From the free out-door life at Nohant she passed at thirteen to the convent of the English Augustinians at Paris, where for the first two years she never went outside the walls. Nothing better shows the plasticity of her character than the ease with which she adapted herself to this sudden change. The volume which describes her conventual life is as graphic as Miss Bronte\*s *Villette,* but we can only dwell on one passage of it. Tired of mad pranks, in a fit of home-sickness, she found herself one evening in the convent chapel.

“ I had forgotten all; I knew not what was passing in me; with my soul rather than my senses, I breathed an air of ineffable sweetness. All at once a sudden shock passed through my whole being, my eyes swam, and I seemed wrapped in a dazzling white mist. I heard a voice murmur in my ear, ‘*Tolle, lege.'* I turned round, thinking that it was one of the sisters talking to me—I was alone.

I indulged in no vain illusion; I believed in no miracle; I was quite sensible of the sort of hallucination into which I had fallen; I neither sought to intensify it nor to (escape from it. Only I felt that faith was laying hold of me—by the heart, as I had wished it. I was so filled with gratitude and joy that the tears rolled down my cheeks.

I felt as before that I loved God, that my mind embraced and ac­cepted that ideal of justice, tenderness and holiness which I had never doubted, but with which I had never held direct communion, and now at last I felt that this communion was consummated, as though an invincible barrier had been broken down between the source of infinite light and the smouldering fire of my heart. An endless vista stretched before me, and I panted to start upon my way. There was no more doubt or lukewarmness. That I should repent on the morrow and rally myself on my over-wrought ecstasy never once entered my thoughts. I was like one who never casts a look behind, who hesitates before some Rubicon to be crossed, but having touched the farther bank sees no more the shore he has just left.”

Such is the story of her conversion as told by herself. It reads more like a chapter from the life of Ste Thérèse or Madame Guyon than of the author of *Lélia.* Yet no one can doubt the sincerity of her narrative, or even the permanence of her religious feelings under all her many phases of faith and aberrations of conduct. A recent critic has sought in religion the clue to her character and the mainspring of her genius. Only in her case religion must be taken in an even more restricted sense than Matthew Arnold’s “ morality touched by emotion.” For her there was no categorical imperative, no moral code save to follow the promptings of her heart. “ Tenderness ” she had abundantly, and it revealed itself not only in effusive sentimentality, as with Rousseau and Chateaubriand, but in active benevolence; “ justice ” too she had in so far as she sincerely wished that all men should share alike her happiness; but of “ holiness,’’ that sense of awe and reverence that was felt in divers kinds and degrees by Isaiah, Sophocles, Virgil and St Paul, she had not a rudimenatry conception.

Again in 1820 Aurore exchanged the restraint of a convent for freedom, being recalled to Nohant by Mme de Francueil, who had no intention of letting her granddaughter grow up a *dévote.* She rode across country with her brother, she went out shooting with Deschatres, she sat by the cottage doors on the long summer evenings and heard the flax-dressers tell their tales of witches and warlocks. She was a considerable linguist and knew English, Italian and some Latin, though she never tackled Greek. She read widely though unsystematically, studying philosophy in Aristotle, Leibnitz, Locke and Condillac, and feeding her imagina­tion with *René* and *Childe Harold.* Her confessor lent her the *Genius of Christianity,* and to this book she ascribes the first change in her religious views. She renounced once for all the asceticism and isolation of the *De imitatione* for the more genial and sympathetic Christianity of Chateaubriand. Yet she still, clung to old associations, and on her grandmother’s death was about to return to her convent, but was dissuaded by her friends, who found her a husband.

Casimir Dudevant, whom she married on the 11th of December 1822, was the natural son of a Baron Dudevant. He had retired at an early age from the army and was living an idle life at home as a gentleman farmer. Her husband, though he afterwards deteriorated, seems at that time to have been neither better nor worse than the Berrichon squires around him, and the first years of her married life, during which her son Maurice and her daughter

Solange were bom, except for lovers’ quarrels, were passed in peace and quietness, though signs were not wanting of the coming storm. Among these must be mentioned her friendship with Aurélien de Sèze, advocate-general at Bourdeau. De Sèze was a middle-aged lawyer with a philosophic turn of mind, and Madame Dudevant for two years kept up with him an intimate correspondence. The friendship was purely platonic, but the husband felt or affected jealousy, and resented an intimacy which he from his total lack of culture was unable to share. The breach quickly widened. He on his part was more and more repelled by a superior woman determined to live her own intellectual life, and she on hers discovered that she was mated, if not to a clown, at least to a *hobereau* whose whole heart was in his cattle and his turnips. So long as the conventionalities were preserved she endured it, but when her husband took to drinking and made love to the maids under her very eyes she resolved to break a yoke that had grown intolerable. The last straw that determined action was the discovery of a paper docketed “ Not to be opened till after my death,” which was nothing but a railing accusation against herself. She at once quitted Nohant, taking with her Solange, and in 1831 an amicable separation was agreed upon, by which her whole estate was surrendered to the husband with the stipulation that she should receive an allow- ance of £120 a year. She had regained her liberty, and made no secret of her intention to use it to the full. She endeavoured unsuccessfully to eke out her irregularly paid allowance by those expedients to which reduced gentlewomen are driven—fancy- work and painting fans and snuff-boxes; she lived in a garret and was often unable to allow herself the luxury of a fire. It was only as a last resource that she tried literature. Her first apprenticeship was served under Delatouche, the editor of *Figaro.* He was a native of Berri, like herself, a stem but kindly taskmaster who treated her much as Dr Johnson treated Fanny Burney. George Sand was methodical and had a ready pen, but she lacked the more essential qualities of a Parisian journalist, wit, sparkle and conciseness. At the end of a month, she tells us, her earnings amounted to fifteen francs. On the staff of *Figaro* was another compatriot with whom she was already intimate as a visitor at Nohant. Jules Sandeau was a clever and attractive young lawyer. Articles written in common soon led to a complete literary partnership, and 1831 there appeared in the *Revue de Paris* a joint novel entitled *Prima Donna* and signed Jules Sand. Shortly after this was published in book form with the same signature a second novel, *Rose et Blanche.* The sequel to this literary alliance is best recounted in George Sand’s own words: “ I resisted him for three months but then yielded; I lived in my own apartment in an unconventional style.” Her first independent novel, *Indiana* (1832), was written at the instigation of Delatouche, and the world-famous pseudonym George (originally Georges) Sand was adopted as a compromise between herself and her partner. The “ George ” connoted a Berrichon as “ David ” does a Welshman. The one wished to throw *Indiana* into the common stock, the other refused to lend his name, or even part of his name, to a work in which he had had no share. The novel was received with instant acclamation, and Sainte-Beuve only confirmed the judgment of the public when he pronounced in the *Globe* that this new author (then to him unknown) had struck a new and original vein and was destined to go far. Delatouche was the first to throw himself at her feet and bid her forget all the hard things he had said of her. *Indiana* is a direct transcript of the author’s personal experiences (the disagreeable husband is M. Dudevant to the life), and an exposition of her theory of sexual relations which is founded thereon. To many critics it seemed that she had said her whole say and that nothing but replicas could follow. *Valentine,* which was published in the same year, indicated that it was but the first chapter in a life of endless adventures, and that the imagination which turned the crude facts into poetry, and the fancy which played about them like a rainbow, were inexhaustible.

As a novel *Valentine* has little to commend it; the plot is feeble and the characters shadowy. Only in the descriptions of