose water?"

"While they are searching for their basilisk," said the fair Astarte, "I will inform thee of all I have suffered, for which Heaven has sufficiently recompensed me by restoring thee to my sight. Thou knowest that the king, my husband, was vexed to see thee the most amiable of mankind; and that for this reason he one night resolved to strangle thee and poison me. Thou knowest how Heaven permitted my little mute to inform me of the orders of his sublime majesty. Hardly had the faithful Cador advised thee to depart, in obedience to my command, when he ventured to enter my apartment at midnight by a secret passage. He carried me off and conducted me to the temple of Oromazes, where the mage his brother shut me up in that huge statue whose base reaches to the foundation of the temple and whose top rises to the summit of the dome. I was there buried in a manner; but was saved by the mage; and supplied with all the necessaries of life. At break of day his majesty's apothecary entered my chamber with a potion composed of a mixture of henbane, opium, hemlock, black hellebore, and aconite; and another officer went to thine with a bowstring of blue silk. Neither of us was to be found. Cador, the better to deceive the king, pretended to come and accuse us both. He said that thou hadst taken the road to the Indies, and I that to Memphis, on which the king's guards were immediately dispatched in pursuit of us both.

"The couriers who pursued me did not know me. I had hardly ever shown my face to any but thee, and to thee only in the presence and by the order of my husband. They conducted themselves in the pursuit by the description that had been given them of my person. On the frontiers of Egypt they met with a woman of the same stature with me, and possessed perhaps of greater charms. She was weeping and wandering. They made no doubt but that this woman was the Queen of Babylon and accordingly brought her to Moabdar. Their mistake at first threw the king into a violent passion; but having viewed this woman more attentively, he found her extremely handsome and was comforted. She was called Missouf. I have since been informed that this name in the Egyptian language signifies the capricious fair one. She was so in reality; but she had as

much cunning as caprice. She pleased Moabdar and gained such an ascendancy over him as to make him choose her for his wife. Her character then began to appear in its true colors. She gave herself up, without scruple, to all the freaks of a wanton imagination. She would have obliged the chief of the magi, who was old and gouty, to dance before her; and on his refusal, she persecuted him with the most unrelenting cruelty. She ordered her master of the horse to make her a pie of sweetmeats. In vain did he represent that he was not a pastry-cook; he was obliged to make it, and lost his place, because it was baked a little too hard. The post of master of the horse she gave to her dwarf, and that of chancellor to her page. In this manner did she govern Babylon. Everybody regretted the loss of me. The king, who till the moment of his resolving to poison me and strangle thee had been a tolerably good kind of man, seemed now to have drowned all his virtues in his immoderate fondness for this capricious fair one. He came to the temple on the great day of the feast held in honor of the sacred fire. I saw him implore the gods in behalf of Missouf, at the feet of the statue in which I was inclosed. I raised my voice, I cried out, ‘The gods reject the prayers of a king who is now become a tyrant, and who attempted to murder a reasonable wife, in order to marry a woman remarkable for nothing but her folly and extravagance.’ At these words Moabdar was confounded and his head became disordered. The oracle I had pronounced, and the tyranny of Missouf, conspired to deprive him of his judgment, and in a few days his reason entirely forsook him.

“Moabdar’s madness, which seemed to be the judgment of Heaven, was the signal to a revolt. The people rose and ran to arms; and Babylon, which had been so long immersed in idleness and effeminacy, became the theater of a bloody civil war. I was taken from the heart of my statue and placed at the head of a party. Cador flew to Memphis to bring thee back to Babylon. The Prince of Hircania, informed of these fatal events, returned with his army and made a third party in Chaldea. He attacked the king, who fled before him with his capricious Egyptian. Moabdar died pierced with wounds. I myself had the misfortune to be taken by a party of Hircanians, who conducted me to their prince’s tent, at the very moment that Missouf was brought before him. Thou wilt doubtless be pleased to hear that the prince thought me beautiful; but thou wilt be sorry to be informed that he designed me for his seraglio. He told me, with a blunt and resolute air, that as soon as he had finished a military expedition, which he was just going to undertake, he would come to me. Judge how great must have been my grief. My ties with Moabdar were already dissolved; I might have been the wife of Zadig; and I was fallen into the hands of a barbarian. I answered him with all the pride which my high rank and noble sentiment could inspire. I had always heard it affirmed that Heaven stamped on persons of my condition a mark of grandeur, which, with a single word or

glance, could reduce to the lowliness of the most profound respect those rash and forward persons who presume to deviate from the rules of politeness. I spoke like a queen, but was treated like a maidservant. The Hircanian, without even deigning to speak to me, told his black eunuch that I was impertinent, but that he thought me handsome. He ordered him to take care of me, and to put me under the regimen of favorites, that so my complexion being improved, I might be the more worthy of his favors when he should be at leisure to honor me with them, I told him that rather than submit to his desires I would put an end to my life. He replied, with a smile, that women, he believed, were not, so bloodthirsty, and that he was accustomed to such violent expressions; and then left me with the air of a man who had just put another parrot into his aviary. What a state for the first queen of the universe, and, what is more, for a heart devoted to Zadig!”

At these words Zadig threw himself at her feet and bathed them with his tears. Astarte raised him with great tenderness and thus continued her story: “I now saw myself in the power of a barbarian and rival to the foolish woman with whom I was confined. She gave me an account of her adventures in Egypt. From the description she gave me of your person, from the time, from the dromedary on which you were mounted, and from every other circumstance, I inferred that Zadig was the man who had fought for her. I doubted not but that you were at Memphis, and, therefore, resolved to repair thither. Beautiful Missouf, said I, thou art more handsome than I, and will please the Prince of Hircania much better. Assist me in contriving the means of my escape; thou wilt then reign alone; thou wilt at once make me happy and rid thyself of a rival. Missouf concerted with me the means of my flight; and I departed secretly with a female Egyptian slave.

“As I approached the frontiers of Arabia, a famous robber, named Arbogad, seized me and sold me to some merchants, who brought me to this castle, where Lord Ogul resides. He bought me without knowing who I was. He is a voluptuary, ambitious of nothing but good living, and thinks that God sent him into the world for no other purpose than to sit at table. He is so extremely corpulent that he is always in danger of suffocation. His physician, who has but little credit with him when he has a good digestion, governs him with a despotic sway when he has eaten too much. He has persuaded him that a basilisk stewed in rose water will effect a complete cure. The Lord Ogul hath promised his hand to the female slave that brings him a basilisk. Thou seest that I leave them to vie with each other in meriting this honor; and never was I less desirous of finding the basilisk than since Heaven hath restored thee to my sight.”

This account was succeeded by a long conversation between Astarte and Zadig, consisting of everything that their long-suppressed sentiments, their

great sufferings, and their mutual love could inspire in hearts the most noble and tender; and the genii who preside over love carried their words to the sphere of Venus.

The woman returned to Ogul without having found the basilisk. Zadig was introduced to this mighty lord and spoke to him in the following terms: "May immortal health descend from heaven to bless all thy days! I am a physician; at the first report of thy indisposition I flew to thy castle and have now brought thee a basilisk stewed in rose water. Not that I pretend to marry thee. All I ask is the liberty of a Babylonian slave, who hath been in thy possession for a few days; and, if I should not be so happy as to cure thee, magnificent Lord Ogul, I consent to remain a slave in her place."

The proposal was accepted. Astarte set out for Babylon with Zadig's servant, promising, immediately upon her arrival, to send a courier to inform him of all that had happened. Their parting was as tender as their meeting. The moment of meeting and that of parting are the two greatest epochs of life, as sayeth the great book of Zend. Zadig loved the queen with as much ardor as he professed; and the queen loved him more than she thought proper to acknowledge.

Meanwhile Zadig spoke thus to Ogul: "My lord, my basilisk is not to be eaten; all its virtues must enter through thy pores. I have inclosed it in a little ball, blown up and covered with a fine skin. Thou must strike this ball with all thy might and I must strike it back for a considerable time; and by observing this regimen for a few days thou wilt see the effects of my art." The first day Ogul was out of breath and thought he should have died with fatigue. The second he was less fatigued, slept better. In eight days he recovered all the strength, all the health, all the agility and cheerfulness of his most agreeable years.

"Thou hast played at ball, and thou hast been temperate," said Zadig; "know that there is no such thing in nature as a basilisk; that temperance and exercise are the two great preservatives of health; and that the art of reconciling intemperance and health is as chimerical as the philosopher's stone, judicial astrology, or the theology of the magi."

Ogul's first physician, observing how dangerous this man might prove to the medical art, formed a design, in conjunction with the apothecary, to send Zadig to search for a basilisk in the other world. Thus, having suffered such a long train of calamities on account of his good actions, he was now upon the point of losing his life for curing a gluttonous lord. He was invited to an excellent dinner and was to have been poisoned in the second course, but, during the first, he happily received a courier from the fair Astarte. "When one is beloved

by a beautiful woman,” says the great Zoroaster, “he hath always the good fortune to extricate himself out of every kind of difficulty and danger.”

## THE COMBATS

The queen was received at Babylon with all those transports of joy which are ever felt on the return of a beautiful princess who hath been involved in calamities. Babylon was now in greater tranquillity. The Prince of Hircania had been killed in battle. The victorious Babylonians declared that the queen should marry the man whom they should choose for their sovereign. They were resolved that the first place in the world, that of being husband to Astarte and King of Babylon, should not depend on cabals and intrigues. They swore to acknowledge for king the man who, upon trial, should be found to be possessed of the greatest valor and the greatest wisdom. Accordingly, at the distance of a few leagues from the city, a spacious place was marked out for the list, surrounded with magnificent amphitheaters. Thither the combatants were to repair in complete armor. Each of them had a separate apartment behind the amphitheaters, where they were neither to be seen nor known by anyone. Each was to encounter four knights, and those that were so happy as to conquer four were then to engage with one another; so that he who remained the last master of the field would be proclaimed conqueror at the games.

Four days after he was to return with the same arms and to explain the enigmas proposed by the magi. If he did not explain the enigmas he was not king; and the running at the lances was to be begun afresh till a man would be found who was conqueror in both these combats; for they were absolutely determined to have a king possessed of the greatest wisdom and the most invincible courage. The queen was all the while to be strictly guarded: she was only allowed to be present at the games, and even there she was to be covered with a veil; but was not permitted to speak to any of the competitors, that so they might neither receive favor, nor suffer injustice.

These particulars Astarte communicated to her lover, hoping that in order to obtain her he would show himself possessed of greater courage and wisdom than any other person. Zadig set out on his journey, beseeching Venus to fortify his courage and enlighten his understanding. He arrived on the banks of the Euphrates on the eve of this great day. He caused his device to be inscribed among those of the combatants, concealing his face and his name, as the law ordained; and then went to repose himself in the apartment that fell to him by lot. His friend Cador, who, after the fruitless search he had made for him in Egypt, was now returned to Babylon, sent to his tent a complete suit of armor, which was a present from the queen; as also, from himself, one of the finest

horses in Persia. Zadig presently perceived that these presents were sent by Astarte; and from thence his courage derived fresh strength, and his love the most animating hopes.

Next day, the queen being seated under a canopy of jewels, and the amphitheaters filled with all the gentlemen and ladies of rank in Babylon, the combatants appeared in the circus. Each of them came and laid his device at the feet of the grand magi. They drew their devices by lot; and that of Zadig was the last. The first who advanced was a certain lord, named Itobad, very rich and very vain, but possessed of little courage, of less address, and hardly of any judgment at all. His servants had persuaded him that such a man as he ought to be king; he had said in reply, "Such a man as I ought to reign"; and thus they had armed him *cap-à-pie*. He wore an armor of gold enameled with green, a plume of green feathers, and a lance adorned with green ribbons. It was instantly perceived by the manner in which Itobad managed his horse, that it was not for such a man as he that Heaven reserved the scepter of Babylon. The first knight that ran against him threw him out of his saddle; the second laid him flat on his horse's buttocks, with his legs in the air, and his arms extended. Itobad recovered himself, but with so bad a grace that the whole amphitheater burst out a-laughing. The third knight disdained to make use of his lance; but, making a pass at him, took him by the right leg and, wheeling him half round, laid him prostrate on the sand. The squires of the game ran to him laughing, and replaced him in his saddle. The fourth combatant took him by the left leg, and tumbled him down on the other side. He was conducted back with scornful shouts to his tent, where, according to the law, he was to pass the night; and as he climbed along with great difficulty he said, "What an adventure for such a man as I!"

The other knights acquitted themselves with greater ability and success. Some of them conquered two combatants; a few of them vanquished three; but none but Prince Otamus conquered four. At last Zadig fought him in his turn. He successively threw four knights off their saddles with all the grace imaginable. It then remained to be seen who should be conqueror, Otamus or Zadig. The arms of the first were gold and blue, with a plume of the same color; those of the last were white. The wishes of all the spectators were divided between the knight in blue and the knight in white. The queen, whose heart was in a violent palpitation, offered prayers to Heaven for the success of the white color.

The two champions made their passes and vaults with so much agility, they mutually gave and received such dexterous blows with their lances, and sat so firmly in their saddles, that everybody but the queen wished there might be two kings in Babylon. At length, their horses being tired and their lances broken,

Zadig had recourse to this stratagem: He passes behind the blue prince; springs upon the buttocks of his horse; seizes him by the middle; throws him on the earth; places himself in the saddle; and wheels around Otamus as he lay extended on the ground. All the amphitheater cried out, "Victory to the white knight!"

Otamus rises in a violent passion, and draws his sword; Zadig leaps from his horse with his saber in his hand. Both of them are now on the ground, engaged in a new combat, where strength and agility triumph by turns. The plumes of their helmets, the studs of their bracelets, the rings of their armor, are driven to a great distance by the violence of a thousand furious blows. They strike with the point and the edge; to the right, to the left, on the head, on the breast; they retreat; they advance; they measure swords; they close; they seize each other; they bend like serpents; they attack like lions; and the fire every moment flashes from their blows.

At last Zadig, having recovered his spirits, stops; makes a feint; leaps upon Otamus; throws him on the ground and disarms him; and Otamus cries out, "It is thou alone, O white knight, that oughtest to reign over Babylon!" The queen was now at the height of her joy. The knight in blue armor and the knight in white were conducted each to his own apartment, as well as all the others, according to the intention of the law. Mutes came to wait upon them and to serve them at table. It may be easily supposed that the queen's little mute waited upon Zadig. They were then left to themselves to enjoy the sweets of repose till next morning, at which time the conqueror was to bring his device to the grand magi, to compare it with that which he had left, and make himself known.

Zadig though deeply in love, was so much fatigued that he could not help sleeping. Itobad, who lay near him, never closed his eyes. He arose in the night, entered his apartment, took the white arms and the device of Zadig, and put his green armor in their place. At break of day he went boldly to the grand magi to declare that so great a man as he was conqueror. This was little expected; however, he was proclaimed while Zadig was still asleep. Astarte, surprised and filled with despair, returned to Babylon. The amphitheater was almost empty when Zadig awoke; he sought for his arms, but could find none but the green armor. With this he was obliged to cover himself, having nothing else near him. Astonished and enraged, he put it on in a furious passion, and advanced in this equipage.

The people that still remained in the amphitheater and the circus received him with hoots and hisses. They surrounded him and insulted him to his face. Never did man suffer such cruel mortifications. He lost his patience; with his

saber he dispersed such of the populace as dared to affront him; but he knew not what course to take. He could not see the queen; he could not claim the white armor she had sent him without exposing her; and thus, while she was plunged in grief, he was filled with fury and distraction. He walked on the banks of the Euphrates, fully persuaded that his star had destined him to inevitable misery, and resolving in his own mind all his misfortunes, from the adventure of the woman who hated one-eyed men to that of his armor. "This," said he, "is the consequence of my having slept too long. Had I slept less, I should now have been King of Babylon and in possession of Astarte. Knowledge, virtue, and courage have hitherto served only to make me miserable." He then let fall some secret murmurings against Providence, and was tempted to believe that the world was governed by a cruel destiny, which oppressed the good and prospered knights in green armor. One of his greatest mortifications was his being obliged to wear that green armor which had exposed him to such contumelious treatment. A merchant happening to pass by, he sold it to him for a trifle and bought a gown and a long bonnet. In this garb he proceeded along the banks of the Euphrates, filled with despair, and secretly accusing Providence, which thus continued to persecute him with unremitting severity.

## THE HERMIT

While he was thus sauntering he met a hermit, whose white and venerable beard hung down to his girdle. He held a book in his hand, which he read with great attention. Zadig stopped, and made him a profound obeisance. The hermit returned the compliment with such a noble and engaging air, that Zadig had the curiosity to enter into conversation with him. He asked him what book it was that he had been reading? "It is the Book of Destinies," said the hermit; "wouldst thou choose to look into it?" He put the book into the hands of Zadig, who, thoroughly versed as he was in several languages, could not decipher a single character of it. This only redoubled his curiosity.

"Thou seemest," said this good father, "to be in great distress."

"Alas," replied Zadig, "I have but too much reason."

"If thou wilt permit me to accompany thee," resumed the old man, "perhaps I may be of some service to thee. I have often poured the balm of consolation into the bleeding heart of the unhappy."

Zadig felt himself inspired with respect for the air, the beard, and the book of the hermit. He found, in the course of the conversation, that he was possessed of superior degrees of knowledge. The hermit talked of fate, of justice, of



morals, of the chief good, of human weakness, and of virtue and vice, with such a spirited and moving eloquence, that Zadig felt himself drawn toward him by an irresistible charm. He earnestly entreated the favor of his company till their return to Babylon.

“I ask the same favor of thee,” said the old man; “swear to me by Oromazes, that whatever I do, thou wilt not leave me for some days.” Zadig swore, and they set out together.

In the evening the two travelers arrived in a superb castle. The hermit entreated a hospitable reception for himself and the young man who accompanied him. The porter, whom one might have easily mistaken for a great lord, introduced them with a kind of disdainful civility. He presented them to a principal domestic, who showed them his master’s magnificent apartments. They were admitted to the lower end of the table, without being honored with the least mark of regard by the lord of the castle; but they were served, like the rest, with delicacy and profusion. They were then presented with water to wash their hands, in a golden basin adorned with emeralds and rubies. At last they were conducted to bed in a beautiful apartment; and in the morning a domestic brought each of them a piece of gold, after which they took their leave and departed.

“The master of the house,” said Zadig, as they were proceeding on the journey, “appears to be a generous man, though somewhat too proud; he nobly performs the duties of hospitality.” At that instant he observed that a kind of large pocket, which the hermit had, was filled and distended; and upon looking more narrowly he found that it contained the golden basin adorned with precious stones, which the hermit had stolen. He durst not take any notice of it, but he was filled with a strange surprise.

About noon, the hermit came to the door of a paltry house inhabited by a rich miser, and begged the favor of an hospitable reception for a few hours. An old servant, in a tattered garb, received them with a blunt and rude air, and led them into the stable, where he gave them some rotten olives, moldy bread, and sour beer. The hermit ate and drank with as much seeming satisfaction as he had done the evening before; and then addressing himself to the old servant, who watched them both, to prevent their stealing anything, and rudely pressed them to depart, he gave him the two pieces of gold he had received in the morning, and thanked him for his great civility.

“Pray,” added he, “allow me to speak to thy master.” The servant, filled with astonishment, introduced the two travelers. “Magnificent lord,” said the hermit, “I cannot but return thee my most humble thanks for the noble manner in which

thou hast entertained us. Be pleased to accept this golden basin as a small mark of my gratitude.” The miser started, and was ready to fall backward; but the hermit, without giving him time to recover from his surprise, instantly departed with his young fellow traveler.

“Father,” said Zadig, “what is the meaning of all this? Thou seemest to me to be entirely different from other men; thou stealest a golden basin adorned with precious stones from a lord who received thee magnificently, and givest it to a miser who treats thee with indignity.”

“Son,” replied the old man, “this magnificent lord, who receives strangers only from vanity and ostentation, will hereby be rendered more wise; and the miser will learn to practice the duties of hospitality. Be surprised at nothing, but follow me.”

Zadig knew not as yet whether he was in company with the most foolish or the most prudent of mankind; but the hermit spoke with such an ascendancy, that Zadig, who was moreover bound by his oath, could not refuse to follow him.

In the evening they arrived at a house built with equal elegance and simplicity, where nothing savored either of prodigality or avarice. The master of it was a philosopher, who had retired from the world, and who cultivated in peace the study of virtue and wisdom, without any of that rigid and morose severity so commonly to be found in men of his character. He had chosen to build this country house, in which he received strangers with a generosity free from ostentation. He went himself to meet the two travelers, whom he led into a commodious apartment, where he desired them to repose themselves a little. Soon after he came and invited them to a decent and well-ordered repast during which he spoke with great judgment of the last revolutions in Babylon. He seemed to be strongly attached to the queen, and wished that Zadig had appeared in the lists to dispute the crown. “But the people,” added he, “do not deserve to have such a king as Zadig.”

Zadig blushed, and felt his griefs redoubled. They agreed, in the course of the conversation, that the things of this world did not always answer the wishes of the wise. The hermit still maintained that the ways of Providence were inscrutable; and that men were in the wrong to judge of a whole, of which they understood but the smallest part.

They talked of passions. “Ah,” said Zadig, “how fatal are their effects!”

“They are in the winds,” replied the hermit, “that swell the sails of the ship; it is true, they sometimes sink her, but without them she could not sail at all. The

bile makes us sick and choleric; but without bile we could not live. Everything in this world is dangerous, and yet everything is necessary.”

The conversation turned on pleasure; and the hermit proved that it was a present bestowed by the Deity. “For,” said he, “man cannot give himself either sensations or ideas; he receives all; and pain and pleasure proceed from a foreign cause as well as his being.”

Zadig was surprised to see a man, who had been guilty of such extravagant actions, capable of reasoning with so much judgment and propriety. At last, after a conversation equally entertaining and instructive, the host led back his two guests to their apartment, blessing Heaven for having sent him two men possessed of so much wisdom and virtue. He offered them money with such an easy and noble air as could not possibly give any offense. The hermit refused it, and said that he must now take his leave of him, as he set out for Babylon before it was light. Their parting was tender; Zadig especially felt himself filled with esteem and affection for a man of such an amiable character.

When he and the hermit were alone in their apartment, they spent a long time praising their host. At break of day the old man awakened his companion. “We must now depart,” said he, “but while all the family are still asleep, I will leave this man a mark of my esteem and affection.” So saying, he took a candle and set fire to the house.

Zadig, struck with horror, cried aloud, and endeavored to hinder him from committing such a barbarous action; but the hermit drew him away by a superior force, and the house was soon in flames. The hermit, who, with his companion, was already at a considerable distance, looked back to the conflagration with great tranquillity.

“Thanks be to God,” said he, “the house of my dear host is entirely destroyed! Happy man!”

At these words Zadig was at once tempted to burst out a-laughing, to reproach the reverend father, to beat him, and to run away. But he did none of all of these, for still subdued by the powerful ascendancy of the hermit, he followed him, in spite of himself, to the next stage.

This was at the house of a charitable and virtuous widow, who had a nephew fourteen years of age, a handsome and promising youth, and her only hope. She performed the honors of her house as well as she could. Next day, she ordered her nephew to accompany the strangers to a bridge, which being lately broken down, was become extremely dangerous in passing. The young man walked before them with great alacrity. As they were crossing the bridge, “Come” said

the hermit to the youth, "I must show my gratitude to thy aunt." He then took him by the hair and plunged him into the river. The boy sunk, appeared again on the surface of the water, and was swallowed up by the current.

"O monster! O thou most wicked of mankind!" cried Zadig.

"Thou promisedst to behave with greater patience," said the hermit, interrupting him. "Know that under the ruins of that house which Providence hath set on fire the master hath found an immense treasure. Know that this young man, whose life Providence hath shortened, would have assassinated his aunt in the space of a year, and thee in that of two."

"Who told thee so, barbarian?" cried Zadig; "and though thou hadst read this event in thy Book of Destinies, art thou permitted to drown a youth who never did thee any harm?"

While the Babylonian was thus exclaiming, he observed that the old man had no longer a beard, and that his countenance assumed the features and complexion of youth. The hermit's habit disappeared, and four beautiful wings covered a majestic body resplendent with light.

"O sent of heaven! O divine angel!" cried Zadig, humbly prostrating himself on the ground, "hast thou then descended from the Empyrean to teach a weak mortal to submit to the eternal decrees of Providence?"

"Men," said the angel Jesrad, "judge of all without knowing anything; and, of all men, thou best deservest to be enlightened."

Zadig begged to be permitted to speak. "I distrust myself," said he, "but may I presume to ask the favor of thee to clear up one doubt that still remains in my mind? Would it not have been better to have corrected this youth, and made him virtuous, than to have drowned him?"

"Had he been virtuous," replied Jesrad, "and enjoyed a longer life, it would have been his fate to be assassinated himself, together with the wife he would have married, and the child he would have had by her."

"But why," said Zadig, "is it necessary that there should be crimes and misfortunes, and that these misfortunes should fall on the good?"

"The wicked," replied Jesrad, "are always unhappy; they serve to prove and try the small number of the just that are scattered through the earth; and there is no evil that is not productive of some good."

"But," said Zadig, "suppose there were nothing but good and no evil at all."

“Then,” replied Jesrad, “this earth would be another earth. The chain of events would be ranged in another order and directed by wisdom; but this other order, which would be perfect, can exist only in the eternal abode of the Supreme Being, to which no evil can approach. The Deity hath created millions of worlds among which there is not one that resembles another. This immense variety is the effect of His immense power. There are not two leaves among the trees of the earth, nor two globes in the unlimited expanse of heaven that are exactly similar; and all that thou seest on the little atom in which thou art born, ought to be in its proper time and place, according to the immutable decree of Him who comprehends all. Men think that this child who hath just perished is fallen into the water by chance; and that it is by the same chance that this house is burned; but there is no such thing as chance; all is either a trial, or a punishment, or a reward, or a foresight. Remember the fisherman who thought himself the most wretched of mankind. Oromazes sent thee to change his fate. Cease, then, frail mortal, to dispute against what thou oughtest to adore.”

“But,” said Zadig—as he pronounced the word “But,” the angel took his flight toward the tenth sphere. Zadig on his knees adored Providence, and submitted. The angel cried to him from on high, “Direct thy course toward Babylon.”

## THE ENIGMAS

Zadig, entranced, as it were, and like a man about whose head the thunder had burst, walked at random. He entered Babylon on the very day when those who had fought at the tournaments were assembled in the grand vestibule of the palace to explain the enigmas and to answer the questions of the grand magi. All the knights were already arrived, except the knight in green armor. As soon as Zadig appeared in the city the people crowded round him; every eye was fixed on him; every mouth blessed him, and every heart wished him the empire. The envious man saw him pass; he frowned and turned aside. The people conducted him to the place where the assembly was held. The queen, who was informed of his arrival, became a prey to the most violent agitations of hope and fear. She was filled with anxiety and apprehension. She could not comprehend why Zadig was without arms, nor why Itobad wore the white armor. A confused murmur arose at the sight of Zadig. They were equally surprised and charmed to see him; but none but the knights who had fought were permitted to appear in the assembly.

“I have fought as well as the other knights,” said Zadig, “but another here wears my arms; and while I wait for the honor of proving the truth of my assertion, I demand the liberty of presenting myself to explain the enigmas.”

The question was put to the vote, and his reputation for probity was still so deeply impressed in their minds, that they admitted him without scruple.

The first question proposed by the grand magi was: “What, of all things in the world, is the longest and the shortest, the swiftest and the slowest, the most divisible and the most extended the most neglected and the most regretted, without which nothing can be done, which devours all that is little, and enlivens all that is great?”

Itobad was to speak. He replied that so great a man as he did not understand enigmas, and that it was sufficient for him to have conquered by his strength and valor. Some said that the meaning of the enigma was Fortune; some, the Earth; and others the Light. Zadig said that it was Time. “Nothing,” added he, “is longer, since it is the measure of eternity; nothing is shorter, since it is insufficient for the accomplishment of our projects; nothing more slow to him that expects, nothing more rapid to him that enjoys; in greatness, it extends to infinity; in smallness, it is infinitely divisible; all men neglect it; all regret the loss of it; nothing can be done without it; it consigns to oblivion whatever is unworthy of being transmitted to posterity, and it immortalizes such actions as are truly great.” The assembly acknowledged that Zadig was in the right.

The next question was: “What is the thing which we receive without thanks, which we enjoy without knowing how, which we give to others when we know not where we are, and which we lose without perceiving it?”

Everyone gave his own explanation. Zadig alone guessed that it was Life, and explained all the other enigmas with the same facility. Itobad always said that nothing was more easy, and that he could have answered them with the same readiness had he chosen to have given himself the trouble. Questions were then proposed on justice, on the sovereign good, and on the art of government. Zadig’s answers were judged to be the most solid. “What a pity is it,” said they, “that such a great genius should be so bad a knight!”

“Illustrious lords,” said Zadig, “I have had the honor of conquering in the tournaments. It is to me that the white armor belongs. Lord Itobad took possession of it during my sleep. He probably thought that it would fit him better than the green. I am now ready to prove in your presence, with my gown and sword, against all that beautiful white armor which he took from me, that it is I who have had the honor of conquering the brave Otamus.”

Itobad accepted the challenge with the greatest confidence. He never doubted but that, armed as he was, with a helmet, a cuirass, and brassarts, he would obtain an easy victory over a champion in a cap and nightgown. Zadig drew his sword, saluting the queen, who looked at him with a mixture of fear and joy.

Itobad drew his without saluting anyone. He rushed upon Zadig, like a man who had nothing to fear; he was ready to cleave him in two. Zadig knew how to ward off his blows, by opposing the strongest part of his sword to the weakest of that of his adversary, in such a manner that Itobad's sword was broken. Upon which Zadig, seizing his enemy by the waist, threw him on the ground; and firing the point of his sword at the breastplate, "Suffer thyself to be disarmed," said he, "or thou art a dead man."

Itobad, always surprised at the disgraces that happened to such a man as he, was obliged to yield to Zadig, who took from him with great composure his magnificent helmet, his superb cuirass, his fine brassarts, his shining cuishes; clothed himself with them, and in this dress ran to throw himself at the feet of Astarte. Cador easily proved that the armor belonged to Zadig. He was acknowledged king by the unanimous consent of the whole nation, and especially by that of Astarte, who, after so many calamities, now tasted the exquisite pleasure of seeing her lover worthy, in the eyes of all the world, to be her husband. Itobad went home to be called lord in his own house. Zadig was king, and was happy. The queen and Zadig adored Providence. He sent in search of the robber Arbogad, to whom he gave an honorable post in his army, promising to advance him to the first dignities if he behaved like a true warrior, and threatening to hang him if he followed the profession of a robber.

Setoc, with the fair Almona, was called from the heart of Arabia and placed at the head of the commerce of Babylon. Cador was preferred and distinguished according to his great services. He was the friend of the king; and the king was then the only monarch on earth that had a friend. The little mute was not forgotten.

But neither could the beautiful Semira be comforted for having believed that Zadig would be blind of an eye; nor did Azora cease to lament her having attempted to cut off his nose. Their griefs, however, he softened by his presents. The envious man died of rage and shame. The empire enjoyed peace, glory, and plenty. This was the happiest age of the earth; it was governed by love and justice. The people blessed Zadig, and Zadig blessed Heaven.

## ABANDONED By Guy De Maupassant

“I really think you must be mad, my dear, to go for a country walk in such weather as this. You have had some very strange notions for the last two months. You drag me to the seaside in spite of myself, when you have never once had such a whim during all the forty-four years that we have been married. You chose Fécamp, which is a very dull town, without consulting me in the matter, and now you are seized with such a rage for walking, you who hardly ever stir out on foot, that you want to take a country walk on the hottest day of the year. Ask d’Apreval to go with you, as he is ready to gratify all your whims. As for me, I am going back to have a nap.”

Madame de Cadour turned to her old friend and said:

“Will you come with me, Monsieur d’Apreval?”

He bowed with a smile, and with all the gallantry of former years:

“I will go wherever you go,” he replied.

“Very well, then, go and get a sunstroke,” Monsieur de Cadour said; and he went back to the Hôtel des Bains to lie down for an hour or two.

As soon as they were alone, the old lady and her old companion set off, and she said to him in a low voice, squeezing his hand:

“At last! at last!”

“You are mad,” he said in a whisper. “I assure you that you are mad. Think of the risk you are running. If that man—”

She started.

“Oh! Henri, do not say that man, when you are speaking of him.”

“Very well,” he said abruptly, “if our son guesses anything, if he has any suspicions, he will have you, he will have us both in his power. You have got on without seeing him for the last forty years. What is the matter with you to-day?”

They had been going up the long street that leads from the sea to the town, and now they turned to the right, to go to Etretat. The white road stretched in front of them under a blaze of brilliant sunshine, so they went on slowly in the burning heat. She had taken her old friend’s arm, and was looking straight in front of her, with a fixed and haunted gaze, and at last she said:



“And so you have not seen him again, either?”

“No, never.”

“Is it possible?”

“My dear friend, do not let us begin that discussion again. I have a wife and children and you have a husband, so we both of us have much to fear from other people’s opinion.”

She did not reply; she was thinking of her long past youth and of many sad things that had occurred. How well she recalled all the details of their early friendship, his smiles, the way he used to linger, in order to watch her until she was indoors. What happy days they were, the only really delicious days she had ever enjoyed, and how quickly they were over!

And then—her discovery—of the penalty she paid! What anguish!

Of that journey to the South, that long journey, her sufferings, her constant terror, that secluded life in the small, solitary house on the shores of the Mediterranean, at the bottom of a garden, which she did not venture to leave. How well she remembered those long days which she spent lying under an orange tree, looking up at the round, red fruit, amid the green leaves. How she used to long to go out, as far as the sea, whose fresh breezes came to her over the wall, and whose small waves she could hear lapping on the beach. She dreamed of its immense blue expanse sparkling under the sun, with the white sails of the small vessels, and a mountain on the horizon. But she did not dare to go outside the gate. Suppose anybody had recognized her!

And those days of waiting, those last days of misery and expectation! The impending suffering, and then that terrible night! What misery she had endured, and what a night it was! How she had groaned and screamed! She could still see the pale face of her lover, who kissed her hand every moment, and the clean-shaven face of the doctor and the nurse’s white cap.

And what she felt when she heard the child’s feeble cries, that wail, that first effort of a human’s voice!

And the next day! the next day! the only day of her life on which she had seen and kissed her son; for, from that time, she had never even caught a glimpse of him.

And what a long, void existence hers had been since then, with the thought of that child always, always floating before her. She had never seen her son, that little creature that had been part of herself, even once since then; they had taken

him from her, carried him away, and had hidden him. All she knew was that he had been brought up by some peasants in Normandy, that he had become a peasant himself, had married well, and that his father, whose name he did not know, had settled a handsome sum of money on him.

How often during the last forty years had she wished to go and see him and to embrace him! She could not imagine to herself that he had grown! She always thought of that small human atom which she had held in her arms and pressed to her bosom for a day.

How often she had said to M. d'Apreval: "I cannot bear it any longer; I must go and see him."

But he had always stopped her and kept her from going. She would be unable to restrain and to master herself; their son would guess it and take advantage of her, blackmail her; she would be lost.

"What is he like?" she said.

"I do not know. I have not seen him again, either."

"Is it possible? To have a son and not to know him; to be afraid of him and to reject him as if he were a disgrace! It is horrible."

They went along the dusty road, overcome by the scorching sun, and continually ascending that interminable hill.

"One might take it for a punishment," she continued; "I have never had another child, and I could no longer resist the longing to see him, which has possessed me for forty years. You men cannot understand that. You must remember that I shall not live much longer, and suppose I should never see him, never have seen him! ... Is it possible? How could I wait so long? I have thought about him every day since, and what a terrible existence mine has been! I have never awakened, never, do you understand, without my first thoughts being of him, of my child. How is he? Oh, how guilty I feel toward him! Ought one to fear what the world may say in a case like this? I ought to have left everything to go after him, to bring him up and to show my love for him. I should certainly have been much happier, but I did not dare, I was a coward. How I have suffered! Oh, how those poor, abandoned children must hate their mothers!"

She stopped suddenly, for she was choked by her sobs. The whole valley was deserted and silent in the dazzling light and the overwhelming heat, and only the grasshoppers uttered their shrill, continuous chirp among the sparse yellow grass on both sides of the road.

“Sit down a little,” he said.

She allowed herself to be led to the side of the ditch and sank down with her face in her hands. Her white hair, which hung in curls on both sides of her face, had become tangled. She wept, overcome by profound grief, while he stood facing her, uneasy and not knowing what to say, and he merely murmured: “Come, take courage.”

She got up.

“I will,” she said, and wiping her eyes, she began to walk again with the uncertain step of an elderly woman.

A little farther on the road passed beneath a clump of trees, which hid a few houses, and they could distinguish the vibrating and regular blows of a blacksmith’s hammer on the anvil; and presently they saw a wagon standing on the right side of the road in front of a low cottage, and two men shoeing a horse under a shed.

Monsieur d’Apreval went up to them.

“Where is Pierre Benedict’s farm?” he asked.

“Take the road to the left, close to the inn, and then go straight on; it is the third house past Poret’s. There is a small spruce fir close to the gate; you cannot make a mistake.”

They turned to the left. She was walking very slowly now, her legs threatened to give way, and her heart was beating so violently that she felt as if she should suffocate, while at every step she murmured, as if in prayer:

“Oh! Heaven! Heaven!”

Monsieur d’Apreval, who was also nervous and rather pale, said to her somewhat gruffly:

“If you cannot manage to control your feelings, you will betray yourself at once. Do try and restrain yourself.”

“How can I?” she replied. “My child! When I think that I am going to see my child.”

They were going along one of those narrow country lanes between farmyards, that are concealed beneath a double row of beech trees at either side of the ditches, and suddenly they found themselves in front of a gate, beside which there was a young spruce fir.

“This is it,” he said.

She stopped suddenly and looked about her. The courtyard, which was planted with apple trees, was large and extended as far as the small thatched dwelling house. On the opposite side were the stable, the barn, the cow house and the poultry house, while the gig, the wagon and the manure cart were under a slated outhouse. Four calves were grazing under the shade of the trees and black hens were wandering all about the enclosure.

All was perfectly still; the house door was open, but nobody was to be seen, and so they went in, when immediately a large black dog came out of a barrel that was standing under a pear tree, and began to bark furiously.

There were four bee-hives on boards against the wall of the house.

Monsieur d’Apreval stood outside and called out:

“Is anybody at home?”

Then a child appeared, a little girl of about ten, dressed in a chemise and a linen petticoat, with dirty, bare legs and a timid and cunning look. She remained standing in the doorway, as if to prevent any one going in.

“What do you want?” she asked.

“Is your father in?”

“No.”

“Where is he?”

“I don’t know.”

“And your mother?”

“Gone after the cows.”

“Will she be back soon?”

“I don’t know.”

Then suddenly the lady, as if she feared that her companion might force her to return, said quickly:

“I shall not go without having seen him.”

“We will wait for him, my dear friend.”

As they turned away, they saw a peasant woman coming toward the house, carrying two tin pails, which appeared to be heavy and which glistened brightly in the sunlight.

She limped with her right leg, and in her brown knitted jacket, that was faded by the sun and washed out by the rain, she looked like a poor, wretched, dirty servant.

“Here is mamma.” the child said.

When she got close to the house, she looked at the strangers angrily and suspiciously, and then she went in, as if she had not seen them. She looked old and had a hard, yellow, wrinkled face, one of those wooden faces that country people so often have.

Monsieur d’Apreval called her back.

“I beg your pardon, madame, but we came in to know whether you could sell us two glasses of milk.”

She was grumbling when she reappeared in the door, after putting down her pails.

“I don’t sell milk,” she replied.

“We are very thirsty,” he said, “and madame is very tired. Can we not get something to drink?”

The peasant woman gave them an uneasy and cunning glance and then she made up her mind.

“As you are here, I will give you some,” she said, going into the house, and almost immediately the child came out and brought two chairs, which she placed under an apple tree, and then the mother, in turn brought out two bowls of foaming milk, which she gave to the visitors. She did not return to the house, however, but remained standing near them, as if to watch them and to find out for what purpose they had come there.

“You have come from Fécamp?” she said.

“Yes,” Monsieur d’Apreval replied, “we are staying at Fécamp for the summer.”

And then, after a short silence he continued:

“Have you any fowls you could sell us every week?”

The woman hesitated for a moment and then replied:

“Yes, I think I have. I suppose you want young ones?”

“Yes, of course.”

“What do you pay for them in the market?”

D’Apreval, who had not the least idea, turned to his companion:

“What are you paying for poultry in Fécamp, my dear lady?”

“Four francs and four francs fifty centimes,” she said, her eyes full of tears, while the farmer’s wife, who was looking at her askance, asked in much surprise:

“Is the lady ill, as she is crying?”

He did not know what to say, and replied with some hesitation:

“No—no—but she lost her watch as we came along, a very handsome watch, and that troubles her. If anybody should find it, please let us know.”

Mother Benedict did not reply, as she thought it a very equivocal sort of answer, but suddenly she exclaimed:

“Oh, here is my husband!”

She was the only one who had seen him, as she was facing the gate. D’Apreval started and Madame de Cadour nearly fell as she turned round suddenly on her chair.

A man bent nearly double, and out of breath, stood there, ten yards from them, dragging a cow at the end of a rope. Without taking any notice of the visitors, he said:

“Confound it! What a brute!”

And he went past them and disappeared in the cow house.

Her tears had dried quickly as she sat there startled, without a word and with the one thought in her mind, that this was her son, and D’Apreval, whom the same thought had struck very unpleasantly, said in an agitated voice:

“Is this Monsieur Benedict?”

“Who told you his name?” the wife asked, still rather suspiciously.

“The blacksmith at the corner of the highroad,” he replied, and then they were all silent, with their eyes fixed on the door of the cow house, which formed a sort of black hole in the wall of the building. Nothing could be seen

inside, but they heard a vague noise, movements and footsteps and the sound of hoofs, which were deadened by the straw on the floor, and soon the man reappeared in the door, wiping his forehead, and came toward the house with long, slow strides. He passed the strangers without seeming to notice them and said to his wife:

“Go and draw me a jug of cider; I am very thirsty.”

Then he went back into the house, while his wife went into the cellar and left the two Parisians alone.

“Let us go, let us go, Henri,” Madame de Cadour said, nearly distracted with grief, and so d’Apreval took her by the arm, helped her to rise, and sustaining her with all his strength, for he felt that she was nearly fainting, he led her out, after throwing five francs on one of the chairs.

As soon as they were outside the gate, she began to sob and said, shaking with grief:

“Oh! oh! is that what you have made of him?”

He was very pale and replied coldly:

“I did what I could. His farm is worth eighty thousand francs, and that is more than most of the sons of the middle classes have.”

They returned slowly, without speaking a word. She was still crying; the tears ran down her cheeks continually for a time, but by degrees they stopped, and they went back to Fécamp, where they found Monsieur de Cadour waiting dinner for them. As soon as he saw them, he began to laugh and exclaimed:

“So my wife has had a sunstroke, and I am very glad of it. I really think she has lost her head for some time past!”

Neither of them replied, and when the husband asked them, rubbing his hands:

“Well, I hope that, at least, you have had a pleasant walk?”

Monsieur d’Apreval replied:

“A delightful walk, I assure you; perfectly delightful.”

## THE GUILTY SECRET BY PAUL DE KOCK

Nathalie De Hauteville was twenty-two years old, and had been a widow for three years. She was one of the prettiest women in Paris; her large dark eyes shone with remarkable brilliancy, and she united the sparkling vivacity of an Italian and the depth of feeling of a Spaniard to the grace which always distinguishes a Parisian born and bred. Considering herself too young to be entirely alone, she had long ago invited M. d'Ablaincourt, an old uncle of hers, to come and live with her.

M. d'Ablaincourt was an old bachelor; he had never loved anything in this world but himself. He was an egotist, too lazy to do any one an ill turn, but at the same time too selfish to do any one a kindness, unless it would tend directly to his own advantage. And yet, with an air of complaisance, as if he desired nothing so much as the comfort of those around him, he consented to his niece's proposal, in the hope that she would do many little kind offices for him, which would add materially to his comfort.

M. d'Ablaincourt accompanied his niece when she resumed her place in society; but sometimes, when he felt inclined to stay at home, he would say to her: "My dear Nathalie, I am afraid you will not be much amused this evening. They will only play cards; besides, I don't think any of your friends will be there. Of course, I am ready to take you, if you wish to go."

And Nathalie, who had great confidence in all her uncle said, would stay at home.

In the same manner, M. d'Ablaincourt, who was a great gourmand, said to his niece: "My dear, you know that I am not at all fond of eating, and am satisfied with the simplest fare; but I must tell you that your cook puts too much salt in everything! It is very unwholesome."

So they changed the cook.

Again, the garden was out of order; the trees before the old gentleman's window must be cut down, because their shade would doubtless cause a dampness in the house prejudicial to Nathalie's health; or the surrey was to be changed for a landau.

Nathalie was a coquette. Accustomed to charm, she listened with smiles to the numerous protestations of admiration which she received. She sent all who aspired to her hand to her uncle, saying: "Before I give you any hope, I must know my uncle's opinion."



It is likely that Nathalie would have answered differently if she had ever felt a real preference for any one; but heretofore she seemed to have preferred her liberty.

The old uncle, for his part, being now master in his niece's house, was very anxious for her to remain as she was. A nephew might be somewhat less submissive than Nathalie. Therefore, he never failed to discover some great fault in each of those who sought an alliance with the pretty widow.

Besides his egotism and his epicureanism, the dear uncle had another passion—to play backgammon. The game amused him very much; but the difficulty was to find any one to play with. If, by accident, any of Nathalie's visitors understood it, there was no escape from a long siege with the old gentleman; but most people preferred cards.

In order to please her uncle, Nathalie tried to learn this game; but it was almost impossible. She could not give her attention to one thing for so long a time. Her uncle scolded. Nathalie gave up in despair.

"It was only for your own amusement that I wished to teach it to you," said the good M. d'Ablaincourt.

Things were at this crisis when, at a ball one evening, Nathalie was introduced to a M. d'Apremont, a captain in the navy.

Nathalie raised her eyes, expecting to see a great sailor, with a wooden leg and a bandage over one eye; when to her great surprise, she beheld a man of about thirty, tall and finely formed, with two sound legs and two good eyes.

Armand d'Apremont had entered the navy at a very early age, and had arrived, although very young, to the dignity of a captain. He had amassed a large fortune, in addition to his patrimonial estates, and he had now come home to rest after his labors. As yet, however, he was a single man, and, moreover, had always laughed at love.

But when he saw Nathalie, his opinions underwent a change. For the first time in his life he regretted that he had never learned to dance, and he kept his eyes fixed on her constantly.

His attentions to the young widow soon became a subject of general conversation, and, at last, the report reached the ears of M. d'Ablaincourt. When Nathalie mentioned, one evening, that she expected the captain to spend the evening with her, the old man grew almost angry.

“Nathalie,” said he, “you act entirely without consulting me. I have heard that the captain is very rude and unpolished in his manners. To be sure, I have only seen him standing behind your chair; but he has never even asked after my health. I only speak for your interest, as you are so giddy.”

Nathalie begged her uncle’s pardon, and even offered not to receive the captain’s visit; but this he forbore to require—secretly resolving not to allow these visits to become too frequent.

But how frail are all human resolutions—overturned by the merest trifle! In this case, the game of backgammon was the unconscious cause of Nathalie’s becoming Mme. d’Apremont. The captain was an excellent hand at backgammon. When the uncle heard this, he proposed a game; and the captain, who understood that it was important to gain the uncle’s favor, readily acceded.

This did not please Nathalie. She preferred that he should be occupied with herself. When all the company were gone, she turned to her uncle, saying: “You were right, uncle, after all. I do not admire the captain’s manners; I see now that I should not have invited him.”

“On the contrary, niece, he is a very well-behaved man. I have invited him to come here very often, and play backgammon with me—that is, to pay his addresses to you.”

Nathalie saw that the captain had gained her uncle’s heart, and she forgave him for having been less attentive to her. He soon came again, and, thanks to the backgammon, increased in favor with the uncle.

He soon captivated the heart of the pretty widow, also. One morning, Nathalie came blushing to her uncle.

“The captain has asked me to marry him. What do you advise me to do?”

He reflected for a few moments. “If she refuses him, D’Apremont will come here no longer, and then no more backgammon. But if she marries him, he will be here always, and I shall have my games.” And the answer was: “You had better marry him.”

Nathalie loved Armand; but she would not yield too easily. She sent for the captain.

“If you really love me—”

“Ah, can you doubt it?”

“Hush! do not interrupt me. If you really love me, you will give me one proof of it.”

“Anything you ask. I swear—”

“No, you must never swear any more; and, one thing more, you must never smoke. I detest the smell of tobacco, and I will not have a husband who smokes.”

Armand sighed, and promised.

The first months of their marriage passed smoothly, but sometimes Armand became thoughtful, restless, and grave. After some time, these fits of sadness became more frequent.

“What is the matter?” asked Nathalie one day, on seeing him stamp with impatience. “Why are you so irritable?”

“Nothing—nothing at all!” replied the captain, as if ashamed of his ill humor.

“Tell me,” Nathalie insisted, “have I displeased you in anything?”

The captain assured her that he had no reason to be anything but delighted with her conduct on all occasions, and for a time he was all right. Then soon he was worse than before.

Nathalie was distressed beyond measure. She imparted her anxiety to her uncle, who replied: “Yes, my dear, I know what you mean; I have often remarked it myself, at backgammon. He is very inattentive, and often passes his hand over his forehead, and starts up as if something agitated him.”

And one day, when his old habits of impatience and irritability reappeared, more marked than ever, the captain said to his wife: “My dear, an evening walk will do me a world of good; an old sailor like myself cannot bear to sit around the house after dinner. Nevertheless, if you have any objection—”

“Oh, no! What objection can I have?”

He went out, and continued to do so, day after day, at the same hour. Invariably he returned in the best of good humor.

Nathalie was now unhappy indeed. “He loves some other woman, perhaps,” she thought, “and he must see her every day. Oh, how wretched I am! But I must let him know that his perfidy is discovered. No, I will wait until I shall have some certain proof wherewith to confront him.”

And she went to seek her uncle. “Ah, I am the most unhappy creature in the world!” she sobbed.

“What is the matter?” cried the old man, leaning back in his armchair.

“Armand leaves the house for two hours every evening, after dinner, and comes back in high spirits and as anxious to please me as on the day of our marriage. Oh, uncle, I cannot bear it any longer! If you do not assist me to discover where he goes, I will seek a separation.”

“But, my dear niece—”

“My dear uncle, you who are so good and obliging, grant me this one favor. I am sure there is some woman in the secret.”

M. d’Ablaincourt wished to prevent a rupture between his niece and nephew, which would interfere very much with the quiet, peaceable life which he led at their house. He pretended to follow Armand; but came back very soon, saying he had lost sight of him.

“But in what direction does he go?”

“Sometimes one way, and sometimes another, but always alone; so your suspicions are unfounded. Be assured, he only walks for exercise.”

But Nathalie was not to be duped in this way. She sent for a little errand boy, of whose intelligence she had heard a great deal.

“M. d’Apremont goes out every evening.”

“Yes, madame.”

“To-morrow, you will follow him; observe where he goes, and come and tell me privately. Do you understand?”

“Yes, madame.”

Nathalie waited impatiently for the next day, and for the hour of her husband’s departure. At last, the time came—the pursuit is going on—Nathalie counted the moments. After three-quarters of an hour, the messenger arrived, covered with dust.

“Well,” exclaimed Nathalie, “speak! Tell me everything that you have seen!”

“Madame, I followed M. d’Apremont, at a distance, as far as the Rue Vieille du Temple, where he entered a small house, in an alley. There was no servant to let him in.”

“An alley! No servant! Dreadful!”

“I went in directly after him, and heard him go up-stairs and unlock a door.”

“Open the door himself, without knocking! Are you sure of that?”

“Yes, madame.”

“The wretch! So he has a key! But, go on.”

“When the door shut after him, I stole softly up-stairs, and peeped through the keyhole.”

“You shall have twenty francs more.”

“I peeped through the keyhole, and saw him drag a trunk along the floor.”

“A trunk?”

“Then he undressed himself, and—”

“Undressed himself!”

“Then, for a few seconds, I could not see him, and directly he appeared again, in a sort of gray blouse, and a cap on his head.”

“A blouse! What in the world does he want with a blouse? What next?”

“I came away, then, madame, and made haste to tell you; but he is there still.”

“Well, now run to the corner and get me a cab, and direct the coachman to the house where you have been.”

While the messenger went for the cab, Nathalie hurried on her hat and cloak, and ran into her uncle’s room.

“I have found him out—he loves another. He’s at her house now, in a gray blouse. But I will go and confront him, and then you will see me no more.”

The old man had no time to reply. She was gone, with her messenger, in the cab. They stopped at last.

“Here is the house.”

Nathalie got out, pale and trembling.

“Shall I go up-stairs with you, madame?” asked the boy.

“No, I will go alone. The third story, isn’t it?”

“Yes, madame; the left-hand door, at the head of the stairs.”

It seemed that now, indeed, the end of all things was at hand.

Nathalie mounted the dark, narrow stairs, and arrived at the door, and, almost fainting, she cried: “Open the door, or I shall die!”

The door was opened, and Nathalie fell into her husband’s arms. He was alone in the room, clad in a gray blouse, and—smoking a Turkish pipe.

“My wife!” exclaimed Armand, in surprise.

“Your wife—who, suspecting your perfidy, has followed you, to discover the cause of your mysterious conduct!”

“How, Nathalie, my mysterious conduct? Look, here it is!” (Showing his pipe.) “Before our marriage, you forbade me to smoke, and I promised to obey you. For some months I kept my promise; but you know what it cost me; you remember how irritable and sad I became. It was my pipe, my beloved pipe, that I regretted. One day, in the country, I discovered a little cottage, where a peasant was smoking. I asked him if he could lend me a blouse and cap; for I should like to smoke with him, but it was necessary to conceal it from you, as the smell of smoke, remaining in my clothes, would have betrayed me. It was soon settled between us. I returned thither every afternoon, to indulge in my favorite occupation; and, with the precaution of a cap to keep the smoke from remaining in my hair, I contrived to deceive you. This is all the mystery. Forgive me.”

Nathalie kissed him, crying: “I might have known it could not be! I am happy now, and you shall smoke as much as you please, at home.”

And Nathalie returned to her uncle, saying: “Uncle, he loves me! He was only smoking, but hereafter he is to smoke at home.”

“I can arrange it all,” said D’Ablaincourt; “he shall smoke while he plays backgammon.”

“In that way,” thought the old man, “I shall be sure of my game.”

## JEAN MONETTE By Eugene Francois Vidocq

At the time when I first became commissary of police, my arrondissement was in that part of Paris which includes the Rue St. Antoine—a street which has a great number of courts, alleys, and culs-de-sac issuing from it in all directions. The houses in these alleys and courts are, for the most part, inhabited by wretches wavering betwixt the last shade of poverty and actual starvation, ready to take part in any disturbance, or assist in any act of rapine or violence.

In one of these alleys, there lived at that time a man named Jean Monette, who was tolerably well stricken in years, but still a hearty man. He was a widower, and, with an only daughter, occupied a floor, au quatrième, in one of the courts; people said he had been in business and grown rich, but that he had not the heart to spend his money, which year after year accumulated, and would make a splendid fortune for his daughter at his death. With this advantage, Emma, who was really a handsome girl, did not want for suitors, and thought that, being an heiress, she might wait till she really felt a reciprocal passion for some one, and not throw herself away upon the first tolerable match that presented itself. It was on a Sunday, the first in the month of June, that Emma had, as an especial treat, obtained sufficient money from her father for an excursion with some friends to see the fountains of Versailles.

It was a beautiful day, and the basin was thronged around with thousands and thousands of persons, looking, from the variety of their dresses, more like the colors of a splendid rainbow than aught besides; and when, at four o'clock, Triton and his satellites threw up their immense volumes of water, all was wonder, astonishment, and delight; but none were more delighted than Emma, to whom the scene was quite new.

And, then, it was so pleasant to have found a gentleman who could explain everything and everybody; point out the duke of this, and the count that, and the other lions of Paris; besides, such an agreeable and well-dressed man; it was really quite condescending in him to notice them! And then, toward evening, he would insist they should all go home together in a fiacre, and that he alone should pay all the expenses, and when, with a gentle pressure of the hand and a low whisper, he begged her to say where he might come and throw himself at her feet, she thought her feelings were different to what they had ever been before. But how could she give her address—tell so dashing a man that she lived in such a place? No, she could not do that, but she would meet him at the Jardin d'Été next Sunday evening, and dance with no one else all night.

She met him on the Sunday, and again and again, until her father began to suspect, from her frequent absence of an evening—which was formerly an unusual circumstance with her—that something must be wrong. The old man loved his money, but he loved his daughter more. She was the only link in life that kept together the chain of his affections. He had been passionately fond of his wife, and when she died, Emma had filled up the void in his heart. They were all, save his money, that he had ever loved. The world had cried out against him as a hard-hearted, rapacious man, and he, in return, despised the world.

He was, therefore, much grieved at her conduct, and questioned Emma as to where her frequent visits led her, but could only obtain for answer that she was not aware she had been absent so much as to give him uneasiness. This was unsatisfactory, and so confirmed the old man in his suspicions that he determined to have his daughter watched.

This he effected through the means of an ancien ami, then in the profession of what he called an “inspector,” though his enemies (and all men have such) called him a mouchard, or spy. However, by whatever name he called himself, or others called him, he understood his business, and so effectually watched the young lady that he discovered her frequent absences to be for the purpose of meeting a man who, after walking some distance with her, managed, despite the inspector’s boasted abilities, to give him the slip.

This naturally puzzled him, and so it would any man in his situation. Fancy the feelings of one of the government’s employees in the argus line of business, a man renowned for his success in almost all the arduous and intricate affairs that had been committed to his care, to find himself baffled in a paltry private intrigue, and one which he had merely undertaken for the sake of friendship!

For a second time, he tried the plan of fancying himself to be well paid, thinking this would stimulate his dormant energies, knowing well that a thing done for friendship’s sake is always badly done; but even here he failed. He watched them to a certain corner, but, before he could get around it, they were nowhere to be seen. This was not to be borne. It was setting him at defiance. Should he call in the assistance of a brother in the line? No, that would be to acknowledge himself beaten, and the disgrace he could not bear—his honor was concerned, and he would achieve it single handed; but, then, it was very perplexing.

The man, to his experienced eye, seemed not, as he had done to Emma, a dashing gentleman, but more like a foul bird in fine feathers. Something must



be wrong, and he must find it out—but, then, again came that confounded question, how?

He would go and consult old Monette—he could, perhaps, suggest something; and, musing on the strangeness of the adventure, he walked slowly toward the house of the old man to hold a council with him on the situation.

On the road, his attention was attracted by a disturbance in the street, and mingling with the crowd, in hope of seizing some of his enemies exercising their illegal functions on whom the whole weight of his official vengeance might fall, he for the time forgot his adventure. The crowd had been drawn together by a difference of opinion between two gentlemen of the vehicular profession, respecting some right of way, and, after all the usual expressions of esteem common on such occasions had been exhausted, one of them drove off, leaving the other at least master of the field, if he had not got the expected job.

The crowd began to disperse, and with them also was going our friend, the detective, when, on turning round, he came in contact with Mlle. Monette, leaning on the arm of her mysterious lover. The light from a lamp above his head shone immediately on the face of Emma and her admirer, showing them both as clear as noonday, so that when his glance turned from the lady to the gentleman, and he obtained a full view of his face, he expressed his joy at the discovery by a loud “Whew!” which, though a short sound and soon pronounced, meant a great deal.

For first, it meant that he had made a great discovery; secondly, that he was not now astonished because he had not succeeded before in his watchfulness; thirdly—but perhaps the two mentioned may be sufficient; for, turning sharply round, he made the greatest haste to reach Monette and inform him, this time, of the result of his espionage.

After a long prelude, stating how fortunate Monette was to have such a friend as himself, a man who knew everybody and everything, he proceeded to inform him of the pleasing intelligence that his daughter was in the habit of meeting, and going to some place (he forgot to say where) with the most desperate and abandoned character in Paris—one who was so extremely dexterous in all his schemes that the police, though perfectly aware of his intentions, had not been able to fix upon him the commission of any one of his criminal acts, for he changed his appearance so often as to set at naught all the assiduous exertions of the Corps des Espions.

The unhappy father received from his friend at parting the assurance that they would catch him yet, and give him an invitation to pass the rest of his days in the seclusion of a prison.

On Emma's return, he told her the information he had received, wisely withholding the means from which his knowledge came, saying that he knew she had that moment parted from a man who would lead her to the brink of destruction, and then cast her off like a child's broken play-thing. He begged, nay, he besought her, with tears in his eyes, to promise she would never again see him. Emma was thunderstruck, not only at the accuracy of her father's information, but at hearing such a character of one whom she had painted as perfection's self; and, calling to her aid those never-failing woman's arguments, a copious flood of tears, fell on her father's neck and promised never again to see her admirer and, if possible, to banish all thoughts of him from her mind.

"My child," said the old man, "I believe you from my heart—I believe you. I love you, but the world says I am rich—why, I know not. You know I live in a dangerous neighborhood, and all my care will be necessary to prevent my losing either my child or my reputed wealth; therefore, to avoid all accidents, I will take care you do not leave this house for the next six months to come, and in that time your lover will have forgotten you, or what will amount to the same thing, you will have forgotten him; but I am much mistaken if the man's intentions are not to rob me of my money, rather than my child."

The old man kept his word, and Emma was not allowed for several days to leave the rooms on the fourth floor.

She tried, during the time, if it were possible to forget the object of her affections, and thought if she could but see him once more, to bid him a long and last farewell, she might in time wear out his remembrance from her heart; but in order to do that, she must see him once more; and having made up her mind that this interview would be an essential requisite to the desired end, she took counsel with herself how it was to be accomplished. There was only one great obstacle presenting itself to her view, which was that "she couldn't get out."

Now women's invention never fails them, when they have set their hearts upon any desired object; and it occurred to her, that although she could not get out, yet it was not quite so apparent that he could not get in; and this point being settled, it was no very difficult matter to persuade the old woman who occasionally assisted her in the household arrangements, to be the bearer of a short note, purporting to say that her father having been unwell for the last few days, usually retired early to rest, and that if her dear Despreau would come about eleven o'clock on the following evening, her father would be asleep, and she would be on the watch for a signal, which was to be three gentle taps on the door.

The old woman executed her commission so well that she brought back an answer vowing eternal fidelity, and promising a punctual attendance at the rendezvous. Nor was it likely that he meant to fail—seeing it was the object he had had for months in view, and he reasoned with himself that if he once got there, he would make such good use of his time as to render a second visit perfectly unnecessary.

Therefore it would be a pity to disappoint any one, and he immediately communicated his plans to two of his confederates, promising them a good share of the booty, and also the girl herself, if either of them felt that way inclined, as a reward for their assistance.

His plans were very well managed, and would have gone on exceedingly well, but for one small accident which happened through the officious interference of the inspector, who, the moment he had discovered who the Lothario was, had taken all the steps he could to catch him, and gain the honor of having caught so accomplished a gentleman. He rightly judged that it would not be long before he would pay a visit to Monette's rooms, and the letters, before their delivery by the old woman, had been read by him, and met with his full approbation.

I was much pleased on being informed by the inspector that he wanted my assistance, one evening, to apprehend the celebrated Despreau, who had planned a robbery near the Rue St. Antoine, and make me acquainted with nearly all the circumstances. So, about half past ten o'clock, I posted myself with the inspector and four men where I could see Despreau pass, and at eleven o'clock, punctual to the moment, he and his two associates began to ascend the stairs.

The two confederates were to wait some time, when he was to come to the door on some pretext and let them in.

After the lapse of half an hour they were let in, when we ascended after them, and the inspector, having a duplicate key, we let ourselves gently in, standing in the passage, so as to prevent our being seen; in a few minutes we heard a loud shriek from Emma, and old Monette's voice most vociferously crying "Murder!" and "Thieves!" On entering the rooms, we perceived that the poor girl was lying on the ground, while one of the men was endeavoring to stifle her cries by either gagging or suffocating her, though in the way he was doing it, the latter would have soon been the case.

The old man had been dragged from his bed, and Despreau stood over him with a knife, swearing that unless he showed him the place where his money and valuables were deposited, it should be the last hour of his existence.

Despreau, on seeing us, seemed inclined to make a most desperate resistance, but not being seconded by his associates, submitted to be pinioned, expressing his regret that we had not come half an hour later, when we might have been saved the trouble.

Despreau was shortly after tried for the offense, which was too clearly proved to admit of any doubt. He was sentenced to the galleys for life, and is now at Brest, undergoing his sentence. Emma, soon afterward, married a respectable man, and old Monette behaved on the occasion much more liberally than was expected.

## **SOLANGE—DR. LEDRU’S STORY OF THE REIGN OF TERROR By Alexandre Dumas**

Leaving l’Abbaye, I walked straight across the Place Turenne to the Rue Tournon, where I had lodgings, when I heard a woman scream for help.

It could not be an assault to commit robbery, for it was hardly ten o’clock in the evening. I ran to the corner of the place whence the sounds proceeded, and by the light of the moon, just then breaking through the clouds, I beheld a woman in the midst of a patrol of sans-culottes.

The lady observed me at the same instant, and seeing, by the character of my dress, that I did not belong to the common order of people, she ran toward me, exclaiming:

“There is M. Albert! He knows me! He will tell you that I am the daughter of Mme. Ledieu, the laundress.”

With these words the poor creature, pale and trembling with excitement, seized my arm and clung to me as a shipwrecked sailor to a spar.

“No matter whether you are the daughter of Mme. Ledieu or some one else, as you have no pass, you must go with us to the guard-house.”

The young girl pressed my arm. I perceived in this pressure the expression of her great distress of mind. I understood it.

“So it is you, my poor Solange?” I said. “What are you doing here?”

“There, messieurs!” she exclaimed in tones of deep anxiety; “do you believe me now?”

“You might at least say ‘citizens!’”

“Ah, sergeant, do not blame me for speaking that way,” said the pretty young girl; “my mother has many customers among the great people, and taught me to be polite. That’s how I acquired this bad habit—the habit of the aristocrats; and, you know, sergeant, it’s so hard to shake off old habits!”

This answer, delivered in trembling accents, concealed a delicate irony that was lost on all save me. I asked myself, who is this young woman? The mystery seemed complete. This alone was clear; she was not the daughter of a laundress.

“How did I come here, Citizen Albert?” she asked. “Well, I will tell you. I went to deliver some washing. The lady was not at home, and so I waited; for

in these hard times every one needs what little money is coming to him. In that way it grew dark, and so I fell among these gentlemen—beg pardon, I would say citizens. They asked for my pass. As I did not have it with me, they were going to take me to the guard-house. I cried out in terror, which brought you to the scene; and as luck would have it, you are a friend. I said to myself, as M. Albert knows my name to be Solange Ledieu, he will vouch for me; and that you will, will you not, M. Albert?”

“Certainly, I will vouch for you.”

“Very well,” said the leader of the patrol; “and who, pray, will vouch for you, my friend?”

“Danton! Do you know him? Is he a good patriot?”

“Oh, if Danton will vouch for you, I have nothing to say.”

“Well, there is a session of the Cordeliers to-day. Let us go there.”

“Good,” said the leader. “Citizens, let us go to the Cordeliers.”

The club of the Cordeliers met at the old Cordelier monastery in the Rue l’Observance. We arrived there after scarce a minute’s walk. At the door I tore a page from my note-book, wrote a few words upon it with a lead pencil, gave it to the sergeant, and requested him to hand it to Danton, while I waited outside with the men.

The sergeant entered the clubhouse and returned with Danton.

“What!” said he to me; “they have arrested you, my friend? You, the friend of Camilles—you, one of the most loyal republicans? Citizens,” he continued, addressing the sergeant, “I vouch for him. Is that sufficient?”

“You vouch for him. Do you also vouch for her?” asked the stubborn sergeant.

“For her? To whom do you refer?”

“This girl.”

“For everything; for everybody who may be in his company. Does that satisfy you?”

“Yes,” said the man; “especially since I have had the privilege of seeing you.”

With a cheer for Danton, the patrol marched away. I was about to thank Danton, when his name was called repeatedly within.

“Pardon me, my friend,” he said; “you hear? There is my hand; I must leave you—the left. I gave my right to the sergeant. Who knows, the good patriot may have scrofula?”

“I’m coming!” he exclaimed, addressing those within in his mighty voice with which he could pacify or arouse the masses. He hastened into the house.

I remained standing at the door, alone with my unknown.

“And now, my lady,” I said, “whither would you have me escort you? I am at your disposal.”

“Why, to Mme. Ledieu,” she said with a laugh. “I told you she was my mother.”

“And where does Mme. Ledieu reside?”

“Rue Ferou, 24.”

“Then, let us proceed to Rue Ferou, 24.”

On the way neither of us spoke a word. But by the light of the moon, enthroned in serene glory in the sky, I was able to observe her at my leisure. She was a charming girl of twenty or twenty-two—brunette, with large blue eyes, more expressive of intelligence than melancholy—a finely chiseled nose, mocking lips, teeth of pearl, hands like a queen’s, and feet like a child’s; and all these, in spite of her costume of a laundress, betokened an aristocratic air that had aroused the sergeant’s suspicions not without justice.

Arrived at the door of the house, we looked at each other a moment in silence.

“Well, my dear M. Albert, what do you wish?” my fair unknown asked with a smile.

“I was about to say, my dear Mlle. Solange, that it was hardly worth while to meet if we are to part so soon.”

“Oh, I beg ten thousand pardons! I find it was well worth the while; for if I had not met you, I should have been dragged to the guard-house, and there it would have been discovered that I am not the daughter of Mme. Ledieu—in fact, it would have developed that I am an aristocrat, and in all likelihood they would have cut off my head.”

“You admit, then, that you are an aristocrat?”

“I admit nothing.”

“At least you might tell me your name.”

“Solange.”

“I know very well that this name, which I gave you on the inspiration of the moment, is not your right name.”

“No matter; I like it, and I am going to keep it—at least for you.”

“Why should you keep it for me? if we are not to meet again?”

“I did not say that. I only said that if we should meet again it will not be necessary for you to know my name any more than that I should know yours. To me you will be known as Albert, and to you I shall always be Solange.”

“So be it, then; but I say, Solange,” I began.

“I am listening, Albert,” she replied.

“You are an aristocrat—that you admit.”

“If I did not admit it, you would surmise it, and so my admission would be divested of half its merit.”

“And you were pursued because you were suspected of being an aristocrat?”

“I fear so.”

“And you are hiding to escape persecution?”

“In the Rue Ferrou, No. 24, with Mme. Ledieu, whose husband was my father’s coachman. You see, I have no secret from you.”

“And your father?”

“I shall make no concealment, my dear Albert, of anything that relates to me. But my father’s secrets are not my own. My father is in hiding, hoping to make his escape. That is all I can tell you.”

“And what are you going to do?”

“Go with my father, if that be possible. If not, allow him to depart without me until the opportunity offers itself to me to join him.”

“Were you coming from your father when the guard arrested you to-night?”

“Yes.”

“Listen, dearest Solange.”



“I am all attention.”

“You observed all that took place to-night?”

“Yes. I saw that you had powerful influence.”

“I regret my power is not very great. However, I have friends.”

“I made the acquaintance of one of them.”

“And you know he is not one of the least powerful men of the times.”

“Do you intend to enlist his influence to enable my father to escape?”

“No, I reserve him for you.”

“But my father?”

“I have other ways of helping your father.”

“Other ways?” exclaimed Solange, seizing my hands and studying me with an anxious expression.

“If I serve your father, will you then sometimes think kindly of me?”

“Oh, I shall all my life hold you in grateful remembrance!”

She uttered these words with an enchanting expression of devotion. Then she looked at me beseechingly and said:

“But will that satisfy you?”

“Yes,” I said.

“Ah, I was not mistaken. You are kind, generous. I thank you for my father and myself. Even if you should fail, I shall be grateful for what you have already done!”

“When shall we meet again, Solange?”

“When do you think it necessary to see me again?”

“To-morrow, when I hope to have good news for you.”

“Well, then, to-morrow.”

“Where?”

“Here.”

“Here in the street?”

“Well, mon Dieu!” she exclaimed. “You see, it is the safest place. For thirty minutes, while we have been talking here, not a soul has passed.”

“Why may I not go to you, or you come to me?”

“Because it would compromise the good people if you should come to me, and you would incur serious risk if I should go to you.”

“Oh, I would give you the pass of one of my relatives.”

“And send your relative to the guillotine if I should be accidentally arrested!”

“True. I will bring you a pass made out in the name of Solange.”

“Charming! You observe Solange is my real name.”

“And the hour?”

“The same at which we met to-night—ten o’clock, if you please.”

“All right; ten o’clock. And how shall we meet?”

“That is very simple. Be at the door at five minutes of ten, and at ten I will come down.”

“Then, at ten to-morrow, dear Solange.”

“To-morrow at ten, dear Albert.”

I wanted to kiss her hand; she offered me her brow.

The next day I was in the street at half past nine. At a quarter of ten Solange opened the door. We were both ahead of time.

With one leap I was by her side.

“I see you have good news,” she said.

“Excellent! First, here is a pass for you.”

“First my father!”

She repelled my hand.

“Your father is saved, if he wishes.”

“Wishes, you say? What is required of him?”

“He must trust me.”

“That is assured.”

“Have you seen him?”

“Yes.”

“You have discussed the situation with him?”

“It was unavoidable. Heaven will help us.”

“Did you tell your father all?”

“I told him you had saved my life yesterday, and that you would perhaps save his to-morrow.”

“To-morrow! Yes, quite right; to-morrow I shall save his life, if it is his will.”

“How? What? Speak! Speak! If that were possible, how fortunately all things have come to pass!”

“However—” I began hesitatingly.

“Well?”

“It will be impossible for you to accompany him.”

“I told you I was resolute.”

“I am quite confident, however, that I shall be able later to procure a passport for you.”

“First tell me about my father; my own distress is less important.”

“Well, I told you I had friends, did I not?”

“Yes.”

“To-day I sought out one of them.”

“Proceed.”

“A man whose name is familiar to you; whose name is a guarantee of courage and honor.”

“And this man is?”

“Marceau.”

“General Marceau?”

“Yes.”

“True, he will keep a promise.”

“Well, he has promised.”

“Mon Dieu! How happy you make me! What has he promised? Tell me all.”

“He has promised to help us.”

“In what manner?”

“In a very simple manner. Kléber has just had him promoted to the command of the western army. He departs to-morrow night.”

“To-morrow night! We shall have no time to make the smallest preparation.”

“There are no preparations to make.”

“I do not understand.”

“He will take your father with him.”

“My father?”

“Yes, as his secretary. Arrived in the Vendée, your father will pledge his word to the general to undertake nothing against France. From there he will escape to Brittany, and from Brittany to England. When he arrives in London, he will inform you; I shall obtain a passport for you, and you will join him in London.”

“To-morrow,” exclaimed Solange; “my father departs tomorrow!”

“There is no time to waste.”

“My father has not been informed.”

“Inform him.”

“To-night?”

“To-night.”

“But how, at this hour?”

“You have a pass and my arm.”

“True. My pass.”

I gave it to her. She thrust it into her bosom.

“Now? your arm?”

I gave her my arm, and we walked away. When we arrived at the Place Turenne—that is, the spot where we had met the night before—she said: “Await me here.”

I bowed and waited.

She disappeared around the corner of what was formerly the Hôtel Malignon. After a lapse of fifteen minutes she returned.

“Come,” she said, “my father wishes to receive and thank you.”

She took my arm and led me up to the Rue St. Guillaume, opposite the Hôtel Mortemart. Arrived here, she took a bunch of keys from her pocket, opened a small, concealed door, took me by the hand, conducted me up two flights of steps, and knocked in a peculiar manner.

A man of forty-eight or fifty years opened the door. He was dressed as a working man and appeared to be a bookbinder. But at the first utterance that burst from his lips, the evidence of the seigneur was unmistakable.

“Monsieur,” he said, “Providence has sent you to us. I regard you an emissary of fate. Is it true that you can save me, or, what is more, that you wish to save me?”

I admitted him completely to my confidence. I informed him that Marceau would take him as his secretary, and would exact no promise other than that he would not take up arms against France.

“I cheerfully promise it now, and will repeat it to him.”

“I thank you in his name as well as in my own.”

“But when does Marceau depart?”

“To-morrow.”

“Shall I go to him to-night?”

“Whenever you please; he expects you.”

Father and daughter looked at each other.

“I think it would be wise to go this very night,” said Solange.

“I am ready; but if I should be arrested, seeing that I have no permit?”

“Here is mine.”

“But you?”

“Oh, I am known.”

“Where does Marceau reside?”

“Rue de l’Université, 40, with his sister, Mlle. Dégraviers-Marceau.”

“Will you accompany me?”

“I shall follow you at a distance, to accompany mademoiselle home when you are gone.”

“How will Marceau know that I am the man of whom you spoke to him?”

“You will hand him this tri-colored cockade; that is the sign of identification.”

“And how shall I reward my liberator?”

“By allowing him to save your daughter also.”

“Very well.”

He put on his hat and extinguished the lights, and we descended by the gleam of the moon which penetrated the stair-windows.

At the foot of the steps he took his daughter’s arm, and by way of the Rue des Saints Pères we reached Rue de l’Université. I followed them at a distance of ten paces. We arrived at No. 40 without having met any one. I rejoined them there.

“That is a good omen,” I said; “do you wish me to go up with you?”

“No. Do not compromise yourself any further. Await my daughter here.”

I bowed.

“And now, once more, thanks and farewell,” he said, giving me his hand. “Language has no words to express my gratitude. I pray that heaven may some day grant me the opportunity of giving fuller expression to my feelings.”

I answered him with a pressure of the hand.

He entered the house. Solange followed him; but she, too, pressed my hand before she entered.

In ten minutes the door was reopened.

“Well?” I asked.

“Your friend,” she said, “is worthy of his name; he is as kind and considerate as yourself. He knows that it will contribute to my happiness to remain with my father until the moment of departure. His sister has ordered a bed placed in her room. To-morrow at three o’clock my father will be out of danger. To-morrow evening at ten I shall expect you in the Rue Ferou, if the gratitude of a daughter who owes her father’s life to you is worth the trouble.”

“Oh, be sure I shall come. Did your father charge you with any message for me?”

“He thanks you for your pass, which he returns to you, and begs you to join him as soon as possible.”

“Whenever it may be your desire to go,” I said, with a strange sensation at my heart.

“At least, I must know where I am to join him,” she said. “Ah, you are not yet rid of me!”

I seized her hand and pressed it against my heart, but she offered me her brow, as on the previous evening, and said: “Until to-morrow.”

I kissed her on the brow; but now I no longer strained her hand against my breast, but her heaving bosom, her throbbing heart.

I went home in a state of delirious ecstasy such as I had never experienced. Was it the consciousness of a generous action, or was it love for this adorable creature? I know not whether I slept or woke. I only know that all the harmonies of nature were singing within me; that the night seemed endless, and the day eternal; I know that though I wished to speed the time, I did not wish to lose a moment of the days still to come.

The next day I was in the Rue Ferou at nine o’clock. At half-past nine Solange made her appearance.

She approached me and threw her arms around my neck.

“Saved!” she said; “my father is saved! And this I owe you. Oh, how I love you!”

Two weeks later Solange received a letter announcing her father’s safe arrival in England.

The next day I brought her a passport.

When Solange received it she burst into tears.

“You do not love me!” she exclaimed.

“I love you better than my life,” I replied; “but I pledged your father my word, and I must keep it.”

“Then, I will break mine,” she said. “Yes, Albert; if you have the heart to let me go, I have not the courage to leave you.”

Alas, she remained!

Three months had passed since that night on which we talked of her escape, and in all that time not a word of parting had passed her lips.

Solange had taken lodgings in the Rue Turenne. I had rented them in her name. I knew no other, while she always addressed me as Albert. I had found her a place as teacher in a young ladies’ seminary solely to withdraw her from the espionage of the revolutionary police, which had become more scrutinizing than ever.

Sundays we passed together in the small dwelling, from the bedroom of which we could see the spot where we had first met. We exchanged letters daily, she writing to me under the name of Solange, and I to her under that of Albert.

Those three months were the happiest of my life.

In the meantime I was making some interesting experiments suggested by one of the guillotiniere. I had obtained permission to make certain scientific tests with the bodies and heads of those who perished on the scaffold. Sad to say, available subjects were not wanting. Not a day passed but thirty or forty persons were guillotined, and blood flowed so copiously on the Place de la Révolution that it became necessary to dig a trench three feet deep around the scaffolding. This trench was covered with deals. One of them loosened under the feet of an eight-year-old lad, who fell into the abominable pit and was drowned.

For self-evident reasons I said nothing to Solange of the studies that occupied my attention during the day. In the beginning my occupation had inspired me with pity and loathing, but as time wore on I said: “These studies are for the good of humanity,” for I hoped to convince the lawmakers of the wisdom of abolishing capital punishment.

The Cemetery of Clamart had been assigned to me, and all the heads and trunks of the victims of the executioner had been placed at my disposal. A small chapel in one corner of the cemetery had been converted into a kind of



laboratory for my benefit. You know, when the queens were driven from the palaces, God was banished from the churches.

Every day at six the horrible procession filed in. The bodies were heaped together in a wagon, the heads in a sack. I chose some bodies and heads in a haphazard fashion, while the remainder were thrown into a common grave.

In the midst of this occupation with the dead, my love for Solange increased from day to day; while the poor child reciprocated my affection with the whole power of her pure soul.

Often I had thought of making her my wife; often we had mutually pictured to ourselves the happiness of such a union. But in order to become my wife, it would be necessary for Solange to reveal her name; and this name, which was that of an emigrant, an aristocrat, meant death.

Her father had repeatedly urged her by letter to hasten her departure, but she had informed him of our engagement. She had requested his consent, and he had given it, so that all had gone well to this extent.

The trial and execution of the queen, Marie Antoinette, had plunged me, too, into deepest sadness. Solange was all tears, and we could not rid ourselves of a strange feeling of despondency, a presentiment of approaching danger, that compressed our hearts. In vain I tried to whisper courage to Solange. Weeping, she reclined in my arms, and I could not comfort her, because my own words lacked the ring of confidence.

We passed the night together as usual, but the night was even more depressing than the day. I recall now that a dog, locked up in a room below us, howled till two o'clock in the morning. The next day we were told that the dog's master had gone away with the key in his pocket, had been arrested on the way, tried at three, and executed at four.

The time had come for us to part. Solange's duties at the school began at nine o'clock in the morning. Her school was in the vicinity of the Botanic Gardens. I hesitated long to let her go; she, too, was loath to part from me. But it must be. Solange was prone to be an object of unpleasant inquiries.

I called a conveyance and accompanied her as far as the Rue des Fosses-Saint-Bernard, where I got out and left her to pursue her way alone. All the way we lay mutely wrapped in each other's arms, mingling tears with our kisses.

After leaving the carriage, I stood as if rooted to the ground. I heard Solange call me, but I dared not go to her, because her face, moist with tears, and her hysterical manner were calculated to attract attention.

Utterly wretched, I returned home, passing the entire day in writing to Solange. In the evening I sent her an entire volume of love-pledges.

My letter had hardly gone to the post when I received one from her.

She had been sharply reprimanded for coming late; had been subjected to a severe cross-examination, and threatened with forfeiture of her next holiday. But she vowed to join me even at the cost of her place. I thought I should go mad at the prospect of being parted from her a whole week. I was more depressed because a letter which had arrived from her father appeared to have been tampered with.

I passed a wretched night and a still more miserable day.

The next day the weather was appalling. Nature seemed to be dissolving in a cold, ceaseless rain—a rain like that which announces the approach of winter. All the way to the laboratory my ears were tortured with the criers announcing the names of the condemned, a large number of men, women, and children. The bloody harvest was over-rich. I should not lack subjects for my investigations that day.

The day ended early. At four o'clock I arrived at Clamart; it was almost night.

The view of the cemetery, with its large, new-made graves; the sparse, leafless trees that swayed in the wind, was desolate, almost appalling.

A large, open pit yawned before me. It was to receive to-day's harvest from the Place de la Révolution. An exceedingly large number of victims was expected, for the pit was deeper than usual.

Mechanically I approached the grave. At the bottom the water had gathered in a pool; my feet slipped; I came within an inch of falling in. My hair stood on end. The rain had drenched me to the skin. I shuddered and hastened into the laboratory.

It was, as I have said, an abandoned chapel. My eyes searched—I know not why—to discover if some traces of the holy purpose to which the edifice had once been devoted did not still adhere to the walls or to the altar; but the walls were bare, the altar empty.

I struck a light and deposited the candle on the operating-table on which lay scattered a miscellaneous assortment of the strange instruments I employed. I sat down and fell into a reverie. I thought of the poor queen, whom I had seen in her beauty, glory, and happiness, yesterday carted to the scaffold, pursued by

the execrations of a people, to-day lying headless on the common sinners' bier—she who had slept beneath the gilded canopy of the throne of the Tuileries and St. Cloud.

As I sat thus, absorbed in gloomy meditation, wind and rain without redoubled in fury. The rain-drops dashed against the window-panes, the storm swept with melancholy moaning through the branches of the trees. Anon there mingled with the violence of the elements the sound of wheels.

It was the executioner's red hearse with its ghastly freight from the Place de la Révolution.

The door of the little chapel was pushed ajar, and two men, drenched with rain, entered, carrying a sack between them.

"There, M. Ledru," said the guillotiner; "there is what your heart longs for! Be in no hurry this night! We'll leave you to enjoy their society alone. Orders are not to cover them up till to-morrow, and so they'll not take cold."

With a horrible laugh, the two executioners deposited the sack in a corner, near the former altar, right in front of me. Thereupon they sauntered out, leaving open the door, which swung furiously on its hinges till my candle flashed and flared in the fierce draft.

I heard them unharness the horse, lock the cemetery, and go away.

I was strangely impelled to go with them, but an indefinable power fettered me in my place. I could not repress a shudder. I had no fear; but the violence of the storm, the splashing of the rain, the whistling sounds of the lashing branches, the shrill vibration of the atmosphere, which made my candle tremble—all this filled me with a vague terror that began at the roots of my hair and communicated itself to every part of my body.

Suddenly I fancied I heard a voice! A voice at once soft and plaintive; a voice within the chapel, pronouncing the name of "Albert!"

I was startled.

"Albert!"

But one person in all the world addressed me by that name!

Slowly I directed my weeping eyes around the chapel, which, though small, was not completely lighted by the feeble rays of the candle, leaving the nooks and angles in darkness, and my look remained fixed on the blood-soaked sack near the altar with its hideous contents.

At this moment the same voice repeated the same name, only it sounded fainter and more plaintive.

“Albert!”

I bolted out of my chair, frozen with horror.

The voice seemed to proceed from the sack!

I touched myself to make sure that I was awake; then I walked toward the sack with my arms extended before me, but stark and staring with horror. I thrust my hand into it. Then it seemed to me as if two lips, still warm, pressed a kiss upon my fingers!

I had reached that stage of boundless terror where the excess of fear turns into the audacity of despair. I seized the head and collapsing in my chair, placed it in front of me.

Then I gave vent to a fearful scream. This head, with its lips still warm, with the eyes half closed, was the head of Solange!

I thought I should go mad.

Three times I called:

“Solange! Solange! Solange!”

At the third time she opened her eyes and looked at me. Tears trickled down her cheeks; then a moist glow darted from her eyes, as if the soul were passing, and the eyes closed, never to open again.

I sprang to my feet a raving maniac, I wanted to fly; I knocked against the table; it fell. The candle was extinguished; the head rolled upon the floor, and I fell prostrate, as if a terrible fever had stricken me down—an icy-shudder convulsed me, and, with a deep sigh, I swooned.

The following morning at six the grave-diggers found me, cold as the flagstones on which I lay.

Solange, betrayed by her father’s letter, had been arrested the same day, condemned, and executed.

The head that had called me, the eyes that had looked at me, were the head, the eyes, of Solange!

## THE BIRDS IN THE LETTER-BOX By Rene Bazin

Nothing can describe the peace that surrounded the country parsonage. The parish was small, moderately honest, prosperous, and was used to the old priest, who had ruled it for thirty years. The town ended at the parsonage, and there began meadows which sloped down to the river and were filled in summer with the perfume of flowers and all the music of the earth. Behind the great house a kitchen-garden encroached on the meadow. The first ray of the sun was for it, and so was the last. Here the cherries ripened in May, and the currants often earlier, and a week before Assumption, usually, you could not pass within a hundred feet without breathing among the hedges the heavy odor of the melons.

But you must not think that the abbé of St. Philémon was a gourmand. He had reached the age when appetite is only a memory. His shoulders were bent, his face was wrinkled, he had two little gray eyes, one of which could not see any longer, and he was so deaf in one ear that if you happened to be on that side you just had to get round on the other.

Mercy, no! he did not eat all the fruits in his orchard. The boys got their share—and a big share—but the biggest share, by all odds, was eaten by the birds—the blackbirds, who lived there very comfortably all the year, and sang in return the best they could; the orioles, pretty birds of passage, who helped them in summer, and the sparrows, and the warblers of every variety; and the tomtits, swarms of them, with feathers as thick as your fingers, and they hung on the branches and pecked at a grape or scratched a pear—veritable little beasts of prey, whose only “thank you” was a shrill cry like a saw.

Even to them, old age had made the abbé of St. Philémon indulgent. “The beasts cannot correct their faults,” he used to say; “if I got angry at them for not changing I’d have to get angry with a good many of my parishioners!”

And he contented himself with clapping his hands together loud when he went into his orchard, so he should not see too much stealing.

Then there was a spreading of wings, as if all the silly flowers cut off by a great wind were flying away; gray, and white, and yellow, and mottled, a short flight, a rustling of leaves, and then quiet for five minutes. But what minutes! Fancy, if you can, that there was not one factory in the village, not a weaver or a blacksmith, and that the noise of men with their horses and cattle, spreading over the wide, distant plains, melted into the whispering of the breeze and was lost. Mills were unknown, the roads were little frequented, the railroads were very far away. Indeed, if the ravagers of his garden had repented for long the abbé would have fallen asleep of the silence over his breviary.

Fortunately, their return was prompt; a sparrow led the way, a jay followed, and then the whole swarm was back at work. And the abbé could walk up and down, close his book or open it, and murmur: “They’ll not leave me a berry this year!”

It made no difference; not a bird left his prey, any more than if the good abbé had been a cone-shaped pear-tree, with thick leaves, balancing himself on the gravel of the walk.

The birds know that those who complain take no action. Every year they built their nests around the parsonage of St. Philémon in greater numbers than anywhere else. The best places were quickly taken, the hollows in the trees, the holes in the walls, the forks of the apple-trees and the elms, and you could see a brown beak, like the point of a sword, sticking out of a wisp of straw between all the rafters of the roof. One year, when all the places were taken, I suppose, a tomtit, in her embarrassment, spied the slit of the letter-box protected by its little roof, at the right of the parsonage gate. She slipped in, was satisfied with the result of her explorations, and brought the materials to build a nest. There was nothing she neglected that would make it warm, neither the feathers, nor the horsehair, nor the wool, nor even the scales of lichens that cover old wood.

One morning the housekeeper came in perfectly furious, carrying a paper. She had found it under the laurel bush, at the foot of the garden.

“Look, sir, a paper, and dirty, too! They are up to fine doings!”

“Who, Philomène?”

“Your miserable birds; all the birds that you let stay here! Pretty soon they’ll be building their nests in your soup-tureens!”

“I haven’t but one.”

“Haven’t they got the idea of laying their eggs in your letter-box! I opened it because the postman rang and that doesn’t happen every day. It was full of straw and horsehair and spiders’ webs, with enough feathers to make a quilt, and, in the midst of all that, a beast that I didn’t see hissed at me like a viper!”

The abbé of St. Philémon began to laugh like a grandfather when he hears of a baby’s pranks.

“That must be a tomtit,” said he, “they are the only birds clever enough to think of it. Be careful not to touch it, Philomène.”

“No fear of that; it is not nice enough!”

The abbé went hastily through the garden, the house, the court planted with asparagus, till he came to the wall which separated the parsonage from the public road, and there he carefully opened the letter-box, in which there would have been room enough for all the mail received in a year by all the inhabitants of the village.

Sure enough, he was not mistaken. The shape of the nest, like a pine-cone, its color and texture, and the lining, which showed through, made him smile. He heard the hiss of the brooding bird inside and replied:

“Rest easy, little one, I know you. Twenty-one days to hatch your eggs and three weeks to raise your family; that is what you want? You shall have it. I’ll take away the key.”

He did take away the key, and when he had finished the morning’s duties—visits to his parishioners who were ill or in trouble; instructions to a boy who was to pick him out some fruit at the village: a climb up the steeple because a storm had loosened some stones, he remembered the tomtit and began to be afraid she would be troubled by the arrival of a letter while she was hatching her eggs.

The fear was almost groundless, because the people of St. Philémon did not receive any more letters than they sent. The postman had little to do on his rounds but to eat soup at one house, to have a drink at another and, once in a long while, to leave a letter from some conscript, or a bill for taxes at some distant farm. Nevertheless, since St. Robert’s Day was near, which, as you know, comes on the 29th of April, the abbé thought it wise to write to the only three friends worthy of that name, whom death had left him, a layman and two priests: “My friend, do not congratulate me on my saint’s day this year, if you please. It would inconvenience me to receive a letter at this time. Later I shall explain, and you will appreciate my reasons.”

They thought that his eye was worse and did not write.

The abbé of St. Philémon was delighted. For three weeks he never entered his gate one time without thinking of the eggs, speckled with pink, that were lying in the letter-box, and when the twenty-first day came round he bent down and listened with his ear close to the slit of the box. Then he stood up beaming:

“I hear them chirp, Philomène; I hear them chirp. They owe their lives to me, sure enough, and they’ll not be the ones to regret it any more than I.”

He had in his bosom the heart of a child that had never grown old.

Now, at the same time, in the green room of the palace, at the chief town of the department, the bishop was deliberating over the appointments to be made with his regular councillors, his two grand vicars, the dean of the chapter, the secretary-general of the palace, and the director of the great academy. After he had appointed several vicars and priests he made this suggestion:

“Gentlemen of the council, I have in mind a candidate suitable in all respects for the parish of X——; but I think it would be well, at least, to offer that charge and that honor to one of our oldest priests, the abbé of St. Philémon. He will undoubtedly refuse it, and his modesty, no less than his age, will be the cause; but we shall have shown, as far as we could, our appreciation of his virtues.”

The five councilors approved unanimously, and that very evening a letter was sent from the palace, signed by the bishop, and which contained in a postscript: “Answer at once, my dear abbé; or, better, come to see me, because I must submit my appointments to the government within three days.”

The letter arrived at St. Philémon the very day the tomtits were hatched. The postman had difficulty in slipping it into the slit of the box, but it disappeared inside and lay touching the base of the nest, like a white pavement at the bottom of the dark chamber.

The time came when the tiny points on the wings of the little tomtits began to be covered with down. There were fourteen of them, and they twittered and staggered on their little feet, with their beaks open up to their eyes, never ceasing, from morning till night, to wait for food, eat it, digest it, and demand more. That was the first period, when the baby birds hadn’t any sense. But in birds it doesn’t last long. Very soon they quarrelled in the nest, which began to break with the fluttering of their wings, then they tumbled out of it and walked along the side of the box, peeped through the slit at the big world outside, and at last they ventured out.

The abbé of St. Philémon, with a neighboring priest, attended this pleasant garden party. When the little ones appeared beneath the roof of the box—two, three—together and took their flight, came back, started again, like bees at the door of a hive, he said:

“Behold, a babyhood ended and a good work accomplished. They are hardy and strong, every one.”

The next day, during his hour of leisure after dinner, the abbé came to the box with the key in his hand. “Tap, tap,” he went. There was no answer. “I



thought so,” said he. Then he opened the box and, mingled with the débris of the nest, the letter fell into his hands.

“Good Heavens!” said he, recognizing the writing. “A letter from the bishop; and in what a state! How long has it been here?”

His cheek grew pale as he read.

“Philomène, harness Robin quickly.”

She came to see what was the matter before obeying.

“What have you there, sir?”

“The bishop has been waiting for me three weeks!”

“You’ve missed your chance,” said the old woman.

The abbé was away until the next evening. When he came back he had a peaceful air, but sometimes peace is not attained without effort and we have to struggle to keep it. When he had helped to unharness Robin and had given him some hay, had changed his cassock and unpacked his box, from which he took a dozen little packages of things bought on his visit to the city, it was the very time that the birds assembled in the branches to tell each other about the day. There had been a shower and the drops still fell from the leaves as they were shaken by these bohemian couples looking for a good place to spend the night.

Recognizing their friend and master as he walked up and down the gravel path, they came down, fluttered about him, making an unusually loud noise, and the tomtits, the fourteen of the nest, whose feathers were still not quite grown, essayed their first spirals about the pear-trees and their first cries in the open air.

The abbé of St. Philémon watched them with a fatherly eye, but his tenderness was sad, as we look at things that have cost us dear.

“Well, my little ones, without me you would not be here, and without you I would be dead. I do not regret it at all, but don’t insist. Your thanks are too noisy.”

He clapped his hands impatiently.

He had never been ambitious, that is very sure, and, even at that moment, he told the truth. Nevertheless, the next day, after a night spent in talking to Philomène, he said to her:

“Next year, Philomène, if the tomtit comes back, let me know. It is decidedly inconvenient.”

But the tomtit never came again—and neither did the letter from the bishop!

## JEAN GOURDON'S FOUR DAYS By Émile Zola

### SPRING

On that particular day, at about five o'clock in the morning, the sun entered with delightful abruptness into the little room I occupied at the house of my uncle Lazare, parish priest of the hamlet of Dourgues. A broad yellow ray fell upon ray closed eyelids, and I awoke in light.

My room, which was whitewashed, and had deal furniture, was full of attractive gaiety. I went to the window and gazed at the Durance, which traced its broad course amidst the dark green verdure of the valley. Fresh puffs of wind caressed my face, and the murmur of the trees and river seemed to call me to them.

I gently opened my door. To get out I had to pass through my uncle's room. I proceeded on tip-toe, fearing the creaking of my thick boots might awaken the worthy man, who was still slumbering with a smiling countenance. And I trembled at the sound of the church bell tolling the Angelus. For some days past my uncle Lazare had been following me about everywhere, looking sad and annoyed. He would perhaps have prevented me going over there to the edge of the river, and hiding myself among the willows on the bank, so as to watch for Babet passing, that tall dark girl who had come with the spring.

But my uncle was sleeping soundly. I felt something like remorse in deceiving him and running away in this manner. I stayed for an instant and gazed on his calm countenance, with its gentle expression enhanced by rest, and I recalled to mind with feeling the day when he had come to fetch me in the chilly and deserted home which my mother's funeral was leaving. Since that day, what tenderness, what devotedness, what good advice he had bestowed on me! He had given me his knowledge and his kindness, all his intelligence and all his heart.

I was tempted for a moment to cry out to him:

"Get up, uncle Lazare! let us go for a walk together along that path you are so fond of beside the Durance. You will enjoy the fresh air and morning sun. You will see what an appetite you will have on your return!"

And Babet, who was going down to the river in her light morning gown, and whom I should not be able to see! My uncle would be there, and I would have to lower my eyes. It must be so nice under the willows, lying flat on one's stomach, in the fine grass! I felt a languid feeling creeping over me, and, slowly, taking short steps, holding my breath, I reached the door. I went

downstairs, and began running like a madcap in the delightful, warm May morning air.

The sky was quite white on the horizon, with exquisitely delicate blue and pink tints. The pale sun seemed like a great silver lamp, casting a shower of bright rays into the Durance. And the broad, sluggish river, expanding lazily over the red sand, extended from one end of the valley to the other, like a stream of liquid metal. To the west, a line of low rugged hills threw slight violet streaks on the pale sky.

I had been living in this out-of-the-way corner for ten years. How often had I kept my uncle Lazare waiting to give me my Latin lesson! The worthy man wanted to make me learned. But I was on the other side of the Durance, ferreting out magpies, discovering a hill which I had not yet climbed. Then, on my return, there were remonstrances: the Latin was forgotten, my poor uncle scolded me for having torn my trousers, and he shuddered when he noticed sometimes that the skin underneath was cut. The valley was mine, really mine; I had conquered it with my legs, and I was the real landlord by right of friendship. And that bit of river, those two leagues of the Durance, how I loved them, how well we understood one another when together! I knew all the whims of my dear stream, its anger, its charming ways, its different features at each hour of the day.

When I reached the water's edge on that particular morning, I felt something like giddiness at seeing it so gentle and so white. It had never looked so gay. I slipped rapidly beneath the willows, to an open space where a broad patch of sunlight fell on the dark grass. There I laid me down on my stomach, listening, watching the pathway by which Babet would come, through the branches.

“Oh! how sound uncle Lazare must be sleeping!” I thought.

And I extended myself at full length on the moss. The sun struck gentle heat into my back, whilst my breast, buried in the grass, was quite cool.

Have you never examined the turf, at close quarters, with your eyes on the blades of grass? Whilst I was waiting for Babet, I pried indiscreetly into a tuft which was really a whole world. In my bunch of grass there were streets, cross roads, public squares, entire cities. At the bottom of it, I distinguished a great dark patch where the shoots of the previous spring were decaying sadly, then slender stalks were growing up, stretching out, bending into a multitude of elegant forms, and producing frail colonnades, churches, virgin forests. I saw two lean insects wandering in the midst of this immensity; the poor children were certainly lost, for they went from colonnade to colonnade, from street to street, in an affrighted, anxious way.

It was just at this moment that, on raising my eyes, I saw Babet's white skirts standing out against the dark ground at the top of the pathway. I recognized her printed calico gown, which was grey, with small blue flowers. I sunk down deeper in the grass, I heard my heart thumping against the earth and almost raising me with slight jerks. My breast was burning now, I no longer felt the freshness of the dew.

The young girl came nimbly down the pathway, her skirts skimming the ground with a swinging motion that charmed me, I saw her at full length, quite erect, in her proud and happy gracefulness. She had no idea I was there behind the willows; she walked with a light step, she ran without giving a thought to the wind, which slightly raised her gown. I could distinguish her feet, trotting along quickly, quickly, and a piece of her white stockings, which was perhaps as large as one's hand, and which made me blush in a manner that was alike sweet and painful.

Oh! then, I saw nothing else, neither the Durance, nor the willows, nor the whiteness of the sky. What cared I for the valley! It was no longer my sweetheart; I was quite indifferent to its joy and its sadness. What cared I for my friends, the stories, and the trees on the hills! The river could run away all at once if it liked; I would not have regretted it.

And the spring, I did not care a bit about the spring! Had it borne away the sun that warmed my back, its leaves, its rays, all its May morning, I should have remained there, in ecstasy, gazing at Babet, running along the pathway, and swinging her skirts deliciously. For Babet had taken the valley's place in my heart, Babet was the spring, I had never spoken to her. Both of us blushed when we met one another in my uncle Lazare's church. I could have vowed she detested me.

She talked on that particular day for a few minutes with the women who were washing. The sound of her pearly laughter reached as far as me, mingled with the loud voice of the Durance. Then she stooped down to take a little water in the hollow of her hand; but the bank was high, and Babet, who was on the point of slipping, saved herself by clutching the grass. I gave a frightful shudder, which made my blood run cold. I rose hastily, and, without feeling ashamed, without reddening, ran to the young girl. She cast a startled look at me; then she began to smile. I bent down, at the risk of falling. I succeeded in filling my right hand with water by keeping my fingers close together. And I presented this new sort of cup to Babet' asking her to drink.

The women who were washing laughed. Babet, confused, did not dare accept; she hesitated, and half turned her head away. At last she made up her

mind, and delicately pressed her lips to the tips of my fingers; but she had waited too long, all the water had run away. Then she burst out laughing, she became a child again, and I saw very well that she was making fun of me.

I was very silly. I bent forward again. This time I took the water in both hands and hastened to put them to Babet's lips. She drank, and I felt the warm kiss from her mouth run up my arms to my breast, which it filled with heat.

"Oh! how my uncle must sleep!" I murmured to myself.

Just as I said that, I perceived a dark shadow beside me, and, having turned round, I saw my uncle Lazare, in person, a few paces away, watching Babet and me as if offended. His cassock appeared quite white in the sun; in his look I saw reproaches which made me feel inclined to cry.

Babet was very much afraid. She turned quite red, and hurried off stammering:

"Thanks, Monsieur Jean, I thank you very much."

As for me, wiping my wet hands, I stood motionless and confused before my uncle Lazare.

The worthy man, with folded arms, and bringing back a corner of his cassock, watched Babet, who was running up the pathway without turning her head. Then, when she had disappeared behind the hedges, he lowered his eyes to me, and I saw his pleasant countenance smile sadly.

"Jean," he said to me, "come into the broad walk. Breakfast is not ready. We have half an hour to spare."

He set out with his rather heavy tread, avoiding the tufts of grass wet with dew. A part of the bottom of his cassock that was dragging along the ground, made a dull crackling sound. He held his breviary under his arm; but he had forgotten his morning lecture, and he advanced dreamily, with bowed head, and without uttering a word.

His silence tormented me. He was generally so talkative. My anxiety increased at each step. He had certainly seen me giving Babet water to drink. What a sight, O Lord! The young girl, laughing and blushing, kissed the tips of my fingers, whilst I, standing on tip-toe, stretching out my arms, was leaning forward as if to kiss her. My action now seemed to me frightfully audacious. And all my timidity returned. I inquired of myself how I could have dared to have my fingers kissed so sweetly.

And my uncle Lazare, who said nothing, who continued walking with short steps in front of me, without giving a single glance at the old trees he loved! He was assuredly preparing a sermon. He was only taking me into the broad walk to scold me at his ease. It would occupy at least an hour: breakfast would get cold, and I would be unable to return to the water's edge and dream of the warm burns that Babet's lips had left on my hands.

We were in the broad walk. This walk, which was wide and short, ran beside the river; it was shaded by enormous oak trees, with trunks lacerated by seams, stretching out their great, tall branches. The fine grass spread like a carpet beneath the trees, and the sun, riddling the foliage, embroidered this carpet with a rosaceous pattern in gold. In the distance, all around, extended raw green meadows.

My uncle went to the bottom of the walk, without altering his step and without turning round. Once there, he stopped, and I kept beside him, understanding that the terrible moment had arrived.

The river made a sharp curve; a low parapet at the end of the walk formed a sort of terrace. This vault of shade opened on a valley of light. The country expanded wide before us, for several leagues. The sun was rising in the heavens, where the silvery rays of morning had become transformed into a stream of gold; blinding floods of light ran from the horizon, along the hills, and spread out into the plain with the glare of fire.

After a moment's silence, my uncle Lazare turned towards me.

"Good heavens, the sermon!" I thought, and I bowed my head. My uncle pointed out the valley to me, with an expansive gesture; then, drawing himself up, he said, slowly:

"Look, Jean, there is the spring. The earth is full of joy, my boy, and I have brought you here, opposite this plain of light, to show you the first smiles of the young season. Observe what brilliancy and sweetness! Warm perfumes rise from the country and pass across our faces like puffs of life."

He was silent and seemed dreaming. I had raised my head, astonished, breathing at ease. My uncle was not preaching.

"It is a beautiful morning," he continued, "a morning of youth. Your eighteen summers find full enjoyment amidst this verdure which is at most eighteen days old. All is great brightness and perfume, is it not? The broad valley seems to you a delightful place: the river is there to give you its freshness, the trees to lend you their shade, the whole country to speak to you of tenderness, the heavens themselves to kiss those horizons that you are searching with hope and

desire. The spring belongs to fellows of your age. It is it that teaches the boys how to give young girls to drink—”

I hung my head again. My uncle Lazare had certainly seen me.

“An old fellow like me,” he continued, “unfortunately knows what trust to place in the charms of spring. I, my poor Jean, I love the Durance because it waters these meadows and gives life to all the valley; I love this young foliage because it proclaims to me the coming of the fruits of summer and autumn; I love this sky because it is good to us, because its warmth hastens the fecundity of the earth. I should have had to tell you this one day or other; I prefer telling it you now, at this early hour. It is spring itself that is giving you the lesson. The earth is a vast workshop wherein there is never a slack season. Observe this flower at our feet; to you it is perfume; to me it is labour, it accomplishes its task by producing its share of life, a little black seed which will work in its turn, next spring. And, now, search the vast horizon. All this joy is but the act of generation. If the country be smiling, it is because it is beginning the everlasting task again. Do you hear it now, breathing hard, full of activity and haste? The leaves sigh, the flowers are in a hurry, the corn grows without pausing; all the plants, all the herbs are quarrelling as to which shall spring up the quickest; and the running water, the river comes to assist in the common labour, and the young sun which rises in the heavens is entrusted with the duty of enlivening the everlasting task of the labourers.”

At this point my uncle made me look him straight in the face. He concluded in these terms:

“Jean, you hear what your friend the spring says to you. He is youth, but he is preparing ripe age; his bright smile is but the gaiety of labour. Summer will be powerful, autumn bountiful, for the spring is singing at this moment, while courageously performing its work.”

I looked very stupid. I understood my uncle Lazare. He was positively preaching me a sermon, in which he told me I was an idle fellow and that the time had come to work.

My uncle appeared as much embarrassed as myself. After having hesitated for some instants he said, slightly stammering:

“Jean, you were wrong not to have come and told me all—as you love Babet and Babet loves you—”

“Babet loves me!” I exclaimed.

My uncle made me an ill-humoured gesture.



“Eh! allow me to speak. I don’t want another avowal. She owned it to me herself.”

“She owned that to you, she owned that to you!”

And I suddenly threw my arms round my uncle Lazare’s neck.

“Oh! how nice that is!” I added. “I had never spoken to her, truly. She told you that at the confessional, didn’t she? I would never have dared ask her if she loved me, and I would never have known anything. Oh! how I thank you!”

My uncle Lazare was quite red. He felt that he had just committed a blunder. He had imagined that this was not my first meeting with the young girl, and here he gave me a certainty, when as yet I only dared dream of a hope. He held his tongue now; it was I who spoke with volubility.

“I understand all,” I continued. “You are right, I must work to win Babet. But you will see how courageous I shall be. Ah! how good you are, my uncle Lazare, and how well you speak! I understand what the spring says: I, also, will have a powerful summer and an autumn of abundance. One is well placed here, one sees all the valley; I am young like it, I feel youth within me demanding to accomplish its task—”

My uncle calmed me.

“Very good, Jean,” he said to me. “I had long hoped to make a priest of you, and I imparted to you my knowledge with that sole aim. But what I saw this morning at the waterside compels me to definitely give up my fondest hope. It is Heaven that disposes of us. You will love the Almighty in another way. You cannot now remain in this village, and I only wish you to return when ripened by age and work. I have chosen the trade of printer for you; your education will serve you. One of my friends, who is a printer at Grenoble, is expecting you next Monday.”

I felt anxious.

“And I shall come back and marry Babet?” I inquired.

My uncle smiled imperceptibly; and, without answering in a direct manner, said:

“The remainder is the will of Heaven.”

“You are heaven, and I have faith in your kindness. Oh! uncle, see that Babet does not forget me. I will work for her.”

Then my uncle Lazare again pointed out to me the valley which the warm golden light was overspreading more and more.

“There is hope,” he said to me. “Do not be as old as I am, Jean. Forget my sermon, be as ignorant as this land. It does not trouble about the autumn; it is all engrossed with the joy of its smile; it labours, courageously and without a care. It hopes.”

And we returned to the parsonage, strolling along slowly in the grass, which was scorched by the sun, and chatting with concern of our approaching separation.

Breakfast was cold, as I had foreseen; but that did not trouble me much. I had tears in my eyes each time I looked at my uncle Lazare. And, at the thought of Babet, my heart beat fit to choke me.

I do not remember what I did during the remainder of the day. I think I went and lay down under the willows at the riverside. My uncle was right, the earth was at work. On placing my ear to the grass I seemed to hear continual sounds. Then I dreamed of what my life would be. Buried in the grass until nightfall, I arranged an existence full of labour divided between Babet and my uncle Lazare. The energetic youthfulness of the soil had penetrated my breast, which I pressed with force against the common mother, and at times I imagined myself to be one of the strong willows that lived around me. In the evening I could not dine. My uncle, no doubt, understood the thoughts that were choking me, for he feigned not to notice my want of appetite. As soon as I was able to rise from table, I hastened to return and breathe the open air outside.

A fresh breeze rose from the river, the dull splashing of which I heard in the distance. A soft light fell from the sky. The valley expanded, peaceful and transparent, like a dark shoreless ocean. There were vague sounds in the air, a sort of impassioned tremor, like a great flapping of wings passing above my head. Penetrating perfumes rose with the cool air from the grass.

I had gone out to see Babet; I knew she came to the parsonage every night, and I went and placed myself in ambush behind a hedge. I had got rid of my timidness of the morning; I considered it quite natural to be waiting for her there, because she loved me and I had to tell her of my departure.

“When I perceived her skirts in the limpid night, I advanced noiselessly. Then I murmured in a low voice:

“Babet, Babet, I am here.”

She did not recognise me, at first, and started with fright. When she discovered who it was, she seemed still more frightened, which very much surprised me.

“It’s you, Monsieur Jean,” she said to me. “What are you doing there? What do you want?”

I was beside her and took her hand.

“You love me fondly, do you not?”

“I! who told you that?”

“My uncle Lazare.”

She stood there in confusion. Her hand began to tremble in mine. As she was on the point of running away, I took her other hand. We were face to face, in a sort of hollow in the hedge, and I felt Babet’s panting breath running all warm over my face. The freshness of the air, the rustling silence of the night, hung around us.

“I don’t know,” stammered the young girl, “I never said that—his reverence the curé misunderstood—For mercy’s sake, let me be, I am in a hurry.”

“No, no,” I continued, “I want you to know that I am going away to-morrow, and to promise to love me always.”

“You are leaving to-morrow!”

Oh! that sweet cry, and how tenderly Babet uttered it! I seem still to hear her apprehensive voice full of affliction and love.

“You see,” I exclaimed in my turn, “that my uncle Lazare said the truth. Besides, he never tells fibs. You love me, you love me, Babet! Your lips this morning confided the secret very softly to my fingers.”

And I made her sit down at the foot of the hedge. My memory has retained my first chat of love in its absolute innocence. Babet listened to me like a little sister. She was no longer afraid, she told me the story of her love. And there were solemn sermons, ingenious avowals, projects without end. She vowed she would marry no one but me, I vowed to deserve her hand by labour and tenderness. There was a cricket behind the hedge, who accompanied our chat with his chaunt of hope, and all the valley, whispering in the dark, took pleasure in hearing us talk so softly.

On separating we forgot to kiss each other.

When I returned to my little room, it appeared to me that I had left it for at least a year. That day which was so short, seemed an eternity of happiness. It was the warmest and most sweetly-scented spring-day of my life, and the remembrance of it is now like the distant, faltering voice of my youth.

## II

### SUMMER

When I awoke at about three o'clock in the morning on that particular day, I was lying on the hard ground tired out, and with my face bathed in perspiration. The hot heavy atmosphere of a July night weighed me down.

My companions were sleeping around me, wrapped in their hooded cloaks; they speckled the grey ground with black, and the obscure plain panted; I fancied I heard the heavy breathing of a slumbering multitude. Indistinct sounds, the neighing of horses, the clash of arms rang out amidst the rustling silence.

The army had halted at about midnight, and we had received orders to lie down and sleep. We had been marching for three days, scorched by the sun and blinded by dust. The enemy were at length in front of us, over there, on those hills on the horizon. At daybreak a decisive battle would be fought.

I had been a victim to despondency. For three days I had been as if trampled on, without energy and without thought for the future. It was the excessive fatigue, indeed, that had just awakened me. Now, lying on my back, with my eyes wide open, I was thinking whilst gazing into the night, I thought of this battle, this butchery, which the sun was about to light up. For more than six years, at the first shot in each fight, I had been saying good-bye to those I loved the most fondly, Babet and uncle Lazare. And now, barely a month before my discharge, I had to say good-bye again, and this time perhaps for ever.

Then my thoughts softened. With closed eyelids I saw Babet and my uncle Lazare. How long it was since I had kissed them! I remembered the day of our separation; my uncle weeping because he was poor, and allowing me to leave like that, and Babet, in the evening, had vowed she would wait for me, and that she would never love another. I had had to quit all, my master at Grenoble, my friends at Dourgues. A few letters had come from time to time to tell me they always loved me, and that happiness was awaiting me in my well-beloved valley. And I, I was going to fight, I was going to get killed.

I began dreaming of my return. I saw my poor old uncle on the threshold of the parsonage extending his trembling arms; and behind him was Babet, quite

red, smiling through her tears. I fell into their arms and kissed them, seeking for expressions—

Suddenly the beating of drums recalled me to stern reality. Daybreak had come, the grey plain expanded in the morning mist. The ground became full of life, indistinct forms appeared on all sides; a sound that became louder and louder filled the air; it was the call of bugles, the galloping of horses, the rumble of artillery, the shouting out of orders. War came threatening, amidst my dream of tenderness. I rose with difficulty; it seemed to me that my bones were broken, and that my head was about to split. I hastily got my men together; for I must tell you that I had won the rank of sergeant. We soon received orders to bear to the left and occupy a hillock above the plain.

As we were about to move, the sergeant-major came running along and shouting:

“A letter for Sergeant Gourdon!”

And he handed me a dirty crumpled letter, which had been lying perhaps for a week in the leather bags of the post-office. I had only just time to recognise the writing of my uncle Lazare.

“Forward, march!” shouted the major.

I had to march. For a few seconds I held the poor letter in my hand, devouring it with my eyes; it burnt my fingers; I would have given everything in the world to have sat down and wept at ease whilst reading it. I had to content myself with slipping it under my tunic against my heart.

I have never experienced such agony. By way of consolation I said to myself what my uncle had so often repeated to me: I was in the summer of my life, at the moment of the fierce struggle, and it was essential that I should perform my duty bravely, if I would have a peaceful and bountiful autumn. But these reasons exasperated me the more: this letter, which had come to speak to me of happiness, burnt my heart, which had revolted against the folly of war. And I could not even read it! I was perhaps going to die without knowing what it contained, without perusing my uncle Lazare’s affectionate remarks for the last time.

We had reached the top of the hill. We were to await orders there to advance. The battle-field had been marvellously chosen to slaughter one another at ease. The immense plain expanded for several leagues, and was quite bare, without a house or tree. Hedges and bushes made slight spots on the whiteness of the ground. I have never since seen such a country, an ocean of dust, a chalky soil, bursting open here and there, and displaying its tawny bowels. And never either

have I since witnessed a sky of such intense purity, a July day so lovely and so warm; at eight o'clock the sultry heat was already scorching our faces. O the splendid morning, and what a sterile plain to kill and die in!

Firing had broken out with irregular crackling sounds, a long time since, supported by the solemn growl of the cannon. The enemy, Austrians dressed in white, had quitted the heights, and the plain was studded with long files of men, who looked to me about as big as insects. One might have thought it was an ant-hill in insurrection. Clouds of smoke hung over the battle-field. At times, when these clouds broke asunder, I perceived soldiers in flight, smitten with terrified panic. Thus there were currents of fright which bore men away, and outbursts of shame and courage which brought them back under fire.

I could neither hear the cries of the wounded, nor see the blood flow. I could only distinguish the dead which the battalions left behind them, and which resembled black patches. I began to watch the movements of the troops with curiosity, irritated at the smoke which hid a good half of the show, experiencing a sort of egotistic pleasure at the knowledge that I was in security, whilst others were dying.

At about nine o'clock we were ordered to advance. We went down the hill at the double and proceeded towards the centre which was giving way. The regular beat of our footsteps appeared to me funeral-like. The bravest among us panting, pale and with haggard features.

I have made up my mind to tell the truth. At the first whistle of the bullets, the battalion suddenly came to a halt, tempted to fly.

"Forward, forward!" shouted the chiefs.

But we were riveted to the ground, bowing our heads when a bullet whistled by our ears. This movement is instinctive; if shame had not restrained me, I would have thrown myself flat on my stomach in the dust.

Before us was a huge veil of smoke which we dared not penetrate. Red flashes passed through this smoke. And, shuddering, we still stood still. But the bullets reached us; soldiers fell with yells. The chiefs shouted louder:

"Forward, forward!"

The rear ranks, which they pushed on, compelled us to march. Then, closing our eyes, we made a fresh dash and entered the smoke.

We were seized with furious rage. When the cry of "Halt!" resounded, we experienced difficulty in coming to a standstill. As soon as one is motionless,

fear returns and one feels a wish to run away. Firing commenced. We shot in front of us, without aiming, finding some relief in discharging bullets into the smoke. I remember I pulled my trigger mechanically, with lips firmly set together and eyes wide open; I was no longer afraid, for, to tell the truth, I no longer knew if I existed. The only idea I had in my head, was that I would continue firing until all was over. My companion on the left received a bullet full in the face and fell on me; I brutally pushed him away, wiping my cheek which he had drenched with blood. And I resumed firing.

I still remember having seen our colonel, M. de Montrevert, firm and erect upon his horse, gazing quietly towards the enemy. That man appeared to me immense. He had no rifle to amuse himself with, and his breast was expanded to its full breadth above us. From time to time, he looked down, and exclaimed in a dry voice:

“Close the ranks, close the ranks!”

We closed our ranks like sheep, treading on the dead, stupefied, and continuing firing. Until then, the enemy had only sent us bullets; a dull explosion was heard and a shell carried off five of our men. A battery which must have been opposite us and which we could not see, had just opened fire. The shells struck into the middle of us, almost at one spot, making a sanguinary gap which we closed unceasingly with the obstinacy of ferocious brutes.

“Close the ranks, close the ranks!” the colonel coldly repeated.

We were giving the cannon human flesh. Each time a soldier was struck down, I was tak