***Henry Kissinger:*** But a war over Taiwan would set back China's internal evolution substantially. So, at the end of the war, they might find themselves in the position of the winners of the first world war, who were afraid to enforce its provisions. The ambiguity of the nature of superiority now is an inherent flaw of the system. But the question we now face is that, whatever capabilities China has, technology accentuates it. So if we get into a trade war, if you take the views of the traditional hawks on this, it is that China really must be given no opportunity to develop itself. Under 19th-century principles, there will be some areas of special interest—Central Asia will always be an area in which China has a special geographic interest. And in fact, I've been told by pretty responsible people in China that an original motive for the Belt and Road policy was as an alternative to other Asian policies, which would lead to more confrontation with the United States.

To do what I believe needs to be done—and something towards which the administration is tacking—it's very close to what I'm describing. The only problem is, you can't just say it, you have to do it. And you have to do it with a series of intangibles. Because there is no certain answer. You know, in 1938, at the time of Munich, it was not an implausible argument to say that, if you thought you were going to get into conflict with Germany, you better yield – i.e. appease, than go to war then. But that's a complicated question and, having lived in Nazi Germany, I know that war was inevitable because Hitler needed it. I don't think the Chinese need it.

My perception of the Chinese is that they're more Confucian than Marxist in their basic thinking. And the strength of China has been historically that the selection of personnel through the educational system and through the appointment did bring forward people who were nationally trained. So, the Confucian system teaches two things: to achieve the maximum strength of which they are capable, and they want to be respected for it. But not personal respect in the Western sense, but respect in the sense that any negotiations should reflect some recognition of pragmatic capacities and accomplishments. It is of course possible that they drive it to a point, where the Chinese definition of respect is incompatible with our security. That will lead to conflict, but even then it would be better that the conflict be limited, rather than all-out.

***The Economist:*** Is it the case that their goal—as so many in Washington say—is to supplant the US as the world's leading power?

***Henry Kissinger:*** It is highly likely that a significant part of Chinese thinkers believe America is on a downward slope. And, therefore, as a result of a historic evolution, they will eventually supplant us. But if you believe that, then in your policies, you maintain the option of adversaries to assert themselves. So in the first phase of what I'm talking about, you need a kind of tacit agreement, which has all the dangers that the Washington people recommend, except they have no alternative to it. It has dangers. And there is a danger that, in America, we then will not keep up strategically. And there is a danger that our allies will start moving. It's uncertain that [they] will move [all the way] but near certainty at least some of them will start moving. While, if we pursue the course I recommend, we will always have more options. But I have great sympathy for the administration on this.

***The Economist:*** So, let's imagine your approach is being followed. And you've already described how you think climate change may not be the right ground on which to build diplomatic engagement. What would you be looking to instead? What are the possible areas where the two presidents could sit down?

***Henry Kissinger:*** I would probably do two things at the beginning. I would say, first of all, let's lower the rhetoric on Taiwan. And we don't need to make an announcement of it, we can just do it. And, secondly, on Taiwan we can deploy our forces in such a way that assures our intention. Because, realistically, I'm sure Taiwan can't be maintained in its present form in a war. So I think that's an achievable objective, if we don't state it as an announcement. And secondly, I think we have to begin exchanges on the impact of technology on each other. We have to take baby steps towards arms control, in which each side presents the other with controllable material about new capabilities. I had an experience in Russia once with Brezhnev, with whom I was negotiating arms control. We were discussing an agreement about technical capabilities. And Brezhnev said, "I'm going to assign [their execution] to the minister of production," who was at the meeting. So I began my discussion of the weapon capabilities—the minister of production had a hysterical fit. He made so much noise they took him out of the room; then they brought him back, I began speaking, and he again had a fit. So we couldn't go any further. And, later, when we thought about it, we weren't sure if Gromyko knew what the weapons' capabilities were, because he was only a foreign minister at that time - he wasn't yet in the Politburo. The basic problem was that their weapons had more throw weight, but ours had more accuracy—and we had more variety of weapons. So it was easy for the hawks to play with these disparities, and if you had the wrong people in office…

Now, we are in a world in which you invent technologies that will have huge and novel applications. And it isn't so easy to say, "Let me tell you what we think the consequences are." Because the people who develop LLMs [large language models] wanted to build office machinery, they sought to teach a computer how to complete sentences and then make that an imperative for American businesses. The newfound machines understand more than humans ever originally conceived. So that is something that affects the Chinese as much as us.

What I have in mind requires two leaders to have wisdom on each side and a domestic structure that can sustain it. Because the danger for the West is to say, "the danger is gone". That's the great danger.

***The Economist:*** One more question on this idea of finding ways to coordinate. Is there scope to coordinate over, let's say, Iran and the Middle East? And let's say the war in Ukraine—and all these are things that look like threats—could they actually be opportunities to build confidence?

***Henry Kissinger:*** We all have to admit we're in a new world…there is no guaranteed course.

My impression of talking to Chinese leaders is that what is grating on them is our assumption that we are on the right course, and that if they behave themselves, we will grant them certain privileges. And also when we speak of a world system, a rules-based system, we made all the rules. And they want to participate in whatever new rules emerge. There's another part that thinks that the Americans will never grant us that, so it's foolish to fall for it. But if that happens, if you look at the evolution of technology, the concept of these LLMs didn't exist before. They were inconceivable before.

Now, we have tremendous confidence feeding them information that, by definition, nobody else can get. It costs a billion dollars to build that learned information. So there can only be, perhaps, 10 in the whole world. And then you deal with another country by monopolising that knowledge. And if you then rely entirely on what you can achieve through power, you're likely to destroy the world. Because you will not know the consequences, fully. The people who started World War One thought it would end in six months.

So, the current leaders will have to be strong and, beyond that, understand that they cannot use the limits of this. And so, what are the limitations that you can achieve either by agreement, or by practice, or indirectly?

But I will admit, what I want to achieve requires above all confidence in oneself. But the alternative is worse.

***The Economist:*** You've laid that out very clearly. And we'll talk in a little while about the context in which these decisions are being made. But firstly, another way in which the world is now more complicated and more dangerous is that it is not just the two players - we've been discussing the US and China—there are the emergent players. And then there are arguably the collapsing players; and I wanted to go next to Russia. You were just describing Putin, whom you know well. And let's start with where we are now. Russia has destroyed, I think, any chance of finding a way to live with Europe. In the short term, it's going to be a junior partner to China, even as it is sort of clinging to its imperialist dream, with the invasion of Ukraine. Was where we are now inevitable, was it a failure of Western diplomacy? Or was it a catastrophic failure of judgement by Putin?

***Henry Kissinger:*** It was certainly a catastrophic mistake of judgement by Putin at the end. I wrote an article, which you've probably seen, in which I substantially predicted the evolution. I thought that the decision to leave open the membership of Ukraine in NATO was very wrong. It was unwise, because if you looked at it from the Russian point of view, in 1989, they controlled Europe up to the Elbe River. They then withdrew from there, under compulsion of their internal system, but still—they withdrew from it. And every square inch of what they withdrew from became part of NATO. The only territory that was left was the country they always considered the little brother closest to them organically and historically. And now it's going into NATO, too. So [that] was a big turning point, it was a final turning point.

And at that time Putin was even saying that he didn't object to Ukraine becoming part of an economic system with Europe, but not NATO. The year before the war, he made a proposal on NATO's long-term evolution. And we didn't take it seriously. It was not acceptable by itself but could have been a starting point. Our negotiator was a wonderful lady, I like her very much, but she hates Putin so totally.

Compare that with how the West reacted to the Berlin Ultimatum. Both Macmillan and Eisenhower used it to start long negotiations that went on for 20 years until Nixon and Brezhnev found the preconditions for a new Berlin agreement, which then lasted the rest of the cold war. We didn't do that with Ukraine. And in fact, our negotiators said at the negotiation, that one American basic principle is that any country that meets our membership qualification can join. So that meant Russia will be totally surrounded by NATO countries. What is Georgia doing in NATO? We have every right to defend it, but why as part of a multilateral institution? In the 19th century Britain might have defended for a strategic reason. But it wouldn't have brought in everybody else.

To Putin, Ukraine membership in NATO was an obsession. So now I'm in the weird position that people say, "He's changed his mind, now he's in favour of full membership of Ukraine in NATO." And my reason for that is twofold. One, Russia is no longer the conventional threat that it used to be. So the challenges of Russia should be considered in a different context. And secondly, we have now armed Ukraine to a point where it will be the best-armed country and with the least strategically experienced leadership in Europe. If the war ends like it probably will, with Russia losing many of its gains, but retaining Sevastopol, we may have a dissatisfied Russia, but also a dissatisfied Ukraine—in other words, a balance of dissatisfaction.

So, for the safety of Europe, it is better to have Ukraine in NATO, where it cannot make national decisions on territorial claims.

***The Economist:*** So your argument for having Ukraine in NATO is an argument for reducing the risks of Ukraine to Europe rather than an argument about the defence of Ukraine?

***Henry Kissinger:*** We've proved now the capability to defend Ukraine. What the Europeans are now saying is, in my view, madly dangerous. Because the Europeans are saying: "We don't want them in NATO, because they're too risky. And therefore, we'll arm the hell out of them and give them the most advanced weapons." And how can that possibly work? We shouldn't end it in the wrong way. Assuming the outcome is the probable outcome, that would be somewhere along the line of the status quo ante that existed [prior to February 24, 2022]. The outcome should be one in which Ukraine remains protected by Europe and doesn't become a solitary state just looking out for itself.

I want to avoid that. Before I wanted Ukraine to be a neutral state. But with Finland and Sweden in NATO it doesn't make sense. I want Russia to give up much of what it conquered in 2014, and it's not my job to negotiate a peace agreement. I can tell you the principles of an enhanced, independent Ukraine, closely tied to Europe and either closely tied under a NATO guarantee or part of NATO. It's not an ideal outcome. That would be my view on what will likely happen.

***The Economist:*** And what about Russia? Is Russia now fated to be the junior partner or the vassal state to China? And what will be the consequences of that?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Every student of history knows that Russia has been generally tied to Europe, at least since the 15th century. And so, much of the great history of Europe has involved Russia, and within Russia, there has always been this ambivalent feeling of living in unique danger from Europe but also having a unique cultural relationship to Europe. On the one hand, it has wanted to acquire European culture, but on the other it has [a view of itself] as the third Rome that will help define Europe. Putin has to be perceived as a character out of Dostoevsky, not as Hitler, and with all the ambivalences and the doubts about his own people.

So, that's my general view of Russia. I have never met a Russian leader who said anything good about China. And I've never met a Chinese leader who said anything good about Russia, they are sort of treated with contempt. And even when Putin is in China, he is not shown the kind of courtesies that they showed to Macron, [who] came to a special place that is tied to the history of the Chinese leader, and they don't do that for the Russians. Symbolism is very important in China, so it's not a natural alliance.

***The Economist:*** Is it therefore a reasonable goal of US policy—and European policy, but particularly US policy—to try to split China from Russia to help to catalyse that process?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Reintroducing Russia to Europe [is important]. If Russia isn't in Central Asia as an operating great power, it will become open to a Syrian-type civil war; all these many conflicts that are now in part restrained because they're inconvenient to Russia would then be open to some extent to Turkey, to Iran, certainly to China with great ambivalence on the part of India about all of this.

You know, the practising political leader that is quite close to my views is the Indian Foreign Minister. That's how I think he would analyse this situation. Which still makes them a block for China, and India is an important factor. But India doesn't need a NATO system for Asia to perform its role in the balance.

***The Economist:*** So India will be playing a 19th century balance of power role in this?

***Henry Kissinger:*** You may know Lyndsay Howard, she's working for Bloomberg, and she organised a meeting at which I was present. A former Indian Cabinet Secretary said that the international system should be based on non-permanent alliances geared to the immediate necessities, and foreseeable needs, rather than these huge multilateral structures which then tie you up.

Take Singapore. They share our view about dangers, but they certainly don't want to be in the permanent frontline. Or Japan. It has a pretty clear view of where they're going; they're heading towards becoming a nuclear power in five years. And they always want to be close to us. Except I wouldn't exclude their making deals inconvenient to us. But they will always be worried about China, and the power relationship between them. Similarly, I don't think Japan has any intention of being a permanent member of a global multilateral system that will constrain them.

***The Economist:*** Let's come back to that one. But just a couple of questions on Europe because this seems the most difficult bit of the puzzle that you've described. So, first, you describe Ukraine in NATO, guaranteed by NATO. And secondly, a European framework—which also requires the Europeans [to act]. And I guess my question on Europe is, is Europe capable of that kind of strategic autonomy? Is it capable of that kind of strategic thinking? And which countries in Europe would do that?

***Henry Kissinger:*** I would look to Britain and France to take the lead, partly because Britain and France are the two countries that have practised it before—France with relation to Central Europe, Britain with relation to Europe and the world. Germany has had no historically consistent global or historical experience. They had a very great leader in Bismarck, who did it for 20 years. But after that, they could never clearly decide among the various options. And now, they're only beginning with this kind of strategic reassessment. Because at the end of World War Two, they needed to link themselves [to the West] through people I admire greatly, and who were personal friends of mine. Now they are reassessing their new capacities and options.

Now, these issues—which were well-handled from that point of view—demand clarification in the post-Ukraine world. The young generation in Germany has been brought up on the history of the failures of their parents and grandparents. Germany will be a central part of that process and will always play a significant role, but I think the intellectual leadership in this next phase needs to come from both Britain and France.

***The Economist:*** One of China's aims is to drive a wedge between Europe and America. How does that complicate this process?

***Henry Kissinger:*** I would say a Russian and Chinese aim is to constrain [American] freedom of action. And in the Middle East, an American policy that had the elements that I mentioned before would complicate Russia operating in the Middle East; but at least we would attempt to put it into a joint effort so that it's not an anti-American effort.

Europe has to play a special role in American thinking. And there needs to be a special relationship. I have always been a believer in the special relationship of Britain to the United States, because it is a natural evolution of our history. [That] is what people really believe. So Britain can play that role—though it hasn't done it to the same degree in the recent years. As for France, de Gaulle believed that France could not act as it would have to if it didn't have an autonomous belief in itself. And I don't mean that America should require that its allies follow our lead in every tactical point. But we should have an agreement strategically; what are we trying to achieve? And what are we trying to avoid? Whenever a concrete issue arises like Iraq, there have been huge differences. But I could understand in a modified arrangement that Europe could play a more important role in some areas. I am not offended by autonomy in my definition of it.

***The Economist:*** So you were not offended by Macron's recent comments, or his comments about NATO being brain dead? Are they the manifestation of an autonomy?

***Henry Kissinger:*** NATO should be maintained. But it's not the spontaneous place to define our future in every area of the world. So much dedication has gone into NATO, and there are so many good people who believe in it and so many useful tendencies in its countries, but I don't think NATO is the place to develop creative policies for all the issues of the world you are asking me about. Its greatest utility is a defence of Europe. To the extent that European countries participated in, say, Iraq, it was to guarantee American support. The Eastern Europeans are different, but they feel the more immediate threat.

***The Economist:*** Shall we turn now to America itself?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Before we move to America, [let me say that] I don't want to challenge China more than it's essential. And I don't want to hurt German feelings more than it's essential.

***The Economist:*** I understand your overriding view that in the long run, Russia and China, [their] underlying emotion is one of suspicion and contempt. But, for the time being, they're working together. What can they accomplish in the short run and the medium term, if they work together successfully? What should we be worried about them doing together?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Theoretically, you could say that if they split the developing world between themselves, that would give them an even greater impact. And to the extent that they both believe the United States is threatening them, and looking for opportunities to isolate China as they may think we've done to Russia, they'll be more aligned.

But they're not natural allies. You don't find in Russian history or in Chinese history any leaders who have advocated basing their policy on alliances with each other, through all the turmoil that both of them have experienced. Of course, for a big part of the history, China was too weak for such a role.

When I was with Ford in Vladivostok, I peeled off to go to China to "brief them"—to show the Russians that we had a Chinese option. And Deng asked how I found Vladivostok, and I said that my overpowering impression of Vladivostok was the cold: "I've never known it could get so cold in this world." And then—tactlessly—I said, "Now I know why you Chinese never went up there." And Deng said, "What do you mean never went up there, it's ours! And it's called"—whatever it's called in Chinese—"and all the cities around there are all ours." And he gave me the names of all of them [in Chinese]. And it's only very recently, well after the period that we opened to China, that they accepted the 19th-century border. And most of these territories were acquired in the 19th century.

So, what could they work together on? India a little bit, through the Russian arms sales. The Middle East? It's not a natural alliance. Because really, if you've been to China, what do people look to Russia for? Anything?

***The Economist:*** Contempt.

***Henry Kissinger:*** Contempt, yes, is the basic attitude. And it's not wise for us to say we want to split them from China— but it's something which we should have in mind. And the prerequisite for it is, first of all, not to destroy Russia totally in the war.

And after the war, [we can] declare its membership in Europe an important objective. Though it will be impossible—and understandably—to get the Eastern Europeans to agree to something like that easily.

***The Economist:*** Does China have any natural allies?

***Henry Kissinger:*** You know, they haven't conceived of themselves [as a state needing allies]… When the first British ambassador came there in 1793, he was treated with exquisite courtesy. But it was made very clear to him that a permanent ambassador was out of the question. And if he wanted to stay dressed like a Chinese, he could stay—but he'd never be permitted to leave. That attitude [remains]. I don't think the Chinese are comfortable with the notion of sovereignty applied to them.

China has natural allies when they have common grievances. But this is all conjecture. I'm not worried about the Solomon Islands. The intention they reflect is worrisome. But the execution of it over a substantial period of time is not natural.

***The Economist:*** So is the China that we will be dealing with one that would like to inspire awe rather than respect, or perhaps recreate its traditional notion of a tributary system with it at the centre? A different notion of dominance perhaps than we might think of in a Western view.

***Henry Kissinger:*** I have no problem of saying we should be wary. I'm not saying we can teach mutual love. It is also very hard for Americans. Our notion of alliances is not the 19th-century [one]. Ours is to create a system of equal thinking and of substantial American contribution, but never quite equality. But compared to China, we think of it as a pragmatic burden sharing.

***The Economist:*** So let's turn to America, which is the central actor in defining the world that we're discussing. And perhaps start with your reflection on where America is now, in its long-standing intellectual tension between its idealism, which is so essentially part of it, and the realism that tempers its idealism—or the sense of frustration about the failure, so to speak— –of its idealism. Where is America now on that pendulum you've written about?

***Henry Kissinger:*** America is in a strange position politically, because normally you would expect the Democrats to be exponents of pure idealism and the Republicans to be asserting something that at least contains my point of view. But what has happened is they've turned upside down: the public perception is quite unified fear of the Chinese. And practically, there is a great conviction that we can master this like we did World War One and World War Two, by material superiority.

But if we look at the post World War Two history, the United States deserves huge credit for the generosity in which we ended the war with Germany. But we've messed up conflict in other regions with the same insight, starting with the Korean War. It was a good decision to enter the Korean war. It became a prelude of the Vietnam War, in the sense that the Chinese, after initially trying to defeat us, then were satisfied with showing the limits of American power. Our superiority was so great that I think the Chinese decided that they couldn't exhaust us [into defeat]. But in Vietnam there was no constituency that could play the role of a European bureaucracy, and on which we could establish a democratic state. We didn't analyse the premises of a democratic state.

So the division in America became absolute, with the realists and so-called idealists on opposite sides. But the people who got us into the war and who sent 550,000 troops, they weren't realists; they were the idealists who believed an absolute victory was possible. There is a point I made in an article that I published after I was already appointed NSA.

***The Economist:*** But as you say, now, both sides have a concern about China, both the realist and the idealist, for different reasons. Is the US now less of an idealist power?

***Henry Kissinger:*** The paradox is that the people who most loudly affirm the importance of power are the idealists, and the realists join them by instinct. But you already find now the Florida Governor saying we should be out of Ukraine, which traditional realists would never say.

The key question is, is the fear of China justified? And if it is justified, is our policy adequate to it? I don't believe that China, in its history, has ever aimed for world domination. They have aimed at the maximum evolution of their capacities, inspiring so much respect that other countries would adjust their policies to Chinese preferences. The European idea that domination means physical presence in the country derives from the fact [that] European history has been made by relatively small physical states. So they had a concept of domination that involved direct control.

In Chinese history, their biggest fear has been domestic upheaval. And they often tried to keep the foreigners out - they built the Great Wall [for that purpose]. So in the course of time, if they achieved superiority that can be genuinely used, would they drive it to the point of imposing Chinese culture? I don't know. My instinct is no, but I don't want to get to the test of that. I believe it is in our capacity to prevent that situation from arising by a combination of diplomacy and force. But if we fail in that, the first thing that would happen is the disintegration of our influence in the world.

***The Economist:*** You say that both sides are motivated by a fear of China in the US, but one of the framings that the US is making is a very Wilsonian idealist one, which is the framing of democracies versus autocracies.

***Henry Kissinger:*** The French Revolution certainly didn't turn out to be peaceful. Certainly, insofar as the public in democracies can have a big influence on decision-making, and decision-making can be framed in a meaningful way that is relevant to the problem, it is, of course, better to live in a democracy.

The difference is, I would think, that democratic power should be used, first of all, in the defence of the people who profess it. It should be used in some limited way for the benefit of others, but not to the point of begging the war and peace question. And also with a modesty. If your conduct is announced to be the overthrow of the opponent, that makes it a more intense conflict. And of course, it would be worthwhile if the result were good, but since at least the invention of nuclear weapons a relationship between military and political goals remains a prime and serious goal of American policy.

I differ with the people who make the military issue in terms of democracy against authoritarianism. It also disarms us, to some extent, from analysing the strategic dangers that can emerge. Those we must resist when they arise. But then it's in the nature of statesmanship that a judgement has to be made, whether you are able to bear whatever the burden is of that particular exercise. We solved that issue in Europe to a large extent. When we have encountered that test with respect to the region outside of Europe, our unity was [transitory].

***The Economist:*** You mean, in Iraq?

***Henry Kissinger:*** In Iraq, I was in favour of going in and overthrowing [Saddam], and then doing what we did after the Gulf War—letting a natural evolution take place, in which we could play a role similar to that of the great powers in Afghanistan. I even wrote an article calling for a Belgian-type solution of neutralisation, by which all the threatened countries could co-operate against terrorism…The curse of Afghanistan is that if you want to govern the whole country, no Afghan government can do so without an outside power to rally against.

***The Economist:*** Just to be clear, this focus on democracies versus autocracies that is currently fashionable in Washington, do you think that is weakening America's ability to achieve the strategic goals that we've been discussing versus China? Does it make it less likely to have alliances, less likely to have support amongst emerging economies?

***Henry Kissinger:*** No, though it makes it less likely to have the kinds of alliances which we favour, which are multilateral and permanent. I think [highly of] the Australian alliance; I'm very enthusiastic about close relations with India. I'm wary of the anti-Chinese definition of [American policy], but I'm not in favour of withdrawing from Asia.

***The Economist:*** I was going to ask you whether India is a good test of this, in that there are all sorts of reasons why the interests of India and the interests of the US align, particularly over some aspects of China. But, in Wilsonian terms, the government of Modi is increasingly oppressive and anti-Muslim and constrains the press and interferes in the courts. So, I wanted to ask you whether you thought India was an interesting test case of whether the US is able to think through these tensions between Wilsonian principles and the overriding [national] interest. How do you think about that? And how would you assess US treatment of India at the moment, and how it should be in the future?

***Henry Kissinger:*** I agree with strengthening India militarily with respect to its conflict with China, because I think a military victory of China over India would then raise all kinds of problems of civil war in India. So, I would help India for that specific purpose.

And in India, I think we could, partly because of the previous British educational system, give expression to a preference for democracy in the form of encouraging private institutions for various purposes. And between India and the United States, there's enough freedom of dialogue to express philosophical points.

When I was in government, the Indians were, by our standards, very difficult in stating their views in relation to some of our policies. But it never got us to the point of being hostile to India. In India today, there is scope for alignment. I have very high regard for the way the Indians conduct their foreign policy now, because it shows balance. So how would they actually decide in various circumstances? I don't know. Partly because of our history with India, it's still varied, and we have had so much dialogue already. We have a greater scope for being understood when we put democracy and power together into one. And the Indians have a great talent; they have survived thousands of years under foreign occupation, without having a government of their own, which shows a great social tenacity—a remarkable social tenacity.

***The Economist:*** Can I ask you about the domestic context in which American strategy is being formulated, and how different that is now from the years when you were in office? Is it possible to have the kind of long-term strategic thinking that you've described in modern American political life?

***Henry Kissinger:*** That's our big challenge which we must solve. If we don't, the predictions of failure will be proved true. I'm deeply worried at the kind of dialogue that goes on now… This has been going on for a long time, and, if you compare the charges against Nixon, he didn't fight them. I mean, he fought them legally, but he did not attack the motives of his critics. But now a comparable situation to Watergate could lead to civil war-type conditions, and that deeply worries me. The nature of a political debate is so different from when I first came to Washington, without any knowledge of the system. Joe Alsop—I don't know if you know who he was—he was a fantastic character. He gave a bipartisan dinner every Sunday night, with leaders of both parties. And they were intense but not acrimonious.

George McGovern and I were on friendly terms, which is unlikely today between a security adviser and a cabinet member from the opposing party. I met regularly with him. So even in the Nixon period with all its animosities, there was still a degree of unity. It started weakening in every administration, but I think Trump and now Biden have driven it over the top. You don't see that kind of discussion now in Washington.

And in order to get a strategic view, you need faith in your country. To some extent [the problem is] the teaching system, which makes the evils of the country the pre-eminent point. Of course, such evils are a special historical problem, there is no debate about it in my mind. But unless you educate people to have some faith in the future, then, in the difficult decisions of life, which are close - otherwise they wouldn't be difficult - they're confused about the real issues.

***The Economist:*** And does that mean that American strategic thinking in the 1950s and the 1960s was predicated on a common perception of American strength? And that now -

***Henry Kissinger:*** It was a common perception of America's worth.

***The Economist:*** Has that perception of America's worth now been lost?

***Henry Kissinger:*** In a way.

***The Economist:*** That is what you hear in Beijing, that America is a declining power.

***Henry Kissinger:*** It's very hard for Americans—it's hard for anybody—to learn the principles of coexistence in a world which is on the way to learning a dialogue with machines. Which is going to happen. And we don't know what we're going to learn there, through that process.

***The Economist:*** That's the other element of the context that has changed so dramatically, technology. Let's talk about that, again, because you've written about it—a man approaching his 100th birthday is writing about a technology of the future. It's impressive. How worried are you that technology is going to make the kind of strategic thinking that we've been discussing even more difficult?

***Henry Kissinger:*** I view this present period in technology [as] sort of comparable to the period after the invention of printing, in which the previous view of the world was challenged by a new technology. So it will affect everybody, but there will always only be a few in any generation that can handle its implications across the whole spectrum. And that is a huge problem for every society now. You know, Europe had to learn this when it went through a comparable experience, in the wars of the 16th and 17th century, which were extremely bloody and destructive, and which killed a third of the population of Central Europe with conventional weapons.

And it was only out of that war that the notion of sovereignty and international law emerged as a rallying concept. On China, some Americans think that if we defeated it, it will become democratic and peaceful. [But] there is no precedent for that in any part of Chinese history. The much more likely outcome is civil war between competing units, and civil wars fought about ideological principles will add a new element of catastrophe. It's not in our interest to drive China to dissolution. So, here's an interest principle that transcends the moral principle in the name of the moral principle. That's the ambiguity of it. And if you ask me, how are we going to handle this? Where do we find the Lincoln? Nobody knows that.

***The Economist:*** How does modern media, the news cycle, and social media complicate this process of shaping US policy?

***Henry Kissinger:*** My theme is the need for balance and moderation. Institutionalise that. That's the aim; whether it's always succeeded is a different issue. When I first came to Washington, I had never had a press conference in my life, so I had to learn all of this, and the media were hostile to Nixon. But there were in the largely print media about 15 to 20 people who thought in the categories of national unity, but who didn't always agree with me. But on Vietnam, it was possible to have a dialogue with them. I always took up to 15 journalists with me—I saw every day for an hour or so. I rarely answered very concrete questions, but that was understood. And they drove me nuts. For example, they would say things that provoked the Arabs during [shuttle diplomacy] that would complicate negotiations with the Israelis even more.

But that was part of the game, they weren't unfair. So people like Scotty Reston, who was a consistent critic of Nixon, and Walter Lippmann—these were people with whom it was possible to have a dialogue. I don't see many like this today. There's no reward for reflective media thinking and no incentive for it. I think it's a big problem.

***The Economist:*** So if you put that together with what you were saying about educational problems and a sort of pessimism about America's worth, what has that done to American soft power in the world, if you accept that category of analysis? And if so, what are the consequences of that?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Look, no matter what media we had, we'd be in an age of transition now. You can't blame it all on the media. We would need great leaders—or good leaders, like Gerald Ford, who inherited an administration in dissolution. He did decent things. And his opponents could also rely on him to do decent things. You don't find that drive as a typical characteristic now; any means that can [start the unilateral] are acceptable. But what I don't want to do is to sound pessimistic.

***The Economist:*** You're doing a very bad job in that case.

***Henry Kissinger:*** I know I'm doing a poor job, but this is the problem that has to be solved. And I believe I've spent my life trying to deal with it. It's not a problem easily solved right now. And I don't necessarily know how it's going to be solved. And in this book, I tried to show what six different leaders did to solve substantial problems. Can we do that today? We must.

***The Economist:*** In your [latest book] you've looked back at historical figures and the nature of their leadership. When you look at it today, point to some of the characteristics of leadership that you've identified in the past that would be useful today.

***Henry Kissinger:*** Identify where you are, pitilessly. So, this kind of analysis is useful for constructive things. Define objectives that can enlist people, find means, describable means, of achieving these objectives. Link all of these to your domestic objectives, whatever they are.

I really do believe that if our leaders can find the courage to [articulate a vision], the American public—without understanding all the details—would go along with it. But what becomes hard to bear is an endless source of scandals as the conduct of debate. Bipartisanship, [too, is important]. A senator I knew from Mississippi, Senator Stennis, told me that on weekends he would go to courthouses to see law [practised], which bound all of America together. That was a very moving statement to me. Or Senator Jackson on the Democratic side.

***The Economist:*** Henry Jackson?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Yes. He often criticised me, but if he were here, he would consider this a valid discussion. Today, most presidential advisors would say, don't waste your time on this. Let's find some phrases that can be move people right away. Worry about being president once you're president. But who can unify? The security adviser can, if the president backs him; the secretary of state can't, he has clients in 160 countries. And in the British system, it's almost automatic, if you get four or five first-class cabinet members.

***The Economist:*** I don't want to sound frivolous here, there's a serious point to this question. But earlier, you talked about one of the steps to try and improve things between China and America is to get a group of people together who would sit and study and speak to each other. Now, if you could pick that group, anybody dead or alive, who would sit on that committee? Who would be your committee to save the world? Picking people dead or alive, from history, or people you knew?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Three people to do this Chinese discussion, I think we can find. Among contemporaries I would pick Bill Burns for sure. Then I'd find some academic. And one great technical guy. I could name 10 who could contribute to that.

***The Economist:*** You mean someone who understands the technology?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Yes, somebody from the technology world. Somebody that I liked among [them was] the head of Microsoft…

***The Economist:*** Satya Nadella?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Yes, Nadella. I think it can be done well, on the technology side—we'll be forced to deal with it. When the public understands that it is surrounded by machines that act on a basis that is not understood, there will need to be an expanding dialogue about it.

And I don't know whether you know Winston Lord. When we intervened in Cambodia, he wanted to quit. And I told him, "You can quit and march around this place carrying a placard. Or you can help us solve the Vietnam War." And he decided to stay. And he became head of the policy planning staff, then ambassador to China.

I think that what we need [is] people who make that decision—that they're living in this time, and they want to do something about it, other than feel sorry for themselves. I'm not saying it can always be done dramatically. But we don't often in history arrive at a point where a real transition is occurring, not just a visual one. This one is real, in the sense that amazing things are happening. And they're happening to people who are not aiming for them. Necessarily, I'm talking about the technology [here]. And at the same time, if you look at military history, you can say, it has never been possible to destroy all your opponents, because of limitations of geography and of accuracy. [Now] there are no limitations. Every adversary is 100 percent vulnerable.

So there's no limit to this, and simultaneously with this destructiveness, now you can create weapons that recognize their own [targets]. So destructiveness becomes practically automatic. Though it is a standard doctrine that there must always be a human being in the chain, it is not always possible in practice. Theoretically, it's possible. But when you have all of this happening, and then you keep building more and more destructiveness without trying to limit the framework. The only trouble is that all the demonstrators in the various squares in the world say that too. And they want to solve it by feeling sorry for themselves and bringing pressure [onto governments]. They have two illusions. First, you cannot abolish this technology. Second, there needs to be an element of force in international politics. That is the essence of the issue.

***The Economist:*** The other thing, I think, that comes through your writing is a sense of restraint. And I don't think we live in a world where people are good at restraint.

***Henry Kissinger:*** That's inherent also in the media, and in the multiplicity of media. We may well wind up destroying ourselves. And a point is now quite reachable where the machines can refuse to be shut off. I mean once the machines recognised this possibility, they can build it into their advice prior to the contingency. Many genius scientists believe that—and they know more than I do.

***The Economist:*** But just to bring this fascinating conversation together, there are the risks that come from both the US and China acting incautiously.

***Henry Kissinger:*** You have to blame the Chinese too. It's not that they are doing well and we're doing badly and need to change.

***The Economist:*** There are the risks that come from technology. Together with your careful assessment of risks that you've spent your career doing, how much time do we have?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Look, probably not enough to give a perfect answer. And there's never been a period where you can say that these objectives have in fact been reached. But our first step has to be mitigation of them. I think the technology will become more and more dangerous when combined with the other factors, within five years.

[Demis] Hassabis [is] one of the key scientists who understands where it's going. So more and more scientists will become convinced of the stakes… The scientists are not strategists, but they have been affected by the turmoil of their times. And by the fact that, if you want to make any progress, you need to go down certain routes that are not necessarily popular. To stand apart and do well has become harder.

***The Economist:*** Two questions to end on. One is that, if you look throughout history, as you have done, progress has been made—but it has often been made in the aftermath of prolonged and terrible conflict.

***Henry Kissinger:*** Exactly. After the Napoleonic Wars, after the Thirty Years War, after World War Two, in the construction of Europe. But then when it became global, new factors complicated it, and then the people who had done a wonderful job in the post-World War Two period became too absorbed in immediate issues.

So progress has been made. I think it's possible that you can create a world order on the basis of rules that Europe, China and India could join, and that's already a good slice of humanity. So if you look at the practicality of it, it can end well—or at least it can end without catastrophe, and we can make progress through it. But it will require vision and dedication.

***The Economist:*** When I read your books, on diplomacy and on world order, and on China, a common theme at the end of these books is to appeal to a more clear-sighted sense of the balance between America's interests and its enduring values. And reading particularly Diplomacy, and your analysis of how Russia might behave after the collapse of the Soviet Union, it looks really prescient now. Because actually, Russia has pretty much behaved like that, [and] the things you predicted have come to pass. And when I read your recommendations on how the US should think about its relations with China, and what would happen if it failed to do that, it looks like your warnings about there are also coming to pass. The calculation that balances between interests and principles that you're asking of the US—is the US is actually capable of doing that?

***Henry Kissinger:*** That's our big challenge. I don't know… Many great things in American history derive from commitment to principles. On the other hand, it hasn't occurred to any country to try to reform every other. At the height of its power, that has never occurred to anyone [else]. And that reflected American optimism that it's possible. And you read it even today with the crisis in Sudan. The progressive newspapers will say if we put enough resources into it [we can fix it].

Is that possible? On present evidence, I'd say no. But if I look at it for the future, if I say what should our task be, I would say the task of leaders is to make it possible to inspire small groups and build on it. That's what I would say if this were a student discussion, and you can totally quote that if you want to. How optimistic am I about that?

If you look at the leaders whom I've respected, they didn't ask that question. They asked, "Is it necessary?" And I think it's possible in America. It is possible in countries in Europe. Is it possible in China? Over the years I have met Chinese leaders, who I thought would understand what we are talking about, and would even be sympathetic, as long as they are granted their cultural identity within it. In India it's clearly possible. But how do you get to it for the next 10 years? It's going to be a big challenge, because we're now busy indicting the son of a president on top of all the other indictments already being pursued. You can say these were bad people to begin with. But a really effective system would eject them quietly and not make them symbols. It is dangerous to weaponize politics with the criminal process.

We have problems now.

***The Economist:*** For almost 100 years you've been in a world where on balance, optimism [has been validated and] progress has been made.

***Henry Kissinger:*** But after some very terrible periods.

***The Economist:*** After some very terrible periods. Now, as you look forward, I think, actuarially, there are probably not another 100 years of you surveying this world. Are you—and we'll close on this—are you fundamentally optimistic or pessimistic?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Look, my life has been difficult, but it gives ground for optimism. And difficulty—it's also a challenge. It shouldn't always be an obstacle. So, I think, to inspire the young generation, they need a demonstration of faith in the future. And that can be done. For example, de Gaulle. In 1968, there was a student uprising in France that took over Paris. The prime minister was Pompidou, whom de Gaulle had appointed. [Pompidou] was already starting conversations about who would replace de Gaulle, when de Gaulle disappeared for a day and went to the military headquarters of the French army in Germany.

And he talked to the commander there, whom he had fired in Algiers, who therefore had every reason to hate him, and said, "I want to know your attitude when I resign." The commander said: "You have no right to resign. You're needed." Which meant he supported him. So de Gaulle went back and called for a public meeting in the Place de la Concord and then called an election. He gained the only majority election in the French Republic history. And that shows what an inspired leader can do, because all the evidence was against it, every telegram within our government thought he was finished. And once he had done that, he resigned a year later, a little more than a year later, [without pressure, because he thought his task was completed.

***The Economist:*** So individuals can do that.

***The Economist:*** That may be an apposite place to end, given the announcement today. [Referring to announcement by President Biden that he was running for reelection]

***Henry Kissinger:*** We've done actually pretty well on that, when it happened, in this country. But in the conduct of presidents to their vice presidents, I have never seen an exception to this rule that they keep the vice president in a [lower] position; it's always limited to some particular job rather than a continual one, because they can't fire him or her.

***The Economist:*** So the one subject we've barely mentioned is climate change. It struck me that you talked about inspiring the younger generation. Is that subject, which so animates the next generation, something that should be a greater part of the calculus?

***Henry Kissinger:*** But it requires no sacrifice by them. That's something they can observe and ask others to do. I'm all for [responding to climate change]. I just don't think that in the Chinese mind, and in the American mind, it will create enough of a balance to the strategic mind. But I'm for it in principle, even quickly.

***The Economist:*** I'm ending this conversation, I think on balance, somewhat pessimistic. But inspired that hopefully your committee of three people Bill Burns, Satya Nadella and Winston Lord—

***Henry Kissinger:*** Well, Kennedy had that inspirational quality. So you need something like that first. And then you can, in various fields, implement it in this generation. We need it immediately in the China field. But we need it also in the technology field. And we need it in the weapons field. Because the builders of technology and weapons don't understand their implications, necessarily. But if you use them in a systematic way, you will lose control over them, and much quicker than in World War One.

But even in World War One, look at the discussions that were going on between Britain, Germany, and France, in 1916. And basically, the people talking agreed on peace without victory. But they didn't know how to tell the people how to do that, when they had already lost a million casualties. At the same time, the Germans had prepared the Verdun offensive, the British had prepared the Somme offensive, and both of them thought they might win with this. So both offensives were carried out. Another million and a half people died, close to two million. And then they never got it together again. And they never had a strategy either, anymore, until we came in and overwhelmed it. We can't afford to be in that position. I think if people in 1916 had understood that, they would have found a way to end it. It may not be demonstrable. But it's not beyond conception. I think there are enough good people around who would know how to do this.

***The Economist:*** We were putting a time [-frame] on this, and five to 10 years was the horizon. Well, five years takes us to 2028—in the next presidential term. And it looks as though the next presidential term is going to be between Biden and possibly Trump, and that's not renewal. That's not a Kennedy coming in, who can inspire something different. That's a continuation.

***Henry Kissinger:*** I don't think Biden can supply the inspiration, and I'm hoping that Republicans can come up with somebody better. Look, it's not a great moment in history, but the alternative is total abdication.

***The Economist:*** And potential annihilation.

***Henry Kissinger:*** You know, it's not inconceivable that the discussion of how to handle machines, when we've developed qualities in them which we now cannot yet fully foresee, will be a totally new subject of conversation.

***The Economist:*** Maybe that will be the catalyst to the kind of thinking that should have happened in 1916, or indeed in 1930. And it will be the catalyst to waking everyone up to the need for the kinds of approaches you're describing.

***Henry Kissinger:*** I think thinking people have to start from that assumption. I do not like the way many of these discussions are going, but I think that's a phase like others we've had as humans.

***The Economist:*** Well, let's hope they change direction in time. Dr Kissinger, thank you.

***Henry Kissinger:*** I won't be around to see it either way. Thank you for the way you've conducted this conversation.

**DAY TWO**

***Henry Kissinger:*** The Chinese have called the Ukrainians and begun to be mediators.

***The Economist:*** Yes.

***Henry Kissinger:*** When you read over the statements that we make to the Chinese, it is to [ask them to] wake up and call it "Russian aggression." That is not how the Chinese think. They don't think in moral terms, but about the national interest. Ukraine is now a major state. The Chinese talk about joint relations. But for China and the Communist philosophy, joint is not NATO. They are creating their own world order, in so far as they can.

On the entry of China [into Ukraine conflict diplomacy], if I were Ukrainian, I would think about the nature of the upcoming offensive. It is one thing if you conduct it to punish Russia, another to stay within the principles that the Chinese have laid down. It is the same for Israel. It used to be an axiom that if Iran reached a level of weapons-grade material, they would risk an Israeli preemptive strike. I'm not saying how to conduct the strategy, but they need to consider the interests involved.

***The Economist:*** Yesterday, you discussed China as a dominant power. Today, you have elaborated that China has a conception of world order. Is China trying to play a global strategic role [in Ukraine conflict diplomacy]? What does that mean for the United States?

***Henry Kissinger:*** It is trying to play a global role. We have to assess at each point if the conceptions of a strategic role are compatible. In principle, I would like a permanent dialogue with China, where the outcomes are on the table, and my hope is a consideration of outcomes that are compatible. If that fails, strategic decisions on both sides have to be taken. Then, there is the question of technology and what kind of assurances you can achieve. Those are the questions, in my view, to educate on all sides. The fact is that China is interested in Europe exclusively from its interest. I would have preferred to put the date [of China's involvement] off a bit. But when you read the statements on the Western side, which say, "have the Chinese ever called it Russian aggression?"—I wouldn't expect that they ever would, with the background of their "partnership without limits." If China plays a constructive role, it would be, first, presumably compatible with their limits, and we will see if it is compatible with NATO.

***The Economist:*** China sees its strategic rivalry with the United States—

***Henry Kissinger:*** To which we have contributed mightily.

***The Economist:*** You say about the Ukrainian counteroffensive—

***Henry Kissinger:*** No, the Ukrainians want the relationship. Zelensky has proven an extraordinary leader, and it is an exercise in wisdom on his part, because they could have thought, after the pledge of the "partnership without limits," that China would never enter on a diplomacy parallel to NATO. That could not happen. That doesn't mean that one couldn't distil an outcome that would contribute to peace. That's what I tried to do in my first Davos remarks. The war needs some political limits.

To the extent that the Chinese participate, their views need to be considered. It can't be identical with ours. They have not expressed their views. The offer to participate is a big step. It is important to put limits on Russia. From my point of view, I would not have gone down this road, but settled on NATO basically taking political steps. Chinese participation in this instance is a new challenge. But what we should not do is celebrate China joining us, because relative to an agreement with China, it is very complex and important. China does this, in part, because they do not want to clash with the United States. If Russia is totally defeated—two years of Chinese and Russian evolution cannot end in a total Russian defeat with Chinese acquiescence. In this new reality, China wants an independent Ukraine. And I'm impressed with the Ukrainian wisdom in being one step ahead of us on that road when they had to know how it would turn out. They couldn't have expected China to be a NATO ally. But China can support the outcome of having a strong and independent Ukraine.

***The Economist:*** You argue that Ukraine should be in NATO.

***Henry Kissinger:*** My basic position was not to open NATO to Ukraine, and the NATO [expansion] debate was a basic mistake, because it challenged the perceptions of Russia fundamentally. Many Russians, including liberal Russians like Solzhenitsyn, who was a great opponent of the Soviet system, believe that Ukraine was a special case. I've never met a Russian in a leading position who did not believe that. [NATO] took a chunk of Russia-dominated Europe and did not leave it there, but pushed it into a permanent military alignment with joint plans with other countries. [NATO pursued] it ideologically, because in statements released afterwards, we said that any country that met our domestic structure could join NATO. Any country in the Caucasus or Central Asia. That made security an issue. I don't say that justified the Russian action of trying to return Ukraine to a satellite status or the means used. I wrote an article before the crisis that Ukraine should be a bridge and not an outpost.

***The Economist:*** Yesterday, you said –

***Henry Kissinger:*** If the war had ended with the present major participants, I would have said that Ukraine is not safe, because the nationalist aspect would never be calm. Ukraine is safer in NATO, where it has the guarantee of allies and needs their approval for military initiatives.

Zelensky must have known the Chinese perspective was not incompatible with his survival. But China's affection for NATO is not compatible with ours. Western statesmanship needs to take that into account. If we want China to back our outcome, it will not be a NATO outcome.

***The Economist:*** If Ukraine is safer in NATO, how can it be a safer Europe if Chinese involvement precludes NATO in Ukraine?

***Henry Kissinger:*** Until the agreement between Putin and Xi at the Olympic Games, when Xi stated his opposition to NATO expansion—I don't think any Chinese leader had expressed a view on European evolution before this. Xi must have known that Putin would go into Ukraine. That is a serious Chinese commitment. They will not go to war for that. They're not heading for world domination in a Hitlerian sense. That is not how they think or have ever thought of world order. [To them,] world order means they are the final judges of their interests. What they want is participation in how the rules are made. Not agreeing on the rules does not mean war, but it is a greater possibility. I haven't seen the details of what the Chinese said. But what they say is usually invariably said after extensive meetings done in the Confucian way. Whether that is hopeful or not depends on what happens next. They might acquiesce in Ukraine in NATO. I wrote in 2014 that Ukraine should be a bridge. If it is an outpost of NATO in the east, it is within 300 miles of Moscow. If it is on the west side, it is within 300 miles of Warsaw and Budapest and 600 miles of Berlin. So, I thought that it would be better to have a Finnish type of neutrality in Ukraine. Now that Finland and Sweden are joining NATO, that is not possible. And it is not possible to say that you cannot select Ukraine for NATO membership, because it is in the most vulnerable position [geographically]. America should make that argument. The Europeans don't want Ukraine in NATO. They want to give Ukraine as many arms as they want, but make them defend themselves. That won't work. That is why, reluctantly, I have come to support Ukraine being in NATO. But China won't make their view depend on where the borders are. They will probably throw their negotiating weight in favour of something like my first Davos speech.

***The Economist:*** Do you think this could be a building block for US-China relations?

***Henry Kissinger:*** It can be, in my opinion. When you've been in my position, I feel great compassion for my successors, but I don't want to prescribe tactics. My general principle is that the United States and China should establish dialogue for these unprecedented circumstances. They are two powers of the type where, historically, a military confrontation was inevitable. But this is not a normal circumstance, because of mutually assured destruction and artificial intelligence. We are at the very beginning of a capability where machines could impose global pestilence or other pandemics—not just nuclear, but any field of human destruction. The circumstances require responsible leaders, who at least make an attempt to avoid conflict.

***The Economist:*** Have you discussed this with your successors, the idea of finding common ground? We met many people in Washington but did not see it.

***Henry Kissinger:*** I know what they think. They say China wants world domination. They now seem to want dialogue. The answer is that they [in China] want to be powerful. So far, they have not sought a military confrontation on order-threatening issues. We must try to bring China into some international system. I prefer a democratic system, on historical experience and my own life experiences. Our domestic system now must relearn [to reduce] domestic conflicts.

***The Economist:*** Yesterday and today, you said that China and the United States should sit down and discuss their interests. What is the role of human rights and the Uyghurs in Xinjiang? American values impose an obligation to crusade for it.

***Henry Kissinger:*** Yes. It makes a difference whether you approach it as something that is to be imposed or as something that is bound to affect their relationship but leaving the decision to them. I've always handled it in that manner and succeeded on individual issues. That does not mean that it would always succeed—by showing in individual cases that they might adjust their views. My formula is not to contest legality but to [have them] release the individual as an act of grace.

***The Economist:*** Is [playing domestic politics] what the United States is doing now?

***Henry Kissinger:*** The idea is that the United States can affect China's domestic approach, but we cannot redo the world on our domestic basis. We tried that in Sudan—look at Sudan now—Vietnam, Iraq. Our perception is based on the Western experience. Of course, having lived in a totalitarian system, I prefer democracy. But [we live] in a world of unprecedented destructiveness, and machines that do not have feeling have to be considered. What to do case to case? China has adjusted to our preferences, even in the Mao era and substantially under Deng [Xiaoping], but that has to be worked out in practice.

***The Economist:*** Is it fair to summarise that the United States oscillates between realism and idealism?

***Henry Kissinger:*** And each side believes their conviction is absolute. People who rely on power do not think of limits. The missionary part also does not think of limits. Recognition of limits is imposed now.

***The Economist:*** Should the world today be more realist?

***Henry Kissinger:*** No. We have to begin with the correct assessment of the range [of outcomes] in each of these spheres, and we have to get the security right, because if not, you're at the mercy of the most irresponsible group. Where to draw the line, I don't want to say, because you have to learn it in practice.

***The Economist:*** On your style of diplomacy: it depended on secrecy, and that seems hard today with social media.

***Henry Kissinger:*** That is true. Yes, absolutely. I don't think the president today could send an envoy with the powers that I had. I had the right to settle it on my trip [to China]. That couldn't be done. But the substance could still be achieved.

When Ukraine wants to move with some diplomatic flexibility in the current situation, they have to get out of the NATO framework to a limited extent. I believe they recognize it.

***The Economist:*** Are you sure that Ukraine will give up on NATO [membership]?

***Henry Kissinger:*** It would be ironic if I became the defender of it. But I think the situation has changed. If I talked to Putin, I would tell him that he, too, is safer with Ukraine in NATO.

This is not about my legacy as such. But the idea is, I have tried to implement [my view] from the perspective of having seen the challenges of societies in Europe.

***The Economist:*** Yesterday was like recreating the last chapter of Diplomacy for the present day.

***Henry Kissinger:*** [Immanuel Kant] said peace would either occur through human understanding or some disaster. He thought that it would occur through reason, but he could not guarantee it. That is more or less what I think. It is the duty of the leaders that now exist. It is an unprecedented challenge and great opportunity. We are at the beginning of the challenge but are not living up to it right now. But I've seen leaders in my lifetime, and it is possible even in the United States.

'We Have Only Our Pens to Defend Ourselves'.

## Huysman (contd.)

Faint and prostrate, Des Esseintes spat blood into a basin, refused, with a gesture, the tooth which the old woman was about to wrap in a piece of paper and fled, after paying two francs. Expectorating blood, in his turn, down the steps, he at length found himself in the street, joyous, feeling ten years younger, interested in every little occurrence\.\s

"Phew!" he exclaimed, saddened by the assault of these memories. He rose to dissi- pate the horrible spell of this vision and, re- turning to reality, began to be concerned with the tortoise\.\s

It did not budge at all and he tapped it. The animal was dead. Doubtless accustomed to a sedentary existence, to a humble life spent underneath its poor shell, it had been unable to support the dazzling luxury imposed on it, the rutilant cope with which it had been covered, the jewels with which its back had been paved, like a pyx\.\s

ITH the sharpening of his desire to withdraw from a hated age, he felt a despotic urge to shun pictures representing humanity striving in little holes or running to and fro in quest of money\.\s

With his growing indifference to contem- porary life he had resolved not to introduce into his cell any of the ghosts of distastes or regrets, but had desired to procure subtle and exquisite paintings, steeped in ancient dreams or antique corruptions, far removed from the manner of our present day\.\s

For the delight of his spirit and the joy of his eyes, he had desired a few suggestive creations that cast him into an unknown world, revealing to him the contours of new conjec- tures, agitating the nervous system by the vio- lent deliriums, complicated nightmares, non- chalant or atrocious chimerae they induced\.\s

Among these were some executed by an artist whose genius allured and entranced him : Gustave Moreau\.\s

Des Esseintes had acquired his two master- pieces and, at night, used to sink into revery before one of them — a representation of Sa- lome, conceived in this fashion: A throne, resembling the high altar of a cathedral, reared itself beneath innumerable vaults leaping from heavy Romanesque pil- lars, studded with polychromatic bricks, set with mosaics, incrusted with lapis lazuli and sardonyx, in a palace that, like a basilica, was at once Mohammedan and Byzantine in de- sign\.\s

In the center of the tabernacle, surmounting an altar approached by semi-circular steps, sat Herod the Tetrach, a tiara upon his head, his legs pressed closely together, his hands resting upon his knees\.\s

His face was the color of yellow parchment; it was furrowed with wrinkles, ravaged with age. His long beard floated like a white cloud upon the star-like clusters of jewels constel- lating the orphrey robe fitting tightly over his breast\.\s

Around this form, frozen into the immobile, sacerdotal, hieratic pose of a Hindoo god, burned perfumes wafting aloft clouds of in- cense which were perforated, like phosphor- escent eyes of beasts, by the fiery rays of the stones set in the throne. Then the vapor rolled up, diffusing itself beneath arcades where the blue smoke mingled with the gold powder of the long sunbeams falling from the domes\.\s

In the perverse odor of the perfumes, in the overheated atmosphere of the temple, Salome her left arm outstretched in a gesture of com- mand, her right arm drawn back and holding a large lotus on a level with her face, slowly advances on her toes, to the rhythm of a stringed instrument played by a woman seated on the ground\.\s

Her face is meditative, solemn, almost au- gust, as she commences the lascivious dance that will awaken the slumbering senses of old Herod. Diamonds scintillate against her glistening skin. Her bracelets, her girdles, her rings flash. On her triumphal robe, seamed with pearls, flowered with silver and lami- nated with gold, the breastplate of jewels, each link of which is a precious stone, flashes serpents of fire against the pallid flesh, deli- cate as a tea-rose: its jewels like splendid in- sects with dazzling elytra, veined with car- mine, dotted with yellow gold, diapered with blue steel, speckled with peacock green\.\s

With a tense concentration, with the fixed gaze of a somnambulist, she beholds neither the trembling Tetrarch, nor her mother, the fierce Herodias who watches her, nor the herma- phrodite, nor the eunuch who sits, sword in hand, at the foot of the throne— a terrible fig- ure, veiled to his eyes, whose breasts droop like gourds under his orange-checkered tunic. This conception of Salome, so haunting to artists and poets, had obsessed Des Esseintes for years. How often had he read in the old Bible of Pierre Variquet, translated by the theological doctors of the University of Lou- vain, the Gospel of Saint Matthew who, in brief and ingenuous phrases, recounts the beheading of the Baptist! How often had he fallen into revery, as he read these lines: But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced be- fore them, and pleased Herod\.\s

Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask\.\s

And she, being before instructed of her mother, said: Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger\.\s

And the king was sorry: nevertheless, for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her\.\s

And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison\.\s

And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. But neither Saint Matthew, nor Saint Mark, nor Saint Luke, nor the other Evangelists had emphasized the maddening charms and de- pravities of the dancer. She remained vague and hidden, mysterious and swooning in the far-off mist of the centuries, not to be grasped by vulgar and materialistic minds, accessible only to disordered and volcanic intellects made visionaries by their neuroticism; rebellious to painters of the flesh, to Rubens who disguised her as a butcher's wife of Flanders; a mystery to all the writers who had never succeeded in portraying the disquieting exaltation of this dancer, the refined grandeur of this murderess. In Gustave Moreau's work, conceived in- dependently of the Testament themes, Des Esseintes at last saw realized the superhuman and exotic Salome of his dreams. She was no longer the mere performer who wrests a cry of desire and of passion from an old man by a perverted twisting of her loins; who destroys the energy and breaks the will of a king by trembling breasts and quivering belly\.\s

She became, in a sense, the symbolic deity of indestructible lust, the goddess of immortal Hysteria, of accursed Beauty, distinguished from all others by the catalepsy which stiffens her flesh and hardens her muscles; the mon- strous Beast, indifferent, irresponsible, in- sensible, baneful, like the Helen of antiquity, fatal to all who approach her, all who behold her, all whom she touches\.\s

Thus understood, she was associated with the théogonies of the Far East. She no longer sprang from biblical traditions, could no longer even be assimilated with the living image of Babylon, the royal Prostitute of the Apocalypse, garbed like her in jewels and purple, and painted like her; for she was not hurled by a fatidical power, by a supreme force, into the alluring vileness of debauchery\.\s

The painter, moreover, seems to have wished to affirm his desire of remaining out- side the centuries, scorning to designate the origin, nation and epoch, by placing his Sa- lome in this extraordinary palace with its confused and imposing style, in clothing her with sumptuous and chimerical robes, in crowning her with a fantastic mitre shaped like a Phoenician tower, such as Salammbô bore, and placing in her hand the sceptre of Isis, the tall lotus, sacred flower of Egypt and India\.\s

Des Esseintes sought the sense of this em- blem. Had it that phallic significance which the primitive cults of India gave it? Did it enunciate an oblation of virginity to the senile Herod, an exchange of blood, an impure and voluntary wound, offered under the express stipulation of a monstrous sin? Or did it rep- resent the allegory of fecundity, the Hindoo myth of life, an existence held between the hands of woman, distorted and trampled by the palpitant hands of man whom a fit of madness seizes, seduced by a convulsion of the flesh? Perhaps, too, in arming his enigmatic god- dess with the venerated lotus, the painter had dreamed of the dancer, the mortal woman with the polluted Vase, from whom spring all sins and crimes. Perhaps he had recalled the rites of ancient Egypt, the sepulchral ceremonies of the embalming when, after stretching the corpse on a bench of casper, extracting the brain with curved needles through the chambers of the nose, the chemists and the priests, before gilding the nails and teeth and coating the body with bitumens and essences, inserted the chaste petals of the divine •flower in the sexual parts, to purify them\.\s

However this may be, an irresistible fasci- nation emanated from this painting; but the water-color entitled The Apparition was per- haps even more disturbing\.\s

There, the palace of Herod arose like an Alhambra on slender, iridescent columns with moorish tile, joined with silver beton and gold cement. Arabesques proceeded from lo- zenges of lapis lazuli, wove their patterns on the cupolas where, on nacreous marquetry, crept rainbow gleams and prismatic flames\.\s

The murder was accomplished. The execu- tioner stood impassive, his hands on the hilt of his long, blood-stained sword\.\s

The severed head of the saint stared lividly on the charger resting on the slabs; the mouth was discolored and open, the neck crimson, and tears fell from the eyes. The face was en- circled by an aureole worked in mosaic, which shot rays of light under the porticos and illum- inated the horrible ascension of the head, brightening the glassy orbs of the contracted eyes which were fixed with a ghastly stare upon the dancer\.\s

With a gesture of terror, Salome thrusts from her the horrible vision which transfixes her, motionless, to the ground. Her eyes di- late, her hands clasp her neck in a convulsive clutch\.\s

She is almost nude. In the ardor of the dance, her veils had become loosened. She is garbed only in gold-wrought stuffs and lim- pid stones; a neck-piece clasps her as a corselet does the body and, like a superb buckle, a marvelous jewel sparkles on the hollow be- tween her breasts. A girdle encircles her hips, concealing the upper part of her thighs, against which beats a gigantic pendant stream- ing with carbuncles and emeralds\.\s

All the facets of the jewels kindle under the ardent shafts of light escaping from the head of the Baptist. The stones grow warm, outlining the woman's body with incandescent rays, striking her neck, feet and arms with tongues of fire, — vermilions like coals, violets like jets of gas, blues like flames of alcohol, and whites like star light\.\s

The horrible head blazes, bleeding con- stantly, clots of sombre purple on the ends of the beard and hair. Visible for Salome alone, it does not, with its fixed gaze, attract Hero- dias, musing on her finally consummated re- venge, nor the Tetrarch who, bent slightly for- ward, his hands on his knees, still pants, mad- dened by the nudity of the woman saturated with animal odors, steeped in balms, exuding incense and myrrh\.\s

Like the old king, Des Esseintes remained dumbfounded, overwhelmed and seized with giddiness, in the presence of this dancer who was less majestic, less haughty but more dis- quieting than the Salome of the oil painting\.\s

In this insensate and pitiless image, in this innocent and dangerous idol, the eroticism and terror of mankind were depicted. The tall lotus had disappeared, the goddess had van- ished; a frightful nightmare now stifled the woman, dizzied by the whirlwind of the dance, hypnotized and petrified by terror\.\s

It was here that she was indeed Woman, for here she gave rein to her ardent and cruel temperament. She was living, more refined and savage, more execrable and exquisite. She more energetically awakened the dulled senses of man, more surely bewitched and subdued his power of will, with the charm of a tall venereal flower, cultivated in sacrilegious beds, in impious hothouses\.\s

Des Esseintes thought that never before had a water color attained such magnificent color- ing; never before had the poverty of colors been able to force jeweled corruscations from paper, gleams like stained glass windows touched by rays of sunlight, splendors of tissue and flesh so fabulous and dazzling\.\s

Lost in contemplation, he sought to discover the origins of this great artist and mystic pagan, this visionary who succeeded in remov- ing himself from the world sufficiently to be- hold, here in Paris, the splendor of these cruel visions and the enchanting sublimation of past ages\.\s

Des Esseintes could not trace the genesis of this artist. Here and there were vague sugges- tions of Mantegna and of Jacope de Barbarj; here and there were confused hints of Vinci and of the feverish colors of Delacroix. But the influences of such masters remained neg- ligible. The fact was that Gustave Moreau derived from no one else. He remained unique in contemporary art, without ancestors and without possible descendants. He went to ethnographic sources, to the origins of myths, and he compared and elucidated their intri- cate enigmas. He reunited the legends of the Far East into a whole, the myths which had been altered by the superstitions of other peo- ples; thus justifying his architectonic fusions, his luxurious and outlandish fabrics, his hiera- tic and sinister allegories sharpened by the restless perceptions of a pruriently modern neurosis. And he remained saddened, haunted by the symbols of perversities and superhuman loves, of divine stuprations brought to end without abandonment and without hope\.\s

His depressing and erudite productions possessed a strange enchantment, an incanta- tion that stirred one to the depths, just as do certain poems of Baudelaire, caused one to pause disconcerted, amazed, brooding on the spell of an art which leaped beyond the con- fines of painting, borrowing its most subtle effects from the art of writing, its most mar- velous strokes from the art of Limosin, its most exquisite refinements from the art of the lapidary and the engraver. These two pic- tures of Salome, for which Des Esseintes' admi- ration was boundless, he had hung on the walls of his study on special panels between the bookshelves, so that they might live under his eyes\.\s

But these were not the only pictures he had acquired to divert his solitude\.\s

Although he had surrendered to his serv- ants the second story of his house, which he himself never used at all, the ground floor had required a number of pictures to fit the walls\.\s

It was thus arranged: A dressing room, communicating with the bedroom, occupied one of the corners of the house. One passed from the bedroom to the library, and from the library into the dining room, which formed the other corner\.\s

These rooms, whose windows looked out on the Aunay Valley, composed one of the sides of the dwelling\.\s

The other side of the house had four rooms arranged in the same order. Thus, the kitchen formed an angle, and corresponded with the dining room; a long corridor, which served as the entrance, with the library; a small dres- sing room, with the bedroom; and the toilet, forming a second angle, with the dressing room\.\s

These rooms received the light from the side opposite the Aunay Valley and faced the Towers of Croy and Chatillon\.\s

As for the staircase, it was built outside, against one of the sides of the house, and the footsteps of his servants in ascending or de- scending thus reached Des Esseintes less dis- tinctly\.\s

The dressing room was tapestried in deep red. On the walls, in ebony frames, hung the prints of Jan Luyken, an old Dutch engraver almost unknown in France\.\s

He possessed of the work of this artist, who was fantastic and melancholy, vehement and wild, the series of his Religious Persecutions, horrible prints depicting all the agonies in- vented by the madness of religions: prints pregnant with human sufferings, showing bodies roasting on fires, skulls slit open with swords, trepaned with nails and gashed with saws, intestines separated from the abdomen and twisted on spools, finger nails slowly ex- tracted with pincers, eyes gouged, limbs dis- located and deliberately broken, and bones bared of flesh and agonizingly scraped by sheets of metal\.\s

These works filled with abominable imagin- ings, offensive with their odors of burning, oozing with blood and clamorous with cries of horror and maledictions, gave Des Esseintes, who was held fascinated in this red room, the creeping sensations of goose-flesh\.\s

But in addition to the tremblings they occa- sioned, beyond the terrible skill of this man, the extraordinary life which animates his characters, one discovered, among his aston- ishing, swarming throngs — among his mobs of people delineated with a dexterity which re- called Callot, but which had a strength never possessed by that amusing dauber — curious reconstructions of bygone ages. The architec- ture, costumes and customs during the time of the Maccabeans, of Rome under the Chris- tian persecutions, of Spain under the Inquisi- tion, of France during the Middle Ages, at the time of Saint Bartholomew and the Dra- gonnades, were studied with a meticulous care and noted with scientific accuracy\.\s

These prints were veritable treasures of learning. One could gaze at them for hours without experiencing any sense of weariness. Profoundly suggestive in reflections, they as- sisted Des Esseintes in passing many a day when his books failed to charm him\.\s

Luyken's life, too, fascinated him, by ex- plaining the hallucination of his work. A fer- vent Calvinist, a stubborn sectarian, unbal- anced by prayers and hymns, he wrote re- ligious poetry which he illustrated, para- phrased the psalms in verse, lost himself in the reading of the Bible from which he emerged haggard and frenzied, his brain haunted by monstrous subjects, his mouth twisted by the maledictions of the Reforma- tion and by its songs of terror and hate\.\s

And he scorned the world, surrendering his wealth to the poor and subsisting on a slice of bread. He ended his life in travelling, with an equally fanatical servant, going where chance led his boat, preaching the Gospel far and wide, endeavoring to forego nourishment, and eventually becoming almost demented and violent\.\s

Other bizarre sketches were hung in the larger, adjoining room, as well as in the cor- ridor, both of which had woodwork of red cedar\.\s

There was Bresdin's Comedy of Death in which, in the fantastic landscape bristling with trees, brushwood and tufts of grass resem- bling phantom, demon forms, teeming with rat-headed, pod-tailed birds, on earth covered with ribs, skulls and bones, gnarled and cracked willows rear their trunks, sur- mounted by agitated skeletons whose arms beat the air while they intone a song of vic- tory. A Christ speeds across a clouded sky; a hermit in the depths of a cave meditates, holding his head in his hands; one wretch dies, exhausted by long privation and en- feebled with hunger, lying on his back, his legs outstretched in front of a pond\.\s

The Good Samaritan, by the same artist, is a large engraving on stone : an incongruous medley of palms, sorbs and oaks grown to- gether, heedless of seasons and climates, peo- pled with monkeys and owls, covered with old stumps as misshapen as the roots of the mandrake; then a magical forest, cut in the center near a glade through which a stream can be seen far away, behind a camel and the Samaritan group; then an elfin town appear- ing on the horizon of an exotic sky dotted with birds and covered with masses of fleecy clouds\.\s

It could be called the design of an uncer- tain, primitive Durer with an opium-steeped brain. But although he liked the finesse of the detail and the imposing appearance of this print, Des Esseintes had a special weak- ness for the other frames adorning the room\.\s

They were signed : Odilon Redon\.\s

They enclosed inconceivable apparitions in their rough, gold-striped pear-tree wood. A head of a Merovingian style, resting against a bowl, a bearded man, at once resembling a Buddhist priest and an orator at a public re- union, touching the ball of a gigantic cannon with his fingers; a frightful spider revealing a human face in its body. The charcoal draw- ings went even farther into dream terrors. Here, an enormous die in which a sad eye winked; there, dry and arid landscapes, dusty plains, shifting ground, volcanic upheavals catching rebellious clouds, stagnant and livid skies. Sometimes the subjects even seemed to have borrowed from the cacodemons of science, reverting to prehistoric times. A monstrous plant on the rocks, queer blocks everywhere, glacial mud, figures whose simian shapes, heavy jaws, beetling eyebrows, retreating foreheads and flat skulls, recalled the ances- tral heads of the first quartenary periods, when inarticulate man still devoured fruits and seeds, and was still contemporaneous with the mammoth, the rhinoceros and the big bear. These designs were beyond anything imagin- able; they leaped, for the most part, beyond the limits of painting and introduced a fan- tasy that was unique, the fantasy of a diseased and delirious mind\.\s

And, indeed, certain of these faces, with their monstrous, insane eyes, certain of these swollen, deformed bodies resembled carafes, induced in Des Esseintes recollections of typhoid, memories of feverish nights and of the shocking visions of his infancy which per- sisted and would not be suppressed\.\s

Seized with an indefinable uneasiness in the presence of these sketches, the same sensa- tion caused by certain Proverbs of Goya which they recalled, or by the reading of Edgar Allen Poe's tales, whose mirages of hallucina- tion and effects of fear Odilon Redon seemed to have transposed to a different art, he rubbed his eyes and turned to contemplate a radiant figure which, amid these tormenting sketches, arose serene and calm — a figure of Melancholy seated near the disk of a sun, on the rocks, in a dejected and gloomy posture\.\s

The shadows were dispersed as though by an enchantment. A charming sadness, a lan- guid and desolate feeling flowed through him. He meditated long before this work which, with its dashes of paint flecking the thick crayon, spread a brilliance of sea-green and of pale gold among the protracted darkness of the charcoal prints\.\s

In addition to this series of the works of Redon which adorned nearly every panel of the passage, he had hung a disturbing sketch by El Greco in his bedroom. It was a Christ done in strange tints, in a strained design, pos- sessing a wild color and a disordered energy: a picture executed in the painter's second man- ner when he had been tormented by the nec- essity of avoiding imitation of Titian\.\s

This sinister painting, with its wax and sickly green tones, bore an affinity to certain ideas Des Esseintes had with regard to furr nishing a room\.\s

According to him, there were but two ways of fitting a bedroom. One could either make it a sense-stimulating alcove, a place for noc- turnal delights, or a cell for solitude and repose, a retreat for thought, a sort of oratory\.\s

For the first instance, the Louis XV style was inevitable for the fastidious, for the cerebrally morbid. Only the eighteenth century had succeeded in enveloping woman with a vicious atmosphere, imitating her contours in the undulations and twistings of wood and copper, accentuating the sugary languor of the blond with its clear and lively decors, attenuating the pungency of the brunette with its tapes- tries of aqueous, sweet, almost insipid tones\.\s

He had once had such a room in Paris, with a lofty, white, lacquered bed which is one stimu- lant the more, a source of depravity to old roués, leering at the false chastity and hypo- critical modesty of Greuze's tender virgins, at the deceptive candor of a bed evocative of babes and chaste maidens\.\s

For the second instance, — and now that he wished to put behind him the irritating mem- ories of his past life, this was the only possible expedient — he was compelled to design a room that would be like a monastic cell. But diffi- culties faced him here, for he refused to ac- cept in its entirety the austere ugliness of those asylums of penitence and prayer\.\s

By dint of studying the problem in all its phases, he concluded that the end to be attained could thus be stated: to devise a sombre effect by means of cheerful objects, or rather to give a tone of elegance and distinction to the room thus treated, meanwhile preserving its char- acter of ugliness; to reverse the practice of the theatre, whose vile tinsel imitates sumptuous and costly textures ; to obtain the contrary effect by use of splendid fabrics; in a word, to have the cell of a Carthusian monk which should possess the appearance of reality with- out in fact being so\.\s

Thus he proceeded. To imitate the stone- color of ochre and clerical yellow, he had his walls covered with saffron silk; to simulate the chocolate hue of the dadoes common to this type of room, he used pieces of violet wood deepened with amarinth. The effect was bewitching, while recalling to Des Essein- tes the repellant rigidity of the model he had followed and yet transformed. The ceiling, in turn, was hung with white, unbleached cloth, in imitation of plaster, but without its discordant brightness. As for the cold pave- ment of the cell, he was able to copy it, by means of a bit of rug designed in red squares, with whitish spots in the weave to imitate the wear of sandals and the friction of boots\.\s

Into this chamber he introduced a small iron bed, the kind used by monks, fashioned of antique, forged and polished iron, the head and foot adorned with thick filigrees of blos- soming tulips enlaced with vine branches and leaves. Once this had been part of a balus- trade of an old hostel's superb staircase\.\s

For his table, he installed an antique pray- ing-desk the inside of which could contain an urn and the outside a prayer book. Against the wall, opposite it, he placed a church pew surmounted by a tall dais with little benches carved out of solid wood. His church tapers were made of real wax, procured from a spe- cial house which catered exclusively to houses of worship, for Des Esseintes professed a sin- cere repugnance to gas, oil and ordinary candles, to all modern forms of illumination, so gaudy and brutal\.\s

Before going to sleep in the morning, he would gaze, with his head on the pillows, at his El Greco whose barbaric color rebuked the smiling, yellow material and recalled it to a more serious tone. Then he could easily imagine himself living a hundred leagues re- moved from Paris, far from society, in clois- tral security\.\s

And, all in all, the illusion was not difficult, since he led an existence that approached the life of a monk. Thus he had the advantages of monasticism without the inconveniences of its vigorous discipline, its lack of service, its dirt, its promiscuity and its monotonous idle- ness. Just as he had transformed his cell into a comfortable chamber, so had he made his life normal, pleasant, surrounded by comforts, occupied and free\.\s

Like a hermit he was ripe for isolation, since life harassed him and he no longer de- sired anything of it. Again like a monk, he was depressed and in the grip of an obsessing lassitude, seized with the need of self-com- munion and with a desire to have nothing in common with the profane who were, for him, the utilitarian and the imbecile\.\s

Although he experienced no inclination for the state of grace, he felt a genuine sympathy for those souls immured in monasteries, perse- cuted by a vengeful society which can forgive neither the merited scorn with which it in- spires them, nor the desire to expiate, to atone AGAINST THE GRAIN 113 by long silences, for the ever growing sham- lessness of its ridiculous or trifling gossipings\.\s

VER since the night when he had evoked, for no apparent reason, a whole train of melancholy memo- ries, pictures of his past life re- turned to Des Esseintes and gave him no peace\.\s

He found himself unable to understand a single word of the books he read. He could not even receive impressions through his eyes. It seemed to him that his mind, saturated with literature and art, refused to absorb any more. He lived within himself, nourished by his own substance, like some torpid creature which hibernates in caves. Solitude had re- acted upon his brain like a narcotic. After having strained and enervated it, his mind had fallen victim to a sluggishness which anni- hilated his plans, broke his will power and invoked a cortège of vague reveries to which he passively submitted\.\s

The confused medley of meditations on art and literature in which he had indulged since his isolation, as a dam to bar the current of old memories, had been rudely swept away, and the onrushing, irresistible wave crashed into the present and future, submerging everything beneath the blanket of the past, filling his mind with an immensity of sorrow, on whose surface floated, like futile wreckage, absurd trifles and dull episodes of his life\.\s

The book he held in his hands fell to his knees. He abandoned himself to the mood which dominated him, watching the dead years of his life filled with so many disgusts and fears, move past. What a life he had lived! He thought of the evenings spent in society, the horse races, card parties, love af- fairs ordered in advance and served at the stroke of midnight, in his rose-colored bou- doir! He recalled faces, expressions, vain words which obsessed him with the stubborn- ness of popular melodies which one cannot help humming, but which suddenly and in- explicably end by boring one\.\s

This phase had not lasted long. His mem- ory gave him respite and he plunged again into his Latin studies, so as to efface the im- pressions of such recollections\.\s

But almost instantly the rushing force of his memories swept him into a second phase, that of his childhood, especially of the years spent at the school of the Fathers\.\s

Although more remote, they were more positive and more indelibly stamped on his brain. The leafy park, the long walks, the flower beds, the benches — all the actual details of the monastery rose before him, here in his room\.\s

The gardens filled and he heard the ringing cries of the students, mingling with the laugh- ter of the professors as they played tennis, with their cassocks tucked up between their knees, or perhaps chatted under the trees with the youngsters, without any posturing or hauteur, as though they were companions of the same age\.\s

He recalled the easy yoke of the monks who declined to administer punishment by inflict- ing the committment of five hundred or a thousand lines while the others were at play, being satisfied with making those delinquents prepare the lesson that had not been mastered, and most often simply having recourse to a gentle admonition. They surrounded the chil- dren with an active but gentle watch, seeking to please them, consenting to whatever expe- ditions they wished to take on Tuesdays, tak- ing the occasion of every minor holiday not formally observed by the Church to add cakes and wine to the ordinary fare, and to enter- tain them with picnics. It was a paternal dis- cipline whose success lay in the fact that they did not seek to domineer over the pupils, that they gossiped with them, treating them as men while showering them with the attentions paid a spoiled child\.\s

In this manner, the monks succeeded in as- suming a real influence over the youngsters; in molding, to some extent, the minds which they were cultivating; in directing them, in a sense; in instilling special ideas; in assuring the growth of their thoughts by insinuating, wheedling methods with which they continued to flatter them throughout their careers, taking pains not to lose sight of them in their later life, and by sending them affectionate letters like those which the Dominican Lacordaire so skillfully wrote to his former pupils of Sorrèze\.\s

Des Esseintes took note of this system which had been so fruitlessly expended on him. His stubborn, captious and inquisitive character, disposed to controversies, had prevented him from being modelled by their discipline or subdued by their lessons. His scepticism had increased after he left the precincts of the college. His association with a legitimist, in- tolerant and shallow society, his conversations with unintelligent church wardens and ab- bots, whose blunders tore away the veil so subtly woven by the Jesuits, had still more fortified his spirit of independence and in- creased his scorn for any faith whatever\.\s

He had deemed himself free of all bonds and constraints. Unlike most graduates of lycées or private schools, he had preserved a vivid memory of his college and of his mas- ters. And now, as he considered these matters, he asked himself if the seeds sown until now on barren soil were not beginning to take root\.\s

For several days, in fact, his soul had been strangely perturbed. At moments, he felt him- self veering towards religion. Then, at the slightest approach of reason, his faith would dissolve. Yet he remained deeply troubled\.\s

Analyzing himself, he was well aware that he would never possess a truly Christian spirit of humility and penitence. He knew without a doubt that he would never experience that moment of grace mentioned by Lacordaire, "when the last shaft of light penetrates the soul and unites the truths there lying dis- persed." He never felt the need of mortifica- tion and of prayer, without which no conver- sion is possible, if one is to believe the ma- jority of priests. He had no desire to implore a God whose forgiveness seemed most improb- able. Yet the sympathy he felt for his old teach- ers lent him an interest in their works and doc- trines. Those inimitable accents of convic- tion, those ardent voices of men of indubitably superior intelligence returned to him and led him to doubt his own mind and strength. Amid the solitude in which he lived, without new nourishment, without any fresh experi- ences, without any renovation of thought, without that exchange of sensations common to society, in this unnatural confinement in which he persisted, all the questionings for- gotten during his stay in Paris were revived as active irritants. The reading of his beloved Latin works, almost all of them written by bishops and monks, had doubtless contributed to this crisis. Enveloped in a convent-like at- mosphere, in a heady perfume of incense, his nervous brain had grown excitable. And by an association of ideas, these books had driven back the memories of his life as a young man, revealing in full light the years spent with the Fathers\.\s

"There is no doubt about it," Des Esseintes mused, as he reasoned the matter and followed the progress of this introduction of the Jesuitic spirit into Fontenay. "Since my childhood, although unaware of it, I have had this leaven which has never fermented. The weakness I have always borne for religious subjects is perhaps a positive proof of it." But he sought to persuade himself to the contrary, disturbed at no longer being his own master. He searched for motives ; it had required a struggle for him to abandon things sacerdotal, since the Church alone had treasured objects of art — the lost forms of past ages. Even in its wretched mod- ern reproductions, she had preserved the con- tours of the gold and silver ornaments, the charm of chalices curving like petunias, and the charm of pyxes with their chaste sides; even in aluminum and imitation enamels and colored glasses, she had preserved the grace of vanished modes. In short, most of the pre- cious objects now to be found in the Cluny museum, which have miraculously escaped the crude barbarism of the philistines, come from the ancient French abbeys. And just as the Church had preserved philosophy and his- tory and letters from barbarism in the Middle Ages, so had she saved the plastic arts, bring- ing to our own days those marvelous fabrics and jewelries which the makers of sacred ob- jects spoil to the best of their ability, without being able to destroy the originally exquisite form. It followed, then, that there was noth- ing surprising in his having bought these old trinkets, in his having, together with a num- ber of other collectors, purchased such relics from the antique shops of Paris and the sec- ond-hand dealers of the provinces\.\s

But these reasons he evoked in vain. He did not wholly succeed in convincing himself. He persisted in considering religion as a su- perb legend, a magnificent imposture. Yet, despite his convictions, his scepticism began to be shattered\.\s

This was the singular fact he was obliged to face : he was less confident now than in child- hood, when he had been directly under the in- fluence of the Jesuits, when their instruction could not be shunned, when he was in their hands and belonged to them body and soul, without family ties, with no outside influence powerful enough to counteract their precepts. Moreover, they had inculcated in him a cer- tain tendency towards the marvelous which, interned and exercised in the close quarters of his fixed ideas, had slowly and obscurely de- veloped in his soul, until today it was blossom- ing in his solitude, affecting his spirit, regard- less of arguments\.\s

By examining the process of his reasoning, by seeking to unite its threads and to discover its sources and causes, he concluded that his pre- vious mode of living was derived from the education he had received. Thus, his ten- dencies towards artificiality and his craving for eccentricity, were no more than the results of specious studies, spiritual refinements and quasi-theological speculations. They were, in the last analysis, ecstacies, aspirations towards an ideal, towards an unknown universe as de- sirable as that promised us by the Holy Scrip- tures\.\s

He curbed his thoughts sharply and broke the thread of his reflections\.\s

"Well !" he thought, vexed, "I am even more affected than I had imagined. Here am I arguing with myself like a very casuist!" He was left pensive, agitated by a vague fear. Certainly, if Lacordaire's theory were sound, he had nothing to be afraid of, since the magic touch of conversion is not to be con- summated in a moment. To bring about the explosion, the ground must be constantly and assiduously mined. But just as the romancers speak of the thunderclap of love, so do theo- logians also speak of the thunderclap of con- version. No one was safe, should one admit the truth of this doctrine. There was no longer any need of self-analysis, of paying heed to presentiments, of taking preventive measures. The psychology of mysticism was void. Things were so because they were so, and that was all\.\s

"I am really becoming stupid," thought Des Esseintes. "The very fear of this malady will end by bringing it on, if this continues." He partially succeeded in shaking off this influence. The memories of his life with the Jesuits waned, only to be replaced by other thoughts. He was entirely dominated by mor- bid abstractions. Despite himself, he thought of the contradictory interpretations of the dog- mas, of the lost apostasies of Father Labbe, recorded in the works on the Decrees. Frag- ments of these schisms, scraps of these heresies which for centuries had divided the Churches of the Orient and the Occident, returned to him\.\s

Here, Nestarius denied the title of "Mother of God" to the Virgin because, in the mystery of the Incarnation, it was not God but rather a human being she had nourished in her womb; there, Eutyches declared that Christ's image could not resemble that of other men, since divinity had chosen to dwell in his body and had consequently entirely altered the form of everything. Other quibblers maintained that the Redeemer had had no body at all and that this expression of the holy books must be taken figuratively, while Tertullian put forth his famous, semi-materialistic axiom: "Only that which is not, has no body; everything which is, has a body fitting it." Finally, this ancient question, debated for years, demanded an answer: was Christ hanged on the cross, or was it the Trinity which had suffered as one in its triple hypostasis, on the cross at Calvary? And mechanically, like a lesson long ago learned, he proposed the questions to himself and answered them\.\s

For several days his brain was a swarm of paradoxes, subtleties and hair-splittings, a skein of rules as complicated as the articles of the codes that involved the sense of everything, indulged in puns and ended in a most tenuous and singular celestial jurisprudence. The ab- stract side vanished, in its turn, and under the influence of the Gustave Moreau paintings on the wall, yielded to a concrete succession of pictures\.\s

Before him he saw marching a procession of prelates. The archimandrites and patri- archs, their white beards waving during the reading of the prayers, lifted golden arms to bless kneeling throngs. He saw silent files of penitents marching into dim crypts. Before him rose vast cathedrals where white monks intoned from pulpits. Just as De Quincey, hav- ing taken a dose of opium and uttered the word "Consul Romanus," evoked entire pages of Livius, and beheld the solemn advance of the consuls and the magnificent, pompous march of the Roman armies, so he, at a theo- logical expression, paused breathless as he viewed the onrush of penitents and the church- ly apparitions which detached themselves from the glowing depths of the basilica. These scenes held him enchanted. They moved from age to age, culminating in the modern relig- ious ceremonies, bathing his soul in a tender, mournful infinity of music\.\s

On this plane, no reasonings were neces- sary; there were no further contests to be en- dured. He had an indescribable impression of respect and fear. His artistic sense was conquered by the skillfully calculated Catho- lic rituals. His nerves quivered at these mem- ories. Then, in sudden rebellion, in a sudden reversion, monstrous ideas were born in him, fancies concerning those sacrileges warned against by the manual of the father confessors, of the scandalous, impure desecration of holy water and sacred oil. The Demon, a powerful rival, now stood against an omnipotent God. A frightful grandeur seemed to Des Esseintes to emanate from a crime committed in Church by a believer bent, with blasphemously hor- rible glee and sadistic joy, over such revered objects, covering them with outrages and sat- urating them in opprobrium\.\s

Before him were conjured up the madnesses of magic, of the black mass, of the witches' revels, of terrors of possessions and of exor- cisms. He reached the point where he won- dered if he were not committing a sacrilege in possessing objects which had once been con- secrated: the Church canons, chasubles and pyx covers. And this idea of a state of sin im- parted to him a mixed sensation of pride and relief. The pleasures of sacrilege were un- ravelled from the skein of this idea, but these were debatable sacrileges, in any case, and hardly serious, since he really loved these ob- jects and did not pollute them by misuse. In this wise he lulled himself with prudent and cowardly thoughts, the caution of his soul for- bidding obvious crimes and depriving him of the courage necessary to the consummation of frightful and deliberate sins\.\s

Little by little this tendency to ineffectual quibbling disappeared. In his mind's eye he saw the panorama of the Church with its hereditary influence on humanity through the centuries. He imagined it as imposing and suffering, emphasizing to man the horror of life, the infelicity of man's destiny; preaching patience, penitence and the spirit of sacrifice; seeking to heal wounds, while it displayed the bleeding wounds of Christ; bespeaking divine privileges; promising the richest part of para- dise to the afflicted; exhorting humanity to suffer and to render to God, like a holocaust, its trials and offenses, its vicissitudes and pains. Thus the Church grew truly eloquent, the beneficent mother of the oppressed, the eternal menace of oppressors and despots\.\s

Here, Des Esseintes was on firm ground. He was thoroughly satisfied with this admis- sion of social ordure, but he revolted against the vague hope of remedy in the beyond. Schopenhauer was more true. His doctrine and that of the church started from common premises. He, too, based his system on the vileness of the world; he, too, like the author of the Imitation of Christ, uttered that griev- ous outcry: "Truly life on earth is wretched." He, also, preached the nothingness of life, the advantages of solitude, and warned humanity that no matter what it does, in whatever di- rection it may turn, it must remain wretched, the poor by reason of the sufferings entailed by want, the rich by reason of the unconquer- able weariness engendered by abundance; but this philosophy promised no universal reme- dies, did not entice one with false hopes, so as to minimize the inevitable evils of life\.\s

He did not affirm the revolting conception of original sin, nor did he feel inclined to ar- gue that it is a beneficent God who protects the worthless and wicked, rains misfortunes on children, stultifies the aged and afflicts the innocent. He did not exalt the virtues of a Providence which has invented that useless, incomprehensible, unjust and senseless abomi- nation, physical suffering. Far from seeking to justify, as does the Church, the necessity of torments and afflictions, he cried, in his out- raged pity: "If a God has made this world, I should not wish to be that God. The world's wretchedness would rend my heart." Ah! Schopenhauer alone was right. Com- pared with these treatises of spiritual hygiene, of what avail were the evangelical pharmaco- pœias? He did not claim to cure anything, and he offered no alleviation to the sick. But his theory of pessimism was, in the end, the great consoler of choice intellects and lofty souls. He revealed society as it is, asserted woman's inherent stupidity, indicated the saf- est course, preserved you from disillusionment by warning you to restrain hopes as much as possible, to refuse to yield to their allurement, to deem yourself fortunate, finally, if they did not come toppling about your ears at some unexpected moment\.\s

Traversing the same path as the Imitation, this theory, too, ended in similar highways of resignation and indifference, but without go- ing astray in mysterious labyrinths and remote roads\.\s

But if this resignation, which was obviously the only outcome of the deplorable condition of things and their irremediability, was open to the spiritually rich, it was all the more dif- ficult of approach to the poor whose passions and cravings were more easily satisfied by the benefits of religion\.\s

These reflections relieved Des Esseintes of a heavy burden. The aphorisms of the great German calmed his excited thoughts, and the points of contact in these two doctrines helped him to correlate them; and he could never forget that poignant and poetic Catholicism in which he had bathed, and whose essence he had long ago absorbed\.\s

These reversions to religion, these intima- tions of faith tormented him particularly since the changes that had lately taken place in his health. Their progress coincided with that of his recent nervous disorders\.\s

He had been tortured since his youth by in- explicable aversions, by shudderings which chilled his spine and made him grit his teeth, as, for example, when he saw a girl wringing wet linen. These reactions had long per- sisted. Even now he suffered poignantly when he heard the tearing of cloth, the rubbing of a finger against a piece of chalk, or a hand touching a bit of moire\.\s

The excesses of his youthful life, the exag- gerated tension of his mind had strangely ag- gravated his earliest nervous disorder, and had thinned the already impoverished blood of his race. In Paris, he had been compelled to sub- mit to hydrothérapie treatments for his trem- bling fingers, frightful pains, neuralgic strokes which cut his face in two, drummed madden- ingly against his temples, pricked his eyelids agonizingly and induced a nausea which could be dispelled only by lying flat on his back in the dark\.\s

These afflictions had gradually disappeared, thanks to a more regulated and sane mode of living. They now returned in another form, attacking his whole body. The pains left his head, but affected his inflated stomach. His entrails seemed pierced by hot bars of iron. A nervous cough racked him at regular inter- vals, awakening and almost strangling him in his bed. Then his appetite forsook him; gase- ous, hot acids and dry heats coursed through his stomach. He grew swollen, was choked for breath, and could not endure his clothes after each attempt at eating\.\s

He shunned alcoholic beverages, coffee and tea, and drank only milk. And he took re- course to baths of cold water and dosed him- self with assafcetida, valerian and quinine. He even felt a desire to go out, and strolled about the country when the rainy days came to make it desolate and still. He obliged himself to take exercise. As a last resort, he temporarily abandoned his books and, corroded with en- nui, determined to make his listless life toler- able by realizing a project he had long de- ferred through laziness and a dislike of change, since his installment at Fontenay\.\s

Being no longer able to intoxicate himself with the felicities of style, with the delicious witchery of the rare epithet which, while re- maining precise, yet opens to the imagination of the initiate infinite and distant vistas, he determined to give the finishing touches to the decorations of his home. He would pro- cure precious hot-house flowers and thus per- mit himself - a material occupation which might distract him, calm his nerves and rest his brain. He also hoped that the sight of their strange and splendid nuances would in some degree atone for the fanciful and genu- ine colors of style which he was for the time to lose from his literary diet\.\s

|E had always been passionately fond of flowers, but during his residence at Jutigny, that love had been lav- ished upon flowers of all sorts; he had never cultivated distinctions and discriminations in regard to them. Now his taste in this direction had grown refined and self-conscious\.\s

For a long time he had scorned the popular plants which grow in flat baskets, in watered pots, under green awnings or under the red parasols of Parisian markets\.\s

Simultaneous with the refinement of his literary taste and his preoccupations with art, which permitted him to be content only in the presence of choice creations, distilled by subtly troubled brains, and simultaneous with the weariness he began to feel in the presence of popular ideas, his love for flowers had grown purged of all impurities and lees, and had become clarified\.\s

He compared a florist's shop to a microcosm wherein all the categories of society are rep- resented. Here are poor common flowers, the kind found in hovels, which are truly at home only when resting on ledges of garret win- dows, their roots thrust into milk bottles and old pans, like the gilly-flower for example\.\s

And one also finds stupid and pretentious flowers like the rose which belongs in the porcelain flowerpots painted by young girls\.\s

Then, there are flowers of noble lineage like the orchid, so delicate and charming, at once cold and palpitating, exotic flowers exiled in the heated glass palaces of Paris, princesses of the vegetable kingdom living in solitude, having absolutely nothing in common with the street plants and other bourgeois flora\.\s

He permitted himself to feel a certain in- terest and pity only for the popular flowers enfeebled by their nearness to the odors of sinks and drains in the poor quarters. In re- venge he detested the bouquets harmonizing with the cream and gold rooms of pretentious houses. For the joy of his eyes he reserved those distinguished, rare blooms which had been brought from distant lands and whose lives were sustained by artful devices under artificial equators\.\s

But this very choice, this predilection for the conservatory plants had itself changed under the influence of his mode of thought. Formerly, during his Parisian days, his love for artificiality had led him to abandon real flowers and to use in their place replicas faith- fully executed by means of the miracles per- formed with India rubber and wire, calico and tafïeta, paper and silk. He was the pos- sessor of a marvelous collection of tropical plants, the result of the labors of skilful art- ists who knew how to follow nature and re- create her step by step, taking the flower as a bud, leading it to its full development, even imitating its decline, reaching such a point of perfection as to convey every nuance — the most fugitive expressions of the flower when it opens at dawn and closes at evening, ob- serving the appearance of the petals curled by the wind or rumpled by the rain, applying dew drops of gum on its matutinal corollas; shaping it in full bloom, when the branches bend under the burden of their sap, or show- ing the dried stem and shrivelled cupules, when calyxes are thrown off and leaves fall to the ground\.\s

This wonderul art had held him entranced for a long while, but now he was dreaming of another experiment\.\s

He wished to go one step beyond. Instead of artificial flowers imitating real flowers, na- tural flowers should mimic the artificial ones\.\s

He directed his ideas to this end and had not to seek long or go far, since his house lay in the very heart of a famous horticultural region. He visited the conservatories of the Avenue de Chatillon and of the Aunay valley, and returned exhausted, his purse empty, astonished at the strange forms of vegetation he had seen, thinking of nothing but the spe- cies he had acquired and continually haunted by memories of magnificent and fantastic plants\.\s

The flowers came several days later\.\s

Des Esseintes holding a list in his hands, verified each one of his purchases. The gar- deners from their wagons brought a collec- tion of caladiums which sustained on enor- mous heartshaped leaves turgid hairy stalks; while preserving an air of relationship with its neighbor, no one leaf repeated the same pattern\.\s

Others were equally extraordinary. The roses like the Virginale seemed cut out of var- nished cloth or oil-silks; the white ones, like the Albano, appeared to have been cut out of anox's transparent pleura, or the diaphanous bladder of a pig. Some, particularly the Madame Marne, imitated zinc and parodied pieces of stamped metal having a hue of em- peror green, stained by drops of oil paint and by spots of white and red lead ; others like the Bosphorous, gave the illusion of a starched calico in crimson and myrtle green; still others, like the Aurora Borealis, displayed leaves having the color of raw meat, streaked with purple sides, violet fibrils, tumefied leaves from which oozed blue wine and blood. The Albano and the Aurora sounded the two extreme notes of temperament, the apo- plexy and chlorosis of this plant\.\s

The gardeners brought still other varieties which had the appearance of artificial skin ridged with false veins, and most of them looked as though consumed by syphillis and leprosy, for they exhibited livid surfaces of flesh veined with scarlet rash and damasked with eruptions. Some had the deep red hue of scars that have just closed or the dark tint of incipient scabs. Others were marked with matter raised by scaldings. There were forms which exhibited shaggy skins hollowed by ulcers and relieved by cankers. And a few appeared embossed with wounds, covered with black mercurial hog lard, with green un- guents of belladonna smeared with grains of dust and the yellow micas of iodoforme\.\s

Collected in his home, these flowers seemed to Des Esseintes more monstrous than when he had beheld them, confused with others among the glass rooms of the conservatory\.\s

"Sapristi!" he exclaimed enthusiastically\.\s

A new plant, modelled like the Caladiums, the Alocasia Metallica, excited him even more. It was coated with a layer of bronze green on which glanced silver reflections. It was the masterpiece of artificiality. It could be called a piece of stove pipe, cut by a chim- ney-maker into the form of a pike head\.\s

The men next brought clusters of leaves, lozenge-like in shape and bottle-green in color. In the center rose a rod at whose end a var- nished ace of hearts swayed. As though mean- ing to defy all conceivable forms of plants, a fleshy stalk climbed through the heart of this intense vermilion ace — a stalk that in some specimens was straight, in others showed ring- lets like a pig's tail\.\s

It was the Anthurium, an aroid recently imported into France from Columbia; a vari- ety of that family to which also belonged an Amorphophallus, a Cochin China plant with leaves shaped like fish-knives, with long dark stems seamed with gashes, like lambs flecked with black\.\s

Des Esseintes exulted\.\s

They brought a new batch of monstrosities from the wagon: Echinopses, issuing from padded compresses with rose-colored flowers that looked like pitiful stumps; gaping Nidu- laria revealing skinless foundations in steel plates; Tillandsia Lindeni, the color of wine must, with jagged scrapers; Cypripedia, with complicated contours, a crazy piece of work seemingly designed by a crazy inventor. They looked like sabots or like a lady's work- table on which lies a human tongue with taut filaments, such as one sees designed on the illustrated pages of works treating of the di- seases of the throat and mouth; two little side- pieces, of a red jujube color, which appeared to have been borrowed from a child's toy mill completed this singular collection of a tongue's underside with the color of slate and wine lees, and of a glossy pocket from whose lining oozed a viscous glue\.\s

He could not remove his eyes from this un- natural orchid which had been brought from India. Then the gardeners, impatient at his procrastinations, themselves began to read the labels fastened to the pots they were carrying in\.\s

Bewildered, Des Esseintes looked on and listened to the cacophonous sounds of the names: the Encephalartos horridus, a gigan- tic iron rust-colored artichoke, like those put on portals of chateaux to foil wall climbers; the Cocos Micania, a sort of notched and slender palm surrounded by tall leaves resem- bling paddles and oars; the Zamia Lehman- ni, an immense pineapple, a wondrous Chester leaf, planted in sweet-heather soil, its top bristling with barbed javelins and jagged arrows; the Cibotium Spectabile, surpass- ing the others by the craziness of its struc- ture, hurling a defiance to revery, as it darted, through the palmated foliage, an enormous orang-outang tail, a hairy dark tail whose end was twisted into the shape of a bishop's cross\.\s

But he gave little heed, for he was impa- tiently awaiting the series of plants which most bewitched him, the vegetable ghouls, the carnivorous plants; the Antilles Fly-Trap, with its shaggy border, secreting a digestive liquid, armed with crooked prickles coiling around each other, forming a grating about the imprisoned insect; the Drosera of the peat- bogs, provided with glandular hair; the Sarracena and the Cephalothus, opening greedy horns capable of digesting and ab- sorbing real meat; lastly, the Nepenthes, whose capricious appearance transcends all limits of eccentric forms\.\s

He never wearied of turning in his hands the pot in which this floral extravagance stirred. It imitated the gum-tree whose long leaf of dark mettalic green it possessed, but it differed in that a green string hung from the end of its leaf, an umbilic cord supporting a greenish urn, streaked with jasper, a sort of German poreclain pipe, a strange bird's nest which tranquilly swung about, revealing an interior covered with hair\.\s

"This is really something worth while," Des Esseintes murmured\.\s

He was forced to tear himself away, for the gardeners, anxious to leave, were empty- ing the wagons of their contents and deposit- ing, without any semblance of order, the tuberous Begonias and black Crotons stained like sheet iron with Saturn red\.\s

Then he perceived that one name still re- mained on his list. It was the Cattleya of New Granada. On it was designed a little winged bell of a faded lilac, an almost dead mauve. He approached, placed his nose above the plant and quickly recoiled. It exhaled an odor of toy boxes of painted pine; it recalled the horrors of a New Year's Day\.\s

He felt that he would do well to mistrust it and he almost regretted having admitted, among the scentless plants, this orchid which evoked the most disagreeable memories\.\s

As soon as he was alone his gaze took in this vegetable tide which foamed in the vesti- bule. Intermingled with each other, they crossed their swords, their krisses and stan- chions, taking on a resemblance to a green pile of arms, above which, like barbaric pen- nons, floated flowers with hard dazzling colors\.\s

The air of the room grew rarefied. Then, in the shadowy dimness of a corner, near the floor, a white soft light crept\.\s

He approached and perceived that the phenomenon came from the Rhizomorphes which threw out these night-lamp gleams while respiring\.\s

"These plants are amazing," he reflected. Then he drew back to let his eye encompass the whole collection at a glance. His pur- pose was achieved. Not one single specimen seemed real; the cloth, paper, porcelain and metal seemed to have been loaned by man to nature to enable her to create her monstro- sities. When unable to imitate man's handi- work, nature had been reduced to copying the inner membranes of animals, to borrowing the vivid tints of their rotting flesh, their magni- ficent corruptions\.\s

"All is syphilis," thought Des Esseintes, his eye riveted upon the horrible streaked stain- ings of the Caladium plants caressed by a ray of light. And he beheld a sudden vision of humanity consumed through the centuries by the virus of this disease. Since the world's be- ginnings, every single creature had, from sire to son, transmitted the imperishable heritage, the eternal malady which has ravaged man's ancestors and whose effects are visible even in the bones of old fossils that have been exhumed\.\s

The disease had swept on through the cen- turies gaining momentum. It even raged to- day, concealed in obscure sufferings, dissi- mulated under symptoms of headaches and bronchitis, hysterics and gout. It crept to the surface from time to time, preferably attack- ing the ill-nourished and the poverty stricken, spotting faces with gold pieces, ironically decorating the faces of poor wretches, stamp- ing the mark of money on their skins to aggra- vate their unhappiness\.\s

And here on the colored leaves of the plants it was resurgent in its original splendor\.\s

"It is true," pursued Des Esseintes, return- ing to the course of reasoning he had momen- tarily abandoned, "it is true that most often nature, left alone, is incapable of begetting such perverse and sickly specimens. She fur- nishes the original substance, the germ and the earth, the nourishing womb and the ele- ments of the plant which man then sets up, models, paints, and sculpts as he wills. Lim- ited, stubborn and formless though she be, na- ture has at last been subjected and her master has succeeded in changing, through chemical reaction, the earth's substances, in using combi- nations which had been long matured, cross- fertilization processes long prepared, in mak- ing use of slips and graftings, and man now forces differently colored flowers in the same species, invests new tones for her, modifies to his will the long-standing form of her plants, polishes the rough clods, puts an end to the period of botch work, places his stamp on them, imposes on them the mark of his own unique art." "It cannot be gainsaid," he thought, resum- ing his reflections, "that man in several years is able to effect a selection which slothful na- ture can produce only after centuries. Decid- edly the horticulturists are the real artists now- adays." He was a little tired and he felt stifled in this atmosphere of crowded plants. The prom- enades he had taken during the last few days had exhausted him. The transition had been too sudden from the tepid atmosphere of his room to the out-of-doors, from the placid tranquillity of a reclusive life to an active one. He left the vestibule and stretched out on his bed to rest, but, absorbed by this new fancy of his, his mind, even in his sleep, could not lessen its tension and he was soon wandering among the gloomy insanities of a nightmare\.\s

He found himself in the center of a walk, in the heart of the wood; twilight had fallen. He was strolling by the side of a woman whom he had never seen before. She was emaciated and had flaxen hair, a bulldog face, freckles on her cheeks, crooked teeth projecting under a flat nose. She wore a nurse's white apron, a long neckerchief, torn in strips on her bosom; half-shoes like those worn by Prus- sian soldiers and a black bonnet adorned with frillings and trimmed with a rosette\.\s

There was a foreign look about her, like that of a mountebank at a fair\.\s

He asked himself who the woman could be; he felt that she had long been an intimate part of his life; vainly he sought her origin, her name, her profession, her reason for being. No recollection of this liaison, which was in- explicable and yet positive, rewarded him\.\s

He was searching his past for a clue, when a strange figure suddenly appeared on horse- back before them, trotting about for a moment and then turning around in its saddle. Des Esseintes' heart almost stopped beating and he stood riveted to the spot with horror. He nearly fainted. This enigmatic, sexless figure was green; through her violet eyelids the eyes were terrible in their cold blue; pimples sur- rounded her mouth ; horribly emaciated, skele- ton arms bared to the elbows issued from ragged tattered sleeves and trembled feverish- ly; and the skinny legs shivered in shoes that were several sizes too large\.\s

The ghastly eyes were fixed on Des Essein- tes, penetrating him, freezing his very mar- row; wilder than ever, the bulldog woman threw herself at him and commenced to howl like a dog at the killing, her head hanging on her rigid neck\.\s

Suddenly he understood the meaning of the frightful vision. Before him was the image of Syphilis\.\s

Pursued by fear and quite beside himself, he sped down a pathway at top speed and gained a pavillion standing among the labur- nums to the left, where he fell into a chair, in the passage way\.\s

After a few moments, when he was begin- ning to recover his breath, the sound of sob- bing made him lift his head. The bulldog woman was in front of him and, grotesque and woeful, while warm tears fell from her eyes, she told him that she had lost her teeth in her flight. As she spoke she drew clay pipes from the pocket of her nurse's apron, breaking them and shoving pieces of the stems into the hollows of her gums\.\s

"But she is really absurd," Des Esseintes told himself. "These stems will never stick." And, as a matter of fact, they dropped out one after another\.\s

At this moment were heard the galloping sounds of an approaching horse. A fearful terror pierced Des Esseintes. His limbs gave way. The galloping grew louder. Despair brought him sharply to his senses. He threw himself upon the woman who was stamping on the pipe bowls, entreating her to be silent, not to give notice of their presence by the sound of her shoes. She writhed and struggled in his grip ; he led her to the end of the corri- dor, strangling her to prevent her from crying out. Suddenly he noticed the door of a coffee house, with green Venetian shutters. It was unlocked; he pushed it, rushed in headlong and then paused\.\s

Before, him, in the center of a vast glade, huge white pierrots were leaping rabbit-like under the rays of the moon\.\s

Tears of discouragement welled to his eyes; never, no never would he succeed in crossing the threshold. "I shall be crushed," he thought. And as though to justify his fears, the ranks of tall pierrots swarmed and multi- plied; their somersaults now covered the en- tire horizon, the whole sky on which they landed now on their heads, now on their feet\.\s

Then the hoof beats paused. He was in the passage, behind a round skylight. More dead than alive, Des Esseintes turned about and through the round window beheld pro- jecting erect ears, yellow teeth, nostrils from which breathed two jets of vapor smelling of phenol\.\s

He sank to the ground, renouncing all ideas of flight or of resistance. He closed his eyes so as not to behold the horrible gaze of Syph- ilis which penetrated through the wall, which even pierced his closed lids, which he felt gliding over his moist spine, over his body whose hair bristled in pools of cold sweat. He waited for the worst and even hoped for the coup de grâce to end everything. A moment which seemed to last a century passed. Shud- dering, he opened his eyes. Everything had vanished. Without any transition, as though by some stage device, a frightful mineral land- scape receded into the distance, a wan, dead, waste, gullied landscape. A light illumined this desolate site, a peaceful white light that recalled gleams of phosphorus dissolved in oil\.\s

Something that stirred on the ground be- came a deathly pale, nude woman whose feet were covered with green silk stockings\.\s

He contemplated her with curiosity. As though frizzed by overheated irons, her hair curled, becoming straight again at the end; her distended nostrils were the color of roast veal. Her eyes were desirous, and she called to him in low tones\.\s

He had no time to answer, for already the woman was changing. Flamboyant colors passed and repassed in her eyes. Her lips were stained with a furious Anthurium red\.\s

The nipples of her breasts flashed, painted like two pods of red pepper\.\s

A sudden intuition came to him. "It is the Flower," he said. And his reasoning mania persisted in his nightmare\.\s

Then he observed the frightful irritation of the breasts and mouth, discovered spots of bister and copper on the skin of her body, and recoiled bewildered. But the woman's eyes fascinated him and he advanced slowly, at- tempting to thrust his heels into the earth so as not to move, letting himself fall, and yet lifting himself to reach her. Just as he touched her, the dark Amorphophalli leaped up from all sides and thrust their leaves into his abdomen which rose and fell like a sea. He had broken all the plants, experiencing a limitless disgust in seeing these warm, firm stems stirring in his hands. Suddenly the detested plants had disappeared and two arms sought to enlace him. A terrible anguish made his heart beat furiously, for the eyes, the hor- rible eyes of the woman, had become a clear, cold and terrible blue. He made a super- human effort to free himself from her em- brace, but she held him with an irresistible movement. He beheld the wild Nidularium which yawned, bleeding, in steel plates\.\s

With his body he touched the hideous wound of this plant. He felt himself dying, awoke with a start, suffocating, frozen, mad with fear and sighing: "Ah! thank God, it was but a dream!" HESE nightmares attacked him re- peatedly. He was afraid to fall asleep. For hours he remained stretched on his bed, now a prey to feverish and agitated wakefulness, now in the grip of oppressive dreams in which he tumbled down flights of stairs and felt him- self sinking, powerless, into abysmal depths. His nervous attacks, which had abated for several days, became acute, more violent and obstinate than ever, unearthing new tortures. The bed covers tormented him. He stifled under the sheets, his body smarted and tingled as though stung by swarms of insects. These symptoms were augmented by a dull pain in his jaws and a throbbing in his temples which seemed to be gripped in a vise\.\s

His alarm increased; but unfortunately the means of subduing the inexorable malady were not at hand. He had unsuccessfully sought to install a hydropathic apparatus in his dressing room. But the impossibility of forcing water to the height on which his house was perched, and the difficulty of procuring water even in the village where the fountains functioned sparingly and only at certain hours of the day, caused him to renounce the pro- ject. Since he could not have floods of water playing on him from the nozzle of a hose, (the only efficacious means of overcoming his insomnia and calming his nerves through its action on his spinal column) he was reduced to brief sprays or to mere cold baths, followed by energetic massages applied by his servant with the aid of a horse-hair glove\.\s

But these measures failed to stem the march of his nervous disorder. At best they afforded him a few hours' relief, dearly paid for by the return of the attacks in an even more virulent form\.\s

His ennui passed all bounds. His pleasure in the possession of his wonderful flowers was exhausted. Their textures and nuances palled on him. Besides, despite the care he lavished on them, most of his plants drooped. He had them removed from his rooms, but in his state of extreme excitability, their very absence ex- asperated him, for his eyes were pained by the void\.\s

To while away the interminable hours, he had recourse to his portfolios of prints, and arranged his Goyas. The first impressions of certain plates of the Caprices, recognizable as proofs by their reddish hues, which he had bought at auction at a high price, comforted him, and he lost himself in them, following the painter's fantasies, distracted by his vertig- inous scenes, his witches astride on cats, his women striving to pluck out the teeth of a hanged man, his bandits, his succubi, his demons and dwarfs\.\s

Then he examined his other series of etch- ings and aquatints, his Proverbs with their macabre horror, his war subjects with their wild rage, finally his plate of the Garot, of which he cherished a marvelous trial proof, printed on heavy water-marked paper, un- mounted\.\s

Goya's savage verve and keenly fanciful talent delighted him, but the universal admi- ration his works had won nevertheless es- tranged him slightly. And for years he had refused to frame them for fear that the first blundering fool who caught sight of them might deem it necessary to fly into banal and facile raptures before them\.\s

The same applied to his Rembrandts which he examined from time to time, half secretly; and if it be true that the loveliest tune imagin- able becomes vulgar and insupportable as soon as the public begins to hum it and the hurdy- gurdies make it their own, the work of art which does not remain indifferent to the spu- rious artists, which is not contested by fools, and which is not satisfied with awakening the enthusiasm of the few, by this very fact be- comes profaned, trite, almost repulsive to the initiate\.\s

This promiscuity in admiration, further- more, was one of the greatest sources of regret in his life. Incomprehensible successses had forever spoiled for him many pictures and books once cherished and dear. Approved by the mob, they began to reveal impercep- tible defects to him, and he rejected them, wondering meanwhile if his perceptions were not growing blunted\.\s

He closed his portfolios and, completely disconcerted, again plunged into melancholy. To divert the current of his thoughts and cool his brain, he sought books that would soothe him and turned to the romances of Dickens, those charming novels which are so satisfying to invalids and convalescents who might grow fatigued by works of a more profound and vigorous nature\.\s

But they produced an effect contrary to his expectations. These chaste lovers, these pro- testing heroines garbed to the neck, loved among the stars, confined themselves to lowered eyes and blushes, wept tears of joy and clasped hands — an exaggeration of purity which threw him into an opposite excess. By the law of contrast, he leaped from one ex- treme to the other, let his imagination dwell on vibrant scenes between human lovers, and mused on their sensual kisses and passionate embraces\.\s

His mind wandered off from his book to worlds far removed from the English prude: to wanton peccadilloes and salacious practices condemned by the Church. He grew excited. The impotence of his mind and body which he had supposed final, vanished. Solitude again acted on his disordered nerves; he was once more obsessed, not by religion itself, but by the acts and sins it forbids, by the subject of all its obsecrations and threats. The carnal side, atrophied for months, which had been stirred by the enervation of his pious readings, then brought to a crisis by the English cant, came to the surface. His stimulated senses carried him back to the past and he wallowed in memories of his old sin\.\s

He rose and pensively opened a little box of vermeil with a lid of aventurine\.\s

It was filled with violet bonbons. He took one up and pressed it between his fingers, thinking of the strange properties of this sugary, frosted sweetmeat. When his virility had been impaired, when the thought of woman had roused in him no sharp regret or desire, he had only to put one in his mouth, let it melt, and almost at once it induced misty, languishing memories, infinitely tender\.\s

These bonbons invented by Siraudin and bearing the ridiculous name of "Perles des Pyrenees" were each a drop of sarcanthus per- fume, a drop of feminine essence crystallized in a morsel of sugar. They penetrated the papillae of the tongue, recalling the very savor of voluptuous kisses\.\s

Usually he smiled as he inhaled this love aroma, this shadow of a caress which for a moment restored the delights of women he had once adored. Today they were not merely suggestive, they no longer served as a delicate hint of his distant riotous past. They were become powerful, thrusting aside the veils, exposing before his eyes the importunate, cor- poreal and brutal reality\.\s

At the head of the procession of mistresses whom the fragrance of the bonbons helped to place in bold relief, one paused, displaying long white teeth, a satiny rose skin, a snub nose, mouse-colored eyes, and close-cropped blond hair\.\s

This was Miss Urania, an American, with a vigorous body, sinewy limbs, muscles of steel and arms of iron\.\s

She had been one of the most celebrated acrobats of the Circus\.\s

Des Esseintes had watched her attentively through many long evenings. At first, she had seemed to him what she really was, a strong and beautiful woman, but the desire to know her never troubled him. She possessed nothing to recommend her in the eyes of a blasé man, and yet he returned to the Circus, allured by he knew not what, importuned by a sentiment difficult to define\.\s

Gradually, as he watched her, a fantastic idea seized him. Her graceful antics and arch feminine ways receded to the background of his mind, replaced by her power and strength which had for him all the charm of masculinity. Compared with her, Des Essein- tes seemed to himself a frail, effeminate crea- ture, and he began to desire her as ardently as an anaemic young girl might desire some loutish Hercules whose arms could crush her in a strong embrace\.\s

One evening he finally decided to commu- nicate with her and dispatched one of the attendants on this errand. Miss Urania deemed it necessary not to yield before a preliminary courtship ; but she showed herself amenable, as it was common gossip that Des Esseintes was rich and that his name was in- strumental in estabishing women\.\s

But as soon as his wishes were granted, his disappointment surpassed any he had yet expe- rienced. He had persuaded himself that the American woman would be as bestial and stu- pid as a wrestler at a county fair, and instead her stupidity was of an altogether feminine nature. Certainly, she lacked education and tact, had neither good sense nor wit, and dis- played an animal voracity at table, but she possessed all the childish traits of a woman. Her manner and speech were coquettish and affected, those of a silly, scandal-loving young girl. There was absolutely nothing masculine about her\.\s

Furthermore, she was withdrawn and puri- tanical in her embraces, displaying none of the brute force he had dreaded yet longed for, and she was subject to none of the perturba- tions of his sex\.\s

Des Esseintes inevitably returned to the masculine rôle he had momentarily aban- doned\.\s

His impression of femininity, weakness, need of protection, of fear even, disappeared. The illusion was no longer possible! Miss Urania was an ordinary mistress, in no wise justifying the cerebral curiosity she had at first awakened in him\.\s

Although the charm of her firm skin and magnificent beauty had at first astonished and captivated Des Esseintes, he lost no time in terminating this liaison, for his impotence was prematurely hastened by the frozen and prudish caresses of this woman\.\s

And yet she was the first of all the women he had loved, now flitting through his revery, to stand out. But if she was more strongly im- printed on his memory than a host of others whose allurements had been less spurious and more seductive, the reason must be ascribed to her healthy animalism, to her exuberance which contrasted so strikingly with the per- fumed anaemia of the others, a faint suggestion of which he found in the delicate Siraudin bonbon\.\s

Miss Urania haunted him by reason of her very difference, but almost instantly, offended by the intrusion of this natural, crude aroma, the antithesis of the scented confection, Des Esseintes returned to more civilized exhala- tions and his thoughts reverted to his other mistresses. They pressed upon him in a throng; but above them all rose a woman whose startling talents had satisfied him for months\.\s

She was a little, slender brunette, with black eyes and burnished hair parted on one side and sleeked down over her head. He had known her in a café where she gave ventriloqual per- formances\.\s

Before the amazed patrons, she caused her tiny cardboard figures, placed near each other on chairs, to talk; she conversed with the ani- mated mannikins while flies buzzed around the chandeliers. Then one heard the rustling of the tense audience, surprised to find itself seated and instinctively recoiling when they heard the rumbling of imaginary carriages\.\s

Des Esseintes had been fascinated. He lost no time in winning over the ventriloquist, tempting her with large sums of money. She delighted him by the very contrast she exhib- ited to the American woman. This brunette used strong perfumes and burned like a crater. Despite all her blandishments, Des Esseintes wearied of her in a few short hours. But this did not prevent him from letting himself be fleeced, for the phenomenon of the ventril- oquist attracted him more than did the charms of the mistress\.\s

Certain plans he had long pondered upon ripened, and he decided to bring them to fruition\.\s

One evening he ordered a tiny sphinx brought in — a sphinx carved from black marble and resting in the classic pose with out- stretched paws and erect head. He also pur- chased a chimera of polychrome clay; it brandished its mane of hair, and its sides re- sembled a pair of bellows. These two images he placed in a corner of the room. Then he extinguished the lamps, permitting the glow- ing embers to throw a dim light around the room and to magnify the objects which were almost immersed in gloom\.\s

Then he stretched out on a couch'beside the woman whose motionless figure was touched by the ember gleams, and waited\.\s

With strange intonations that he had long and patiently taught her, she animated the two monsters ; she did not even move her lips, she did not even glance in their direction\.\s

And in the silence followed the marvelous dialogue of the Chimera and the Sphinx; it was recited in deep guttural tones which were at first raucous, then turned shrill and un- earthly\.\s

"Here, Chimera, pause!" "Never!" Lulled by the admirable prose of Flaubert, he listened; he panted and shivering sensations raced through his frame, when the Chimera uttered the magical and solemn phrase: "New perfumes I seek, stranger flowers I seek, pleasures not yet discovered." Ah! it was to him that this voice, mysterious as an incantation, spoke ; it was to him that this voice recounted her feverish agitation for the unknown, her insatiable ideals, her impera- tive need to escape from the horrible reality of existence, to leap beyond the confines of thought, to grope towards the mists of elusive, unattainable art. The poignant tragedy of his past failures rent his heart. Gently he clasped the silent woman at his side, he sought refuge in her nearness, like a child who is inconsol- able ; he was blind to the sulkiness of the come- dienne obliged to perform off-scene, in her lei- sure moments, far from the spotlight\.\s

Their liaison continued, but his spells of exhaustion soon became acute. His brain no longer sufficed to stimulate his benumbed body. No longer did his nerves obey his will; and now the crazy whims of dotards domi- nated him. Terrified by the approach of a disastrous weakness in the presence of his mis- tress, he resorted to fear — that oldest, most efficacious of excitants\.\s

A hoarse voice from behind the door would exclaim, while he held the woman in his arms : "Open the door, woman, I know you're in there, and with whom. Just wait, wait!" In- stantly, like a libertine stirred by fear of dis- covery in the open, he recovered his strength and hurled himself madly upon the ventril- oquist whose voice continued to bluster out- side the room. In this wise he experienced the pleasures of a panic-stricken person\.\s

But this state, unfortunately, did not last long, and despite the sums he paid her, the ventriloquist parted to offer herself to some- one less exigent and less complex\.\s

He had regretted her defection, and now, re- calling her, the other women seemed insipid, their childish graces and monotonous coquetry disgusting him\.\s

In the ferment of his disordered brain, he delighted in mingling with these recollections of his past, other more gloomy pleasures, as theology qualifies the evocation of past, dis- graceful acts. With the physcial visions he mingled spiritual ardors brought into play and motivated by his old readings of the casu- ists, of the Busembaums and the Dianas, of the Liguoris and the Sanchezes, treating of trans- gressions against the sixth and ninth com- mandments of the Decalogue\.\s

In awakening an almost divine ideal in this soul steeped in her precepts — a soul possibly predisposed to the teachings of the church through hereditary influences dating back from the reign of Henry III, religion had also stirred the illegitimate, forbidden enjoyment of the senses. Licentious and mystical obses- sions haunted his brain, they mingled con- fusedly, and he would often be troubled by an unappeasable desire to shun the vulgarities of the world and to plunge, far from the cus- toms and modes held in such reverence, into convulsions and raptures which were holy or infernal and which, in either case, proved too exhausting and enervating\.\s

He would arise prostrate from such reveries, fatigued and all but lifeless. He would light the lamps and candles so as to flood the room with light, for he hoped that by so doing he might possibly diminish the intolerably per- sistent and dull throbbing of his arteries which beat under his neck with redoubled strokes\.\s

URING the course of this malady which attacks impoverished races, sudden calms succeed an attack. Strangely enough, Des Esseintes awoke one morning recovered; no longer was he tormented by the throbbing of his neck or by his racking cough. Instead, he had an ineffable sensation of contentment, a lightness of mind in which thought was sparklingly clear, turning from a turbid, opaque, green color to a liquid iridescence magical with tender rainbow tints\.\s

This lasted several days. Then hallucina- tions of odor suddenly appeared\.\s

His room was aromatic with the fragrance of frangipane; he tried to ascertain if a bottle were not uncorked — no! not a bottle was to be found in the room, and he passed into his study and thence to the kitchen. Still the odor persisted\.\s

Des Esseintes rang for his servant and asked if he smelled anything. The domestic sniffed the air and declared he could not detect any perfume. There was no doubt about it: his nervous attacks had returned again, under the appearance of a new illusion of the senses\.\s

Fatigued by the tenacity of this imaginary aroma, he resolved to steep himself in real per- fumes, hoping that this homeopathic treat- ment would cure him or would at least drown the persistent odor\.\s

He betook himself to his dressing room. There, near an old baptistery which he used as a wash basin, under a long mirror of forged iron, which, like the edge of a well silvered by the moon, confined the green dull surface of the mirror, were bottles of every conceiv- able size and form, placed on ivory shelves\.\s

He set them on the table and divided them into two series: one of the simple perfumes, pure extracts or spirits, the other of compound perfumes, designated under the generic term of bouquets\.\s

He sank into an easy chair and meditated\.\s

He had long been skilled in the science of smell. He believed that this sense could give one delights equal to those of hearing and sight; each sense being susceptible, if naturally keen and if properly cultivated, to new im- pressions, which it could intensify, coordinate and compose into that unity which constitutes a creative work. And it was not more ab- normal and unnatural that an art should be called into existence by disengaging odors than that another art should be evoked by detach- ing sound waves or by striking the eye with diversely colored rays. But if no person could discern, without intuition developed by study, a painting by a master from a daub, a melody of Beethoven from one by Clapisson, no more could any one at first, without preliminary initiation, help confusing a bouquet invented by a sincere artist with a pot pourri made by some manufacturer to be sold in groceries and bazaars\.\s

In this art, the branch devoted to achieving certain effects by artificial methods partic- ularly delighted him\.\s

Perfumes, in fact, rarely come from the flowers whose names they bear. The artist who dared to borrow nature's elements would only produce a bastard work which would have neither authenticity nor style, inasmuch as the essence obtained by the distillation of flowers would bear but a distant and vulgar relation to the odor of the living flower, waft- ing its fragrance into the air\.\s

Thus, with the exception of the inimitable jasmine which it is impossible to counterfeit, all flowers are perfectly represented by the blend of aromatic spirits, stealing the very personality of the model, and to it adding that nuance the more, that heady scent, that rare touch which entitled a thing to be called a work of art\.\s

To resume, in the science of perfumery, the artist develops the natural odor of the flowers, working over his subject like a jeweler refin- ing the lustre of a gem and making it precious\.\s

Little by little, the arcana of this art, most neglected of all, was revealed to Des Essein- tes who could now read this language, as diver- sified and insinuating as that of literature, this style with its unexpected concision under its vague flowing appearance\.\s

To achieve this end he had first been com- pelled to master the grammar and understand the syntax of odors, learning the secret of the rules that regulate them, and, once familiar- ized with the dialect, he compared the works of the masters, of the Atkinsons and Lubins, the Chardins and Violets, the Legrands and Piesses; then he separated the construction of their phrases, weighed the value of their words and the arrangement of their periods\.\s

Later on, in this idiom of fluids, experience was able to support theories too often incom- plete and banal\.\s

Classic perfumery, in fact, was scarcely diversified, almost colorless and uniformly issuing from the mold cast by the ancient chemists. It was in its dotage, confined to its old alambics, when the romantic period was born and had modified the old style, reju- venating it, making it more supple and malle- able\.\s

Step by step, its history followed that of our language. The perfumed Louis XIII style, composed of elements highly prized at that time, of iris powder, musk, chive and myrtle water already designated under the name of "water of the angels," was hardly sufficient to express the cavalier graces, the rather crude tones of the period which certain sonnets of Saint-Amand have preserved for us. Later, with myrrh and olibanum, the mystic odors, austere and powerful, the pompous gesture of the great period, the redundant artifices of oratorial art, the full, sustained harmonious style of Bossuet and the masters of the pulpit were almost possible. Still later, the sophist- icated, rather bored graces of French society under Louis XV, more easily found their in- terpretation in the almond which in a manner summed up this epoch; then, after the ennui and jadedness of the first empire, which mis- used Eau de Cologne and rosemary, perfum- ery rushed, in the wake of Victor Hugo and Gautier, towards the Levant. It created ori- ental combinations, vivid Eastern nosegays, discovered new intonations, antitheses which until then had been unattempted, selected and made use of antique nuances which it compli- cated, refined and assorted. It resolutely re- jected that voluntary decrepitude to which it had been reduced by the Malesherbes, the Boileaus, the Andrieuxes and the Baour-Lor- mians, wretched distillers of their own poems. But this language had not remained station- ery since the period of 1830. It had continued to evolve and, patterning itself on the pro- gress of the century, had advanced parallel with the other arts. It, too, had yielded to the desires of amateurs and artists, receiving its inspiration from the Chinese and Japanese, conceiving fragrant albums, imitating the Takeoka bouquets of flowers, obtaining the odor of Rondeletia from the blend of laven- der and clove; the peculiar aroma of Chinese ink from the marriage of patchouli and cam- phor; the emanation of Japanese Hovenia by compounds of citron, clove and neroli\.\s

Des Esseintes studied and analyzed the es- sences of these fluids, experimenting to corrob- orate their texts. He took pleasure in play- ing the rôle of a psychologist for his personal satisfaction, in taking apart and re-assem- bling the machinery of a work, in separating the pieces forming the structure of a com- pound exhalation, and his sense of smell had thereby attained a sureness that was all but perfect\.\s

Just as a wine merchant has only to smell a drop of wine to recognize the grape, as a hop dealer determines the exact value of hops by sniffing a bag, as a Chinese trader can imme- diately tell the origin of the teas he smells, knowing in what farms of what mountains, in what Buddhistic convents it was cultivated, the very time when its leaves were gathered, the state and the degree of torréfaction, the effect upon it of its proximity to the plum-tree and other flowers, to all those perfumes which change its essence, adding to it an unexpected touch and introducing into its dryish flavor a hint of distant fresh flowers; just so could Des Esseintes, by inhaling a dash of perfume, in- stantly explain its mixture and the psychology of its blend, and could almost give the name of the artist who had composed and given it the personal mark of his individual style\.\s

Naturally he had a collection of all the products used by perfumers. He even had the real Mecca balm, that rare balm cultivated only in certain parts of Arabia Petraea and under the monopoly of the ruler\.\s

Now, seated in his dressing room in front of his table, he thought of creating a new bouquet; and he was overcome by that mo- ment of wavering confidence familiar to writers when, after months of inaction, they prepare for a new work\.\s

Like Balzac who was wont to scribble on many sheets of paper so as to put himself in a mood for work, Des Esseintes felt the necessity of steadying his hand by several ini- tial and unimportant experiments. Desiring to create heliotrope, he took down bottles of vanilla and almond, then changed his idea and decided to experiment with sweet peas\.\s

He groped for a long time, unable to effect the proper combinations, for orange is dom- inant in the fragrance of this flower. He at- tempted several combinations and ended in achieving the exact blend by joining tube- rose and rose to orange, the whole united by a drop of vanilla\.\s

His hesitation disappeared. He felt alert and ready for work; now he made some tea by blending cassie with iris, then, sure of his tech- nique, he decided to proceed with a fulminat- ing phrase whose thunderous roar would an- nihilate the insidious odor of almond still hov- ering over his room\.\s

He worked with amber and with Tonkin musk, marvelously powerful ; with patchouli, the most poignant of vegetable perfumes whose flower, in its habitat, wafts an odor of mildew. Try what he would, the eighteenth century obsessed him; the panier robes and furbelows appeared before his eyes; mem- ories of Boucher's Venus haunted him; recol- lections of Themidor's romance, of the exqui- site Rosette pursued him. Furious, he rose and to rid himself of the obsession, with all his strength he inhaled that pure essence of spikenard, so dear to Orientals and so repulsive to Europeans because of its pronounced odor of valerian. He was stunned by the violence of the shock. As though pounded by hammer strokes, the filigranes of the delicate odor dis- appeared; he profited by the period of respite to escape the dead centuries, the antiquated fumes, and to enter, as he formerly had done, less limited or more recent works\.\s

He had of old loved to lull himself with perfumes. He used effects analogous to those of the poets, and employed the admirable order of certain pieces of Baudelaire, such as Irreparable and le Balcon, where the last of the five lines composing the strophe is the echo of the first verse and returns, like a re- frain, to steep the soul in infinite depths of melancholy and languor\.\s

He strayed into reveries evoked by those aromatic stanzas, suddenly brought to his point of departure, to the motive of his medita- tion, by the return of the initial theme, reap- pearing, at stated intervals, in the fragrant orchestration of the poem\.\s

He actually wished to saunter through an astonishing, diversified landscape, and he began with a sonorous, ample phrase that sud- denly opened a long vista of fields for him\.\s

With his vaporizers, he injected an essence formed of ambrosia, lavender and sweet peas into this room; this formed an essence which, when distilled by an artist, deserves the name by which it is known : "extract of wild grass" ; into this he introduced an exact blend of tube- rose, orange flower and almond, and forthwith artificial lilacs sprang into being, while the linden-trees rustled, their thin emanations, imitated by extract of London tilia, drooping earthward\.\s

This décor, arranged with a few broad lines, receding as far as the eye could reach, under his closed lids, he introduced a light rain of human and half feline essences, possessing the aroma of petticoats, breathing of the pow- dered, painted woman, the stephanotis, ayapana, opopanax, champala, sarcanthus and cypress wine, to which he added a dash of syringa, in order to give to the artificial life of paints which they exhaled, a suggestion of natural dewy laughter and pleasures enjoyed in the open air\.\s

Then, through a ventilator, he permitted these fragrant waves to escape, only preserv- ing the field which he renewed, compelling it to return in his strophes like a ritornello\.\s

The women had gradually disappeared. Now the plain had grown solitary. Suddenly, on the enchanted horizon, factories appeared whose tall chimneys flared like bowls of punch\.\s

The odor of factories and of chemical pro- ducts now passed with the breeze which was simulated by means of fans; nature exhaled its sweet effluvia amid this putrescence\.\s

Des Esseintes warmed a pellet of storax, and a singular odor, at once repugnant and exqui- site, pervaded the room. It partook of the delicious fragrance of jonquil and of the stench of gutta percha and coal oil. He dis- infected his hands, inserted his resin in a her- metically sealed box, and the factories disap- peared\.\s

Then, among the revived vapors of the lindens and meadow grass, he threw several drops of new mown hay, and, amid this magic site for the moment despoiled of its lilacs, sheaves of hay were piled up, introducing a new season and scattering their fine effluence into these summer odors\.\s

At last, when he had sufficiently enjoyed this sight, he suddenly scattered the exotic per- fumes, emptied his vaporizers, threw in his concentrated spirits, poured his balms, and, in the exasperated and stifling heat of the room there rose a crazy sublimated nature, a para- doxical nature which was neither genuine nor charming, reuniting the tropical spices and the peppery breath of Chinese sandal wood and Jamaica hediosmia with the French odors of jasmine, hawthorn and verbena. Regard- less of seasons and climates he forced trees of diverse essences into life, and flowers with conflicting fragrances and colors. By the clash of these tones he created a general, non- descript, unexpected, strange perfume in which reappeared, like an obstinate refrain, the decorative phrase of the beginning, the odor of the meadows fanned by the lilacs and lin- dens\.\s

Suddenly a poignant pain seized him; he felt as though wimbles were drilling into his temples. Opening his eyes he found himself in his dressing room, seated in front of his table. Stupefied, he painfully walked across the room to the window which he half opened. A puff of wind dispelled the stifling atmos- phere which was enveloping him. To exercise his limbs, he walked up and down gazing at the ceiling where crabs and sea-wrack stood out in relief against a background as light in color as the sands of the seashore. A sim- ilar décor covered the plinths and bordered the partitions which were covered with Japa- nese sea-green crêpe, slightly wrinkled, imi- tating a river rippled by the wind. In this light current swam a rose petal, around which circled a school of tiny fish painted with two strokes of the brush\.\s

But his eyelids remained heavy. He ceased to pace about the short space between the bap- tistery and the bath; he leaned against the window. His dizziness ended. He carefully stopped up the vials, and used the occasion to arrange his cosmetics. Since his arrival at Fontenay he had not touched them; and now was quite astonished to behold once more this collection formerly visited by so many women. The flasks and jars were lying heaped up against each other. Here, a porcelain box contained a marvelous white cream which, when applied on the cheeks, turns to a tender rose color, under the action of the air — to such a true flesh-color that it procures the very illusion of a skin touched with blood; there, lacquer objects incrustd with mother of pearl enclosed Japanese gold and Athenian green, the color of the cantharis wing, gold and green which change to deep purple when wetted; there were jars filled with filbert paste, the serkis of the harem, emulsions of lilies, lotions of strawberry water and elders for the complexion, and tiny bottles filled with solutions of Chinese ink and rose water for the eyes. There were tweezers, scissors, rouge and powder-puffs, files and beauty patches\.\s

He handled this collection, formerly bought to please a mistress who swooned under the in- fluence of certain aromatics and balms, — a nervous, unbalanced woman who loved to steep the nipples of her breasts in perfumes, but who never really experienced a delicious and overwhelming ecstacy save when her head was scraped with a comb or when she could inhale, amid caresses, the odor of perspiration, or the plaster of unfinished houses on rainy days, or of dust splashed by huge drops of rain during summer storms\.\s

He mused over these memories, and one afternoon spent at Pantin through idleness and curiosity, in company with this woman at the home of one of her sisters, returned to him, stirring in him a forgotten world of old ideas and perfumes; while the two women prattled and displayed their gowns, he had drawn near the window and had seen, through the dusty panes, the muddy street sprawling before him, and had heard the repeated sounds of galoches over the puddles of the pavement\.\s

This scene, already far removed, came to him suddenly, strangely and vividly. Pantin was there before him, animated and throbbing in this greenish and dull mirror into which his unseeing eyes plunged. A hallucination transported him far from Fontenay. Beside reflecting the street, the mirror brought back thoughts it had once been instrumental in evoking, and plunged in revery, he repeated to himself this ingenious, sad and comforting composition he had formerly written upon re- turning to Paris: "Yes, the season of downpours is come. Now behold water-spouts vomiting as they rush over the pavements, and rubbish mari- nates in puddles that fill the holes scooped out of the macadam \.\s

"Under a lowering sky, in the damp air, the walls of houses have black perspiration and their air-holes are fetid; the loathsomeness of existence increases and melancholy overwhelms one; the seeds of vileness which each person harbors in his soul, sprout. The craving for vile debaucheries seizes austere people and base desires grow rampant in the brains of respectable men\.\s

"And yet I warm myself, here before a cheerful fire. From a basket of blossoming flowers comes the aroma of balsamic benzoin, geranium and the whorl-flowered bent-grass which permeates the room. In the very month of November, at Pantin, in the rue de Paris, springtime persists. Here in my solitude I laugh at the fears of families which, to shun the approaching cold weather, escape on every steamer to Cannes and to other winter resorts\.\s

"Inclement nature does nothing to contri- bute to this extraordinary phenomenon. It must be said that this artificial season at Pan- tin is the result of man's ingenuity\.\s

"In fact, these flowers are made of taffeta and are mounted on wire. The springtime odor filters through the window joints, exhaled from the neighboring factories, from the per- fumeries of Pinaud and Saint James\.\s

"For the workmen exhausted by the hard labors of the plants, for the young employes who too often are fathers, the illusion of a little healthy air is possible, thanks to these manu- facturers\.\s

"So, from this fabulous subterfuge of a country can an intelligent cure arise. The consumptive men about town who are sent to the South die, their end due to the change in their habits and to the nostalgia for the Parisian excesses which destroyed them. Here, under an artificial climate, libertine mem- ories will reappear, the languishing feminine emanations evaporated by the factories. In- stead of the deadly ennui of provincial life, the doctor can thus platonically substitute for his patient the atmosphere of the Parisian women and of boudoirs. Most often, all that is necessary to effect the cure is for the sub- ject to have a somewhat fertile imagination\.\s

"Since, nowadays, nothing genuine exists, since the wine one drinks and the liberty one boldly proclaims are laughable and a sham, since it really needs a healthy dose of good will to believe that the governing classes are respectable and that the lower classes are worthy of being assisted or pitied, it seems to me," concluded Des Esseintes, "to be neither ridiculous nor senseless, to ask of my fellow men a quantity of illusion barely equivalent to what they spend daily in idiotic ends, so as to be able to convince themselves that the town of Pantin is an artificial Nice or a Menton\.\s

"But all this does not prevent me from see- ing," he said, forced by weakness from his meditations, "that I must be careful to mis- trust these delicious and abominable prac- tices which may ruin my constitution." He sighed. "Well, well, more pleasures to mode- rate, more precautions to be taken." And he passed into his study, hoping the more easily to escape the spell of these per- fumes\.\s

He opened the window wide, glad to be able to breath the air. But it suddenly seemed to him that the breeze brought in a vague tide of bergamot with which jasmine and rose water were blent. Agitated, he asked himself whether he was not really under the yoke of one of those possessions exercised in the Middle Ages. The odor changed and was transformed, but it persisted. A faint scent of tincture of tolu, of balm of Peru and of saffron, united by several drams of amber and musk, now issued from the sleeping village and suddenly, the metamorphosis was effected, those scattered elements were blent, and once more the frangipane spread from the valley of Fontenay as far as the fort, assailing his exhausted nostrils, once more shattering his helpless nerves and throwing him into such a prostration that he fell unconscious on the window sill\.\s

">•..\* ■\*■£!•.\*#• vW\* wji HE servants were seized with alarm and lost no time in calling the Font- enay physician who was complete- ly at sea about Des Esseintes' con- dition. He mumbled a few medical terms, felt his pulse, examined the invalid's tongue, unsucessfully sought to make him speak, prescribed sedatives and rest, promised to return on the morrow and, at the negative sign made by Des Esseintes who recovered enough strength to chide the zeal of his serv- ants and to bid farewell to this intruder, he departed and was soon retailing through the village the eccentricities of this house whose decorations had positively amazed him and held him rooted to the spot\.\s

To the great astonishment of the domestics, who no longer dared stir from the servants' quarters, their master recovered in a few days, and they surprised him drumming against the window panes, gazing at the sky with a troubled look\.\s

One afternoon the bells were peremptorily rung and Des Esseintes commanded his trunks to be packed for a long voyage\.\s

While the man and the woman were choos- ing, under his guidance, the necessary equip- ment, he feverishly paced up and down the cabin of the dining room, consulted the time- tables of the steamers, walked through his study where he continued to gaze at the clouds with an air at once impatient and satisfied\.\s

For a whole week, the weather had been atrocious. Streams of soot raced unceasing across the grey fields of the sky-masses of clouds like rocks torn from the earth\.\s

At intervals, showers swept downward, engulfing the valley with torrents of rain\.\s

Today, the appearance of the heavens had changed. The rivers of ink had evaporated and vanished, and the harsh contours of the clouds had softened. The sky was uniformly flat and covered with a brackish film. Little by little, this film seemed to drop, and a watery haze covered the country side. The rain no longer fell in cataracts as on the pre- ceding evening; instead, it fell incessantly, fine, sharp and penetrating; it inundated the walks, covered the roads with its innumerable threads which joined heaven and earth. The livid sky threw a wan leaden light on the village which was now transformed into a lake of mud pricked by needles of water that dotted the puddles with drops of bright silver. In this desolation of nature, everything was gray, and only the housetops gleamed against the dead tones of the walls\.\s

"What weather!" sighed the aged domestic, placing on a chair the clothes which his mas- ter had requested of him — an outfit formerly ordered from London\.\s

Des Esseintes' sole response was to rub his hands and to sit down in front of a book-case with glass doors. He examined the socks which had been placed nearby for his inspec- tion. For a moment he hesitated on the color; then he quickly studied the melancholy day and earnestly bethought himself of the effect he desired. He chose a pair the color of feuil- lemort, quickly slipped them on, put on a pair of buttoned shoes, donned the mouse grey suit which was checqured with a lava gray and dotted with black, placed a small 1 hunting cap on his head and threw a blue raincoat over him. He reached the railway station, followed by the servant who almost bent un- der the weight of a trunk, a valise, a carpet bag, a hat box and a traveling rug containing umbrellas and canes. He informed his serv- ant that the date of his return was problem- atical, that he might return in a year, in a month, in a week, or even sooner, and enjoined him to change nothing' in the house. He gave a sum of money which he thought would be necessary for the upkeep of the house during his absence, and climbed into the coach, leav- ing the old man astounded, arms waving and mouth gaping, behind the rail, while the train got under way\.\s

He was alone in his compartment; a vague and dirty country side, such as one sees through an aquarium of troubled water, receded ra- pidly behind the train which was lashed by the rain. Plunged in his meditations, Des Esseintes closed his eyes\.\s

Once more, this so ardently desired and finally attained solitude had ended in a fear- ful distress. This silence which formerly would have appeared as a compensation for the stupidities heard for years, now weighed on him with an unendurable burden. One morning he had awakened, as uneasy as a prisoner in his cell; his lips had sought to articulate sounds, tears had welled to his eyes and he had found it impossible to breathe, suffocating like a person who had sobbed for hours\.\s

Seized with a desire to walk, to behold a human figure, to speak to someone, to mingle with life, he had proceeded to call his domes- tics, employing a specious pretext; but con- versation with them was impossible. Besides the fact that these old people, bowed down by years of silence and the customs of attend- ants, were almost dumb, the distance at which Des Esseintes had always kept them was hard- ly conducive to inducing them to open their mouths now. Too, they possessed dull brains and were incapable of answering his ques- tions other than by monosyllables\.\s

It was impossible, therefore, to find any solace in their society; but a new phenom- enon now occurred. The reading of the novels of Dickens, which he had lately un- dertaken to soothe his nerves and which had only produced effects the opposite of those hoped for, began slowly to act in an un- expected manner, bringing on visions of English existence on which he mused for hours; little by little, in these fictive contem- plations, ideas insinuated themselves, ideas of the voyage brought to an end, of verified dreams on which was imposed the desire to experience new impressions, and thus escape the exhausting cerebral debauches intent upon beating in the void\.\s

With its mist and rain, this abominable weather aided his thoughts still more, by rein- forcing the memories of his readings, by plac- ing under his eyes the unfading image of a land of fog and mud, and by refusing to let his ideas wander idly\.\s

One day, able to endure it no longer, he had instantly decided. Such was his haste that he even took flight before the designated time, for he wished to shun the present moment, wished to find himself jostled and shouldered in the hubbub of crowded streets and railway stations\.\s

"I breathe!" he exclaimed when the train moderated its waltz and stopped in the Sceaux station rotunda, panting while its wheels per- formed its last pirouettes\.\s

Once in the boulevard d'Enfer, he hailed a coachman. In some strange manner he ex- tracted a pleasure from the fact that he was so hampered with trunks and rugs. By prom- ising a substantial tip, he reached an under- standing with the man of the brown trousers and red waistcoat\.\s

"At once!" he commanded. "And when you reach the rue de Rivoli, stop in front of Galignani's Messenger." Before departing, he desired to buy a Baedeker or Murray guide of London\.\s

The carriage got under way heavily, rais- ing rings of mud around its wheels and mov- ing through marsh-like ground. Beneath the gray sky which seemed suspended over the house tops, water gushed down the thick sides of the high walls, spouts oveflowed, and the streets were coated with a slimy dirt in which passersby slipped. Thickset men paused on sidewalks bespattered by passing omnibuses, and women, their skirts tucked up to the knees, bent under umbrellas, flattened them- selves against the shops to avoid being splashed\.\s

The rain entered diagonally through the carriage doors. Des Esseintes was obliged to lift the carriage windows down which the water ran, while drops of mud furrowed their way like fireworks on each side of the fiacre. To the monotonous sound of sacks of peas shaking against his head through the action of the showers pattering against the trunks and on the carriage rug, Des Esseintes dreamed of his voyage. This already was a partial realization of his England, enjoyed in Paris through the means of this frightful weather : a rainy, colossal London smelling of molten metal and of soot, ceaselessly steam- ing and smoking in the fog now spread out before his eyes; then rows of docks sprawled ahead, as far as the eye could reach, docks full of cranes, hand winches and bales, swarming with men perched on masts or astride yard sails, while myriads of other men on the quays pushed hogsheads into cellars\.\s

All this was transpiring in vast warehouses along the river banks which were bathed by the muddy and dull water of an imaginary Thames, in a forest of masts and girders pierc- ing the wan clouds of the firmament, while trains rushed past at full speed or rumbled underground uttering horrible cries and vom- iting waves of smoke, and while, through every street, monstrous and gaudy and infa- mous advertisements flared through the eter- nal twilight, and strings of carriages passed between rows of preoccupied and taciturn people whose eyes stared ahead and whose elbows pressed closely against their bodies\.\s

Des Esseintes shivered deliciously to feel himself mingling in this terrible world of merchants, in this insulating mist, in this in- cessant activity, in this pitiless gearing which ground millions of the disinherited, urged by the comfort-distilling philanthropists to recite Biblical verses and to sing psalms\.\s

Then the vision faded suddenly with a jolt of the fiacre which made him rebound in his seat. He gazed through the carriage win- dows. Night had fallen ; gas burners blinked through the fog, amid a yellowish halo; rib- bons of fire swam in puddles of water and seemed to revolve around wheels of carriages moving through liquid and dirty flame. He endeavored to get his bearings, perceived the Carrousel and suddenly, unreasoningly, per- haps through the simple effect of the high fall from fanciful spaces, his thought reverted to a very trivial incident. He remembered that his domestic had neglected to put a tooth brush in his belongings. Then, he passed in review the list of objects packed up; every- thing had been placed in his valise, but the annoyance of having omitted this brush per- sisted until the driver, pulling up, broke the chain of his reminiscences and regrets\.\s

He was in the rue de Rivoli, in front of Galignanis Messenger. Separated by a door whose unpolished glass was covered with in- scriptions and with strips of passe-partout framing newspaper clippings and telegrams, were two vast shop windows crammed with albums and books. He drew near, attracted by the sight of these books bound in parrot- blue and cabbage-green paper, embossed with silver and golden letterings. All this had an anti-Parisian touch, a mercantile appearance, more brutal and yet less wretched that those worthless bindings of French books; here and there, in the midst of the opened albums, re- producing humorous scenes from Du Maurier and John Leech, or the delirious cavalcades of Caldecott, some French novels appeared, blending placid and satisfied vulgarities to these rich verjuice hues. He tore himself away from his contemplation, opened the door and entered a large library which was full of people. Seated strangers unfolded maps and jabbered in strange languages. A clerk brought him a complete collection of guides. He, in turns, sat down to examine the books with their flexible covers. He glanced through them and paused at a page of the Baedeker describing the London museums. He became interested in the laconic and exact details of the guide books, but his attention wandered away from the old English paintings to the moderns which attracted him much more. He recalled certain works he had seen at inter- national expositions, and imagined that he might possibly behold them one more at Lon- don: pictures by Millais — the Eve of Saint Agnes with its lunar clear green; pictures by Watts, strange in color, checquered with gamboge and indigo, pictures sketched by a sick Gustave Moreau, painted by an anaemic Michael Angelo and retouched by a Raphael submerged in blue. Among other canvasses, he recalled a Denunication of Cain, an Ida, some Eves where, in the strange and mys- terious mixture of these three masters, rose the personality, at once refined and crude, of a learned and dreamy Englishman tormented by the bewitchment of cruel tones\.\s

These canvasses thronged through his mem- ory. The clerk, astonished by this client who was so lost to the world, asked him which of the guides he would take. Des Esseintes re- mained dumbfounded, then excused himself, bought a Baedeker and departed. The damp- ness froze him to the spot; the wind blew from the side, lashing the arcades with whips of rain. "Proceed to that place," he said to the driver, pointing with his finger to the end of a passage where a store formed the angle of the rue de Rivoli and the rue Castiglione and, with its whitish panes of glass illumed from within, resembled a vast night lamp burning through the wretchedness of this mist, in the misery of this crazy weather\.\s

It was the Bodega. Des Esseintes strayed into a large room sustained by iron pillars and lined, on each side of its walls, with tall barrels placed on their ends upon gantries, hooped with iron, their paunches with wooden loopholes imitating a rack of pipes and from whose notches hung tulip-shaped glasses, upside down. The lower sides were bored and hafted with stone cocks. These hogsheads painted with a royal coat of arms displayed the names of their drinks, the con- tents, and the prices on colored labels and stated that they were to be purchased by the cask, by the bottle or by the glass\.\s

In the passage between these rows of casks, under the gas jets which flared at one end of an ugly iron-gray chandelier, tables covered with baskets of Palmers biscuits, hard and salty cakes, plates piled with mince pies and sandwiches concealing strong, mustardy con- coctions under their unsavory covers, suc- ceeded each other between a row of seats and as far as the end of this cellar which was lined with still more hogsheads carrying tiny bar- rels on their tops, resting on their sides and bearing their names stamped with hot met; into the oak\.\s

An odor of alcohol assailed Des Esseinte upon taking a seat in this room heavy wit, strong wines. He looked about him. Hen the tuns were placed in a straight line, exhibi ing the whole series of ports, the sweet or sou: wines the color of mahogany or amarantl and distingushed by such laudatory epithei as old port, light delicate, Cockburn's ver fine, magnificent old Regina. There, protruc ing formidable abdomens pressed closel against each other, huge casks contained th martial Spanish wines, sherry and its dériva tives, the san lucar, pasto, pale dry, oloroso and amontilla\.\s

The cellar was filled with people. Leaning on his elbows on a corner of the table, Des Esseintes sat waiting for his glass of port or- dered of a gentleman who was opening ex- plosive sodas contained in oval bottles which recalled, while exaggerating, the capsules of gelatine and gluten used by pharmacies to conceal the tase of certain medicines\.\s

Englishmen were everywhere, — awkward pale clergymen garbed in black from head to foot, with soft hats, laced shoes, very long coats dotted in the front with tiny buttons, clean-shaved chins, round spectacles, greasy flat hair; faces, of tripe dealers and mastiff snouts with apoplectic necks, ears like toma- toes, vinous cheeks, blood-shot crazy eyes, whiskers that looked like those of some big monkeys ; farther away, at the end of the wine store, a long row of tow-headed individuals, their chins covered with white hair like the end of an artichoke, reading, through a micro- scope, the tiny roman type of an English news- paper; opposite him, a sort of American com- modore, dumpy and thick-set, with smoked skin and bulbous nose, was sleeping, a cigar planted in the hairy aperture of his mouth. Opposite were frames hanging on the wall en- closing advertisements of Champagne, the trade marks of Perrier and Roederer, Heid- sieck and Mumm, and a hooded head of a monk, with the name of Dom Perignon, Rheims, written in Gothic characters\.\s

A certain enervation enveloped Des Essein- tes in this guard house atmosphere; stunned by the prattle of the Englishmen conversing among themselves, he fell into a revery, evok- ing, before the purple port which filled the glasses, the creatures of Dickens that love this drink so very much, imaginatively peopling the cellar with new personages, seeing here, the white head of hair and the ruddy com- plexion of Mr. Wickfield; there, the phleg- matic, crafty face and the vengeful eye of Mr. Tulkinghorn, the melancholy solicitor in Bleak House. Positively, all of them broke away from his memory and installed them- selves in the Bodega, with their peculiar char- acteristics and their betraying gestures. His memories, brought to life by his recent read- ings, attained a startling precision. The city of the romancer, the house illumined and warmed, so perfectly tended and isolated, the bottles poured slowly by little Dorrit and Dora Copperfield and Tom Pinch's sister, ap- peared to him sailing like an ark in a deluge of mire and soot. Idly he wandered through this imaginary London, happy to be sheltered, as he listened to the sinister shrieks of tugs plying up and down the Thames. His glass was empty. Despite the heavy fumes in this cellar, caused by the cigars and pipes, he expe- rienced a cold shiver when he returned to the reality of the damp and fetid weather\.\s

He called for a glass of amontillado, and suddenly, beside this pale, dry wine, the leni- tive, sweetish stories of the English author were routed, to be replaced by the pitiless revulsives and the grievous irritants of Edgar Allen Poe ; the cold nightmares of The Cask of Amontillado, of the man immured in a vault, assailed him; the ordinary placid faces of American and English drinkers who occu- pied the room, appeared to him to reflect in- voluntary frightful thoughts, to be harboring instinctive, odious plots. Then he perceived that he was left alone here and that the dinner hour was near. He payed his bill, tore himself from his seat and dizzily gained the door. He received a wet slap in the face upon leav- ing the place. The street lamps moved their tiny fans of flame which failed to illuminate; the sky had dropped to the very houses. Des Esseintes viewed the arcades of the rue de Rivoli, drowned in the gloom and submerged by water, and it seemed to him that he was in the gloomy tunnel under the Thames. Twitch- ings of his stomach recalled him to reality. He regained his carriage, gave the driver the 'address of the tavern in the rue d'Amsterdam near the station, and looked at his watch : seven 'o'clock. He had just time to eat dinner; the train would not leave until ten minutes of nine, and he counted on his fingers, reckoning the hours of travel from Dieppe to Newhaven, saying to himself: "If the figures of the time- table are correct, I shall be at London tomor- row at twelve thirty." The fiacre stopped in front of the tavern. Once more, Des Esseintes alighted and entered a long dark plain room, divided into parti- tions as high as a man's waist, — a series of compartments resembling stalls. In this room, wider towards the door, many beer pumps stood on a counter, near hams having the color of old violins, red lobsters, marinated mack- erel, with onions and carrots, slices of lemon, bunches of laurel and thym, juniper berries and long peppers swimming in thick sauce\.\s

One of these boxes was unoccupied. He took it and called a young black-suited man who bent forward, muttering something in a jargon he could not understand. While the cloth was being laid, Des Esseintes viewed his neighbors. They were islanders, just as at the Bodega, with cold faience eyes, crimson complexions, thoughtful or haughty airs. They were reading foreign newspapers. The only ones eating were unescorted women in pairs, robust English women with boyish faces, large teeth, ruddy apple cheeks, long hands and legs. They attacked, with genuine ardor, a rumpsteak pie, a warm meat dish cooked in mushroom sauce and covered with a crust, like a pie\.\s

After having lacked appetite for such a long time, he remained amazed in the pres- ence of these hearty eaters whose voracity- whetted his hunger. He ordered oxtail soup and enjoyed it heartily. Then he glanced at the menu for the fish, ordered a haddock and, seized with a sudden pang of hunger at the sight of so many people relishing their food, he ate some roast beef and drank two pints of ale, stimulated by the flavor of a cow-shed which this fine, pale beer exhaled\.\s

His hunger persisted. He lingered over a piece of blue Stilton chese, made quick work of a rhubarb tart, and to vary his drinking, quenched his thirst with porter, that dark beer which smells of Spanish licorice but which does not have its sugary taste\.\s

He breathed deeply. Not for years had he eaten and drunk so much. This change of habit, this choice of unexpected and solid food had awakened his stomach from its long sleep. He leaned back in his chair, lit a cigarrette and prepared to sip his coffee into which gin had been poured\.\s

The rain continued to fall. He heard it patter on the panes which formed a ceiling at the end of the room; it fell in cascades down the spouts. No one was stirring in the room\.\s

Everybody, utterly weary, was indulging him- self in front of his wine glass\.\s

Tongues were now wagging freely. As al- most all the English men and women raised their eyes as they spoke, Des Esseintes con- cluded that they were talking of the bad weather; not one of them laughed. He threw a delighted glance on their suits whose color and cut did not perceivably differ from that of others, and he experienced a sense of content- ment in not being out of tune in this environ- ment, of being, in some way, though super- ficially, a naturalized London citizen. Then he suddenly started. "And what about the train?" he asked himself. He glanced at his watch: ten minutes to eight. "I still have nearly a half-hour to remain here." Once more, he began to muse upon the plan he had conceived\.\s

In his sedentary life, only two countries had ever attracted him: Holland and England\.\s

He had satisfied the first of his desires. Un- able to keep away, one fine day he had left Paris and visited the towns of the Low Lands, one by one\.\s

In short, nothing but cruel disillusions had resulted from this trip. He had fancied a Hol- land after the works of Teniers and Steen, of Rembrandt and Ostade, in his usual way imagining rich, unique and incomparable Ghettos, had thought of amazing kermesses, continual debauches in the country sides, in- tent for a view of that patriarchal simplicity, that jovial lusty spirit celebrated by the old masters\.\s

Certainly, Haarlem and Amsterdam had en- raptured him. The unwashed people, seen in their country farms, really resembled those types painted by Van Ostade, with their un- couth children and their old fat women, em- bossed with huge breasts and enormous bellies. But of the unrestrained joys, the drunken fam- ily carousals, not a whit. He had to admit that the Dutch paintings at the Louvre had misled him. They had simply served as a springing board for his dreams. He had rushed forward on a false track and had wan- dered into capricious visions, unable to dis- cover in the land itself, anything of that real and magical country which he had hoped to behold, seeing nothing at all, on the plots of ground strewn with barrels, of the dances of petticoated and stockinged peasants crying for very joy, stamping their feet out of sheer happiness and laughing loudly\.\s

Decidedly nothing of all this was visible\.\s

Holland was a country just like any other country, and what was more, a country in no wise primitive, not at all simple, for the Pro- testant religion with its formal hypocricies and solemn rigidness held sway here\.\s

The memory of that disenchantment re- turned to him. Once more he glanced at his watch: ten minutes still separated him from the train's departure. "It is about time to ask for the bill and leave," he told himself\.\s

He felt an extreme heaviness in his stomach and through his body. "Come!" he addressed himself, "let us drink and screw up our cour- age." He filled a glass of brandy, while ask- ing for the reckoning. An individual in black suit and with a napkin under one arm, a sort of majordomo with a bald and sharp head, a greying beard without moustaches, came forward. A pencil rested behind his ear and he assumed an attitude like a singer, one foot in front of the other; he drew a note book from his pocket, and without glancing at his paper, his eyes fixed on the ceiling, near a chandelier, wrote while counting. "There you are!' he said, tearing the sheet from his note book and giving it to Des Esseintes who looked at him with curiosity, as though he were a rare animal. What a surprising John Bull, he thought, contemplating this phlegmatic person who had, because of his shaved mouth, the appearance of a wheelsman of an Amer- ican ship\.\s

At this moment, the tavern door opened. Several persons entered bringing with them an odor of wet dog to which was blent the smell of coal wafted by the wind through the opened door. Des Esseintes was incapable of moving a limb. A soft warm languor pre- vented him from even stretching out his hand to light a cigar. He told himself: "Come now, let us get up, we must take ourselves off." Immediate objections thwarted his orders. What is the use of moving, when one can tra- vel on a chair so magnificently? Was he not even now in London, whose aromas and atmos- phere and inhabitants, whose food and uten- sils surrounded him? For what could he hope, if not new disillusionments, as had happened to him in Holland? He had but sufficient time to race to the station. An overwhelming aversion for the trip, an imperious need of remaining tranquil, seized him with a more and more obvious and stubborn strength. Pensively, he let the min- utes pass, thus cutting off all retreat, and he said to himself, "Now it would be necessary to rush to the gate and crowd into the baggage room! What ennui! What a bore that would be!" Then he repeated to himself once more, "In fine, I have experienced and seen all I wished to experience and see. I have been filled with English life since my departure. I would be mad indeed to go and, by an awk- ward trip, lose those imperishable sensations. How stupid of me to have sought to disown my old ideas, to have doubted the efficacy of the docile phantasmagories of my brain, like a very fool to have thought of the necessity, of the curiosity, of the interest of an excur- sion!" "Well!" he exclaimed, consulting his watch, "it is now time to return home." This time, he arose and left, ordered the driver to bring him back to the Sceaux sta- tion, and returned with his trunks, packages, valises, rugs, umbrellas and canes, to Fontenay, feeling the physical stimulation and the moral fatigue of a man coming back to his home after a long and dangerous voyage\.\s

URING the days following his re- turn, Des Esseintes contemplated his books and experienced, at the thought that he might have been separated from them for a long period, a satisfaction as complete as that which comes after a protracted absence. Under the touch of this sentiment, these objects possessed a renewed novelty to his mind, and he per- ceived in them beauties forgotten since the time he had purchased them\.\s

Everything there, books, bric-a-bric and furniture, had an individual charm for him. His bed seemed the softer by comparison with the hard bed he would have occupied in Lon- don. The silent, discreet ministrations of his servants charmed him, exhausted as he was at the thought of the loud loquacity of hotel attendants. The methodical organization of his life made him feel that it was especially to be envied since the possibility of traveling had become imminent\.\s

He steeped himself in this bath of habitude, to which artificial regrets insinuated a tonic quality\.\s

But his books chiefly preoccupied him. He examined them, re-arranged them on the shelves, anxious to learn if the hot weather and the rains had damaged the bindings and in- jured the rare paper\.\s

He began by moving all his Latin books; then he arranged in a new order the special works of Archelaus, Albert le Grand, Lully and Arnaud de Villanova treating of cabbala and the occult sciences; finally he examined his modern books, one by one, and was happy to perceive that all had remained intact\.\s

This collection had cost him a considerable sum of money. He would not suffer, in his library, the books he loved to resemble other similar volumes, printed on cotton paper with the watermarks of Auvergne\.\s

Formerly in Paris he had ordered made, for himself alone, certain volumes which special- ly engaged mechanics printed from hand presses. Sometimes, he applied to Perrin of Lyons, whose graceful, clear type was suitable for archaic reprints of old books. At other times he dispatched orders to England or to America for the execution of modern litera- ture and the works of the present century\.\s

Still again, he applied to a house in Lille, which for centuries had possessed a complete set of Gothic characters; he also would send requisitions to the old Enschede printing house of Haarlem whose foundry still has the stamps and dies of certain antique letters\.\s

He had followed the same method in select- ing his papers. Finally growing weary of the snowy Chinese and the nacreous and gilded Japanese papers, the white Whatmans, the brown Hollands, the buff-colored Turkeys and Seychal Mills, and equally disgusted with all mechanically manufactured sheets, he had ordered special laid paper in the mould, from the old plants of Vire which still employ the pestles once in use to grind hemp. To intro- duce a certain variety into his collection, he had repeatedly brought from London pre- pared stuffs, paper interwoven with hairs, and as a mark of his disdain for bibliophiles, he had a Lubeck merchant prepare for him an improved candle paper of bottle-blue tint, clear and somewhat brittle, in the pulp of which the straw was replaced by golden spangles resembling those which dot Danzig brandy\.\s

Under these circumstances he had succeeded in procuring unique books, adopting obsolete formats which he had bound by Lortic, by Trautz, by Bauzonnet or Chambolle, by the successors of Cape, in irreproachable covers of old silk, stamped cow hide, Cape goat skin, in full bindings with compartments and in mosaic designs, protected by tabby or moire watered silk, ecclesiastically ornamented with clasps and corners, and sometimes even en- amelled by Gruel Engelmann with silver oxide and clear enamels\.\s

Thus, with the marvelous episcopical let- tering used in the old house of Le Clere, he had Baudelaire's works printed in a large format recalling that of ancient missals, on a very light and spongy Japan paper, soft as elder pith and imperceptibly tinted with a light rose hue through its milky white. This edition, limited to one copy, printed with a velvety black Chinese ink, had been covered outside and then recovered within with a won- derful genuine sow skin, chosen among a thou- sand, the color of flesh, its surface spotted where the hairs had been and adorned with black silk stamped in cold iron in miraculous designs by a great artist\.\s

That day, Des Esseintes took this incom- parable book from his shelves and handled it devotedly, once more reading certain pieces which seemed to him, in this simple but in- estimable frame, more than ordinarily pene- trating\.\s

His admiration for this writer was unquali- fied. According to him, until Baudelaire's ad- vent in literature, writers had limited them- selves to exploring the surfaces of the soul or to penetrating into the accessible and illum- inated caverns, restoring here and there the layers of capital sins, studying their veins, their growths, and noting, like Balzac for example, the layers of strata in the soul pos- sessed by the monomania of a passion, by am- bition, by avarice, by paternal stupidity, or by senile love\.\s

What had been treated heretofore was the abundant health of virtues and of vices, the tranquil functioning of commonplace brains, and the practical reality of contemporary ideas, without any ideal of sickly depravation or of any beyond. In short, the discoverines of those analysts had stopped at the specula- tions of good or evil classified by the Church. It was the simple investigation, the conven- tional examination of a botanist minutely ob- serving the anticipated development of nor- mal efflorescence abounding in the natural earth\.\s

Baudelaire had gone farther. He had de- scended to the very bowels of the inexhaust- ible mine, had involved his mind in abandoned and unfamiliar levels, and come to those dis- tricts of the soul where monstrous vegetations of thought extend their branches\.\s

There, near those confines, the haunt of aberrations and of sickness, of the mystic lock- jaw, the warm fever of lust, and the typhoids and vomits of crime, he had found, brooding under the gloomy clock of Ennui, the terrify- ing spectre of the age of sentiments and ideas\.\s

He had revealed the morbid psychology of the mind which has attained the October of its sensations, recounted the symptoms of souls summoned by grief and licensed by spleen, and shown the increasing decay of impres- sions while the enthusiasms and beliefs of youth are enfeebled and the only thing re- maining is the arid memory of miseries borne, intolerances endured and affronts suffered by intelligences oppressed by a ridiculous destiny\.\s

He had pursued all the phases of that lam- entable autumn, studying the human creature, quick to exasperation, ingenious in deceiving himself, compelling his thoughts to cheat each other so as to suffer the more keenly, and frus- trating in advance all possible joy by his fac- ulty of analysis and observation\.\s

Then, in this vexed sensibility of the soul, in this ferocity of reflection that repels the restless ardor of devotions and the well-mean- ing outrages of charity, he gradually saw aris- ing the horror of those senile passions, those ripe loves, where one person yields while the other is still suspicious, where lassitude denies such couples the filial caresses whose apparent youthfulness seems new, and the maternal candors whose gentleness and comfort impart, in a sense, the engaging remorse of a vague incest\.\s

In magnificent pages he exposed his hybrid loves who were exasperated by the impotence in which they were overwhelmed, the haz- ardous deceits of narcotics and poisons invoked to aid in calming suffering and conquering ennui. At an epoch when literature attributed unhappiness of life almost exclusively to the mischances of unrequited love or to the jeal- ousies that attend adulterous love, he disre- garded such puerile maladies and probed into those wounds which are more fatal, more keen and deep, which arise from satiety, disillusion and scorn in ruined souls whom the present tortures, the past fills with loathing and the future frightens and menaces with despair\.\s

And the more Des Esseintes read Baude- laire, the more he felt the ineffable charm of this writer who, in an age when verse served only to portray the external semblance of beings and things, had succeeded in expressing the inexpressible in a muscular and brawny lan- guage; who, more than any other writer pos- sessed a marvelous power to define with a strange robustness of expression, the most fugitive and tentative morbidities of exhausted minds and sad souls\.\s

After Baudelaire's works, the number of French books given place in his shelves was strictly limited. He was completely indiffer- ent to those works which it is fashionable to praise. "The broad laugh of Rabelais," and "the deep comedy of Molière," did not succeed in diverting him, and the antipathy he felt against these farces was so great that he did not hesitate to liken them, in the point of art, to the capers of circus clowns\.\s

As for old poetry, he read hardly anything except Villon, whose melancholy ballads touched him, and, here and there, certain fragments from d'Aubigné, which stimulated his blood with the incredible vehemence of their apostrophes and curses\.\s

In prose, he cared little for Voltaire and Rousseau, and was unmoved even by Diderot, whose so greatly praised Salons he found strangely saturated with moralizing twaddle and futility; in his hatred toward all this balderdash, he limited himself almost exclu- sively to the reading of Christian eloquence, to the books of Bourdaloue and Bossuet whose sonorously embellished periods were impos- ing; but, still more, he relished suggestive ideas condensed into severe and strong phrases, such as those created by Nicole in his reflec- tions, and especially Pascal, whose austere pessimism and attrition deeply touched him\.\s

Apart from such books as these, French lite- rature began in his library with the nineteenth century\.\s

This section was divided into two groups, one of which included the ordinary, secular literature, and the other the Catholic litera- ture, a special but little known literature pub- lished by large publishing houses and circu- lated to the four corners of the earth\.\s

He had had the hardihood to explore such crypts as these, just as in the secular art he had discovered, under an enormous mass of in- sipid writings, a few books written by true masters\.\s

The distinctive character of this literature was the constant immutability of its ideas and language. Just as the Church perpetuated the primitive form of holy objects, so she has preserved the relics of her dogmas, piously retaining, as the frame that encloses them, the oratorical language of the celebrated century. As one of the Church's own writers, Ozanam, has put it, the Christian style needed only to make use of the dialect employed by Bour- daloue and by Bossuet to the exclusion of all else\.\s

In spite of this statement, the Church, more indulgent, closed its eyes to certain expres- sions, certain turns of style borrowed from the secular language of the same century, and the Catholic idiom had slightly purified it- self of its heavy and massive phrases, espe- cially cleaning itself, in Bossuet, of its pro- lixity and the painful rallying of its pronouns; but here ended the concessions, and others would doubtless have been purposeless for the prose sufficed without this ballast for the limited range of subjects to which the Church confined itself\.\s

Incapable of grappling with contemoprary life, of rendering the most simple aspects of things and persons visible and palpable, un- qualified to explain the complicated wiles of intellects indifferent to the benefits of salva- tion, this language was nevertheless excellent when it treated of abstract subjects. It proved valuable in the argument of a controversy, in the demonstration of a theory, in the obscurity of a commentary and, more than any other style, had the necessary authority to affirm, without any discussion, the intent of a doc- trine\.\s

Unfortunately, here as everywhere, the sanctuary had been invaded by a numerous army of pedants who smirched by their ignor- ance and lack of talent the Church's noble and austere attire. Further to profane it, devout women had interfered, and stupid sacristans and foolish salons had acclaimed as works of genius the wretched prattle of such women\.\s

Among such works, Des Esseintes had had the curiosity to read those of Madame Swet- chine, the Russian, whose house in Paris was the rendezvous of the most fervent Catholics. Her writings had filled him with insufferably horrible boredom ; they were more than mere- ly wretched: they were wretched in every way, resembling the echoes of a tiny chapel where the solemn worshippers mumble their prayers, asking news of one another in low voices, while they repeat with a deeply mys- terious air the common gossip of politics, weather forecasts and the state of the weather\.\s

But there was even worse: a female laureate licensed by the Institute, Madame Augustus Craven, author of Récit d'une soeur, of Eliane and Fleurange, puffed into reputation by the whole apostolic press. Never, no, never, had Des Esseintes imagined that any person could write such ridiculous nonsense. In the point of conception, these books were so ab- surd, and were written in such a disgusting style, that by these tokens they became almost remarkable and rare\.\s

It was not at all among the works of women that Des Esseintes, whose soul was completely jaded and whose nature was not inclined to sentimentality, could come upon a literary retreat suited to his taste\.\s

Yet he strove, with a diligence that no im- patience could overcome, to enjoy the works of a certain girl of genius, the blue-stocking pucelle of the group, but his efforts miscar- ried. He did not take to the Journal and the Lettres in which Eugenie de Guerin cele- brates, without discretion, the amazing talent of a brother who rhymed, with such clever- ness and grace that one must go to the works of de Jouy and Ecouchard Lebrun to find any- thing so novel and daring\.\s

He had also unavailingly attempted to com- prehend the delights of those works in which one may find such things as these : This morning I hung on papa's bed a cross which a little girl had given him yesterday. Or: Mimi and I are invited by Monsieur Loquiers to attend the consecration of a bell tomorrow. This does not dis- please me at all. Or wherein we find such important events as these : On my neck I have hung a medal of the Holy Virgin which Louise had brought me, as an amulet against cholera. Or poetry of this sort: O the lovely moonbeam which fell on the Bible I was reading! And, finally, such fine and penetrating ob- servations as these: When I see a man pass before a cru- cifix, lift his hat and make the sign of the Cross, I say to myself, 'There goes a Christian.' And she continued in this fashion, without pause, until after Maurice de Guerin had died, after which his sister bewailed him in other pages, written in a watery prose strewn here and there with bits of poems whose humiliating poverty ended by moving Des Esseintes to pity\.\s

Ah! it was hardly worth mentioning, but the Catholic party was not at all particular in the choice of its proteges and not at all artistic. Without exception, all these writers wrote in the pallid white prose of pensioners of a monastery, in a flowing movement of phrase which no astringent could counter- balance\.\s

So Des Esseintes, horror-stricken at such insipidities, entirely forsook this literature. But neither did he find atonement for his dis- appointments among the modern masters of the clergy. These latter were one-sided divines or impeccably correct controversialists, but the Christian language in their orations and books had ended by becoming impersonal and congealing into a rhetoric whose every move- ment and pause was anticipated, in a sequence of periods constructed after a single model. And, in fact, Des Esseintes discovered that all the ecclesiastics wrote in the same manner, with a little more or a little less abandon or emphasis, and there was seldom any variations between the bodiless patterns traded by Du- panloup or Landriot, La Bouillerie or Gaume, by Dom Gueranger or Ratisbonne, by Frep- pel or Perraud, by Ravignan or Gratry, by Olivan or Dosithée, by Didon or Chocarne\.\s

Des Esseintes had often pondered upon this matter. A really authentic talent, a supremely profound originality, a well-anchored convic- tion, he thought, was needed to animate this formal style which was too frail to support any thought that was unforseen or any thesis that was audacious\.\s

Yes, despite all this, there were several writers whose burning eloquence fused and shaped this language, notably Lacordaire, who was one of the few really great writers the Church had produced for many years\.\s

Immured, like his colleagues, in the narrow circle of orthodox speculations, likewise ob- liged to dissipate his energies in the exclu- sive consideration of those theories which had been expressed and consecrated by the Fathers of the Church and developed by the masters of the pulpit, he succeeded in inbuing them with novelty and in rejuvenating, almost in modifying them, by clothing them in a more personal and stimulating form. Here and there in his Conférences de Notre-Dame, were treasures of expression, audacious usages of words, accents of love, rapid movements, cries of joy and distracted effusions. Then, to his position as a brilliant and gentle monk whose ingenuity and labors had been exhausted in the impossible task of conciliating the liberal doctrines of society with the authoritarian dogmas of the Church, he added a tempera- ment of fierce love and suave diplomatic ten- derness. In his letters to young men may be found the caressing inflections of a father ex- horting his sons with smiling reprimands, the well-meaning advice and the indulgent for- giveness. Some of these Des Esseintes found charming, confessing as they did the monk's yearning for affection, while others were even imposing when they sought to sustain courage and dissipate doubts by the inimitable cer- tainties of Faith. In fine, this sentiment of paternity, which gave his pen a delicately feminine quality, lent to his prose a character- istically individual accent discernible among all the clerical literature\.\s

Aftr Lacordaire, eccelsiastics and monks possessing any individuality were extremely rare. At the very most, a few pages of his pupil, the Abbé Peyreyve, merited reading. He left sympathetic biographies of his master, wrote a few loveable letters, composed trea- tises in the sonorous language of formal dis- course, and delivered panegyrics in which the declamatory tone was too broadly stressed. Certainly the Abbé Peyreyve had neither the emotion nor the ardor of Lacordaire. He was too much a priest and too little a man. Yet, here and there in the rhetoric of his sermons, flashed interesting effects of large and solid phrasing or touches of nobility that were al- most venerable\.\s

But to find writers of prose whose works justify close study, one was obliged to seek those who had not submitted to Ordination ; to the secular writers whom the interests of Catholicism engaged and devoted to its cause\.\s

With the Comte de Falloux, the episcopal style, so stupidly handled by the prelates, re- cruited new strength and in a manner re- covered its masculine vigor. Under his guise of moderation, this academician exuded gall. The discourse which he delivered to Parlia- ment in 1848 was diffuse and abject, but his articles, first printed in the Correspondant and since collected into books, were mordant and discerning under the exaggerated polite- ness of their form. Conceived as harangues, they contained a certain strong muscular energy and were astonishing in the intolerance of their convictions\.\s

A dangerous polemist because of his ambus- cades, a shrewd logician, executing flanking movements and attacking unexpectedly, the Comte de Falloux had also written striking, penetrating pages on the death of Madame Swetchine, whose tracts he had collected and whom he revered as a saint\.\s

But the true temperament of the writer was betrayed in the two brochures which ap- peared in 1848 and 1880, the latter entitled l'Unité nationale\.\s

Moved by a cold rage, the implacable legit- imist this time fought openly, contrary to his custom, and hurled against the infidels, in the form of a peroration, such fulminating invec- tives as these: "And you, systematic Utopians, who make an abstraction of human nature, fomentors of atheism, fed on chimerae and hatreds, eman- cipators of woman, destroyers of the family, genealogists of the simian race, you whose name was but lately an outrage, be satisfied: you shall have been the prophets, and your disciples will be the high-priests of an abom- inable future!" The other brochure bore the title le Parti catholique, and was directed against the des- potism of the Univers and against Veuillot whose name he refused to mention. Here the sinuous attacks were resumed, venom filtered beneath each line, when the gentleman, clad in blue answered the sharp physical blows of the fighter with scornful sarcasms\.\s

These contestants represented the two par- ties of the Church, the two factions whose dif- ferences were resolved into virulent hatreds. De Falloux, the more haughty and cunning, belonged to the liberal camp which already claimed Montalembert and Cochin, Lacor- daire and De Broglie. He subscribed to the principles of the Correspondant, a review which attempted to cover the imperious the- ories of the Church with a varnish of toler- ance. Veuillot, franker and more open, scorned such masks, unhesitatingly admitted the tyr- anny of the ultramontaine doctrines and con- fessed, with a certain compunction, the piti- less yoke of the Church's dogma\.\s

For the conduct of this verbal warfare, Veuillot had made himself master of a spe- cial style, partly borrowed from La Bruyère and Du Gros-Caillou. This half-solemn, half- slang style, had the force of a tomahawk in the hands of this vehement personality. Strangely headstrong and brave, he had over- whelmed both free thinkers and bishops with this terrible weapon, charging at his enemies like a bull, regardless of the party to which they belonged. Distrusted by the Church, which would tolerate neither his contraband style nor his fortified theories, he had never- theless overawed everybody by his powerful talent, incurring the attack of the entire press which he effectively thrashed in his Odeurs de Paris, coping with every assault, freeing himself with a kick of the foot of all the wretched hack-writers who presumed to at- tack him\.\s

Unfortunately, this undisputed talent only existed in pugilism. At peace, Veuillot was no more than a mediocre writer. His poetry and novels were pitiful. His language was vapid, when it was not engaged in a striking controversy. In repose, he changed, uttering banal litanies and mumbling childish hymns\.\s

More formal, more constrained and more serious was the beloved apologist of the Church, Ozanam, the inquisitor of the Chris- tian language. Although he was very diffi- cult to understand, Des Esseintes never failed to be astonished by the insouciance of this writer, who spoke confidently of God's impen- etrable designs, although he felt obliged to establish proof of the improbable assertions he advanced. With the utmost self-confi- dence, he deformed events, contradicted, with greater impudence even than the panegyrists of other parties, the known facts of history, averred that the Church had never concealed the esteem it had for science, called heresies impure miasmas, and treated Buddhism and other religions with such contempt that he apologized for even soiling his Catholic prose by onslaught on their doctrines\.\s

At times, religious passion breathed a cer- tain ardor into his oratorical language, under the ice of which seethed a violent current; in his numerous writings on Dante, on Saint Francis, on the author of Stabat Mater, on the Franciscan poets, on socialism, on commer- cial law and every imaginable subject, this man pleaded for the defense of the Vatican which he held indefectible, and judged causes and opinions according to their harmony or discord with those that he advanced\.\s

This manner of viewing questions from a single viewpoint was also the method of that literary scamp, Nettement, whom some peo- ple would have made the other's rival. The latter was less bigoted than the master, affected less arrogance and admitted more worldly pre- tentions. He repeatedly left the literary cloister in which Ozanam had imprisoned himself, and had read secular works so as to be able to judge of them. This province he entered gropingly, like a child in a vault, see- ing nothing but shadow around him, perceiv- ing in this gloom only the gleam of the candle which illumed the place a few paces before him\.\s

In this gloom, uncertain of his bearings, he stumbled at every turn, speaking of Murger who had "the care of a chiselled and care- fully finished style" ; of Hugo who sought the noisome and unclean and to whom he dared compare De Laprade; of Paul Delacroix who scorned the rules; of Paul Delaroche and of the poet Reboul, whom he praised because of their apparent faith\.\s

Des Esseintes could not restrain a shrug of the shoulders before these stupid opinions, covered by a borrowed prose whose already worn texture clung or became torn at each phrase\.\s

In a different way, the works of Poujaulat and Genoude, Montalembert, Nicolas and Carne failed to inspire him with any definite interest. His taste for history was not pro- nounced, even when treated with the scholarly fidelity and harmonious style of the Duc de Broglie, nor was his penchant for the social and religious questions, even when broached by Henry Cochin, who revealed his true self in a letter where he gave a stirring account of the taking of the veil at the Sacre-Cœur. He had not touched these books for a long time, and the period was already remote when he had thrown with his waste paper the puerile lucubrations of the gloomy Pontmartin and the pitiful Feval ; and long since he had given to his servants, for a certain vulgar usage, the short stories of Aubineau and Lasserre, in which are recorded wretched hagiographies of miracles effected by Dupont of Tours and by the Virgin\.\s

In no way did Des Esseintes derive even a fugitive distraction from his boredom from this literature. The mass of books which he had once studied he had thrown into dim cor- ners of his library shelves when he left the Fathers' school. "I should have left them in Paris," he told himself, as turned out some books which were particularly insufferable: those of the Abbé Lamennais and that imper- vious sectarian so magisterially, so pompous- ly dull and empty, the Comte Joseph de Maistre\.\s

A single volume remained on a shelf, with- in reach of his hand. It was the Homme of Ernest Hello. This writer was the absolute opposite of his religious confederates. Almost isolated among the pious group terrified by his conduct, Ernest Hello had ended by aban- doning the open road that led from earth to heaven. Probably disgusted by the dullness of the journey and the noisy mob of those pilgrims of letters who for centuries followed one after the other upon the same highway, marching in each other's steps, stopping at the same places to exchange the same common- place remarks on religion, on the Church Fathers, on their similar beliefs, on their com- mon masters, he had departed through the byways to wander in the gloomy glade of Pascal, where he tarried long to recover his breath before continuing on his way and going even farther in the regions of human thought than the Jansenist, whom he derided\.\s

Tortuous and precious, doctoral and com- plex, Hello, by the piercing cunning of his analysis, recalled to Des Esseintes the sharp, probing investigations of some of the infidel psychologists of the preceding and present century. In him was a sort of Catholic Dur- anty, but more dogmatic and penetrating, an experienced manipulation of the magnifying glass, a sophisticated engineer of the soul, a skillful watchmaker of the brain, delighting to examine the mechanism of a passion and elucidate it by the details of the wheel work\.\s

In this oddly formed mind existed unsur- mised relationships of thoughts, harmonies and oppositions; furthermore, he affected a wholly novel manner of action which used the etymology of words as a spring-board for ideas whose associations sometimes became tenuous, but which almost constantly remained ingenious and sparkling\.\s

Thus, despite the awkwardness of his struc- ture, hé dissected with a singular perspicacity, the Avare, "the ordinary man," and "the pas- sion of unhappiness," revealing meanwhile interesting comparisons which could be con- structed between the operations of photo- graphy and of memory\.\s

But such skill in handling this perfected instrument of analyisis, stolen from the en- emies of the Church, represented only one of the temperamental phases of this man\.\s

Still another existed. This mind divided itself in two parts and revealed, besides the writer, the religious fanatic and Biblical pro- phet\.\s

Like Hugo, whom he now and again re- called in distortions of phrases and words, Ernest Hello had delighted in imitating Saint John of Patmos. He pontificated and vaticaned from his retreat in the rue Saint-Sulpice, haranguing the reader with an apocalyptic language partaking in spots of the bitterness of an Isiah\.\s

He affected inordinate pretentions of pro- fundity. There were some fawning and com- placent people who pretended to consider him a great man, the reservoir of learning, the encyclopedic giant of the age. Perhaps he was a well, but one at whose bottom one often could not find a drop of water\.\s

In his volume Paroles de Dieu, he para- phrased the Holy Scriptures, endeavoring to complicate their ordinarily obvious sense. In his other book Homme, and in his brochure le Jour du Seigneur, written in a biblical style, rugged and obscure, he sought to appear like a vengeful apostle, prideful and tormented with spleen, but showed himself a deacon touched with a mystic epilepsy, or like a talented Maistre, a surly and bitter sectarian\.\s

But, thought Des Esseintes, this sickly shamelessness often obstructed the inventive sallies of the casuist. With more intolerance than even Ozanam, he resolutely denied all that pertained to his clan, proclaimed the most disconcerting axioms, maintained with a dis- concerting authority that "geology is return- ing toward Moses," and that natural history, like chemistry and every contemporary science, verifies the scientific truth of the Bible. The proposition on each page was of the unique truth and the superhuman knowledge of the Church, and everywhere were inter- spersed more than perilous aphorisms and raging curses cast at the art of the last century\.\s

To this strange mixture was added the love of sanctimonious delights, such as a transla- tion of the Visions by Angele de Foligno, a book of an unparalleled fluid stupidity, with selected works of Jean Rusbrock l'Admirable, a mystic of the thirteenth century whose prose offered an incomprehensible but alluring com- bination of dusky exaltations, caressing effu- sions, and poignant transports\.\s

The whole attitude of this presumptuous pontiff, Hello, had leaped from a preface written for this book. He himself remarked that "extraordinary things can only be stam- mered," and he stammered in good truth, de- claring that "the holy gloom where Rusbrook extends his eagle wings is his ocean, his prey, his glory, and for such as him the far horizons would be a too narrow garment." However this might be, Des Esseintes felt himself intrigued toward this ill-balanced but subtile mind. No fusion had been effected between the skilful psychologist and the pioui; pedant, and the very jolts and incoherencies constituted the personality of the man\.\s

With him was recruited the little group of writers who fought on the front battle line of the clerical camp. They did not belong to the regular army, but were more properly the scouts of a religion which distrusted men of such talent as Veuillot and Hello, because they did not seem sufficiently submissive and shallow. What the Church really desires is soldiers who do not reason, files of such blind combatants and such mediocrities as Hello describes with the rage of one who has submit- ted to their yoke. Thus it was that Catholic- ism had lost no time in driving away one of its partisans, an enraged pamphleteer who wrote in a style at once rare and exasperated, the savage Leon Bloy; and caused to be cast from the doors of its bookshops, as it would a plague or a filthy vagrant, another writer who had made himself hoarse with celebrating its praises, Barbey d'Aurevilly\.\s

It is true that the latter was too prone to compromise and not sufficiently docile. Others bent their heads under rebukes and returned to the ranks; but he was the enfant terrible, and was unrecognized by the party. In a lit- erary way, he pursued women whom he dragged into the sanctuary. Nay, even that vast disdain was invoked, with which Cath- olicism enshrouds talent to prevent excom- munication from putting beyond the pale of the law a perplexing servant who, under pre- text of honoring his masters, broke the win- dow panes of the chapel, juggled with the holy pyxes and executed eccentric dances around the tabernacle\.\s

Two works of Barbey d'Aurevilly specially attracted Des Esseintes, the Prêtre marié and the Diaboliques. Others, such as the Ensor- celé, the Chevalier des touches and Une Vieille Maitresse, were certainly more cohprehen- sive and more finely balanced, but they left Des Esseintes untouched, for he was really interested only in unhealthy works which were consumed and irritated by fever\.\s

In these all but healthy volumes, Barbey d'Aurevilly constantly hesitated between those two pits which the Catholic religion suc- ceeds in reconciling: mysticism and sadism\.\s

In these two books which Des Esseintes was thumbling, Barbey hal lost all prudence, given full rein to his steed, and galloped at full speed over roads to their farthest limits\.\s

All the mysterious hcrror of the Middle Ages hovered over that improbable book, the Prêtre marié; magic blended with religion, black magic with prayer and, more pitiless and savage than the Devil himself, the God of Original Sin incessantly tortured the inno- cent Calixte, His reprobate, as once He had caused one of his angels to mark the houses of unbelievers whom he wished to slay\.\s

Conceived by a fasting monk in the grip of delirium, these scenes were unfolded in the uneven style of a tortured soul. Unfortunately, among those disordered creatures that were like galvanized Coppelias of Hoffman, some, like Neel de Nehou, seemed to have been imagined in moments of exhaustion following convulsions, and were discordant notes in this harmony of sombre madness, where they were as comical and ridiculous as a tiny zinc figure playing on a horn on a timepiece\.\s

After these mystic divagations, the writer had experienced a period of calm. Then a terrible relapse followed\.\s

This belief that man is a Buridanesque donkey, a being balanced between two forces of equal attraction which successively remain victorious and vanquished, this conviction that human life is only an uncertain combat waged between hell and heaven, this faith in two opposite beings, Satan and Christ, was fatally certain to engender such inner dis- cords of the soul, exalted by incessant struggle, excited at once by promises and menaces, and ending by abandoning itself to whichever of the two forces persisted in the pursuit the more relentlessly\.\s

In the Prêtre marié, Barbey d'Aurevilly sang the praises of Christ, who had prevailed against temptations; in the Diaboliques, the author succumbed to the Devil, whom he cele- brated; then appeared sadism, that bastard of Catholicism, which through the centuries religion has relentlessly pursued with its ex- orcisms and stakes\.\s

This condition, at once fascinating and ambigious, can not arise in the soul of an un- believer. It does not merely consist in sinking oneself in the excesses of the flesh, excited by outrageous blasphemies, for in such a case it would be no more than a case of satyriasis that had reached its climax. Before all, it consists in sacrilegious practice, in moral re- bellion, in spiritual debauchery, in a wholly ideal aberration, and in this it is exemplarily Christian. It also is founded upon a joy tem- pered by fear, a joy analogous to the satisfac- tion of children who disobey their parents and play with forbidden things, for no reason other than that they had been forbidden to do so\.\s

In fact, if it did not admit of sacrilege, sad- ism would have no reason for existence. Be- sides, the sacrilege proceeding from the very existence of a religion, can only be intention- ally and pertinently performed by a believer, for no one would take pleasure in profaning a faith that was indifferent or unknown to him\.\s

The power of sadism and the attraction it presents, lies entirely then in the prohibited enjoyment of transferring to Satan the praises and prayers due to God; it lies in the non- observance of Catholic precepts which one really follows unwillingly, by committing in deeper scorn of Christ, those sins which the Church has especially cursed, such as pollu- tion of worship and carnal orgy\.\s

In its elements, this phenomenon to which the Marquis de Sade has bequeathed his name is as old as the Church. It had reared its head in the eighteenth century, recalling, to go back no farther, by a simple phenomenon of atavism the impious practices of the Sabbath, the witches' revels of the Middle Ages\.\s

By having consulted the Malleus male- ficorum, that terrible code of Jacob Sprenger which permits the Church wholesale burnings of necromancers and sorcerers, Des Esseintes recognized in the witches' Sabbath, all the ob- scene practices and all the blasphemies of sadism. In addition to the unclean scenes beloved by Malin, the nights successively and lawfully consecrated to excessive sensual orgies and devoted to the bestialities of passion, he once more discovered the parody of the pro- cessions, the insults and eternal threats levelled at God and the devotion bestowed upon His rival, while amid cursing of the wine and the bread, the black mass was being celebrated on the back of a woman on all fours, whose stained bare thighs served as the altar from which the congregation received the commun- ion from a black goblet stamped with an image of a goat\.\s

This profusion of impure mockeries and foul shames were marked in the career of the Marquis de Sade, who garnished his terrible pleasures with outrageous sacrileges\.\s

He cried out to the sky, invoked Lucifer, shouted his contempt of God, calling Him rogue and imbecile, spat upon the commun- ion, endeavored to contaminate with vile or- dures a Divinity who he prayed might damn him, the while he declared, to defy Him the more, that He did not exist\.\s

Barbey D'Aurevilly approached this psy- chic state. If he did not presume as far as De Sade in uttering atrocious curses against the Savior; if, more prudent or more timid, he claimed ever to honor the Church, he none the less addressed his suit to the Devil as was done in medieval times and he, too, in order to brave God, fell into demoniac nymph- omania, inventing sensual monstrosities, even borrowing from bedroom philosophy a cer- tain episode which he seasoned with new con- diments when he wrote the story le Diner d'un athée\.\s

This extravagant book pleased Des Essein- tes. He had caused to be printed, in violet ink and in a frame of cardinal purple, on a gen- uine parchment which the judges of the Rota had blessed, a copy of the Diaboliques, with characters whose quaint quavers and flourishes in turned up tails and claws affected a satanic form\.\s

After certain pieces of Baudelaire that, in imitation of the clamorous songs of nocturnal revels, celebrated infernal litanies, this vol- ume alone of all the works of contemporary apostolic literature testified to this state of mind, at once impious and devout, toward which Catholicism often thrust Des Essein- tes\.\s

With Barbey d'Aurevilly ended the line of religious writers; and in truth, that pariah belonged more, from every point of view, to secular literature than to the other with which he demanded a place that was denied him. His language was the language of disheveled romanticism, full of involved expressions, unfamiliar turns of speech, delighted with extravagant comparisons and with whip strokes and phrases which exploded, like the clangor of noisy bells, along the text. In short, d'Aurevilly was like a stallion among the geld- ings of the ultramontaine stables\.\s

Des Esseintes reflected in this wise while re-reading, here and there, several passages of the book and, comparing its nervous and changing style with the fixed manner of other Church writers, he thought of the evolution of language which Darwin has so truly re- vealed\.\s

Compelled to live in a secular atmosphere, raised in the heart of the romantic school, constantly being in the current of modern lit- erature and accustomed to reading contem- porary publications, Barbey d'Aurevilly had acquired a dialect which although it had sus- tained numerous and profound changes since the Great Age, had nevertheless renewed it- self in his works\.\s

The ecclesiastical writers, on the contrary, confined within specific limitations, restricted to ancient Church literature, knowing nothing of the literary progress of the centuries and determined if need be to blind their eyes the more surely not to see, necessarily were con- strained to the use of an inflexible language, like that of the eighteenth century which de- scendants of the French who settled in Canada still speak and write today, without change of phrasing or words, having succeeded in pre- serving their original idiom by isolation in certain metropolitan centres, despite the fact that they are enveloped upon every side by English-speaking peoples\.\s

Meanwhile the silvery sound of a clock that tolled the angelus announced breakfast time to Des Esseintes. He abandoned his books, pressed his brow and went to the din- ing room, saying to himself that, among all the volumes he had just arranged, the works of Barbey d'Aurevilly were the only ones whose ideas and style offered the gaminess he so loved to savor in the Latin and decadent, monastic writers of past ages\.\s

S the season advanced, the weather, far from improving, grew worse. Everything seemed to go wrong that year. After the squalls and mists, the sky was covered with a white expanse of heat, like plates of sheet iron. In two days, without transition, a torrid heat, an atmosphere of frightful heaviness, suc- ceeded the damp cold of foggy days and the streaming of the rains. As though stirred by furious pokers, the sun showed like a kiln-hole, darting a light almost white-hot, burning one's face. A hot dust rose from the roads, scorching the dry trees, and the yellowed lawns became a deep brown. A temperature like that of a foundry hung over the dwelling of Des Essein- tes\.\s

Half naked, he opened a window and re- ceived the air like a furnace blast in his face. The dining room, to which he fled, was fiery, and the rarefied air simmered. Utterly dis- tressed, he sat down, for the stimulation that had seized him had ended since the close of his reveries\.\s

Like all people tormented by nervousness, heat distracted him. And his anaemia, checked by cold weather, again became pronounced, weakening his body which had been debil- itated by copious perspiration\.\s

The back of his shirt was saturated, his perinaeum was damp, his feet and arms moist, his brow overflowing with sweat that ran down his cheeks. Des Esseintes reclined, annihilated, on a chair\.\s

The sight of the meat placed on the table at that moment caused his stomach to rise. He ordered the food removed, asked for boiled eggs, and tried to swallow some bread soaked in eggs, but his stomach would have none of it. A fit of nausea overcame him. He drank a few drops of wine that pricked his stomach like points of fire. He wet his face; the perspiration, alternately warm and cold, coursed along his temples. He began to suck some pieces of ice to overcome his troubled heart — but in vain\.\s

So weak was he that he leaned against the table. He rose, feeling the need of air, but the bread had slowly risen in his gullet and re- mained there. Never had he felt so distressed\.\s

so shattered, so ill at ease. To add to his dis- comfort, his eyes distressed him and he saw objects in double. Soon he lost his sense of distance, and his glass seemed to be a league away. He told himself that he was the play- thing of sensorial illusions and that he was incapable of reacting. He stretched out on a couch, but instantly he was cradled as by the tossing of a moving ship, and the affection of his heart increased. He rose to his feet, de- termined to rid himself, by means of a diges- tive, of the food which was choking him\.\s

He again reached the dining room and sad- ly compared himself, in this cabin, to passen- gers seized with sea-sickness. Stumbling, he made his way to the closet, examined the mouth organ without opening any of the stops, but instead took from a high shelf a bottle of Benedictine which he kept because of its form and which to him seemed suggestive of thoughts that were at once gently wanton and vaguely mystic\.\s

But at this moment he remained indifferent, gazing with lack-lustre, staring eyes at this squat, dark-green bottle which, at other times, had brought before him images of the medie- val priories by its old-fashioned monkish paunch, its head and neck covered with a parchment hood, its red wax stamp quartered with three silver mitres against a field of azure and fastened at the neck, like a papal bull, with bands of lead, its label inscribed in sono- rous Latin, on paper that seemed to have yel- lowed with age: Liquor Monachorum Bene- dictinorum Abbatiae Fiscannensis\.\s

Under this thoroughly abbatial robe, signed with a cross and the ecclesiastic initials T. O. M.', pressed in between its parchments and ligatures, slept an exquisitely fine saffron-col- ored liquid. It breathed an aroma that seemed the quintessence of angelica and hyssop blended with sea-weeds and of iodines and bromes hidden in sweet essences, and it stim- ulated the palate with a spiritous ardor con- cealed under a virginal daintiness, and charmed the sense of smell by a pungency enveloped in a caress innocent and devout\.\s

This deceit which resulted from the extra- ordinary disharmony between contents and container, between the liturgie form of the flask and its so feminine and modern soul, had formerly stimulated Des Esseintes to revery and, facing the bottle, he was inclined to think at great length of the monks who sold it, the Benedictines of the Abbey of Fecamp who, belonging to the brotherhood of Saint-Maur which had been celebrated for its contro- versial works under the rule of Saint Benoit, followed neither the observances of the white monks of Citeaux nor of the black monks of Cluny. He could not but think of them as being like their brethren of the Middle Ages, cultivating simples, heating retorts and dis- tilling faultless panaceas and prescriptions\.\s

He tasted a drop of this liquor and, for a few moments, had relief. But soon the fire, which the dash of wine had lit in his bowels, revived. He threw down his napkin, re- turned to his study, and paced the floor. He felt as if he were under a pneumatic clock, and a numbing weakness stole from his brain through his limbs. Unable to endure it longer, he betook himself to the garden. It was the first time he had done this since his arrival at Fontenay. There he found shelter beneath a tree which radiated a circle of shadow. Seated on the lawn, he looked around with a besotted air at the square beds of vege- tables planted by the servants. He gazed, but it was only at the end of an hour that he really saw them, for a greenish film floated before his eyes, permitting him only to see, as in the depths of water, flickering images of shifting tones\.\s

But when he recovered his balance, he clear- ly distinguished the onions and cabbages, a garden bed of lettuce further off, and, in the distance along the hedge, a row of white lillies recumbent in the heavy air\.\s

A smile played on his lips, for he suddenly recalled the strange comparison of old Nic- andre, who likened, in the point of form, the pistils of lillies to the genital organs of a donkey; and he recalled also a passage from Albert Le Grand, in which that thaumaturgist describes a strange way of discovering whether a girl is still virgin, by means of a lettuce\.\s

These remembrances distracted him some- what. He examined the garden, interesting himself in the plants withered by the heat, and in the hot ground whose vapors rose into the dusty air. Then, above the hedge which separated the garden below from the embank- ment leading to the fort, he watched the ur- chins struggling and tumbling on the ground\.\s

He was concentrating his attention upon them when another younger, sorry little speci- men appeared. He had hair like seaweed covered with sand, two green bubbles beneath his nose, and disgusting lips surrounded by a dirty white frame formed by a slice of bread smeared with cheese and filled with pieces of scallions\.\s

Des Esseintes inhaled the air. A perverse appetite seized him. This dirty slice made his mouth water. It seemed to him that his stomach, refusing all other nourishment, could digest this shocking food, and that his palate would enjoy it as though it were a feast\.\s

He leaped up, ran to the kitchen and or- dered a loaf, white cheese and green onions to be brought from the village, emphasizing his desire for a slice exactly like the one being eaten by the child. Then he returned to sit beneath the tree\.\s

The little chaps were fighting with one an- other. They struggled for bits of bread which they shoved into their cheeks, meanwhile sucking their fingers. Kicks and blows rained freely, and the weakest, trampled upon, cried out\.\s

At this sight, Des Esseintes recovered his animation. The interest he took in this fight distracted his thoughts from his illness. Con- templating the blind fury of these urchins, he thought of the cruel and abominable law of the struggle of existence; and, although these children were mean, he could not help being interested in their futures, yet could not but believe that it had been better for them had their mothers never given them birth\.\s

In fact, all they could expect of life was rash, colic, fever, and measles in their earliest years; slaps in the face and degrading drud- geries up to thirteen years; deceptions by women, sicknesses and infidelity during man- hood and, toward the last, infirmities and agonies in a poorhouse or asylum\.\s

And the future was the same for every one, and none in his good senses could envy his neighbor. The rich had the same passions, the same anxieties, the same pains and the same illnesses, but in a different environment; the same mediocre enjoyments, whether alco- holic, literary or carnal. There was even a vague compensation in evils, a sort of justice which re-established the balance of misfor- tune between the classes, permitting the poor to bear physical suffering more easily, and making it difficult for the unresisting, weaker bodies of the rich to withstand it\.\s

How vain, silly and mad it is to beget brats! And Des Esseintes thought of those ecclesias- tics who had taken vows of sterility, yet were so inconsistent as to canonize Saint Vincent de Paul, because he brought vain tortures to him from his home, forcing him to don a ri- innocent creatures\.\s

By means of his hateful precautions, Vin- cent de Paul had deferred for years the death of unintelligent and insensate beings, in such a way that when they later became almost intel- ligent and sentient to grief, they were able to anticipate the future, to await and fear that death of whose very name they had of late been ignorant, some of them going as far to invoke it, in hatred of that sentence of life which the monk inflicted upon them by an absurd theological code\.\s

And since this old man's death, his ideas had prevailed. Abandoned children were sheltered instead of being killed and yet their lives daily became increasingly rigorous and barren! Then, under pretext of liberty and progress, Society had discovered another means of increasing man's miseries by tearing him from his home, forcing him to don a ri- diculous uniform and carry Weapons, by bru- talizing him in a slavery in every respect like that from which he had compassionately freed the negro, and all to enable him to slaughter his neighbor without risking the scaffold like ordinary murderers who operate single- handed, without uniforms and with weapons that are less swift and deafening\.\s

Des Esseintes wondered if there had ever been such a time as ours. Our age invokes the causes of humanity, endeavors to perfect an- aesthesia to suppress physical suffering. Yet at the same time it prepares these very stim- ulants to increase moral wretchedness\.\s

Ah! if ever this useless procreation should be abolished, it were now. But here, again, the laws enacted by men like Portalis and Homais appeared strange and cruel\.\s

In the matter of generation, Justice finds the agencies for deception to be quite natural. It is a recognized and acknowledged fact. There is scarcely a home of any station that does not confide its children to the drain pipes, or that does not employ contrivances that are freely sold, and which it would enter no per- son's mind to prohibit. And yet, if these sub- terfuges proved insufficient, if the attempt mis- carried and if, to remedy matters, one had recourse to more efficacious measures, ah! then there were not prisons enough, not municipal jails enough to confine those who, in good faith, were condemned by other individuals who had that very evening, on the conjugal bed, done their utmost to avoid giving birth to children\.\s

The deceit itself was not a crime, it seemed. The crime lay in the justification of the deceit\.\s

What Society considered a crime was the act of killing a being endowed with life; and yet, in expelling a foetus, one destroyed an animal that was less formed and living and certainly less intelligent and more ugly than a dog or a cat, although it is permissible to strangle these creatures as soon as they are born\.\s

It is only right to add, for the sake of fair- ness, thought Des Esseintes, that it is not the awkward man, who generally loses no time in disappearing, but rather the woman, the vic- tim of his stupidity, who expiates the crime of having saved an innocent life\.\s

Yet was it right that the world should be filled with such prejudice as to wish to repress manoeuvres so natural that primitive man, the Polynesian savage, for instance, instinctively practices them? The servant interrupted the charitable re- flections of Des Esseintes, who received the slice of bread on a plate of vermeil. Pains shot through his heart. He did not have the courage to eat this bread, for the unhealthy excitement of his stomach had ceased. A sensa- tion of frightful decay swept upon him. He was compelled to rise. The sun turned, and slowly fell upon the place that he had lately occupied. The heat became more heavy and fierce\.\s

"Throw this slice of bread to those children who are murdering each other on the road," he ordered his servant. "Let the weakest be crippled, be denied share in the prize, and be soundly thrashed into the bargain, as they will be when they return to their homes with torn trousers and bruised eyes. This will give them an idea of the life that awaits them!" And he entered the house and sank into his armchair\.\s

"But I must try to eat something," he said. And he attempted to soak a biscuit in old Constantia wine, several bottles of which re- mained in his cellar\.\s

That wine, the color of slightly burned on- ions, partaking of Malaga and Port, but with a specially luscious flavor, and an after-taste of grapes dried by fiery suns, had often com- forted him, given a new energy to his stomach weakened by the fasts which he was forced to undergo. But this cordial, usually so effica- cious, now failed. Then he thought that an emollient might perhaps counteract the fiery- pains which were consuming him, and he took out the Nalifka, a Russian liqueur, contained in a bottle frosted with unpolished glass. This unctuous raspberry-flavored syrup also failed. Alas! the time was far off when, enjoying good health, Des Esseintes had ridden to his house in the hot summer days in a sleigh, and there, covered with furs wrapped about his chest, forced himself to shiver, saying, as he listened attentively to the chattering of his teeth : "Ah, how biting this wind is! It is freezing!" Thus he had almost succeeded in convincing him- self that it was cold\.\s

Unfortunately, such remedies as these had failed of their purpose ever since his sickness became vital\.\s

With all this, he was unable to make use of laudanum: instead of allaying the pain, this sedative irritated him even to the degree of depriving him of rest. At one time he had endeavored to procure visions through opium and hashish, but these two substances had led to vomitings and intense nervous disturbances. He had instantly been forced to give up the idea of taking them, and without the aid of these coarse stimulants, demand of his brain alone to transport him into the land of dreams, far, far from life\.\s

"What a day!" he said to himself, sponging his neck, feeling every ounce of his strength dissolve in perspiration; a feverish agitation still prevented him from remaining in one spot; once more he walked up and down, try- ing every chair in the room in turn. Weaned of the struggle, at last he fell against his bureau and leaning mechanically against the table, without thinking of anything, he touched an astrolabe which rested on a mass of books and notes and served as a paper weight\.\s

He had purchased this engraved and gilded copper instrument (it had come from Germany and dated from the seventeenth century) of a second-hand Paris dealer, after a visit to the Cluny Museum, where he had stood for a long while in ecstatic admiration before a marvelous astrolabe made of chiseled ivory, whose cabalistic appearance enchanted him\.\s

This paper weight evoked many remin- iscences within him. Aroused and actuated by the appearance of this trinket, his thoughts rushed from Fontenay to Paris, to the curio shop where he had purchased it, then returned to the Museum, and he mentally beheld the ivory astrolabe, while his unseeing eyes con- tinued to gaze upon the copper astrolabe on the table\.\s

Then he left the Museum and, without quitting the town, strolled down the streets, wandered through the rue du Sommerard and the Boulevard Saint-Michel, branched off into the neighboring streets, and paused be- fore certain shops whose quite extraordinary appearance and profusion had often attracted him\.\s

Beginning with an astrolabe, this spritual jaunt ended in the cafés of the Latin Quarter\.\s

He remembered how these places were crowded in the rue Monsieur-le-Prince and at the end of the rue de Vaugirard, touching the Odeon; sometimes they followed one an- other like the old riddecks of the Canal-aux- Marengs, at Antwerp, each of which revealed a front, the counterpart of its neighbor\.\s

Through the half-opened doors and the win- dows dimmed with colored panes or curtains, he had often seen women who walked about like geese; others, on benches, rested their el- bows on the marble tables, humming, their temples resting between their hands; still others strutted and posed in front of mirrors, playing with their false hair pomaded by hair- dressers; others, again, took money from their purses and methodically sorted the different denominations in little heaps\.\s

Most of them had heavy features, hoarse voices, flabby necks and painted eyes; and all of them, like automatons, moved simulta- neously upon the same impulse, flung the same enticements with the same tone and uttered the identical queer words, the same odd inflec- tions and the same smile\.\s

Certain ideas associated themselves in the mind of Des Esseintes, whose reveries came to an end, now that he recalled this collection of coffee-houses and streets\.\s

He understood the significance of those cafés which reflected the state of soul of an entire generation, and from it he discovered the synthesis of the period\.\s

And, in fact, the symptoms were certain and obvious. The houses of prostitution dis- appeared, and as soon as one of them closed a café began to operate\.\s

This restriction of prostitution which proved profitable to clandestine loves, evident- ly arose from the incomprehensible illusions of men in the matter of carnal life\.\s

Monstrous as it may appear, these haunts satisfied an ideal\.\s

Although the utilitarian tendencies trans- mitted by heredity and developed by the preco- cious rudeness and constant brutalities of the colleges had made the youth of the day strangely crude and as strangely positive and cold, it had none the less preserved, in the back of their heads, an old blue flower, an old ideal of a vague, sour affection\.\s

Today, when the blood clamored, youths could not bring themselves to go through the formality of entering, ending, paying and leaving; in their eyes, this was bestiality, the action of a dog attacking a bitch without much ado. Then, too, vanity fled unsatisfied from these houses where there was no semblance of resistance; there was no victory, no hoped for preference, nor even largess obtained from the tradeswoman who measured her caresses according to the price. On the contrary, the courting of a girl of the cafés stimulated all the susceptibilities of love, all the refinements of sentiment. One disputed with the others for such a girl, and those to whom she granted a rendezvous, in consideration of much money, were sincere in imagining that they had won her from a rival, and in so thinking they were the objects of honorary distinction and favor\.\s

Yet this domesticity was as stupid, as sel- fish, as vile as that of houses of ill-fame. Its creatures drank without being thirsty, laughed, without reason, were charmed by the caresses of a slut, quarrelled and fought for no reason whatever, despite everything. The Parisian youth had not been able to see that these girls were, from the point of plastic beauty, grace- ful attitudes and necessary attire, quite infe- rior to the women in the bawdy houses! "My God," Des Esseintes exclaimed, "what ninnies are these fellows who flutter around the cafés; for, over and above their silly illusions, they forget the danger of degraded, suspicious allurements, and they are unaware of the sums of money given for affairs priced in advance by the mistress, of the time lost in waiting for an assignation deferred so as to increase its value and cost, delays which are repeated to provide more tips for the waiters." This imbecile sentimentality, combined with a ferociously practical sense, represented the dominant motive of the age. These very per- sons who would have gouged their neighbors' eyes to gain ten sous, lost all presence of mind and discrimination before suspicious looking girls in restaurants who pitilessly harassed and relentlessly fleeced them. Fathers devoted their lives to their businesses and labors, fam- ilies devoured one another on the pretext of trade, only to be robbed by their sons who, in turn, allowed themselves to be fleeced by women who posed as sweethearts to obtain their money\.\s

In all Paris, from east to west and from north to south, there existed an unbroken chain of female tricksters, a system of organized theft, and all because, instead of satisfying men at once, these women were skilled in the subterfuges of delays\.\s

At bottom, one might say that human wis- dom consisted in the protraction of all things, in saying "no" before saying "yes," for one could manage people only by trifling with them\.\s

"Ah! if the same were but true of the stomach," sighed Des Esseintes, racked by a cramp which instantly and sharply brought back his mind, that had roved far off, to Fontenay\.\s

EVERAL days slowly passed thanks to certain measures which suc- ceeded in tricking the stomach, but one morning Des Esseintes could endure food no longer, and he asked himself anxiously whether his already serious weakness would not grow worse and force him to take to bed. A sudden gleam of light relieved his distress; he remembered that one of his friends, quite ill at one time, had made use of a Papin's digester to over- come his anaemia and preserve what little strength he had\.\s

He dispatched his servant to Paris for this precious utensil, and following the directions contained in the prospectus which the manu- facturer had enclosed, he himself instructed the cook how to cut the roast beef into bits, put it into the pewter pot, with a slice of leek and carrot, and screw on the cover to let it boil for four hours\.\s

At the end of this time the meat fibres were strained. He drank a spoonful of the thick salty juice deposited at the bottom of the pot. Then he felt a warmth, like a smooth caress, descend upon him\.\s

This nourishment relieved his pain and nausea, and even strengthened his stomach which did not refuse to accept these few drops of soup\.\s

Thanks to this digester, his neurosis was arrested and Des Esseintes said to himself: "Well, it is so much gained; perhaps the temperature will change, the sky will throw some ashes upon this abominable sun which exhausts me, and I shall hold out without acci- dent till the first fogs and frosts of winter." In the torpor and listless ennui in which he was sunk, the disorder of his library, whose arrangement had never been completed, irri- tated him. Helpless in his armchair, he had constantly in sight the books set awry on the shelves propped against each other or lying flat on their sides, like a tumbled pack of cards. This disorder offended him the more when he contrasted it with the perfect order of his religious works, carefully placed on parade along the walls\.\s

He tried to clear up the confusion, but after ten minutes of work, perspiration covered him ; the effort weakened him. He stretched himself on a couch and rang for his servant\.\s

Following his directions, the old man con- tinued the task, bringing each book in turn to Des Esseintes who examined it and directed where it was to be placed\.\s

This task did not last long, for Des Essein- tes' library contained but a very limited num- ber of contemporary, secular works\.\s

They were drawn through his brain as bands of metal are drawn through a steel-plate from which they issue thin, light, and reduced to almost imperceptible wires; and he had ended by possessing only those books which could submit to such treatment and which were so solidly tempered as to withstand the rolling- mill of each new reading. In his desire to refine, he had restrained and almost sterilized his enjoyment, ever accentuating the irremedi- able conflict existing between his ideas and those of the world in which he had happened to be born. He had now reached such a pass that he could no longer discover any writings to content his secret longings. And his admi- ration even weaned itself from those volumes which had certainly contributed to sharpen his mind, making it so suspicious and subtle\.\s

In art, his ideas had sprung from a simple point of view. For him schools did not exist, and only the temperament of the writer mat- tered, only the working of his brain interested him, regardless of the subject. Unfortunately, this verity of appreciation, worthy of Palisse, was scarcely applicable, for the simple reason that, even while desiring to be free of pre- judices and passion, each person naturally goes to the works which most intimately corres- pond with his own temperament, and ends by relegating all others to the rear\.\s

This work of selection had slowly acted within him; not long ago he had adored the great Balzac, but as his body weakened and his nerves became troublesome, his tastes modified and his admirations changed\.\s

Very soon, and despite the fact that he was aware of his injustice to the amazing author of the Comédie humaine, Des Esseintes had reached a point where he no longer opened Balzac's books; their healthy spirit jarred on him. Other aspirations now stirred in him, somehow becoming undefinable\.\s

Yet when he probed himself he understood that to attract, a work must have that char- acter of strangeness demanded by Edgar Allen Poe ; but he ventured even further on this path and called for Byzantine flora of brain and complicated déliquescences of language. He desired a troubled indecision on which he might brood until he could shape it at will to a more vague or determinate form, accord- ing to the momentary state of his soul. In short, he desired a work of art both for what it was in itself and for what it permitted him to endow it. He wished to pass by means of it into a sphere of sublimated sensation which would arouse in him new commotions whose cause he might long and vainly seek to an- alyze\.\s

In short, since leaving Paris, Des Esseintes was removing himself further and further from reality, especially from the contemporary world which he held in an ever growing de- testation. This hatred had inevitably reacted on his literary and artistic tastes, and he would have as little as possible to do with paintings and books whose limited subjects dealt with modern life\.\s

Thus, losing the faculty of admiring beauty indiscriminately under whatever form it was presented, he preferred Flaubert's Tentation de saint Antoine to his Education sentimen- tale; Goncourt's Faustin to his Germinie Lacerteux; Zola's Faute de l'abbé Mouret to his Assommoir\.\s

This point of view seemed logical to him; these works less immediate, but just as vibrant and human, enabled him to penetrate farther into the depths of the temperaments of these masters who revealed in them the most mys- terious transports of their being with a more sincere abandon ; and they lifted him far above this trivial life which wearied him so\.\s

In them he entered into perfect communion of ideas with their authors who had written them when their state of soul was analogous to his own\.\s

In fact, when the period in which a man of talent is obliged to live is dull and stupid, the artist, though unconsciously, is haunted by a nostalgia of some past century\.\s

Finding himself unable to harmonize, save at rare intervals, with the environment in which he lives and not discovering sufficient distraction in the pleasures of observation and analysis, in the examination of the environ- ment and its people, he feels in himself the dawning of strange ideas. Confused desires for other lands awake and are clarified by re- flection and study. Instincts, sensations and thoughts bequeathed by heredity, awake, grow fixed, assert themselves with an imperious as- surance. He recalls memories of beings and things he has never really known and a time comes when he escapes from the penitentiary of his age and roves, in full liberty, into an- other epoch with which, through a last illu- sion, he seems more in harmony\.\s

With some, it is a return to vanished ages, to extinct civilizations, to dead epochs; with others, it is an urge towards a fantastic future, to a more or less intense vision of a period about to dawn, whose image, by an effect of atavism of which he is unaware, is a reproduc- tion of some past age\.\s

In Flaubert this nostalgia is expressed in solemn and majestic pictures of magnificent splendors, in whose gorgeous, barbaric frames move palpitating and delicate cre\_atures, mys- terious and haughty — women gifted, in the perfection of their beauty, with souls capable of suffering and in whose depths he discerned frightful derangements, mad aspirations, grieved as they were by the haunting premoni- tion of the dissillusionments their follies held in store\.\s

The temperament of this great artist is fully revealed in the incomparable pages of the Tentation de saint Antoine and Salammbô where, far from our sorry life, he evokes the splendors of old Asia, the age of fervent prayer and mystic depression, of languorous passions and excesses induced by the unbearable ennui resulting from opulence and prayer\.\s

In de Goncourt, it was the nostalgia of the preceding century, a return to the elegances of a society forever lost. The stupendous set- ting of seas beating against jetties, of deserts stretching under torrid skies to distant hori- zons, did not exist in his nostalgic work which confined itself to a boudoir, near an aulic park, scented with the voluptuous fragrance of a woman with a tired smile, a perverse little pout and unresigned, pensive eyes. The soul with which he animated his characters was not that breathed by Flaubert into his creatures, no longer the soul early thrown in revolt by the inexorable certainty that no new happiness is possible; it was a soul that had too late re- volted, after the experience, against all the use- less attempts to invent new spiritual liaisons and to heighten the enjoyment of lovers, which from immemorial times has always ended in satiety\.\s

Although she lived in, and partook of the life of our time, Faustin, by her ancestral in- fluences, was a creature of the past century whose cerebral lassitude and sensual excesses she possessed\.\s

This book of Edmond de Goncourt was one of the volumes which Des Esseintes loved best, and the suggestion of revery which he de- manded lived in this work where, under each written line, another line was etched, visible to the spirit alone, indicated by a hint which revealed passion, by a reticence permitting one to divine subtle states of soul which no idiom could express. And it was no longer Flau- bert's language in its inimitable magnificence, but a morbid, perspicacious style, nervous and twisted, keen to note the impalpable impres- sion that strikes the senses, a style expert in modulating the complicated nuances of an epoch which in itself was singularly complex. In short, it was the epithet indispensable to decrepit civilizations, no matter how old they be, which must have words with new mean- ings and forms, innovations in phrases and words for their complex needs\.\s

At Rome, the dying paganism had modified its prosody and transmuted its language with Ausonius, with Claudian and Rutilius whose attentive, scrupulous, sonorous and powerful style presented, in its descriptive parts espe- cially, reflections, hints and nuances bearing an affinity with the style of de Goncourt\.\s

At Paris, a fact unique in literary history had been consummated. That moribund society of the eighteenth century, which possessed painters, musicians and architects imbued with its tastes and doctrines, had not been able to produce a writer who could truly depict its dying elegances, the quintessence of its joys so cruelly expiated. It had been necessary to await the arrival of de Goncourt (whose temperament was formed of memories and regrets made more poignant by the sad spec- tacle of the intellectual poverty and the piti- ful aspirations of his own time) to resuscitate, not only in his historical works, but even more in Faustin, the very soul of that period; in- carnating its nervous refinements in this ac- tress who tortured her mind and her senses so as to savor to exhaustion the grievous revul- sives of love and of art\.\s

With Zola, the nostalgia of the far-away was different. In him was no longing for van- ished ages, no aspiring toward worlds lost in the night of time. His strong and solid tempe- rament, dazzled with the luxuriance of life, its sanguine forces and moral health, diverted him from the artificial graces and painted chloroses of the past century, as well as from the hierarchic solemnity, the brutal ferocity and misty, effeminate dreams of the old orient. When he, too, had become obsessed by this nostalgia, by this need, which is nothing less than poetry itself, of shunning the contenv porary world he was studying, he had rushed into an ideal and fruitful country, had dreamed of fantastic passions of skies, of long raptures of earth, and of fecund rains of pollen falling into panting organs of flowers. He had ended in a gigantic pantheism, had created, unwittingly perhaps, with this Eden- esque environment in which he placed his Adam and Eve, a marvelous Hindoo poem, singing, in a style whose broad, crude strokes had something of the bizarre brilliance of an Indian painting, the song of the flesh, of ani- mated living matter revealing, to the human creature, by its passion for reproduction the forbidden fruits of love, its suffocations, its instinctive caresses and natural attitudes\.\s

With Baudelaire, these three masters had most affected Des Esseintes in modern, French, secular literature. But he had read them so often, had saturated himself in them so com- pletely, that in order to absorb them he had been compelled to lay them aside and let them remain unread on his shelves\.\s

Even now when the servant was arranging them for him, he did not care to open them, and contented himself merely with indicat- ing the place they were to occupy and seeing that they were properly classified and put away\.\s

The servant brought him a new series of books. These oppressed him more. They were books toward which his taste had gradually veered, books which diverted him by their very faults from the perfection of more vig- orous writers. Here, too, Des Esseintes had reached the point where he sought, among these troubled pages, only phrases which dis- charged a sort of electricity that made him tremble; they transmitted their fluid through a medium which at first sight seemed refrac- tory\.\s

Their imperfections pleased him, provided they were neither parasitic nor servile, and perhaps there Was a grain of truth in his theory that the inferior and decadent writer, who is more subjective, though unfinished, distills a more irritating aperient and acid balm than the artist of the same period who is truly great. In his opinion, it was in their turbulent sketches that one perceived the exaltations of the most excitable sensibilities, the caprices of the most morbid psychological states, the most extravagant depravities of language charged, in spite of its rebelliousness, with the difficult task of containing the effervescent salts of sensations and ideas\.\s

Thus, after the masters, he betook himself to a few writers who attracted him all the more because of the disdain in which they were held by a public incapable of understanding them\.\s

One of them was Paul Verlaine who had begun with a volume of verse, the Poèmes Saturniens, a rather ineffectual book where imitations of Leconte de Lisle jostled with exercises in romantic rhetoric, but through which already filtered the real personality of the poet in such poems as the sonnet Rêve Familier\.\s

In searching for his antecedents, Des Essein- tes discovered, under the hesitant strokes of the sketches, a talent already deeply affected by Baudelaire, whose influence had been accentuated later on, acquiesced in by the peerless master; but the imitation was never flagrant\.\s

And in some of his books, Bonne Chanson, Fêtes Galantes, Romances sans paroles, and his last volume, Sagesse, were poems where he himself was revealed as an original and out- standing figure\.\s

With rhymes obtained from verb tenses, sometimes even from long adverbs preceded by a monosyllable from which they fell as from a rock into a heavy cascade of water, his verses, divided by improbable caesuras, often became strangely obscure with their audacious ellipses and strange inaccuracies which none the less did not lack grace\.\s

With his unrivalled ability to handle metre, he had sought to rejuvenate the fixed poetic forms. He turned the tail of the sonnet into the air, like those Japanese fish of polychrome clay which rest on stands, their heads straight down, their tails on top. Sometimes he cor- rupted it by using only masculine rhymes to which he seemed partial. He had often em- ployed a bizarre form— a stanza of three lines whose middle verse was unrhymed, and a tiercet with but one rhyme, folowed by a single line, an echoing refrain like "Dansons la Gigue" in Streets. He had employed other rhymes whose dim echoes are repeated in re- mote stanzas, like faint reverberations of a bell\.\s

But his personality expressed itself most of all in vague and delicious confidences breathed in hushed accents, in the twilight. He alone had been able to reveal the troubled Ultima Thules of the soul ; low whisperings of thoughts, avowals so haltingly and murmur- ingly confessed that the ear which hears them remains hesitant, passing on to the soul lan- guors quickened by the mystery of this sug- gestion which is divined rather than felt. Everything characteristic of Verlaine was ex- pressed in these adorable verses of the Fêtes Galantes: Le soir tombait, un soir équivoque d'automne, Les belles se pendant rêveuses à nos bras, Dirent alors des mots si spécieux tout bas, Que notre âme depuis ce temps tremble et s'étonne\.\s

It was no longer the immense horizon opened by the unforgettable portals of Baudelaire; it was a crevice in the moonlight, opening on a field which was more intimate and more re- strained, peculiar to Verlaine who had for- mulated his poetic system in those lines of which Des Esseintes was so fond : Car nous voulons la nuance encore, Pas la couleur, rien que la nuance. Et tout le reste est littérature\.\s

Des Esseintes had followed him with de- light in his most diversified works. After his Romances sans paroles which had appeared in a journal, Verlaine had preserved a long silence, reappearing later in those charming verses, hauntingly suggestive of the gentle and cold accents of Villon, singing of the Virgin, "removed from our days of carnal thought and weary flesh." Des Esseintes often re-read Sagesse whose poems provoked him to secret reveries, a fanciful love for a Byzantine Madonna who, at a certain moment, changed into a distracted modern Cydalise so myster- ious and troubling that one could not know whether she aspired toward depravities so monstrous that they became irresistible, or whether she moved in an immaculate dream where the adoration of the soul floated around her ever unavowed and ever pure\.\s

There were other poets, too, who induced him to confide himself to them: Tristan Cor- bière who, in 1873, in the midst of the gen- eral apathy had issued a most eccentric vol- ume entitled : Les Amours jaunes. Des Essein- tes who, in his hatred of the banal and com- monplace, would gladly have accepted the most affected folly and the most singular ex- travagance, spent many enjoyable hours with this work where drollery mingled with a dis- ordered energy, and where disconcerting lines blazed out of poems so absolutely obscure as the litanies of Sommeil, that they qualified their author for the name of Obscène confesseur des dévotes mort-nées\.\s

The style was hardly French. The author wrote in the negro dialect, was telegraphic in form, suppressed verbs, affected a teasing phraseology, revelled in the impossible puns of a travelling salesman; then out of this jumble, laughable conceits and sly affectations emerged, and suddenly a cry of keen anguish rang out, like the snapping string of a violon- cello. And with all this, in his hard rugged style, bristling with obsolescent words and un- expected neoligisms, flashed perfect original- ities, treasures of expression and superbly nomadic lines amputated of rhyme. Finally, over and above his Poèmes Parisiens, where Des Esseintes had discovered this profound definition of woman : Eternel féminin de l'éternel jocrisse Tristan Corbière had celebrated in a power- fully concise style, the Sea of Brittany, mer- maids and the Pardon of Saint Anne. And he had even risen to an eloquence of hate in the insults he hurled, apropos of the Conlie camp, at the individuals whom he designated under the name of "foreigners of the Fourth of September." The raciness of which he was so fond, which Corbière offered him in his sharp epithets, his beauties which ever remained a trifle suspect, Des Esseintes found again in another poet, Theodore Hannon, a disciple of Baudelaire and Gautier, moved by a very unusual sense of the exquisite and the artificial\.\s

Unlike Verlaine whose work was directly influenced by Baudelaire, especially on the psychological side, in his insidious nuances of thought and skilful quintessence of senti- ment, Theodore Hannon especially descended from the master on the plastic side, by the ex- ternal vision of persons and things\.\s

His charming corruption fatally corres- ponded to the tendencies of Des Esseintes who, on misty or rainy days, enclosed himself in the retreat fancied by the poet and intoxicated his eyes with the rustlings of his fabrics, with the incandescence of his stones, with his ex- clusively material sumptuousness which min- istered to cerebral reactions, and rose like a cantharides powder in a cloud of fragrant in- cense toward a Brussel idol with painted face and belly stained by the perfumes\.\s

With the exception of the works of these poets and of Stéphane Mallarmé, which his servant was told to place to one side so that he might classify them separately, Des Essein- tes was but slightly attracted towards the poets\.\s

Notwithstanding the majestic form and the imposing quality of his verse which struck such a brilliant note that even the hexameters of Hugo seemed pale in comparison, Leconte de Lisle could no longer satisfy him. The anti- quity so marvelously restored by Flaubert re- mained cold and immobile in his hands. Nothing palpitated in his verses, which lacked depth and which, most often, contained no idea. Nothing moved in those gloomy, waste poems whose impassive mythologies ended by finally leaving him cold. Too, after having long delighted in Gautier, Des Esseintes reached the point where he no longer cared for him. The admiration he felt for this man's incomparable painting had gradually dis- solved; now he was more astonished than rav- ished by his descriptions. Objects impressed themselves upon Gautier's perceptive eyes but they went no further, they never penetrated deeper into his brain and flesh. Like a giant mirror, this writer constantly limited himself to reflecting surrounding objects with imper- sonal clearness. Certainly, Des Esseintes still loved the works of these two poets, as he loved rare stones and precious objects, but none of the variations of these perfect instrumentalists could hold him longer, neither being evocative of revery, neither opening for him, at least, broad roads of escape to beguile the tedium of dragging hours\.\s

These two books left him unsatisfied. And it was the same with Hugo ; the oriental and patriarchal side was too conventional and barren to detain him. And his manners, at once childish and that of a grandfather, exas- perated him. He had to go to the Chansons des rues et des bois to enjoy the perfect acro- batics of his metrics. But how gladly, after all, would he not have exchanged all this tour de force for a new work by Baudelaire which might equal the others, for he, decidedly, was almost the only one whose verses, under their splendid form, contained a healing and nutri- tive substance. In passing from one extreme to the other, from form deprived of ideas to ideas deprived of form, Des Esseintes re- mained no less circumspect and cold. The psychological labyrinths of Stendhal, the analytical detours of Duranty seduced him, but their administrative, colorless and arid language, their static prose, fit at best for the wretched industry of the theatre, repelled him. Then their interesting works and their astute analyses applied to brains agitated by passions in which he was no longer interested. He was not at all concerned with general affections or points of view, with associations of common ideas, now that the reserve of his mind was more keenly developed and that he no longer admitted aught but superfine sensations and catholic or sensual torments. To enjoy a work which should combine, according to his wishes, incisive style with penetrating and feline analysis, he had to go to the master of induction, the profound and strange Edgar Allen Poe, for whom, since the time when he re-read him, his preference had never wavered\.\s

More than any other, perhaps, he ap- proached, by his intimate affinity, Des Essein- tes' meditative cast of mind\.\s

If Baudelaire, in the hieroglyphics of the soul, had deciphered the return of the age of sentiment and ideas, Poe, in the field of mor- bid psychology had more especially invest- igated the domain of the soul\.\s

Under the emblematic title, The Demon of Perversity, he had been the first in literature to pry into the irresistible, unconscious impulses of the will which mental pathology now ex- plains more scientifically. He had also been the first to divulge, if not to signal the impres- sive influence of fear which acts on the will like an anaesthetic, paralyzing sensibility and like the curare, stupefying the nerves. It was on the problem of the lethargy of the will, that Poe had centered his studies, analyzing the effects of this moral poison, indicating the symptoms of its progress, the troubles com- mencing with anxiety, continuing through anguish, ending finally in the terror which deadens the will without intelligence succumb- ing, though sorely disturbed. Death, which the dramatists had so much abused, he had in some manner changed and made more poig- nant, by introducing an algebraic and super- human element; but in truth, it was less the real agony of the dying person which he de- scribed and more the moral agony of the sur- vivor, haunted at the death bed by monstrous hallucinations engendered by grief and fat- igue. With a frightful fascination, he dwelt on acts of terror, on the snapping of the will, coldly reasoning about them, little by little making the reader gasp, suffocated and pant- ing before these feverish mechanically con- trived nightmares\.\s

Convulsed by hereditary neurosis, maddened by a moral St. Vitus dance, Poe's creatures lived only through their nerves; his women, the Morellas and Ligeias, possessed an im- mense erudition. They were steeped in the mists of German philosophy and the cabalistic mysteries of the old Orient; and all had the boyish and inert breasts of angels, all were sexless\.\s

Baudelaire and Poe, these two men who had often been compared because of their common poetic strain and predilection for the exam- ination of mental maladies, differed radically in the affective conceptions which held such a large place in their works; Baudelaire with his iniquitous and debased loves — cruel loves which made one think of the reprisals of an inquisition; Poe with his chaste, aerial loves, in which the senses played no part, where only the mind functioned without cor- responding to organs which, if they existed, remained forever frozen and virgin. This cerebral clinic where, vivisecting in a stifling atmosphere, that spiritual surgeon became, as soon as his attention flagged, a prey to an imag- ination which evoked, like delicious miasmas, somnambulistic and angelic apparitions, was to Des Esseintes a source of unwearying con- jecture. But now that his nervous disorders were augmented, days came when his readings broke his spirit and' when, hands trembling, body alert, like the desolate Usher he was haunted by, an unreasoning fear and a secret terror\.\s

Thus he was compelled to moderate his desires, and he rarely touched these fearful elixirs, in the same way that he could no longer with impunity visit his red corridor and grow ecstatic at the sight of the gloomy Odilon Redon prints and the Jan Luyken horrors. And yet, when he felt inclined to read, all literature seemed to him dull after these terrible Amer- ican imported philtres. Then he betook him- self to Villiers de Lisle-Adam in whose scat- tered works he noted seditious observations and spasmodic vibrations, but which no longer gave one, with the exception of his Claire Lenoir, such troubling horror\.\s

This Claire Lenoir which appeared in 1867 in the Revue des lettres et des arts, opened a series of tales comprised under the title of Histoires Moroses where against a background of obscure speculations borrowed from old Hegel, dislocated creatures stirred, Dr. Trib- ulat Bonhomet, solemn and childish, a Claire Lenoir, farcical and sinister, with blue spec- tacles, round and large as franc pieces, which covered her almost dead eyes\.\s

This story centered about a simple adultery and ended with an inexpressible terror when Bonhomet, opening Claire's eyelids, as she lies in her death bed, and penetrating them with monstrous plummets, distinctly perceives the reflection of the husband brandishing the lover's decapitated head, while shouting a war song, like a Kanaka\.\s

Based on this more or less just observation that the eyes of certain animals, cows for in- stance, preserve even to decomposition, like photographic plates, the image of the beings and things their eyes behold at the moment they expire, this story evidently derived from Poe, from whom he appropriated the terri- fying and elaborate technique\.\s

This also applied to the Intersigne, which had later been joined to the Contes cruels, a collection of indisputable talent in which was found Vera, which Des Esseintes considered a little masterpiece\.\s

Here, the hallucination was marked with an exquisite tenderness; no longer was it the dark mirages of the American author, but the fluid, warm, almost celestial vision; it was in an identical genre, the reverse of the Beatrices and Legeias, those gloomy and dark phan- toms engendered by the inexorable nightmare of opium\.\s

This story also put in play the operations of the will, but it no longer treated of its de- feats and helplessness under the effects of fear; on the contrary, it studied the exaltations of the will under the impulse of a fixed idea; it demonstrated its power which often suc- ceeded in saturating the atmosphere and in imposing its qualities on surrounding objects\.\s

Another book by Villiers de LTsle Adam, Isis, seemed to him curious in other respects. The philosophic medley of Claire Lenoir was evident in this work which offered an un- believable jumble of verbal and troubled ob- servations, souvenirs of old melodramas, poniards and rope ladders — all the roman- ticism which Villiers de LTsle Adam could never rejuvenate in his Elen and Morgane, forgotten pieces published by an obscure man, Sieur Francisque Guyon\.\s

The heroine of this book, Marquise Tullia Fabriana, reputed to have assimilated the Chaldean science of the women of Edgar Allen Poe, and the diplomatic sagacities of Stendhal, had the enigmatic countenance of Bradamante abused by an antique Circe. These insoluble mixtures developed a fulig- inous vapor across which philosophic and lit- erary influences jostled, without being able to be regulated in the author's brain when he wrote the prolegomena? of this work which culd not have embraced less than seven vol- umes\.\s

But there was another side to Villiers' tem- perament. It was piercing and acute in an al- together different sense — a side of forbidding pleasantry and fierce raillery. No longer was it the paradoxical mystifications of Poe, but a scoffing that had in it the lugubrious and savage comedy which Swift possessed. A series of sketches, les Demoiselles de Bienfi- lâtre, l'Affichage céleste, la Machine à gloire, and le Plus beau diner du monde, betrayed a singularly inventive and keenly bantering mind. The whole order of contemporary and utilitarian ideas, the whole commercialized baseness of the age were glorified in stories whose poignant irony transported Des Essein- tes\.\s

No other French book had been written in this serious and bitter style. At the most, a tale by Charles Cros, La science de l'amour, printed long ago in the Revue du Monde- Nouveau, could astonish by reason of its chem- ical whims, by its affected humor and by its coldly facetious observations. But the pleas- ure to be extracted from the story was merely relative, since its execution was a dismal fail- ure. The firm, colored and often original style of Villiers had disappeared to give way to a mixture scraped on the literary bench of the first-comer\.\s

"Heavens! heavens! how few books are really worth re-reading," sighed Des Essein- tes, gazing at the servant who left the stool on which he had been perched, to permit Des Esseintes to survey his books with a single glance\.\s

Des Esseintes nodded his head. But two small books remained on the table. With a sigh, he dismissed the old man, and turned over the leaves of a volume bound in onager skin which had been glazed by a hydraulic press and speckled with silver clouds. It was held together by fly-leaves of old silk damask whose faint patterns held that charm of faded things celebrated by Mallarmé in an exquisite poem\.\s

These pages, numbering nine, had been ex- tracted from copies of the two first Parnassian books; it was printed on parchment paper and preceded by this title: Quelques vers de Mal- larmé, designed in a surprising calligraphy in uncial letters, illuminated and relieved with gold, as in old manuscripts\.\s

Among the eleven poems brought together in these covers, several invited him: Les fenêtres, l'épilogue and Azur; but one among them all, a fragment of the Hérodiade, held him at certain hours in a spell\.\s

How often, beneath the lamp that threw a low light on the silent chamber, had he not felt himself haunted by this Hérodiade who, in the work of Gustave Moreau, was now plunged in gloom revealing but a dim white statue in a brazier extinguished by stones\.\s

The darkness concealed the blood, the re- flections and the golds, hid the temple's farther sides, drowned the supernumeraries of the crime enshrouded in their dead colors, and, only sparing the aquerelle whites, revealed the woman's jewels and heightened her nudity\.\s

At such times he was forced to gaze upon her unforgotten outlines; and she lived for him, her lips articulating those bizarre and delicate lines which Mallarmé makes her utter : O miroir! Eau froide par l'ennui dans ton cadre gelée Que de fois, et pendant les heures, désolée Des songes et cherchant mes souvenirs qui sont Comme des feuilles sous ta glace au trou profond, Je m'apparus en toi comme une ombre lointaine! Mais, horreur! des soirs, dans ta sévère fontaine, J'ai de mon rêve épars connu la nudité! These lines he loved, as he loved the works of this poet who, in an age of democracy de- voted to lucre, lived his solitary and literary life sheltered by his disdain from the encom- passing stupidity, delighting, far from society, in the surprises of the intellect, in cerebral visions, refining on subtle ideas, grafting Byzantine delicacies upon them, perpetuating them in suggestions lightly connected by an almost imperceptible thread\.\s

These twisted and precious ideas were bound together with an adhesive and secret language full of phrase contractions, ellipses and bold tropes\.\s

Perceiving the remotest analogies, with a single term which by an effect of similitude at once gave the form, the perfume, the color and the quality, he described the object or being to which otherwise he would have been compelled to place numerous and different epithets so as to disengage all their facets and nuances, had he simply contented himself with indicating the technical name. Thus he succeeded in dispensing with the comparison, which formed in the reader's mind by analogy as soon as the symbol was understood. Neither was the attention of the reader diverted by the enumeration of the qualities which the jux- taposition of adjectives would have induced. Concentrating upon a single word, he pro- duced, as for a picture, the ensemble, a unique and complete aspect\.\s

It became a concentrated literature, an es- sential unity, a sublimate of art. This style was at first employed with restraint in his earlier works, but Mallarmé had boldly pro- claimed it in a verse on Théophile Gautier and in l'Après-midi du faune, an eclogue where the subtleties of sensual joys are de- scribed in mysterious and caressing verses sud- denly pierced by this wild, rending faun cry: Alors m'éveillerai-je à la ferveur première, Droit et seul sous un flot antique de lumière, Lys! et l'un de vous tous pour l'ingénuité\.\s

That line with the monosyllable lys like a sprig, evoked the image of something rigid, slender and white; it rhymed with the sub- stantive ingénuité, allegorically expressing, by a single term, the passion, the effervescence, the fugitive mood of a virgin faun amorously distracted by the sight of nymphs\.\s

In this extraordinary poem, surprising and unthought of images leaped up at the end of each line, when the poet described the dations and regrets of the faun contemplating, at the edge of a fen, the tufts of reeds still preserv- ing, in its transitory mould, the form made by the naiades who had occupied it\.\s

Then, Des Esseintes also experienced in- sidious delights in touching this diminutive book whose cover of Japan vellum, as white as curdled milk, were held together by two silk bands, one of Chinese rose, the other of black\.\s

Hidden behind the cover, the black band rejoined the rose which rested like a touch of modern Japanese paint or like a lascivious adjutant against the antique white, against the candid carnation tint of the book, and enlaced it, united its sombre color with the light color into a light rosette. It insinuated a faint warn- ing of that regret, a vague menace of that sad- ness which succeeds the ended transports and the calmed excitements of the senses\.\s

Des Esseintes placed V Après-midi du faune on the table and examined another little book he had printed, an anthology of prose poems, a tiny chapel, placed under the invocation of Baudelaire and opening on the parvise of his poems\.\s

This anthology comprised a selection of Gaspard de la nuit of that fantastic Aloysius Bertrand who had transferred the behavior of Leonard in prose and, with his metallic oxydes, painted little pictures whose vivid colors sparkle like those of clear enamels. To this, Des Esseintes had joined le Vox populi of Villiers, a superb piece of work in a ham- mered, golden style after the manner of Leconte de Lisle and of Flaubert, and some selections from that delicate livre de Jade whose exotic perfume of ginseng and of tea blends with the odorous freshness of water babbling along the book, under moonlight\.\s

But in this collection had been gathered certain poems resurrected from defunct re- views: le Démon de l'analogie, la Pipe, le Pauvre enfant pâle, le Spectacle interrompus, le Phénomène futur, and especially Plaintes d'automne and Frisson d'hiver which were Mallarmé's masterpieces and were also cele- brated among the masterpieces of prose poems, for they united such a magnificently delicate language that they cradled, like a melancholy incantation or a maddening melody, thoughts of an irresistible suggestiveness, pulsations of the soul of a sensitive person whose excited nerves vibrate with a keenness which pen- etrates ravishingly and induces a sadness\.\s

Of all the forms of literature, that of the prose poem was the form Des Esseintes pre- ferred. Handled by an alchemist of genius, it contained in its slender volume the strength of the novel whose analytic developments and descriptive redundancies it suppressed. Quite often, Des Esseintes had meditated on that dis- quieting problem — to write a novel concen- trated in a few phrases which should contain the essence of hundreds of pages always em- ployed to establish the setting, to sketch the characters, and to pile up observations and minute details. Then the chosen words would be so unexchangeable that they would do duty for many others, the adjective placed in such an ingenious and definite fashion that it could not be displaced, opening such perspectives that the reader could dream for whole weeks on its sense at once precise and complex, could record the present, reconstruct the past, divine the future of the souls of the characters, re- vealed by the gleams of this unique epithet\.\s

Thus conceived and condensed in a page or two, the novel could become a communion of thought between a magical writer and an ideal reader, a spiritual collaboration agreed to be- tween ten superior persons scattered through- out the universe, a delight offered to the re- fined, and accessible to them alone\.\s

To Des Esseintes, the prose poem repre- sented the concrete juice of literature, the essential oil of art\.\s

That succulence, developed and concen- trated into a drop, already existed in Baude- laire and in those poems of Mallarmé which he read with such deep joy\.\s

When he had closed his anthology, Des Esseintes told himself that his books which had ended on this last book, would probably never have anything added to it\.\s

In fact, the decadence of a literature, irre- parably affected in its organism, enfeebled by old ideas, exhausted by excesses of syntax, sensitive only to the curiosities which make sick persons feverish, and yet intent upon ex- pressing everything in its decline, eager to re- pair all the omissions of enjoyment, to be- queath the most subtle memories of grief in its death bed, was incarnate in Mallarmé, in the most perfect exquisite manner imaginable\.\s

Here were the quintessences of Baudelaire and of Poe; here were their fine and powerful substances distilled and disengaging new flavors and intoxications\.\s

It was the agony of the old language which, after having become moldy from age to age, ended by dissolving, by reaching that delique- scence of the Latin language which expired in the mysterious concepts and the enigmatical expressions of Saint Boniface and Saint Adhelme\.\s

The decomposition of the French language had been effected suddenly. In the Latin language, a long transition, a distance of four hundred years existed between the spotted and superb epithet of Claudian and Rutilius and the gamy epithet of the eighth century. In the French language, no lapse of time, no succes- sion of ages had taken place; the stained and superb style of the de Goncourts and the gamy style of Verlaine and Mallarmé jostled in Paris, living in the same period, epoch and century\.\s

And Des Esseintes, gazing at one of the folios opened on his chapel desk, smiled at the thought that the moment would soon come when an erudite scholar would prepare for the decadence of the French language a glos- sary similar to that in which the savant, Du Cange, has noted the last murmurings, the last spasms, the last flashes of the Latin language dying of old age in the cloisters and sounding its death rattle\.\s

URNING at first like a rick on fire, his enthusiasm for the digester as quickly died out. Torpid at first, his nervous dyspepsia reappeared, and then this hot essence induced such an irritation in his stomach that Des Esseintes was quickly compelled to stop using it\.\s

The malady increased in strength; peculiar symptoms attended it. After the nightmares hallucinations of smell, pains in the eye and deep coughing which recurred with clock-like regularity, after the pounding of his heart and arteries and the cold perspiration, arose illu- sions of hearing, those alterations which only reveal themselves in the last period of sick- ness\.\s

Attacked by a strong fever, Des Esseintes suddenly heard murmurings of water; then those sounds united into one and resembled a roaring which increased and then slowly re- solved itself into a silvery bell sound\.\s

He felt his delirious brain whirling in mu- sical waves, engulfed in the mystic whirlwinds of his infancy. The songs learned at the Jesuits reappeared, bringing with them pic- tures of the school and the chapel where they had resounded, driving their hallucinations to the olfactory and visual organs, veiling them with clouds of incense and the pallid light irradiating through the stained-glass windows, under the lofty arches\.\s

At the Fathers, the religious ceremonies had been practiced with great pomp. An ex- cellent organist and remarkable singing direc- tor made an artistic delight of these spiritual exercises that were conducive to worship. The organist was in love with the old masters and on holidays celebrated masses by Palestrina and Orlando Lasso, psalms by Marcello, ora- torios by Handel, motets by Bach; he pre- ferred to render the sweet and facile compila- tions of Father Lambillotte so much favored by priests, the "Laudi Spirituali" of the six- teenth century whose sacerdotal beauty had often bewitched Des Esseintes\.\s

But he particularly extracted ineffable pleasures while listening to the plain-chant which the organist had preserved regardless of new ideas\.\s

That form which was now considered a decrepit and Gothic form of Christian liturgy, an archaeological curiosity, a relic of ancient time, had been the voice of the early church, the soul of the Middle Age. It was the eternal prayer that had been sung and modulated in harmony with the soul's transports, the en- during hymn uplifted for centuries to the Al- mighty\.\s

That traditional melody was the only one which, with its strong unison, its solemn and massive harmonies, like freestone, was not out of place with the old basilicas, making eloquent the Romanesque vaults, whose ema- nation and very spirit they seeemd to be\.\s

How often had Des Esseintes not thrilled under its spell, when the "Christus factus est" of the Gregorian chant rose from the nave whose pillars seemed to tremble among the rolling clouds from censers, or when the "De Profundi's" was sung, sad and mournful as a suppressed sob, poignant as a despairing in- vocation of humanity bewailing its mortal des- tiny and imploring the tender forgiveness of its Savior! All religious music seemed profane to him compared with that magnificent chant created by the genius of the Church, anonymous as the organ whose inventor is unknown. At bottom, in the works of Jomeli and Porpora, Carissimi and Durante, in the most wonder- ful compositions of Handel and Bach, there was never a hint of a renunciation of public success, or the sacrifice of an effect of art, or the abdication of human pride hearkening to its own prayer\.\s

At the most, the religious style, august and solemn, had crystallized in Lesueur's impos- ing masses celebrated at Saint-Roch, tending to approach the severe nudity and austere majesty of the old plain-chant\.\s

Since then, absolutely revolted by these pretexts at Stabat Maters devised by the Per- goleses and the Rossinis, by this intrusion of profane art in liturgie art, Des Esseintes had shunned those ambiguous works tolerated by the indulgent Church\.\s

In addition, this weakness brought about by the desire for large congregations had quickly resulted in the adoption of songs bor- rowed from Italian operas, of low cavatinas and indecent quadrilles played in churches converted to boudoirs and surrendered to stage actors whose voices resounded aloft, their impurity tainting the tones of the holy organ\.\s

For years he had obstinately refused to take part in these pious entertainments, contenting himself with his memories of childhood. He even regretted having heard the Te Deum of the great masters, for he remembered that admirable plain-chant, that hymn so simple and solemn composed by some unknown saint, a Saint Ambrose or Hilary who, lacking the complicated resources of an orchestra and the musical mechanics of modern science, revealed an ardent faith, a delirious jubilation, uttered, from the soul of humanity, in the piercing and almost celestial accents of conviction\.\s

Des Esseintes' ideas on music were in flag- rant contradiction with the theories he pro- fessed regarding the other arts. In religious music, he approved only of the monastic music of the Middle Ages, that emaciated music which instinctively reacted on his nerves like certain pages of the old Christian Latin. Then (he freely confessed it) he was incapable of understanding the tricks that the contemporary masters had introduced into Catholic art. And he had not studied music with that passion which had led him towards painting and let- ters. He played indifferently on the piano and after many painful attempts had succeeded in reading a score, but he was ignorant of har- mony, of the technique needed really to under- stand a nuance, to appreciate a finesse, to savor a refinement with full comprehension\.\s

In other respects, when not read in solitude, profane music is a promiscuous art. To en- joy music, one must become part of that pub- lic which fills the theatres where, in a vile atmosphere, one perceives a loutish-looking man butchering episodes from Wagner, to the huge delight of the ignorant mob\.\s

He had always lacked the courage to plunge in this mob-bath so as to listen to Berlioz' compositions, several fragments of which had bewitched him by their passionate exaltations and their vigorous fugues, and he was cer- tain that there was not one single scene, not even a phrase of one of the operas of the amaz- ing Wagner which could with impunity be detached from its whole\.\s

The fragments, cut and served on the plate of a concert, lost all significance and remained senseless, since (like the chapters of a book, completing each other and moving to an in- evitable conclusion) Wagner's melodies were necessary to sketch the characters, to incarnate their thoughts and to express their apparent or secret motives. He knew that their in- genious and persistent returns were under- stood only by the auditors who followed the subject from the beginning and gradually be- held the characters in relief, in a setting from which they could not be removed without dying, like branches torn from a tree\.\s

That was why he felt that, among the vulgar herd of melomaniacs enthusing each Sunday on benches, scarcely any knew the score that was being massacred, when the ushers con- sented to be silent and permit the orchestra to be heard\.\s

Granted also that intelligent patriotism forbade a French theatre to give a Wagnerian opera, the only thing left to the curious who know nothing of musical arcana and either cannot or will not betake themselves to Bayreuth, is to remain at home. And that was precisely the course of conduct he had pur- sued\.\s

The more public and facile music and the independent pieces of the old operas hardly interested him; the wretched trills of Auber and Boieldieu, of Adam and Flotow and the rhetorical commonplaces of Ambroise Thomas and the Bazins disgusted him as did the super- annuated affectations and vulgar graces of the Italians. That was why he had resolutely broken with musical art, and during the years of his abstention, he pleasurably recalled only certain programs of chamber music when he had heard Beethoven, and especially Schu- mann and Schubert which had affected his nerves in the same manner as had the more intimate and troubling poems of Edgar Allen Poe\.\s

Some of Schubert's parts for violoncello had positively left him panting, in the grip of hysteria. But it was particularly Schu- bert's lieders that had immeasurably excited him, causing him to experience similar sensa- tions as after a waste of nervous fluid, or a mystic dissipation of the soul\.\s

This music penetrated and drove back an infinity of forgotten sufferings and spleen in his heart. He was astonished at being able to contain so many dim miseries and vague griefs. This desolate music, crying from the inmost depths, terrified while charming him. Never could he repeat the "Young Girl's Lament" without a welling of tears in his eyes, for in this plaint resided something bey- ond a mere broken-hearted state; something in it clutched him, something like a romance ending in a gloomy landscape\.\s

And always, when these exquisite, sad plaints returned to his lips, there was evoked for him a suburban, flinty and gloomy site where a succession of silent bent persons, haras- sed by life, filed past into the twilight, while, steeped in bitterness and overflowing with disgust, he felt himself solitary in this dejected landscape, struck by an inexpressibly melan- choly and stubborn distress whose mysterious intensity excluded all consolation, pity and re- pose. Like a funeral-knell, this despairing chant haunted him, now that he was in bed, prostrated by fever and agitated by an anxiety so much the more inappeasable for the fact that he could not discover its cause. He ended by abandoning himself to the torrent of an- guishes suddenly dammed by the chant of psalms slowly rising in his tortured head\.\s

One morning, nevertheless, he felt more tranquil and requested the servant to bring a looking-glass. It fell from his hands. He hardly recognized himself. His face was a clay color, the lips bloated and dry, the tongue parched, the skin rough. His hair and beard, untended since his illness by the domestic, added to the horror of the sunken face and staring eyes burning with feverish intensity in this skeleton head that bristled with hair. More than his weakness, more than his vomit- ings which began with each attempt at taking nourishment, more than his emaciation, did his changed visage terrify him. He felt lost\.\s

Then, in the dejection which overcame him, a sudden energy forced him in a sitting pos- ture. He had strength to write letter to his Paris physician and to order the servant to depart instantly, seek and bring him back that very day\.\s

He passed suddenly from complete depres- sion into boundless hope. This physician was a celebrated specialist, a doctor renowned for his cures of nervous maladies "He must have cured many more dangerous cases than mine," Des Esseintes reflected. "I shall certainly be on my feet in a few days." Disenchantment succeeded his confidence. Learned and intui- tive though they be, physicians know abso- lutely nothing of neurotic diseases, being ig- norant of their origins. Like the others, this one would prescribe the eternal oxyde of zinc and quinine, bromide of potassium and vale- rian. He had recourse to another thought: "If these remedies have availed me little in the past, could it not be due to the fact that I have not taken the right quantities?" In spite of everything, this expectation of being cured cheered him, but then a new fear entered. His servant might have failed to find the physician. Again he grew faint, passing instantly from the most unreasoning hopes to the most baseless fears, exaggerating the chances of a sudden recovery and his appre- hensions of danger. The hours passed and the moment came when, in utter despair and convinced that the physician would not arrive, he angrily told himself that he certainly would have been saved, had he acted sooner. Then his rage against the servant and the physician whom he accused of permitting him to die, vanished, and he ended by reproaching himself for having waited so long before seeking aid, persuading himself that he would now be wholly cured had he that very last evening used the medicine\.\s

Little by little, these alternations of hope and alarms jostling in his poor head, abated. The struggles ended by crushing him, and he relapsed into exhausted sleep interrupted by in- coherent dreams, a sort of syncope pierced by awakenings in which he was barely conscious of anything. He had reached such a state where he lost all idea of desires and fears, and he was stupefied, experiencing neither aston- ishment or joy, when the physician suddenly arrived\.\s

The doctor had doubtless been apprised by the servant of Des Esssintes' mode of living and of the various symptoms observed since the day when the master of the house had been found near the window, overwhelmed by the violence of perfumes. He put very few ques- tions to the patient whom he had known for many years. He felt his pulse and attentively studied the urine where certain white spots revealed one of the determining causes of nervousness. He wrote a prescription and left without saying omre than that he would soon return\.\s

This visit comforted Des Esseintes who none the less was frightened by the taciturnity ob- served; he adjured his servant not to conceal the truth from him any longer. But the serv- ant declared that the doctor had exhibited no uneasiness, and despite his suspicions, Des Esseintes could seize upon no sign that might betray a shadow of a lie on the tranquil count- enance of the old men\.\s

Then his thoughts began to obsess him less ; his suffering disappeared and to the exhaustion he had felt throughout his members was grafted a certain indescribable languor. He was astonished and satisfied not to be weighted with drugs and vials, and a faint smile played on his lips when the servant brought a nour- ishing injection of peptone and told him he was to take it three times every twenty-four hours\.\s

The operation succeeded and Des Esseintes could not forbear to congratulate himself on this event which in a manner crowned the existence he had created. His penchant to- wards the artificial had now, though involun- tarily, reached the supreme goal\.\s

Farther one could not go. The nourish- ment thus absorbed was the ultimate deviation one could possibly commit\.\s

"How delicious it would be" he reflected, "to continue this simple regime in complete health! What economy of time, what a pro- nounced deliverance from the aversion which food gives those who lack appetite! What a complete riddance from the disgust induced by food forcibly eaten! What an energetic protestation against the vile sin of gluttony, what a positive insult hurled at old nature whose monotonous demands would thus be avoided." And he continued, talking to himself half- aloud. One could easily stimulate desire for food by swallowing a strong aperitif. After the question, "what time is it getting to be? I am famished," one would move to the table and place the instrument on the cloth, and then, in the time it takes to say grace, one could have suppressed the tiresome and vulgar de- mands of the body\.\s

Several days afterwards, the servant pre- sented an injection whose color and odor dif- fered from the other\.\s

"But it is not the same at all!" Des Essein- tes cried, gazing with deep feeling at the liquid poured into the apparatus. As if in a restaurant, he asked for the card, and unfold- ing the physician's prescription, read: Cod Liver Oil 20 grammes Beef Tea 200 grammes Burgundy Wine 200 grammes Yolk of one egg. He remained meditative. He who by reason of the weakened state of his stomach had never seriously preoccupied hismelf with the art of the cuisine, was surprised to find him- self thinking of combinations to please an artificial epicure. Then a strange idea crossed his brain. Perhaps the physician had imag- ined that the strange palate of his patient was fatigued by the taste of the peptone; perhaps he had wished, like a clever chef, to vary the taste of foods and to prevent the monotony of dishes that might lead to want of appetite. Once in the wake of these reflections, Des Esseintes sketched new recipes, perparing vegetable dinners for Fridays, using the dose of cod liver oil and wine, dismissing the beef tea as a meat food specially prohibited by the Church. But he had no occasion longer to ruminate on these nourishing drinks, for the physician succeeded gradually in curing the vomiting attacks, and he was soon swallow- ing, in the normal manner, a syrup of punch containing a pulverized meat whose faint aroma of cacao pleased his palate\.\s

Weeks passed before his stomach decided to function. The nausea returned at certain moments, but these attacks were disposed of by ginger ale and Rivières' antiemetic drink\.\s

Finally the organs were restored. Meats were digested with the aid of pepsines. Re- covering strength, he was able to stand up and attempt to walk, leaning on a cane and sup- porting himself on the furniture. Instead of being thankful over his success, he forgot his past pains, grew irritated at the length of time needed for convalescence and reproached the doctor for not effecting a more rapid cure\.\s

At last the day came when he could remain standing for whole afternoons. Then his study irritated him. Certain blemishes it possessed, and which habit had accustomed him to over- look, now were apparent. The colors chosen to be seen by lamp-light seemed discordant in full day. He thought of changing them and for whole hours he combined rebellious har- monies of hues, hybrid pairings of cloth and leathers\.\s

"I am certainly on the road to recovery," he reflected, taking note of his old hobbies\.\s

One morning, while contemplating his orange and blue walls, considering some ideal tapestries worked with stoles of the Greek Church, dreaming of Russian orphrey dalma- ticas and brocaded copes flowered with Slav- onic letters done in Ural stones and rows of pearls, the physician entered and, noticing the patient's eyes, questioned him\.\s

Des Esseintes spoke of his unrealizable longings. He commenced to contrive new color schemes, to talk of harmonies and discords of tones he meant to produce, when the doctor stunned him by peremptorily announcing that these projects would never be executed here\.\s

And, without giving him time to catch breath, he informed Des Esseintes that he had done his utmost in re-establishing the diges- tive functions and that now it was necessary to attack the neurosis which was by no means cured and which would necessitate years of diet and care. He added that before attempt- ing a cure, before commencing any hydro- thérapie treatment, impossible of execution at Fontenay, Des Esseintes must quit that soli- tude, return to Paris, and live an ordinary mode of existence by amusing himself like others\.\s

"But the pleasures of others will not amuse me," Des Esseintes indignantly cried\.\s

Without debating the matter, the doctor merely asserted that this radical change was, in his eyes, a question of life or death, a ques- tion of health or insanity possibly complicated in the near future by tuberculosis\.\s

"So it is a choice between death and the hulks!" Des Esseintes exasperatedly ex- claimed\.\s

The doctor, who was imbued with all the prejudices of a man of the world, smiled and reached the door without saying a word\.\s

ES ESSEINTES locked himself up in his bedroom, closing his ears to the sounds of hammers on packing cases. Each stroke rent his heart, drove a sorrow into his flesh. The physi- cian's order was being fulfilled; the fear of once more submitting to the pains he had endured, the fear of a frightful agony had acted more powerfully on Des Esseintes than the hatred of the detestable existence to which the medical order condemned him\.\s

Yet he told himself there were people who live without conversing with anyone, absorbed far from the world in their own affairs, like recluses and trappists, and there is nothing to prove that these wretches and sages become madmen or consumptives. He had unsuc- cessfully cited these examples to the doctor; the latter had repeated, coldly and firmly, in a tone that admitted of no reply, that his ver- dict, (confirmed besides by consultation with all the experts on neurosis) was that distrac- tion, amusement, pleasure alone might make an impression on this malady whose spiritual side eluded all remedy; and made impatient by the recriminations of his patient, he for the last time declared that he would refuse to continue treating him if he did not consent to a change of air, and live under new hygienic conditions\.\s

Des Esseintes had instantly betaken him- self to Paris, had consulted other specialists, had impartially put the case before them. All having unhesitantly approved of the action of their colleague, he had rented an apartment in a new house, had returned to Fontenay and, white with rage, had given others to have his trunks packed\.\s

Sunk in his easy chair, he now ruminated upon that unyielding order which was wreck- ing his plans, breaking the strings of his pres- ent life and overturning his future plans. His beatitude was ended. He was compelled to abandon this sheltering haven and return at full speed into the stupidity which had once attacked him\.\s

The physicians spoke of amusement and distraction. With whom, and with what did they wish him to distract and amuse himself? Had he not banished himself from society? Did he know a single person whose existence would approximate his in seclusion and con- templation? Did he know a man capable of appreciating the fineness of a phrase, the sub- tlety of a painting, the quintessence of an idea, — a man whose soul was delicate and ex- quisite enough to understand Mallarmé and love Verlaine? Where and when must he search to discover a twin spirit, a soul detached from common- places, blessing silence as a benefit, ingrati- tude as a solace, contempt as a refuge and port? In the world where he had dwelt before his departure for Fontenay? But most of the county squires he had associated with must since have stultified themselves near card tables or ended upon the lips of women; most by this time must have married ; after having enjoyed, during their life, the spoils of cads, their spouses now possessed the remains of strumpets, for, master of first-fruits, the peo- ple alone waste nothing\.\s

"A pretty change — this custom adopted by a prudish society!" Des Esseintes reflected\.\s

The nobility had died, the aristocracy had marched to imbecility or ordure! It was ex- tinguished in the corruption of its descendants whose faculties grew weaker with each gen- eration and ended in the instincts of gorillas fermented in the brains of grooms and jockeys ; or rather, as with the Choiseul-Praslins, Polig- nacs and Chevreuses, wallowed in the mud of lawsuits which made it equal the other classes in turpitude\.\s

The mansions themselves, the secular escut- cheons, the heraldic deportment of this an- tique caste had disappeared. The land no longer yielding anything was put up for sale, money being needed to procure the venereal witchcraft for the besotted descendants of the old races\.\s

The less scrupulous and stupid threw aside all sense of shame. They weltered in the mire of fraud and deceit, behaved like cheap sharpers\.\s

This eagerness for gain, this lust for lucre had even reacted on that other class which had constantly supported itself on the nobility — the clergy. Now one perceived, in newspapers, announcements of corn cures by priests. The monasteries had changed into apothecary or liqueur workrooms. They sold recipes or manufactured products: the Citeaux order, chocolate; the trappists, semolina; the Maris- tes Brothers, biphosphate of medicinal lime and arquebuse water; the jacobins, an anti- apoplectic elixir; the disciples of Saint Benoit, bénédictine; the friars of Saint Bruno, char- treuse\.\s

Business had invaded the cloisters where, in place of antiphonaries, heavy ledgers re- posed on reading-desks. Like leprosy, the avidity of the age was ravaging the Church, weighing down the monks with inventories and invoices\.\s

And yet, in spite of everything, it was only among the ecclesiastics that Des Esscintes could hope for pleasurable contract. In the society of well-bred and learned canons, he would have been compelled to share their faith, to refrain from floating between scep- tical ideas and transports of conviction which rose from time to time on the water, sustained by recollections of childhood\.\s

He would have had to muster identical opinions and never admit (he freely did in his ardent moments) a Catholicism charged with a soupçon of magic, as under Henry the Third, and with a dash of sadism, as at the end of the last century. This special clericalism, this depraved and artistically perverse mysticism towards which he wended could not even be discussed with a priest who would not have understood them or who would have banished them with horror\.\s

For the twentieth time, this irresolvable problem troubled him. He would have desired an end to this irresolute state in which he floundered. Now that he was pursuing a changed life, he would have liked to possess faith, to incrust it as soon as seized, to screw it into his soul, to chield it finally from all those reflections which uprooted and agitated it. But the more he desired it and the less his emptiness of spirit was evident, the more Christ's visitation receded. As his religious hunger augmented and he gazed eagerly at this faith visible but so far off that the dis- tance terrified him, ideas pressed upn his ac- tive mind, driving back his will, rejecting, by common sense and mathematical proofs, the mysteries and dogmas. He sadly told himself that he would have to find way to abstain from self-discussion. He would have to learn how to close his eyes and let himself be swept along by the current, forgetting those accursed dis- coveries which have destroyed the religious edifice, from top to bottom, since the last two centuries\.\s

He sighed. It is neither the physiologists nor the infidels that demolish Catholicism, but the priests, whose stupid works could extir- pate convictions the most steadfast\.\s

A Dominican friar, Rouard de Card, had proved in a brochure entitled "On the Adult- eration of Sacramental Substances" that most masses were not valid, because the elements used for worship had been adulterated by the manufacturers\.\s

For years, the holy oils had been adulterated with chicken fat; wax, with burned bones; in- cense, with cheap resin and benzoin. But the thing that was worse was that the substances, indispensable to the holy sacrifice, the two substances without which no oblation is pos- sible, had also been debased: the wine, by numerous dilutions and by illicit introduc- tions of Pernambuco wood, danewort berries, alcohol and alum; the bread of the Eucharist that must be kneaded with the fine flour of wheat, by kidney beans, potash and pipe clay\.\s

But they had gone even farther. They had dared suppress the wheat and shameless dealers were making almost all the Host with the fecula of potatoes\.\s

Now, God refused to descend into the fecula. It was an undeniable fact and a cer- tain one. In the second volume of his treatise on moral theology, Cardinal Gousset had dwelt at length on this question of the fraud practiced from the divine point of view. And, according to incontestable authority of this master, one could not consecrate bread made of flour of oats, buckwheat or barley, and if the matter of using rye be less doubtful, no argument was possible in regard to the fecula which, according to the ecclesiastic expres- sion, was in no way fit for sacramental pur- poses\.\s

By means of the rapid manipulation of the fecula and the beautiful appearance presented by the unleavened breads created with this element, the shameless imposture had been so propagated that now the mystery of the transubstantion hardly existed any longer and the priests and faithful were holding com- munion, without being aware of it, with neu- tral elements\.\s

Ah! far off was the time when Radegonda, Queen of France, had with her own hands prepared the bread destined for the altars, or the time when, after the customs of Cluny, three priests or deacons, fasting and garbed in alb and amice, washed their faces and hands and then picked out the wheat, grain by grain, grinding it under millstone, kneading the paste in a cold and pure water and themselves baking it under a clear fire, while chanting psalms\.\s

"All this matter of eternal dupery," Des Esseintes reflected, "is not conducive to the steadying of my already weakened faith. And how admit that omnipotence which stops at such a trifle as a pinch of fecula or a soupçon of alcohol?" These reflections all the more threw a gloom over the view of his future life and rendered his horizon more menacing and dark\.\s

He was lost, utterly lost. What would be- come of him in this Paris where he had neither family nor friends? No bond united him to the Saint-Germain quarters now in its dotage, scaling into the dust of desuetude, buried in a new society like an empty husk. And what contact could exist between him and that bour- geois class which had gradually climbed up, profiting by all the disasters to grow rich, mak- ing use of all the catastrophes to impose re- spect on its crimes and thefts\.\s

After the aristocracy of birth had come the aristocracy of money. Now one saw the reign of the caliphates of commerce, the despotism of the rue du Sentier, the tyranny of trade, bringing in its train venal narrow ideas, knav- ish and vain instincts\.\s

Viler and more dishonest than the nobility despoiled and the decayed clergy, the bour- geoisie borrowed their frivolous ostentations, their braggadoccio, degrading these qualities by its lack of savoir-vivre; the bourgeoisie stole their faults and converted them into hy- pocritical vices. And, authoritative and sly, low and cowardly, it pitilessly attacked its eternal and necessary dupe, the populace, un- muzzled and placed in ambush so as to be in readiness to assault the old castes\.\s

It was now an acknowledged fact. Its task once terminated, the proletariat had been bled, supposedly as a measure of hygiene. The bourgeoisie, reassured, strutted about in good humor, thanks to its wealth and the contagion of its stupidity. The result of its accession to power had been the destruction of all intelli- gence, the negation of all honesty, the death of all art, and, in fact, the debased artists had fallen on their knees, and they eagerly kissed the dirty feet of the eminent jobbers and low satraps whose alms permitted them to live\.\s

In painting, one now beheld a deluge of silliness ; in literature, an intemperate mixture of dull style and cowardly ideas, for they had to credit the business man with honesty, the buccaneer who purchased a dot for his son and refused to pay that of his daughter, with virtue; chaste love to the Voltairian agnostic who accused the clergy of rapes and then went hypocritically and stupidly to sniff, in the ob- scene chambers\.\s

It was the great American hulks trans- ported to our continent. It was the immense, the profound, the incommensurable peasantry of the financier and the parvenu, beaming, like a pitiful sun, upon the idolatrous town which wallowed on the ground the while it uttered impure psalms before the impious tabernacle of banks\.\s

"Well, then, society, crash to ruin! Die, aged world!" cried Des Esseintes, angered by the ignominy of the spectacle he had evoked. This cry of hate broke the nightmare that op- pressed him\.\s

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "To think that all this is not a dream, to think that I am going to return into the cowardly and servile crowd of this century!" To console himself, he recalled the comforting maxims of Scho- penhauer, and repeated to himself the sad axiom of Pascal: "The soul is pained by all things it thinks upon." But the words re- sounded in his mind like sounds deprived of sense; his ennui disintegrated, lifting all sig- nificance frm the words, all healing virtue, all effective and gentle vigor\.\s

He came at last to perceive that the reason- ings of pessimism availed little in comforting him, that impossible faith in a future life alone would pacify him\.\s

An access of rage swept aside, like a hurri- cane, his attempts at resignation and indiffer- ence. He could no longer conceal the hideous truth — nothing was left, all was in ruins. The bourgeoisie were gormandizing on the solemn ruins of the Church which had become a place of rendez-vous, a mass of rubbish, soiled by petty puns and scandalous jests. Were the terrible God of Genesis and the Pale Christ of Golgotha not going to prove their existence by commanding the cataclysms of yore, by rekindling the flames that once consumed the sinful cities? Was this degradation to continue to flow and cover with its pestilence the old world planted with seeds of iniquities and shames? The door was suddenly opened. Clean- shaved men appeared, bringing chests and carrying the furniture; then the door closed once more on the servant who was removing packages of books\.\s

Des Esseintes sank into a chair\.\s

"'I shall be in Paris in two days. Well, all is finished. The waves of human mediocrity rise to the sky and they will engulf the refuge whose dams I open. Ah! courage leaves me, my heart breaks! O Lord, pity the Christian who doubts, the sceptic who would believe, the convict of life embarking alone in the night, under a sky no longer illumined by the consoling beacons of ancient faith."