

The Project Gutenberg Etext of Conscience by Hector Malot, v4 #76 in our series The French Immortals
Crowned by the French Academy #4 in our series by Hector Malot

Copyright laws are changing all over the world, be sure to check the laws for your country before redistributing these files!!!

Please take a look at the important information in this header. We encourage you to keep this file on your own disk, keeping an electronic path open for the next readers.

Please do not remove this.

This should be the first thing seen when anyone opens the book. Do not change or edit it without written permission. The words are carefully chosen to provide users with the information they need about what they can legally do with the texts.

****Welcome To The World of Free Plain Vanilla Electronic Texts****

****Etexts Readable By Both Humans and By Computers, Since 1971****

*******These Etexts Are Prepared By Thousands of Volunteers!*******

Information on contacting Project Gutenberg to get Etexts, and further information is included below, including for donations.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN [Employee Identification Number] 64-6221541

Title: Conscience, v4

Author: Hector Malot

Release Date: April, 2003 [Etext #3989]
[Yes, we are about one year ahead of schedule]
[The actual date this file first posted = 09/28/01]

Edition: 10

Language: English

The Project Gutenberg Etext of Conscience by Hector Malot, v4
****This file should be named 3989.txt or 3989.zip****

This etext was produced by David Widger <widger@cecomet.net>

Project Gutenberg Etexts are usually created from multiple editions, all of which are in the Public Domain in the United States, unless a copyright notice is included. Therefore, we usually do NOT keep any of these books in compliance with any particular paper edition.

We are now trying to release all our books one year in advance of the official release dates, leaving time for better editing. Please be encouraged to send us error messages even years after the official publication date.

Please note neither this listing nor its contents are final til midnight of the last day of the month of any such announcement. The official release date of all Project Gutenberg Etexts is at Midnight, Central Time, of the last

day of the stated month. A preliminary version may often be posted for suggestion, comment and editing by those who wish to do so.

Most people start at our sites at: <http://gutenberg.net> <http://promo.net/pg>

Those of you who want to download any Etext before announcement can surf to them as follows, and just download by date; this is also a good way to get them instantly upon announcement, as the indexes our cataloguers produce obviously take a while after an announcement goes out in the Project Gutenberg Newsletter.

<http://www.ibiblio.org/gutenberg/etext03>

or

<ftp://ftp.ibiblio.org/pub/docs/books/gutenberg/etext03>

Or /etext02, 01, 00, 99, 98, 97, 96, 95, 94, 93, 92, 91 or 90

Just search by the first five letters of the filename you want, as it appears in our Newsletters.

Information about Project Gutenberg (one page)

We produce about two million dollars for each hour we work. The time it takes us, a rather conservative estimate, is fifty hours to get any etext selected, entered, proofread, edited, copyright searched and analyzed, the copyright letters written, etc. This projected audience is one hundred million readers. If our value per text is nominally estimated at one dollar then we produce \$2 million dollars per hour this year as we release fifty new Etext files per month, or 500 more Etexts in 2000 for a total of 3000+ If they reach just 1-2% of the world's population then the total should reach over 300 billion Etexts given away by year's end.

The Goal of Project Gutenberg is to Give Away One Trillion Etext Files by December 31, 2001. [10,000 x 100,000,000 = 1 Trillion] This is ten thousand titles each to one hundred million readers, which is only about 4% of the present number of computer users.

At our revised rates of production, we will reach only one-third of that goal by the end of 2001, or about 4,000 Etexts unless we manage to get some real funding.

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation has been created to secure a future for Project Gutenberg into the next millennium.

We need your donations more than ever!

As of July 12, 2001 contributions are only being solicited from people in:
Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho,
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota,
Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, North
Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota,
Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia,
Wisconsin, and Wyoming.

We have filed in about 45 states now, but these are the only ones that have responded.

As the requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund raising will begin in the additional states. Please feel free to ask to check the status of your state.

In answer to various questions we have received on this:

We are constantly working on finishing the paperwork to legally request donations in all 50 states. If your state is not listed and you would like to know if we have added it since the list you have, just ask.

While we cannot solicit donations from people in states where we are not yet registered, we know of no prohibition against accepting donations from donors in these states who approach us with an offer to donate.

International donations are accepted, but we don't know ANYTHING about how to make them tax-deductible, or even if they CAN be made deductible, and don't have the staff to handle it even if there are ways.

All donations should be made to:

Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation
PMB 113
1739 University Ave.
Oxford, MS 38655-4109

The Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation is a 501(c)(3) organization with EIN [Employee Identification Number] 64-6221541, and has been approved as a 501(c)(3) organization by the US Internal Revenue Service (IRS). Donations are tax-deductible to the maximum extent permitted by law. As the requirements for other states are met, additions to this list will be made and fund raising will begin in the additional states.

We need your donations more than ever!

You can get up to date donation information at:

<http://www.gutenberg.net/donation.html>

If you can't reach Project Gutenberg, you can always email directly to:

Michael S. Hart <hart@pobox.com>

hart@pobox.com forwards to hart@prairienet.org and archive.org if your mail bounces from archive.org, I will still see it, if it bounces from prairienet.org, better resend later on. . . .

Prof. Hart will answer or forward your message.

We would prefer to send you information by email.

Example command-line FTP session:

```
ftp ftp.ibiblio.org login: anonymous password: your@login cd pub/docs/books/gutenberg cd etext90 through
etext99 or etext00 through etext02, etc. dir [to see files] get or mget [to get files. . .set bin for zip files] GET
GUTINDEX.?? [to get a year's listing of books, e.g., GUTINDEX.99] GET GUTINDEX.ALL [to get a listing of
ALL books]
```

****The Legal Small Print****

(Three Pages)

*****START**THE SMALL PRINT!**FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN ETEXTS**START***** Why is this "Small Print!" statement here? You know: lawyers. They tell us you might sue us if there is something wrong with your copy of this etext, even if you got it for free from someone other than us, and even if what's wrong is not our fault. So, among other things, this "Small Print!" statement disclaims most of our liability to you. It also tells you how you may distribute copies of this etext if you want to.

***BEFORE!* YOU USE OR READ THIS ETEXT** By using or reading any part of this PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm etext, you indicate that you understand, agree to and accept this "Small Print!" statement. If you do not, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for this etext by sending a request within 30 days of receiving it to the person you got it from. If you received this etext on a physical medium (such as a disk), you must return it with your request.

ABOUT PROJECT GUTENBERG-TM ETEXTS This PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm etext, like most PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm etexts, is a "public domain" work distributed by Professor Michael S. Hart through the Project Gutenberg Association (the "Project"). Among other things, this means that no one owns a United States copyright on or for this work, so the Project (and you!) can copy and distribute it in the United States without permission and without paying copyright royalties. Special rules, set forth below, apply if you wish to copy and distribute this etext under the "PROJECT GUTENBERG" trademark.

Please do not use the "PROJECT GUTENBERG" trademark to market any commercial products without permission.

To create these etexts, the Project expends considerable efforts to identify, transcribe and proofread public domain works. Despite these efforts, the Project's etexts and any medium they may be on may contain "Defects". Among other things, Defects may take the form of incomplete, inaccurate or corrupt data, transcription errors, a copyright or other intellectual property infringement, a defective or damaged disk or other etext medium, a computer virus, or computer codes that damage or cannot be read by your equipment.

LIMITED WARRANTY; DISCLAIMER OF DAMAGES But for the "Right of Replacement or Refund" described below, [1] Michael Hart and the Foundation (and any other party you may receive this etext from as a PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm etext) disclaims all liability to you for damages, costs and expenses, including legal fees, and [2] YOU HAVE NO REMEDIES FOR NEGLIGENCE OR UNDER STRICT LIABILITY, OR FOR BREACH OF WARRANTY OR CONTRACT, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO INDIRECT, CONSEQUENTIAL, PUNITIVE OR INCIDENTAL DAMAGES, EVEN IF YOU GIVE NOTICE OF THE POSSIBILITY OF SUCH DAMAGES.

If you discover a Defect in this etext within 90 days of receiving it, you can receive a refund of the money (if any) you paid for it by sending an explanatory note within that time to the person you received it from. If you received it on a physical medium, you must return it with your note, and such person may choose to alternatively give you a replacement copy. If you received it electronically, such person may choose to alternatively give you a second opportunity to receive it electronically.

THIS ETEXT IS OTHERWISE PROVIDED TO YOU "AS-IS". NO OTHER WARRANTIES OF ANY KIND, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, ARE MADE TO YOU AS TO THE ETEXT OR ANY MEDIUM IT MAY BE ON, INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY OR FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE.

Some states do not allow disclaimers of implied warranties or the exclusion or limitation of consequential damages, so the above disclaimers and exclusions may not apply to you, and you may have other legal rights.

INDEMNITY You will indemnify and hold Michael Hart, the Foundation, and its trustees and agents, and any volunteers associated with the production and distribution of Project Gutenberg-tm texts harmless, from all liability, cost and expense, including legal fees, that arise directly or indirectly from any of the following that

you do or cause: [1] distribution of this etext, [2] alteration, modification, or addition to the etext, or [3] any Defect.

DISTRIBUTION UNDER "PROJECT GUTENBERG-tm" You may distribute copies of this etext electronically, or by disk, book or any other medium if you either delete this "Small Print!" and all other references to Project Gutenberg, or:

[1] Only give exact copies of it. Among other things, this requires that you do not remove, alter or modify the etext or this "small print!" statement. You may however, if you wish, distribute this etext in machine readable binary, compressed, mark-up, or proprietary form, including any form resulting from conversion by word processing or hypertext software, but only so long as *EITHER*:

[*] The etext, when displayed, is clearly readable, and does *not* contain characters other than those intended by the author of the work, although tilde (~), asterisk (*) and underline (_) characters may be used to convey punctuation intended by the author, and additional characters may be used to indicate hypertext links; OR

[*] The etext may be readily converted by the reader at no expense into plain ASCII, EBCDIC or equivalent form by the program that displays the etext (as is the case, for instance, with most word processors); OR

[*] You provide, or agree to also provide on request at no additional cost, fee or expense, a copy of the etext in its original plain ASCII form (or in EBCDIC or other equivalent proprietary form).

[2] Honor the etext refund and replacement provisions of this "Small Print!" statement.

[3] Pay a trademark license fee to the Foundation of 20% of the gross profits you derive calculated using the method you already use to calculate your applicable taxes. If you don't derive profits, no royalty is due. Royalties are payable to "Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation" the 60 days following each date you prepare (or were legally required to prepare) your annual (or equivalent periodic) tax return. Please contact us beforehand to let us know your plans and to work out the details.

WHAT IF YOU *WANT* TO SEND MONEY EVEN IF YOU DON'T HAVE TO? Project Gutenberg is dedicated to increasing the number of public domain and licensed works that can be freely distributed in machine readable form.

The Project gratefully accepts contributions of money, time, public domain materials, or royalty free copyright licenses.

Money should be paid to the:

"Project Gutenberg Literary Archive Foundation."

If you are interested in contributing scanning equipment or software or other items, please contact Michael Hart at: hart@pobox.com

[Portions of this header are copyright (C) 2001 by Michael S. Hart and may be reprinted only when these Etexts are free of all fees.] [Project Gutenberg is a TradeMark and may not be used in any sales of Project Gutenberg Etexts or other materials be they hardware or software or any other related product without express permission.]

*END THE SMALL PRINT! FOR PUBLIC DOMAIN ETEXTS*Ver.07/27/01*END*

This etext was produced by David Widger <widger@cecomet.net>

[NOTE: There is a short list of bookmarks, or pointers, at the end of the file for those who may wish to sample the author's ideas before making an entire meal of them. D.W.]

CONSCIENCE

By HECTOR MALOT

BOOK 4.

CHAPTER XXXVI

CONSCIENCE ASSERTS ITSELF

During the first years of his sojourn in Paris, Saniel had published in a Latin Quarter review an article on the "Pharmacy of Shakespeare"—the poison of Hamlet, and of Romeo and Juliet; and although since his choice of medicine he read but little besides books of science, at that time he was obliged to study the plays of his author. From this study there lingered in his memory a phrase that for ten years had not risen to his lips, and which all at once forced itself uppermost in his mind with exasperating persistency. It was the words of Macbeth:

"Macbeth does murder sleep, the innocent sleep;
Sleep, that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labor's bath,
Balm of hurt minds."

He also had lost it, "the innocent sleep, sore labor's bath, balm of hurt minds." He had never been a great sleeper; at least he had accustomed himself to the habit, hard at first, of passing only a few hours in bed. But he employed these few hours well, sleeping as the weary sleep, hands clenched, without dreaming, waking, or moving; and the thought that occupied his mind in the evening was with him on waking in the morning, not having been put to flight by others, any more than by dreams.

After Caffie's death this tranquil and refreshing sleep continued the same; but suddenly, after Madame Dammauville's death, it became broken.

At first it did not bother him. He did not sleep, so much the better! He would work more. But one can no more work all the time than one can live without eating. Saniel knew better than any one that the life of every organ is composed of alternate periods of repose and activity, and he did not suppose that he would be able to work indefinitely without sleep. He only hoped that after some days of twenty hours of work daily, overcome by fatigue, he would have, in spite of everything, four hours of solid sleep, that Shakespeare called "sore labor's bath."

He had not had these four hours, and the law that every state of prolonged excitement brings exhaustion that should be refreshed by a functional rest, was proved false in his case. After a hard day's work he would go to bed at one o'clock in the morning and would go to sleep immediately. But very soon he awoke with a start, suffocating, covered with perspiration, in a state of extreme anxiety, his mind agitated by hallucinations of which he could not rid himself all at once. If he did not wake suddenly, he dreamed frightful dreams, always of Madame Dammauville or Caffie. Was it not curious that Caffie, who until then had been completely effaced from his memory, was resuscitated by Madame Dammauville in the night, ghost of the darkness that the daylight dissipated?

Believing that one of the causes of these dreams was the excitement of the brain, occasioned by excessive work at the hour when he should not exercise it, but on the contrary should allow it to rest, he decided to change a plan which produced so little success. Instead of intellectual work he would engage in physical exercise, which, by exhausting his muscular functions, would procure him the sleep of the laboring class; and as he could not roll a wheelbarrow nor chop wood, every evening after dinner he walked seven or eight miles rapidly.

Physical work succeeded no better than intellectual; he endured the fatigue of butchers and wood-choppers, but he did not obtain their sleep. Decidedly, bodily fatigue was worth no more than that of the brain. It was worth even less. At his table, plunged in his books, or in his laboratory over his microscope, he absorbed himself in his work, and, by the force of a will that had been long exercised and submissive to obedience, he was able to keep his thoughts on the subject in hand, without distraction as without dreams. Time passed. But when walking in the streets of Paris, in the deserted roads on the outskirts, by the Seine or Marne, his mind wandered where it would; it was the mistress, and it always dwelt on Madame Dammauville, Caffie, and Florentin. It seemed as if the heat of walking started his brain. When he returned in this state, after many hours of cerebral excitability, how could he find the tranquil and refreshing sleep, complete and profound, of the laboring classes who work only with their muscles?

Never having been ill, he had never examined nor treated himself: medicine was good for others but useless for him. With a machine organized like his he need fear only accidents, and until now he had been spared them; a true son of peasants, he victoriously resisted Paris life as the destroyer of the intellect. But the time had come to undertake an examination and to try a treatment that would give him rest. He was not a sceptical doctor, and he believed that what he ordered for others was good for himself.

The misfortune was that he could not find in himself any of the causes which resolve into insomnia; he had neither meningitis nor brain fever, nor anything that indicated a cerebral tumor; he was not anaemic; he ate well; he did not suffer with neuralgia, nor with any acute or chronic affection that generally accompanied the absence of sleep; he drank neither tea nor alcohol; and without this state of over-excitement of the encephalic centres, he might have said that he was in good health, a little thin, but that was all.

It was this excitement that he must cure, and as there are many remedies for insomnia, he tried those which, it seemed to him, were suitable to his case; but bromide of potassium, in spite of its hypnotic properties, produced no more effect than the over-working of the brain and body. When he realized this he replaced it with chloral; but chloral, which should create a desire to sleep, after several days had no more effect than the bromide. Then he tried injections of morphine.

It was not without a certain uneasiness that he made this third trial, the first two having met with so little success; and since it is acknowledged that chloral produces a calmer sleep than morphine, it seemed as if the latter would prove as useless as the former. However, he slept without being tormented by dreams or wakings, and the next day he still slept.

But he knew too well the effects produced by a prolonged use of these injections to continue them beyond what was strictly indispensable; he therefore omitted them, and sleep left him.

He tried them again; then, soon, as the small doses lost their efficacy, he gradually increased them. At the end of a certain time what he feared came to pass—his leanness increased; he lost his appetite, his muscular force, and his moral energy; his pale face began to wear the characteristic expression of the morphomaniac.

Then he stopped, frightened.

Should he continue, he would become a morphomaniac in a given time, and the apathy into which he fell prevented him from resisting the desire to absorb new doses of poison, a desire as imperious, as irresistible in morphinism as that of alcohol for the alcoholic, and more terrible in its effects—the perversion of the intellectual faculties, loss of will, of memory, of judgment, paralysis, or the mania that leads to suicide.

If he did not continue, and these sleepless nights or the agitated sleep which maddened him should return, and following them, this over- excitement of the brain in troubling the nutrition of the encephalic mass, it might be the prelude of some grave cerebral affection.

On one side the morphine habit; on the other, dementia from the constant excitement and disorganization of the brain.

Between a fatally certain result and one that was possible he did not hesitate. He must give up morphine, and this choice forced itself upon him with so much more strength, because if morphine assured him sleep at night, it by no means gave him tranquil days—quite the contrary.

He began to use this remedy at night when he fell under the influence of certain ideas; during the day when applying himself to work, by an effort of will he escaped from these ideas, and was the man he had always been, master of his strength and mind. But the action of the morphine rapidly weakened this all-powerful will, so much so, that when these ideas crossed his mind during his working hours he had not the energy to drive them away. He tried to shake them off, but in vain; they would not leave his brain, to which they clung and encompassed it with increasing strength.

Truly, those two corpses troubled him horribly. Was it not exasperating for a man who had seen and dissected so many, that there should be always two before his eyes, even when they were closed—that of this old rascal and of this unfortunate woman? In order not to complicate this impression with another that humiliated him, he got rid of the packages of bank bills taken from Caffie, by sending them "as restitution" to the director of public charities. But this had no appreciable effect.

The thought of Florentin troubled him also; and if he saw Caffie lying in his chair, Madame Dammauville motionless and pink on her bed, to him it was not less cruel to see Florentin between the decks of the vessel that would soon carry him to New Caledonia.

The ideas on conscience that he had expressed at Crozat's, and those that he explained to Phillis about remorse, were still his; but he was not the less certain that these two dead persons and the condemned one weighed upon him with a terrible weight, frightful, suffocating, like a nightmare. It was not in accordance with his education nor with his environment to have these corpses behind him and this victim before him.

But where his former ideas were overthrown, since these dead bodies seized hold of his life, was in his confidence in his strength.

The strong man that he believed himself, he who follows his ambition regardless of things and of persons, looking only before him and never behind, master of his mind as of his heart and of his arm, was not at all the one that reality revealed.

On the contrary, he had been weak in action and yet weaker afterward.

And it was not only humiliation in the present that he felt in acknowledging this weakness, it was also in uneasiness for the future; for, if he lacked this strength that he attributed to himself before having tested it, he should, if his beliefs were true, succumb some day.

Evidently, if he were perfectly strong he would not have complicated his life with love. The strong walk alone because they need no one. And he needed a woman; and so great was the need that it was through her only, near her, when he looked at her, when he listened to her, that he experienced a little calm.

Was he weak and cowardly on account of this? Perhaps not, but only human.

CHAPTER XXXVII

ATTEMPTED REPARATION

Because he felt calm when with Phillis, Saniel wished that she might never leave him.

But, as happy as she was in her sorrow to see that instead of avoiding her—which a less generous man would have done, perhaps—he sought to draw nearer each day, she could not give up her lessons and her work, which was her daily bread, to give all her time to her love, any more than she could leave her mother entirely alone, crushed with shame, who had never needed so much as now to be cheered and sustained.

She did not let a day pass without going to see Saniel; but in spite of her desire she could not remain with him as long as she wished and he asked. When she rose to go and he detained her, she remained, but it was only for a few minutes; they were short, and the time soon came when, after ten attempts, she was obliged to leave him.

At all times these separations had been full of despair to her, the apprehension of which, from the moment of her arrival, paralyzed her; but now they were still more cruel. Formerly, on leaving him, she often saw him deep in his work before she opened the door; now, on the contrary, he conducted her to the vestibule, detained her, and only let her leave him when she tore herself from his embrace, after promising and repeating her promise to come early the next day and stay longer. Formerly, also, she was calm when she left him, not thinking of his health, nor asking herself how she would find him at their next meeting, strong and powerful, as sound in body as in mind. On the contrary, now she worried herself, wondering how she would find him on the occasion of each visit. Would the sadness, melancholy, and dejection still remain? Would he be thinner and paler? It was her care, her anguish, to try to divine the causes of the change in him, which manifested itself as strongly in his sentiments as in his person. Was it not truly extraordinary that he was more grave and uneasy now that his life was assured than during the hard times when he was so worried that he never knew what the morrow would bring? He had obtained the position that his ambition coveted; he had sufficient money for his wants; he admitted that his experiments had succeeded beyond his expectations; the essays that he published on his experiments were loudly discussed, praised by some, contested by others; it seemed that he had attained his object; and he was sad, discontented, unhappy, more tormented than when he exhausted himself with efforts, without other support than his will. At last, when frightened to see him thus, she questioned him as to how he felt, he became angry, and answered brutally

"Ill? Why do you think that I am—ill? Am I not better able than any one to know how I am? I am overworked, that is all; and as my life of privation does not permit me to repair my forces, I have become anaemic; it is not serious. It is strange, truly, that you ask for explanations of what is natural. Count the teeth of the polytechnicians and look at their hair after their examinations, and tell me what you think of them. Why do you think anything else is the matter with me? One cannot expend one's self with impunity; that would be too good. Everything must be paid for in this world."

She was obliged to believe that he was right and understood his condition; however, she could not help worrying. She knew nothing of medicine; she did not know the meaning of the medical terms he used, but she found that this was not sufficient to explain all—neither his roughness of temper and excess of anger without reason, any more than his sudden tenderness, his weakness and dejection, his preoccupation and absence of mind.

She discovered the effect she produced on him, and how, merely by her presence, she cheered this gloomy fancy and raised this depression by not asking him stupid questions on certain subjects which she had not yet determined on, but which she hoped to avoid. Also, she did not wish to leave him, and ingeniously invented excuses to go to see him twice a day; in the morning on going to her lessons, and in the afternoon or evening.

Late one evening she rang his bell with a hand made nervous with joy.

"I have come to stay till to-morrow," she said, in triumphant tones.

She expected that he would express his joy by an embrace, but he did nothing.

"Are you going out?"

"Not at all; I am not thinking of myself, but of your mother."

"Do you think that I would have left her alone in her weak and nervous state? A cousin of ours arrived from the country, who will occupy my bed, and I profited by it quick enough, saying that I would remain at the school. And here I am."

In spite of his desire for it, he had never dared ask her to pass the night with him. During the day he would only betray himself by his sad or fantastic temper; but at night, with such dreams as came to him, might not some word escape that would betray him?

However, since she was come it was impossible to send her away; he could not do it for her nor for himself. What pretext could he find to say, "Go! I do not want you?" He wanted her above all; he wanted to look at her, to listen to her, to hear her voice that soothed and lulled his anguish, to feel her near him—only to have her there, and not be face to face with his thoughts.

She examined him secretly, asking herself the cause of this singular reception, standing at the entrance of the office, not daring to remove her hat. How could her arrival produce an effect so different from what she expected?

"You do not take off your hat?" he said.

"I was asking myself if you had to work."

"Why do you ask yourself that?"

"For fear of disturbing you."

"What a madness you have for always asking something!" he exclaimed violently. "What do you expect me to say? What astonishes you? Why should you disturb me? In what? 'Voyons', speak, explain yourself!"

The time was far distant when these explosions surprised her, though they always pained her.

"I speak stupidly," she said. "What will you? I am stupid; forgive me."

These words, "forgive me," were more cruel than numberless reproaches, for he well knew that he had nothing to forgive in her, since she was the victim and he the criminal. Should he never be able to master these explosions, as imprudent as they were unjust?

He took her in his arms and made her sit by him.

"It is for you to forgive," he said.

And he was as tender and caressing as he had been brutal. He was a fool to imagine that she could have suspicions, and the surest way to give birth to them was to show fear that she had them. To betray himself by such awkwardness was as serious as to let a cry escape him while sleeping.

But for this night he had a way which was in reality not difficult, that would not expose him to the danger of talking in his sleep—he would not sleep. After having passed so many nights without closing his eyes, without doubt he could keep them open this entire night.

But he deceived himself; when he heard the calm and regular respiration of Phillis with her head on his shoulder, and felt the mild warmth of her body penetrate his, in the quiet imposed upon him, without being conscious of it,

believing himself far from sleep, and convinced that he required no effort to keep awake, he suddenly slept. When he awoke a ray of pale sunlight filled the room, and leaning her elbow on the bolster, Phillis was watching him. He made a brusque movement, throwing himself backward. "What is the matter?" he cried. "What have I said?" Instantly his face paled, his lips quivered; he felt his heart beat tumultuously and his throat pressed by painful constriction. "But nothing is the matter," she answered, looking at him tenderly. "You have said nothing." To come to the point, why should he have spoken? During his frightful dreams, his nights of disturbed sleep, he might have cried out, but he did not know if he had ever done so. And besides, he had not just waked from an agitated sleep. All this passed through his mind in an instant, in spite of his alarm. "What time is it?" he asked. "Nearly six o'clock." "Six o'clock!" "Do you not hear the vehicles in the street? The street-venders are calling their wares." It must have been about one o'clock when he closed his eyes; he had then slept five hours, profoundly, and he felt calm, rested, refreshed, his body active and his mind tranquil, the man of former times, in the days of his happy youth, and not the half-insane man of these last frightful months.

He breathed a sigh.

"Ah, if I could have you always!" he murmured, as much to himself as to her.

And he gave her a long look mingled with a sad smile; then, placing his arm around her shoulders, he pressed her to him.

"Dear little wife!"

She had never heard so profound, so vibrating, a tenderness in his voice; never had she been able, until hearing these words, to measure the depth of the love that she had inspired in him; and it even seemed that this was the declaration of a new love.

Pressing her passionately to him, he repeated:

"Dear little wife!"

Distracted, lost in her happiness, she did not reply.

All at once he held her from him gently, and looking at her with the same smile:

"Does this word tell you nothing?"

"It tells me that you love me."

"And is that all?"

"What more can I wish? You say it, I feel it. You give me the greatest joy of which I can dream."

"It is enough for you?"

"It would be enough if it need never be interrupted. But it is the misfortune of our life that we are obliged to separate at the time when the ties that unite us are the most strongly bound."

"Why should we separate?"

"Alas! Mamma? And daily bread?"

"If you did not leave your mother. If you need no longer worry about your life?"

She looked at him, not daring to question him, not betraying the direction of her thoughts except by a trembling that she could not control in spite of her efforts.

"I mean if you become my wife."

"Oh, my beloved!"

"Will you not?"

She threw herself in his arms, fainting; but after a moment she recovered.

"Alas! It is impossible," she murmured.

"Why impossible?"

"Do not ask me; do not oblige me to say it."

"But, on the contrary, I wish you to tell me."

She turned her head away, and in a voice that was scarcely perceptible, in a stifled sigh:

"My brother—"

"It is greatly on account of your brother that I wish this marriage."

Then, suddenly: "Do you think me the man to submit to prejudiced blockheads?"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE IMPORTANT QUESTION

Saniel had not waited until this day to acknowledge the salutary influence that Phillis's presence exercised over him, yet the idea of making her his wife never occurred to him. He thought himself ill-adapted to marriage, and but little desirous of being a husband. Until lately he had had no desire for a home.

This idea came to him suddenly and took strong hold of him; at least as much on account of the calmness he felt in her presence, as by the charm of her manner, her health, happiness, and gayety.

It was not only physical calm that she gave him by a mysterious affinity concerning which his studies told him nothing, but of which he did not the less feel all the force; it was also a moral calm.

There were duties he owed her, and terribly heavy were those he owed her mother and Florentin.

He did all he could for Florentin, but this was not all that he owed them. Florentin was in prison; Madame Cormier fell into a mournful despair, growing weaker each day; and Phillis, in spite of her elasticity and courage, bent beneath the weight of injustice.

How much the situation would be changed if he married her—for them, and for him!

When Phillis was a little recovered from her great surprise, she asked him:

"When did you decide on this marriage?"

He did not wish to prevaricate, and he answered that it was at that instant that the idea came to him, exact enough and strong enough to give form to the ideas that had been floating in his brain for several months.

"At least, have you considered it? Have you not yielded to an impulse of love?"

"Would it be better to yield to a long, rational calculation? I marry you because I love you, and also because I am certain that without you I cannot be happy. Frankly, I acknowledge that I need you, your tenderness, your love, your strength of character, your equal temper, your invincible faith in hope, which, for me as I am organized, is worth the largest dot."

"It is exactly because I have no dot to bring you. When you were at the last extremity, desperate and crushed, I might ask to become the wife of the poor village doctor that you were going to be; but to-day, in your position, above all in the position that you will soon occupy, is poor little Phillis worthy of you? You give me the greatest joy that I can ever know, of which I have only dreamed in telling myself that it would be folly to hope to have it realized. But just that gives me the strength to beg you to reflect, and to consider whether you will ever regret this moment of rapture that makes me so happy."

"I have reflected, and what you say proves better than anything that I do not deceive myself. I want a wife who loves me, and you are that wife."

"More than I can tell you at this moment, wild with happiness, but not more than I shall prove to you in the continuance of our love."

"Besides, dearest, do not have any illusions on the splendors of this position of which you speak; it is more than probable that they will never be realized, for I am not a man of money, and will do nothing to gain any. If it does not come by itself—"

"It will come."

"That is not the object for which I work. What I wish I have obtained partly; if now I make money and obtain a rich practice, the jealousy of my confreres will make me lose, or wait too long, for what my ambition prefers to a fortune. For the moment this position will be modest; my four thousand francs of salary, that which I gain at the central bureau while waiting to have the title of hospital physician, and five hundred francs a month more that my editor offers me for work and a review of bacteriology, will give us nearly twelve thousand francs, and we must content ourselves with that for some time."

"That is a fortune to me."

"To me also; but I thought I ought to tell you."

"And when do you wish our marriage to take place?"

"Immediately after the necessary legal delay, and as soon as I am settled in a new apartment; for you could not come here as my wife, where you have been seen so often. It would not be pleasant for you or for me."

"And we will not be so foolish as to put ourselves in the hands of an upholsterer; the first one cost enough."

He said these last words with fierce energy, but continued immediately:

"What do we need? A parlor for the patients, if they come; an office for me, which will do also as a laboratory; a bedroom for us, and one for your mother."

"You wish—"

"But certainly. Do you think that I would ask you to separate from her?"

She took his hand, and kissing it with a passionate impulse: "Oh, the dearest, the most generous of men!"

"Do not let us talk of that," he said with evident annoyance. "In your mother's condition of mental prostration it would kill her to be left alone; she needs you, and I promise to help you to soften her grief. We will make her comfortable; and although my nature is not very tender, I will try to replace him from whom she is separated. It will be a happiness to her to see you happy."

For a long time he enlarged upon what he wished, feeling a sentiment of satisfaction in talking of what he would do for Madame Cormier, in whom at this time he saw the mother of Florentin more than that of Phillis.

"Do you think you can make her forget?" he asked from time to time.

"Forget? No. Neither she nor I can ever forget; but it is certain our sorrow will be drowned in our happiness, and this happiness we shall owe to you. Oh, how you will be adored, respected, blessed!"

Adored, respected! He repeated these words to himself. One could, then, be happy by making others happy. He had had so little opportunity until this time to do for others, that this was in some sort the revelation of a sentiment that he was astonished to feel, but which, for being new, was only the sweeter to him.

He wished to give himself the satisfaction of tasting all the sweetness.

"Where are you going this morning?" he asked.

"I return to the school to help my pupils prepare their compositions for the prize."

"Very well; while you are at the school this morning, I will go to see your mother. The process of asking in marriage that we make use of is perhaps original, and conforms to the laws of nature, if nature admits marriage, which I ignore; but it certainly is not the way of those of the world. And now I must address this request to your mother."

"What joy you will give her!"

"I hope so."

"I should like to be there to enjoy her happiness. Mamma has a mania for marriage; she spends her time marrying the people she knows or those she does not know. And she has felt convinced that I should die in the yellow skin of an old maid. At last, this evening she will have the happiness of announcing to me your visit and your request. But do not make this visit until the afternoon, because then our cousin will be gone."

Saniel spent his morning in looking for apartments, and found one in a quarter of the Invalides, which he engaged.

It was nearly one o'clock when he reached Madame Cormier's. As usual, when he called, she looked at him with anxious curiosity, thinking of Florentin.

"It is not of him that I wish to speak to you to-day," he said, without pronouncing any name, which was unnecessary. "It is of Mademoiselle Phillis—"

"Do you find her ill?" Madame Cormier said, who thought only of misfortune.

"Not at all. It is of her and of myself that I wish to speak. Do not be uneasy. I hope that what I am going to say will not be a cause of sadness to you."

"Pardon me if I always see something to fear. We have been so frightfully tried, so unjustly!"

He interrupted her, for these complaints did not please him.

"For a long time," he said quickly, "Mademoiselle Phillis has inspired me with a deep sentiment of esteem and tenderness; I have not been able to see her so courageous, so brave in adversity, so decided in her character, so good to you, so charming, without loving her, and I have come to ask you to give her to me as my wife."

At Saniel's words, Madame Cormier's hands began to tremble, and the trembling increased.

"Is it possible?" she murmured, beginning to cry. "So great a happiness for my daughter! Such an honor for us, for us, for us!"

"I love her."

"Forgive me if happiness makes me forget the conventionalities, but I lose my head. We are so unhappy that our souls are weak against joy. Perhaps I should hide my daughter's sentiments; but I cannot help telling you that this esteem, this tenderness of which you speak, is felt by her. I discovered it long ago, although she did not tell me. Your request, then, can only be received with joy by mother, as well as daughter."

This was said brokenly, evidently from an overflowing heart. But all at once her face saddened.

"I must talk to you sincerely," she said. "You are young, I am not; and my age makes it a duty for me not to yield to any impulse. We are unfortunates, you are one of the happy; you will soon be rich and famous. Is it wise to burden your life with a wife who is in my daughter's position?"

With the exception of a few words, this was Phillis's answer. He answered the mother as he had answered the daughter.

"It is not for you that I speak," said Madame Cormier. "I should not permit myself to give you advice; it is in placing myself at the point of view of my daughter that I, her mother, with the experience of my age, should watch over her future. Is it certain that in the struggles of life you will never suffer from this marriage, not because my daughter will not make you happy—from this side I am easy—but because the situation that fate has made for us will weigh on you and fetter you? I know my daughter—her delicacy; her uneasy susceptibility, that of the unfortunate; her pride, that of the irreproachable. It would be a wound for her that would make happiness give way to unhappiness, for she could not bear contempt."

"If that is in human nature, it is not in mine; I give you my word."

He explained how he meant to arrange their life, and when she understood that she was to live with them, she clasped her hands and exclaimed

"Oh, my God, who hast taken my son, how good thou art to give me another!"

CHAPTER XXXIX

CONCESSION TO CONSCIENCE

He asked nothing better than to be a son to this poor woman; in reality he was worth much more than this unfortunate boy, effeminate and incapable. What did this maternal hunger require? A son to love. She would find one in her son-in-law. In seeing her daughter happy, how could she help being happy herself?

Evidently they would be happy, the mother and daughter; and whatever Phillis might think, still under the influence of the shameful blow, they would forget. They would owe him this.

It was a long time since he had worked with so much serenity as on this day; and when in the evening he went to bed, uneasy as usual about the night, he slept as calmly as if Phillis were resting her charming head on his shoulder and he breathed the perfume of it.

Decidedly, to make others happy was the best thing in the world, and as long as one could have this satisfaction there was no fear of being unhappy. To create an atmosphere of happiness for others is to profit by it at the same time.

He waited for Phillis impatiently, for she would bring him an echo of her mother's joy, and it was a recompense that she owed him.

She arrived happy, smiling, penetrated with tenderness; but he observed that she was keeping something from him, something that embarrassed her, and yet she would not tell him what it was.

He was not disposed to admit that she could conceal anything from him, and he questioned her.

"What are you keeping from me?"

"How can you suppose that I should keep anything from you?"

"Well, what is the matter? You know, do you not, that I read all your thoughts in your eyes? Very well your eyes speak when your lips are silent."

"I have a request to make of you, a prayer."

"Why do you not tell me?"

"Because I do not dare."

"Yet it does not seem to me that I show a disposition to make you believe that I could refuse you anything."

"It is just that which is the cause of my embarrassment and reserve; I fear to pain you at the moment when I would show you all the gratitude and love in my heart."

"If you are going to give me pain, it is better not to make me wait."

She hesitated; then, before an impatient gesture, she decided to speak.

"I wish to ask you how you mean to be married?"

He looked at her in surprise.

"But, like every one else!"

"Every one?" she asked, persistently.

"Is there any other way of being married?"

"Yes."

"I do not in the least understand this manner of asking conundrums; if you are alluding to a fashionable custom of which I know nothing, say so frankly. That will not wound me, since I am the first to declare that I know nothing of it. What do you wish?"

She felt his irritation increase, and yet she could not decide to say what she wished.

"I have begun badly," she said. "I should have told you at first that you will always find in me a wife who will respect your ideas and beliefs, who will never permit herself to judge you, and still less to seek to contend with them or to modify them. That you feel, do you not, is neither a part of my nature nor of my love?"

"Conclude!" he said impatiently.

"I think, then," she said with timid hesitation, "that you will not say that I fail in respect to your ideas in asking that our marriage take place in church."

"But that was my intention."

"Truly!" she exclaimed. "O dearest! And I feared to offend you!"

"Why should you think it would offend me?" he asked, smiling.

"You consent to go to confession?"

Instantly the smile in his eyes and on his lips was replaced by a gleam of fury.

"And why should I not go to confession?" he demanded.

"But—"

"Do you suppose that I can be afraid to confess? Why do you suppose that? Tell me why?"

He looked at her with eyes that pierced to her heart, as if they would read her inmost thoughts.

Stupefied by this access of fury, which burst forth without any warning, since he had smilingly replied to her request for a religious marriage, she could find nothing to say, not understanding how the simple word "confess" could so exasperate him. And yet she could not deceive herself: it was indeed this word and no other that put him in this state.

He continued to look at her, and wishing to explain herself, she said: "I supposed only one thing, and that is that I might offend you by asking you to do what is contrary to your beliefs."

The mad anger that carried him away so stupidly began to lose its first violence; another word added to what had already escaped him would be an avowal.

"Do not let us talk of it anymore," he said. "Above all, do not let us think of it."

"Permit me to say one word," she replied. "Had I been situated like other people I would have asked nothing; my will is yours. But for you, for your future and your honor, you should not appear to marry in secret, as if ashamed, with a pariah."

"Be easy. I feel as you do, more than you, the necessity of consecrated ceremonies for us."

She understood that on this path he would go farther than she.

To destroy the impression of this unfortunate word, he proposed that they should visit the apartment he had engaged the previous day.

For the first time they walked together boldly, with heads held high, side by side in the streets of Paris, without fear of meeting others. How proud she was! Her husband! It was on her husband's arm that she leaned! When they crossed the Tuileries she was almost surprised that people did not turn to see them pass.

In her present state of mind she could not but find the house he chose admirable; the street was admirable, the house was admirable, the apartment was admirable.

As it contained three bedrooms opening on a terrace, where he would keep the animals for his experiments, Saniel wished to have her decide which one she would choose; as she would share it with him she wished to take the best, but he would not accept this arrangement.

"I want you to choose between the two little ones," he said. "The largest and best must be reserved for your mother, who, not being able to go out, needs more space, air, and light than we do."

She was transported with his kindness, delicacy, and generosity. Never would she be able to love him enough to raise herself up to him.

Fortunately the principal rooms, the parlor and the office, were about the same size as those in the Rue Louis-le-Grand, so there need be but little change in furnishing; and they would bring their furniture from the Rue des Moines.

This feminine talk, interrupted by passionate exclamations and glances, charmed Saniel, who had forgotten the incident of the confession and his anger, thinking only of Phillis, seeing only her, ravished by her gayety, her vivacity, his whole being stirred by the tender caresses of her beautiful dark eyes.

How could he not be happy with this delicious woman who held such sway over him, and who loved him so ardently? For him a single danger henceforth—solitude. She would preserve him from it. With her gayety, good temper, courage, and love, she would not leave him to his thoughts; work would do the rest.

After the question of furniture was decided, they settled that of the marriage ceremony, and she was surprised to find that his ideas were the same as hers.

She decided upon her toilet, a silk gown as simple as possible, and she would make it herself, as she made all her gowns. And then they discussed the witnesses. "We have no friends," Phillis said.

"You had some formerly; your father had friends and comrades."

"I am no longer the daughter of my father, I am the sister of my brother; I would not dare to ask them to witness my marriage."

"It is just because you are the sister of your brother that they cannot refuse you; it would be cruelty added to rudeness. Cruelty may be overlooked, but rudeness! Among the men of talent, who was your father's best friend?"

"Cintrat."

"Is he not a bohemian, a drunkard?"

"My father regarded him as the greatest painter of our time, the most original."

"It is not a question of talent, but of name; I am sure that he is not even decorated. Your father had other friends, more successful, more commonplace, if you wish."

"Glorient."

"The member of the Institute?"

"Casparis, the sculptor."

"An academician, also; that is what we want, and both are 'archi-decore'. You will write them, and tell them who I am, assistant professor of the school of medicine, and doctor of the hospitals. I promise you they will accept. I will ask my old master Carbonneau, president of the academy of medicine; and Claudet, the ancient minister, who, in his quality of deputy of my department, could not decline any more than the others. And that will give us decorated witnesses, which will look well in the newspapers."

It was not only in the newspapers they looked well, but also in the church of Sainte-Marie des Batignolles.

"Glorient! Casparis! Carbonneau! Claudet! Art, science, and politics."

But the beauty and charm of the bride were not eclipsed by these glorious witnesses. She entered on Glorient's arm, proud in her modesty, radiant with grace.

While the priest celebrated mass at the altar, outside, before the door, a man dressed in a costume of chestnut velvet, and wearing a felt hat, walked up and down, smoking a pipe. It was the Count de Brigard, whose principles forbade him to enter a church for either a wedding or a funeral, and who walked up and down on the sidewalk with his disciples, waiting to congratulate Saniel. When he appeared the Count rushed up to him, and taking his hand pressed it warmly on separating him from his wife, and saying:

"It is good, it is noble. Circumstances made this marriage; without them it would not have taken place. I understand and I excuse it; I do more, I applaud it. My dear friend, you are a man."

And as it was Wednesday, in the evening at Crozat's, he publicly expressed his approbation, which, in the conditions in which it had been offered, did not satisfy his conscience.

"Gentlemen, we have assisted to-day at a grand act of reparation, the marriage of our friend Saniel to the sister of this poor boy, victim of an injustice that cries for vengeance. One evening in this same room, I spoke lightly of Saniel, some of you remember, perhaps, in spite of the time that has passed. I wish to make this public reparation to him. To-day he has shown himself a man of duty and of conscience, bravely putting himself above social weaknesses."

"Is it not a social weakness," asked Glady, "to have chosen as witnesses of this act of reparation persons who seem to have been selected for the decorative side of their official positions?"

"Profound irony, on the contrary!" said Brigard. "It is a powerful and fruitful lesson, which makes even those who are professional defenders concur in the demolition of the prejudiced. Saniel is a man!"

CHAPTER XL

PHILLIS IS SURPRISED

The Sunday following her marriage, Phillis experienced a surprise on which she reflected a long time without finding a satisfactory explanation.

As she was dressing, Saniel entered her room.

"What are you going to do to-day?" he asked.

"That which I do every day."

"You are not going to mass?"

She looked at him astonished, not being able to control her surprise, and as usual, when she appeared to wish to read his thoughts, he showed temper.

"In what way is my question extraordinary?"

"Mass is not exactly the usual subject of your thoughts, it seems to me."

"It may become so, especially when I think of others, as is the case just now. Do you not often go to mass?"

"When I can."

"Very well, you can go to-day if you wish. Listen to what I have to say to you. I have not forgotten the promise you made to respect my ideas and beliefs. I wish to make you the same; it is very simple."

"All that is good and generous seems simple to you."

"Well?"

"I will go at once."

"Now? At once? It is not eight o'clock. Go to high mass, it is more fashionable."

Fashionable! What a strange word in his mouth! It was not out of respect to fashion that she went to church, but because there was in her a depth of religious sentiment and of piety, a little vague perhaps, which Florentin's misfortunes had revived.

"I will go to high mass," she said, without letting it appear that this word had suggested anything to her, and continuing her dressing.

"Are you going to wear this frock?" he asked, pointing to one that lay on a chair.

"Yes; at least if it does not displease you."

"I find it rather simple."

In effect it was of extreme simplicity, made of some cheap stuff, its only charm being an originality that Phillis gave it on making it herself.

"Do not forget," he continued, "that Saint-Francois-Xavier is not a church for working people; when a woman is as charming as you are she is always noticed. People will ask who you are."

"You are right; I will wear the gown I wore at the distribution of the prices."

"That is it; and your bonnet, will you not, instead of the round hat?"

The first impression should be the best."

This mixture of religious and worldly things was surprising in him. Had she not understood him, then, until now? After all, perhaps it was only an exception.

But these exactions regarding her dress were repeated. Although before her marriage Phillis had only crossed Sanie's path, she knew him well enough to know that he was entirely given up to work, without thought of anything else, and she believed that after marriage he would continue to work in the same way, not caring for amusements or society. She was correct about his work, but not so regarding society. A short time after their marriage the minister Claudet was cured opportunely of an attack of facial neuralgia by Sanie, for whom he

conceived a great friendship. He invited Saniel and his wife to all his reunions and fetes, and Saniel accepted all his invitations.

At first her wedding gown answered very well, but it would not do always. It had to be trimmed, modified, three or four toilets made of one gown; but, however ingenious Phillis might be in arranging several yards of tulle or gauze, she could not make combinations indefinitely.

And besides, they did not please Saniel; they were too simple. He liked lace, beads, flowers, something shining and glittering, such as he saw other women wear.

How could she please him with the small resources at her disposal? In her household expenses she was as economical as possible; Joseph was dismissed, and replaced by a maid who did all the work; the table was extremely simple. But these little economies, saved on one side, were quickly spent on the other in toilets and carriages.

When she expressed a wish to work, to paint menus, he would not consent, and when she insisted he became angry

He only permitted her to paint pictures. As she had formerly painted for amusement in her father's studio, she might do so now. If trade were a disgrace, art might be honorable. If she had talent he would be glad of it; and if she should sell her pictures it would be original enough to cause her to be talked about.

The salon was partly transformed into a studio, and Phillis painted several little pictures, which, without having any pretensions to great art, were pleasing and painted with a certain dash. Glorient admired them, and made a picture-dealer buy two of them and order others, at a small price it is true, but it was much more than she expected.

With the courage and constancy that women put into work that pleases them, she would willingly have painted from morning till night; but the connections that Saniel had made did not leave her this liberty. Through Claudet they made many acquaintances and accepted invitations that placed her under social obligations, so that almost every day she had a visit to pay, a funeral or a marriage to attend, besides an occasional charity fair, and her own day at home, when she listened for three hours to feminine gossip of no interest to her.

As for him, what pleasure could he take in dressing after a hard day's work to go to a reception? He, son of a peasant, and a peasant himself in so many ways, who formerly understood nothing of fashionable life and felt only contempt for it, finding it as dull as it was ridiculous.

She tried to find a cause for this change, and when lightly, in a roundabout way, she brought him to explain himself, she could only draw one answer from him, which was no answer to her:

"We must be of the world."

Why did he care so much about society? Was it because she was the sister of a criminal that he wished to take her everywhere and make people receive her? She understood this up to a certain point, although the part he made her play was the most cruel that he could give her, and entirely contrary to what she would have chosen if she had been free.

But this was all there was in his desire to be of the world. Because he had married her he was not the brother of a criminal, and on close observation it might be seen that all he desired of these persons in high places whom he sought was their consideration, a part of their importance and honor. But he did not need this; he was some one by himself. The position that he had made was worthy of his merit. His name was honored. His future was envied.

And yet, as if he did not realize this, he sought small satisfactions, unworthy of a serious ambition. One evening she was very much surprised when he told her that the decoration of a Spanish republic was offered to him, and

although she had formed a habit of watching over her words she could not help exclaiming:

"What will you do with that?"

"I could not refuse it."

Not only had he not refused it, but he had accepted others, blue, green, yellow, and tricolored; he wore them in his buttonhole, around his neck, and on his breast. What good could those decorations do that belittled him? And how could a man of his merit hasten to obtain the Legion of Honor before it fell to him naturally?

All this was astonishing, mysterious, and silly, and her mind dwelt upon it when she was alone before her easel; while near her in his laboratory, he continued his experiments, or wrote an article in his office for the Review.

But it was not without a struggle that she permitted herself to judge him in this way. One does not judge those whom one loves, and she loved him. Was it not failing in respect to her love that she did not admire him in every way? When these ideas oppressed her she left her easel and went to him. Close to him they disappeared. At first, in order not to disturb him, she entered on tiptoe, walking softly and leaning over his shoulder, embraced him before he saw or heard her; but he betrayed such horror, such fear, that she gave up this way of greeting him.

She continued to go to his room, but in a different way. Instead of surprising him she announced her presence by rattling the handle of the door, and walking noisily, and instead of receiving her with uneasy manner he welcomed her joyfully.

"You have finished painting?"

"I have come to see you for a little while."

"Very well, stay with me, do not go away immediately; I am never so happy, I never work so well, as when I have you near me."

She felt that this was true. When she was with him, whether she spoke or not, her presence made him happy.

And still she must appear not to look at him too attentively, as if with the manifest intention of studying him; for she did this during the first days of their marriage, and angered him so much that he exclaimed:

"Why do you examine me thus? What do you look for in me?"

She learned to watch herself carefully, and when with him to preserve a discreet attitude that should not offend him. No curious looks, and no questions. But this was not always easy, so she asked leave to assist him in his work, and sometimes drew in larger size the designs that he made for his microscopical studies. In this way the time passed rapidly. If he were but willing to pass the evening hours in this sweet intimacy, without a word about going out, how happy she would be! But he never forgot the hour.

"Allons," he said, interrupting himself, "we must go."

She had never dared to ask the true reason for this "must."

CHAPTER XLI

A TROUBLED SOUL

If she dared not frankly ask him this question: Why must we go out? any more than the others: Why is it proper that I should go to mass to be seen? Why should I wear gowns that ruin us? Why do you accept decorations that are valueless in your eyes? Why do you seek the society of men who have no merit but what they derive from their official position or from their fortune? Why do we take upon ourselves social duties that weary both of us, instead of remaining together in a tender and intelligent intimacy that is sweet to us both? she could not ask herself.

They all appertained to this order of ideas, that she, without doubt, found explained them: disposition of character; the exactions of an ambition in haste to realize its desires; susceptibility or overshadowing pride; but there were others founded on observation or memory, having no connection with those, or so it seemed to her.

She began to know her husband the day following their marriage, having believed that he was always such as he revealed himself to her; but this was not the case, and the man she had loved was so unlike the man whose wife she had become, that it might almost be thought there were two.

To tell the truth, it was not marriage that made the change in his temper that distressed her; but it was not less characteristic by that, that it dated back to a period anterior to this marriage.

She remembered the commencement with a clearness that left no place for doubt or hesitation; it was at the time when pursued by creditors he entered into relations with Caffie. For the first time he, always so strong that she believed him above weakness, had had a moment of discouragement on announcing that he would probably be obliged to leave Paris; but this depression had neither the anger nor weakness that he had since shown. It was the natural sadness of a man who saw his future destroyed, nothing more. The only surprise that she then felt was caused by the idea of strangling Caffie and taking enough money from his safe to clear himself from debt, and also because he said—as a consequence of this act—speaking of the remorse of an intelligent man, that his conscience would not reproach him, since for him conscience did not exist. But this was evidently a simple philosophical theory, not a trait of character; a jest or an argument for the sake of discussion.

Relieved from his creditors with the money won at Monaco, he returned to his usual calm, working harder than ever, passing his 'conours', and when it seemed excusable that he might be nervous, violent, unjust, he remained the man that he had been ever since she knew him. Then, all at once, a short time before Florlentin went to the assizes, occurred these strange explosions of temper, spasms of anger, and restlessness that she could not explain, manifesting themselves exactly at the time when, by Madame Dammauville's intervention, she hoped Florentin would be saved. She had not forgotten the furious anger, that was inexplicable and unjustifiable, with which he refused her request to see Madame Dammauville. He had thrust her away, wishing to break with her, and until she was a witness of this scene she never imagined that any one could put such violence into exasperation. Then to this scene succeeded another, totally opposed, which had not less impressed her, when, at their little dinner by the fire, he showed such profound desolation on telling her to keep the memory of this evening when she should judge him, and announcing to her, in a prophetic sort of way, that the hour would come when she would know him whom she loved.

And now this hour, the thought of which she had thrown far from her, had sounded; she sought to combine the elements of this judgment which then appeared criminal to her, and now forced itself upon her, whatever she might do to repel it.

How many times this memory returned to her! It could almost be said that it had never left her, sweet and sad at the same time, less sweet and more sad, according as new subjects for uneasiness were added to the others, in deepening the mysterious and troublous impression that it left with her.

To judge him! Why did he wish that she should judge him? And on what?

And yet with him it was not an insignificant word, but the evidence of a particular state of conscience, which many times since asserted itself. Was it not, in effect, to this order of ideas that the cry belonged that escaped him in the night when, waking suddenly, he asked with emotion, with fright: "What have I said?" And also to the

same appertained the anger that carried him away when, 'a propos' of their religious marriage, she spoke of confession: "Why do you think that I should be afraid to go to confession?"

How could he imagine that she could admit the idea of fear in connection with him? The idea never occurred to her mind until this moment; and if now the memory of her astonishment came to her, it was because of other little things added to those of the past that evoked it.

How numerous and significant they were, these things: his constant uneasiness on seeing himself watched by her; his invitation when he thought she was going to question him; his access of passion when, through heedlessness or forgetfulness, or simply by chance, she asked him a question on certain subjects, and immediately the tenderness that followed, so sudden that they appeared rather planned in view of a determined end than natural or spontaneous.

It was a long time before she admitted the calculation under the sweet words that made her so happy; but in the end it was well that she should open her eyes to the evidence, and see that they were with him the consequences of the same and constant preoccupation, that of not committing himself.

It was only one step from this to ask him what he did not wish to yield up.

Yet, as short as it was, she resisted for a long time the curiosity that possessed her. It was her duty as a loving and devoted wife not to seek beyond what he showed her, and this duty was in perfect accord with the dispositions of her love; but the power of things seen carried her beyond will and reason. She could not apply her mind to search for that which agonized her, and she could not close her eyes and ears to what she saw and heard.

And what struck them were the same observations, turning always in the same circle, applied to the same subjects and persons:

Caffie's name irritated him; Madame Dammauville's angered him; Florentin's made him positively unhappy.

As for the two former, she might have prevented the pronounciation of them when she saw the effect they infallibly produced on him.

But she could not prevent the utterance of Florentin's name, even had she wished it. How could she tell her mother never to speak the name of him who was constantly in their thoughts?

In spite of Saniel's efforts and solicitations, supported by Nougarede's, Florentin had embarked for New Caledonia, whence he wrote as often as he could. His letters related all his sufferings in the terrible galleys, where he was confined during the voyage, and since his arrival they were a series of long complaints, continued from one to the other, like a story without end, turning always on the same subject, his physical sufferings, his humiliation, his discouragement, and his disgust in the midst of the unfortunates whose companion he was.

The arrival of these letters filled the mother and sister with anguish that lasted for several days; and this anguish, that neither of them could dissimulate, angered Saniel.

"What would you do if he were dead?" he asked Phillis.

"Would it not be better for him?"

"But he will return."

"In what condition?"

"Are we the masters of fate?"

"We weep, we do not complain."

But he complained of the weeping faces that surrounded him, the tears they concealed from him, the sighs they stifled. Ordinarily he was tender and affectionate to his mother-in-law, with attention and deference which in some ways seemed affected, as if he were so by will rather than by natural sentiment; but at these times he forgot this tenderness, and treated her with hardness so unjust, that more than once Madame Cormier spoke of it to her daughter.

"How can your husband, who is so good to me, be so merciless regarding Florentin? One would say that our sadness produces on him the effect of a reproach that we would address to him."

One day when things had gone farther than usual, she had the courage to speak to him plainly: "Forgive me for burdening you with the weariness of our disgrace," she said to him. "When I complain of everything, of men and things, you should remember that you are the exception, you who have done everything to save him."

But these few words which she believed would calm the irritation of her son-in-law, had on the contrary exasperated him; he left her, furious.

"I do not understand your husband at all," she said to her daughter.
"Will you not explain to me what the matter is with him?"

How could she give her mother the explanation that she could not give herself? Having reached an unfathomable abyss, she dared not even lean over to look into its depths; and instead of going on in the path where she was pledged in spite of herself, she made every effort to return, or at least to stop.

What good would it do to find out why he was so peculiar, and what it was that he took so much pains to conceal? This could only be idle curiosity on her part, for which she would be punished sooner or later.

Turning these thoughts over continually in her mind she lost her gayety, her power to resist blows of fate, such as the small trials of life, which formerly made her courageous; her vigorous elasticity sunk under the heavy weight with which it was charged, and her smiling eyes now more often expressed anxiety than happiness and confidence.

In spite of her watchfulness over herself she was not able to hide the change from Saniel, for it manifested itself in everything—in her face formerly so open, but which now bore the imprint of a secret sadness; in her concentrated manner, in her silence and abstraction.

What was the matter with her? He questioned her, and she replied with the prudence that she used in all her conversation with him. He examined her medically, but found nothing to indicate a sickly condition which would justify the change in her.

If she did not wish to answer his questions, and he had the proof that she did not wish to; if, on the other hand, she was not ill, and he was convinced that she was not—there must be something serious the matter to make the woman whom but lately he read so easily become an enigma that made him uneasy.

And this thing—if it were that whose crushing weight he himself carried on his bent shoulders? She divined, she understood, if not all, at least a part of the truth.

What an extraordinary situation was hers, and one which might truly destroy her reason.

Nothing to fear from others, everything from himself. Justice, law, the world—on all sides he was let alone; nothing was asked of him; that which was owed was paid; but he by a sickly aberration was going to awake the dead who slept in their tomb, from which no one thought of taking them, and to make spectres of them which he alone saw and heard.

And he believed himself strong. Fool that he was, and still more foolish to have taken such a charge when by the exercise of his will he did not place himself in a condition to carry it! To will! But he had not learned how to will.

CHAPTER XLII

THE POWER OF HYPNOTISM

The relative calm that Saniel had felt since his marriage he owed to Phillis; to the strength, the confidence, the peace that he drew from her. Phillis without strength, without confidence, without interior peace, such as she was now, could not give him what she no longer had herself, and he returned to the distracted condition that preceded his marriage, and felt the same anguish, the same agitation, the same madness. The beautiful relations, worldly consideration, success, decorations, honors, were good for others; but for his happiness he required the tranquillity and serenity of his wife, and her good moral health which passed into him when she slept on his shoulder. In that case there were no sudden awakenings, no sleeplessness; at the sound of her gentle respiration he was reassured, and the spectres remained in their tomb.

But now that this respiration was agitated, and he no longer felt in her this tranquillity and serenity, he was no longer calm; she was weak and uneasy, and she communicated her fever to him, not her sleep.

"You do not sleep. Why do you not sleep?"

"And you?"

He must know.

He persisted in his questions, but she was always on her guard, so that he was unable to draw anything from her, checked as he was by the fear of betraying himself, which seemed easy at the point he believed she had reached. An awkward word, too much persistence, would let a flood of light into her mind.

He also affected to speak as a physician when questioning her, and to look for medical explanations of her condition.

"If you do not sleep it is because you suffer. What is this suffering?
From what does it proceed?"

Having no reasons to give to justify it, since she did not even dare to speak of her brother, she denied it obstinately.

"But nothing is the matter with me, I assure you," she repeated. "What do you think is the matter?"

"That is what I ask you."

"Then I ask you: What do you think I conceal from you?"

He could not say that he suspected her of concealing anything from him.

"You do not watch yourself properly."

"I can do nothing."

"I will force you to watch yourself and to speak."

"How?"

"By putting you to sleep."

The threat was so terrible that she was beside herself.

"Do not do that!" she cried.

They looked at each other for a few moments in silence, both equally frightened, she at the threat, he at what he would learn from her. But to show this fright was on his side to let loose another proof even more grave.

"Why should I not seek to discover in every way the cause of this uneasiness which escapes my examination as well as yours? For that somnambulism offers us an excellent way."

"But since I am not ill, what more could I tell you when I am asleep than when I am awake?"

"We shall see."

"It is an experiment that I ask you not to attempt. Would you try a poison on me?"

"Somnambulism is not a poison."

"Who knows?"

"Those who have made use of it."

"But you have not."

"Still I know enough to know that you will run no danger in my hands."

She believed that he opened a door of escape to her.

"Never mind, I am too much afraid. If you ever want to make me talk in a state of forced somnambulism, ask one of your 'confreres' in whom you have confidence to put me to sleep."

Before a 'confrere' she was certain he would not ask her dangerous questions.

He understood that she wished to escape him.

"Afraid of what?" he asked. "That I shall ask you questions about the past, concerning your life before we knew each other, and demand a confession that would wound my love?"

"O Victor!" she cried, distracted. "What more cruel wound could you give me than these words? My confession! It comprises three words: I love you; I have never loved any one but you; I shall never love any one but you. I have no past; my life began with my love."

He could not press it without showing the importance that he attached to it.

"I do not insist," he said; "it is a way like any other, but better. You do not wish it, and we will not talk of it."

But he yielded too quickly for her to hope that he renounced his project, and she remained under the influence of a stupefying terror. What would she say if he made her talk? Everything, possibly. She did not even know what thoughts were hidden in the depths of her brain, and she knew absolutely nothing of this forced somnambulism with which she was threatened.

At this time the works of the school of Nancy on sleep, hypnotism, and suggestion, had not yet been published, or at least the book which served as their starting-point was not known, and she knew nothing of processes that were employed to provoke the hypnotic sleep. As soon as her husband left the house she looked for some book in the library that would enlighten her. But the dictionary that she found gave only obscure or confused instructions in which she floundered. The only exact point that struck her was the method employed to produce sleep; to make the subject look at a brilliant object placed from fifteen to twenty centimetres in front of the eyes. If this were true she had no fear of ever being put to sleep.

However, she was not reassured; and when a few days later at a dinner she found herself seated next to one of her husband's 'confreres', who she knew interested himself in somnambulism, she had the courage to conquer her usual timidity concerning medicine, and questioned him.

"Are there not persons with certain diseases who can be put into a state of somnambulism?"

"It was formerly believed by the public and by many physicians that only persons afflicted with hysteria and nervous troubles could be put to sleep in this way, but it was a mistake; artificial somnambulism may be produced on many subjects who are perfectly healthy."

"Is the will preserved in sleep?"

"The subject only preserves the spontaneity and will that his hypnotizer leaves him, who at his pleasure makes him sad, gay, angry, or tender, and plays with his soul as with an instrument."

"But that is frightful."

"Curious, at least. It is certain that there is a local paralysis of such or such a cell, the study of which is the starting-point of many interesting discoveries."

"When he wakes, does the subject remember what he has said?"

"There is a difference of opinion on this point. Some say yes, and others no. As for me, I believe the memory depends upon the degree of sleep: with a light sleep there is remembrance, but with a profound sleep the subject does not remember what he has said or heard or done."

She would have liked to continue, and her companion, glad to talk of what interested him, would willingly have said more, but she saw her husband at the other end of the table watching them by fits and starts, and fearing that he would suspect the subject of their conversation she remained silent.

What she had just learned seemed to her frightful. But, at least, as she would not let herself be hypnotized she had nothing to fear; and remembering what she had read, she promised herself that she would never let him place her in a position where he could put her to sleep. It was during the sleep that the will of the hypnotizer controlled that of the subject, not before.

Resting on this belief, and also on his not having again spoken of sending her to sleep, she was reassured. Was not this a sign that he accepted her opposition and renounced his idea of provoked somnambulism?

But she deceived herself.

One night when she had gone to bed at her usual hour while he remained at his work, she awoke suddenly and saw him standing near her, looking at her with eyes whose fixed stare frightened her.

"What is the matter? What do you want?"

"Nothing, I want nothing; I am going to bed."

In spite of the strangeness of his glance she did not persist; questions would have taught her nothing. And besides, now that he no longer went to bed at the same time as she did, there was nothing extraordinary in his attitude.

But a few days from that she woke again in the night with a feeling of distress, and saw him leaning over her as if he would envelop her in his arms.

This time, frightened as she was, she had the strength to say nothing, but her anguish was the more intense. Did he then wish to hypnotize her while she slept? Was it possible? Then the dictionary had deceived her?

In truth it was while she slept that Sanieel tried to transform her natural into an artificial sleep. Would he succeed? He knew nothing about it, for the experience was new. But he risked it.

The first time, instead of putting her into a state of somnambulism, he awoke her; the second, he succeeded no better; the third, when he saw that after a certain time she did not open her eyes, he supposed that she was asleep. To assure himself, he raised her arm, which remained in the air until he placed it on the bed. Then taking her two hands, he turned them backward, and withdrawing his own, the impulsion which he gave lasted until he checked it. Her face had an expression of calmness and tranquillity that it had not had for a long time; she was the pretty Phillis of other days, with the sprightly glance.

"To-morrow I will make you sleep at the same time," he said, "and you will talk."

The next night he put her to sleep even more easily, but when he questioned her she resisted.

"No," she said, "I will not speak; it is horrible. I will not, I cannot."

He insisted, but she would not.

"Very well, so be it," he said; "not to-day, to-morrow. But to-morrow I wish you to speak, and you shall not resist me; I will it!"

If he did not insist it was not only because he knew that habit was necessary to make her submit to his will without being able to defend herself, but because he was ignorant whether, when she awoke, she had any memory of what happened in her sleep, which was an important point.

The next night she was the same as she had been the previous evening, and nothing indicated that she was conscious of her provoked sleep, any more than what she said in this sleep. He could then continue.

This time she went to sleep sooner and more easily than usual, and her face took the expression of tranquillity and repose he had seen the night before. Would she answer? And if she consented, would she speak sincerely, without attempting to weaken or falsify the truth? Emotion made his voice tremble when he put the first question; it was his life, his peace, the happiness of both which decided him.

"Where do you suffer?" he asked.

"I do not suffer."

"Yet you are agitated, often melancholy or uneasy; you do not sleep well. What troubles you?"

"I am afraid."

"Afraid of what? Of whom?"

"Of you!"

He trembled.

"Afraid of me! Do you think that I could hurt you?"

"No."

His tightened heart relaxed.

"Then why are you afraid?"

"Because there are things in you that frighten me."

"What things? Be exact."

"The change that has taken place in your temper, your character, and your habits."

"And how do these changes make you uneasy?"

"They indicate a serious situation."

"What situation?"

"I do not know; I have never stated exactly."

"Why not?"

"Because I was afraid; and I closed my eyes so that I might not see."

"See what?"

"The explanation of all that is mysterious in your life."

"When did you notice the mystery in my life?"

"At the time of Caffie's death; and before, when you told me that you could kill him without any remorse."

"Do you know who killed Caffie?"

"No."

His relief was so great that for several moments he forgot to continue his interrogations. Then he went on: "And after?"

"A little before Madame Dammauville's death, when you became irritable and furious without cause; when you told me to go because you did not wish to see Madame Dammauville; when, the night before her death, you were so tender, and asked me not to judge you without recalling that hour."

"Yet you have judged me."

"Never. When worry urged me, my love checked me."

"What provoked this uneasiness outside of these facts?"

"Your manner of living since our marriage; your accesses of anger and of tenderness; your fear of being observed; your agitation at night; your complaints—"

"I talked?" he cried.

"Never distinctly; you groan often, and moan, pronouncing broken words without sense, unintelligible—"

His anguish was violent; when he recovered he continued:

"What is it in this way of living that has made you uneasy?"

"Your constant care not to commit yourself—"

"Commit myself how?"

"I do not know—"

"What else?"

"The anger that you show, or the embarrassment, when the name of Caffie is pronounced, Madame Dammauville's, and Florentin's—"

"And you conclude that my anger on hearing these three names—"

"Nothing—I am afraid—"

CHAPTER XLIII

THE TERRIBLE REVELATION

This confession threw him into a state of confusion and agitation, for if it did not go beyond what he feared, yet it revealed a terrible situation.

Clearly, as in an open book, he read her; if she did not know all, she was but one step from the truth, and if she had not taken this step, it was because her love restrained her. If her love had been less strong, less powerful, she certainly would not have withstood the proofs that pressed on her from all sides.

But because she had held back so long, he must not conclude that the struggle would be continued in this way, and that a more violent blow, a stronger proof than the others, would not open her eyes in spite of herself.

It only needed an imprudence, a carelessness on his part, and unluckily he could no longer be relied on.

From what he had just learned it would be easy to watch himself closely, and to avoid dangerous subjects, those that she described to him; but if he could guard his words and looks during the day, neither saying nor letting anything appear that was an accusation, not confirming the suspicions against which she struggled, he could not do it at night.

He had not talked, and when she answered negatively to his question, she lifted a terribly heavy weight from his heart. But he had groaned and moaned, he had pronounced broken words without sense and unintelligible, and there was the danger.

What was necessary to make these sighs, these groans, these broken and unintelligible words become distinct and take a meaning? A nothing, an accident, since his real cerebral tendency placed him up to a certain point in a somnambulistic state. Was this tendency congenital with him or acquired? He did not know. Before the agitated nights after Madame Dammauville's death and Florentin's condemnation, the idea had never occurred to him that

he might talk in his sleep. But now he had the proof that the vague fears which had tormented him on this subject were only too well founded; he had talked, and if the words that escaped were not now comprehensible, they might become so.

Without having made a special study of sleep, natural or induced, he knew that in the case of natural somnambulists a hypnotic sleep is easily produced, and that while holding a conversation with a subject who talks in his sleep one may readily hypnotize him. Without doubt he need not fear this from Phillis; but it was possible that some night when incoherent words escaped him she would not be able to resist the temptation to enter into a conversation with him, and to lead him to confess what she wished to know—what the love that she felt for her brother would drive her to wish to learn.

If this opportunity presented itself, would the love for her brother or for her husband carry her away? If she questioned him, what would he not say?

For the first time he asked himself if he had done right to marry, and if, on the contrary, he had not committed a mad imprudence in introducing a woman into a life so tormented as his. He had asked calmness from this woman, and now she brought him terror.

To tell the truth, she was dangerous only at night; and if he found a way to occupy another room he would have nothing to fear from her during the day, on condition that he held himself rigorously on the defensive. Loving him as she did, she would resist the curiosity that drew her; if uneasiness drove her, her love would restrain her, as she herself had said; little by little this uneasiness and curiosity, being no longer excited, would die out, and they would again enjoy the sweet days that followed their marriage.

But in the present circumstances this way was difficult to find, for to propose another room to Phillis would be equal to telling her that he was afraid of her, and consequently it would give her a new mystery to study. He reflected, and starting with the idea that the proposition of two rooms must come from Phillis, he arranged a plan which, it seemed to him, would accomplish what he wished.

Ignorant of the fact that she had been hypnotized, and not remembering that she had talked, without doubt Phillis still feared that he would hypnotize her; he would threaten it again, and surely she would find a way to defend herself and escape from him.

This is what happened. The next day, when he told her decidedly that he wished to put her to sleep in order that he might learn what troubled her, she showed the same fright as on the first time.

"All that you have asked of me, everything that you have desired, I have wished as you and with you; but I will never consent to this."

"Your resistance is absurd; I will not yield to it."

"You shall not put me to sleep against my will."

"Easily."

"It is not possible."

Without replying, he took a book from the library, and turning over the leaves, he read: "Is it possible to make a sleeping person, without awaking him, pass from the natural to the hypnotic sleep? The thing is possible, at least with certain subjects."

Then handing her the book:

"You see that to put you to sleep artificially I need only the opportunity of finding you sleeping naturally. It is very simple."

"That would be odious."

"Those are merely words."

He threw her into such a state of terror that she kept awake all night, and as he would not sleep for fear of talking, he felt that she exerted every faculty to keep awake. But had he not gone too far? And by this threat would he not drive her to some desperate act? If she should escape, if she deserted him—what would become of him without her? Was she not his whole life? But he reassured himself by saying that she loved him too much ever to consent to a separation. Without doubt, she herself would come to think as he wished her to think.

And yet when he returned home in the evening she told him that her mother was not well, and begged him to examine her. This examination proved that Madame Cormier was in her usual health; but she complained that her breath failed her—during the day she had feared syncope.

"If you are willing," Phillis said, "I will sleep near mamma. I am afraid of not hearing her at night, and she is suffering."

He began by refusing, then he consented to this arrangement; and to thank him for it she stayed with him in his office, affectionate, full of tenderness and caresses, until he went to his room.

He was then free to sleep or not; whether he groaned or talked she could not hear him, since there was no communicating door between his room and that of his mother-in-law; his voice certainly would not penetrate the partition.

Who could have told him on the night that he decided to marry, that he would come to such a pass—to be afraid, to hide himself from her who brought him the calmness of sleep; and that by his fault, by a chain of imprudences and stupidities, as if it were written that in everything he would owe his sufferings to himself, and that if he ever succumbed to the whirlwind that swept him along, it would be by his own deed, by his own hand? At last he had assured the tranquillity of his nights, and as a further precaution, although he did not fear that Phillis would enter his room while he slept, to surprise him—she who dared not look in the face what suspicion showed her—he locked his door. Naturally, Phillis could not always sleep with her mother; but he would find a way to suggest frankly their sleeping apart, and surely he could find one in the storehouse of medicine.

These cares and similar fears were not of a nature to dispose him to sleep, and besides for a long time he had suffered from an exasperating nervous insomnia. As the night was warm he thought a little fresh air would calm him, and he opened the window; if this freshness did not calm him, at least it would make him sleep.

Obliged to improvise a bed in her mother's room, Phillis placed it against the partition that separated her from her husband, but without preconcerted intention, simply by accident, because it was the only place where she could put the bed. A little after midnight an unusual noise awoke her; she sat up to listen and to recover herself. It seemed as if this noise came from her husband's room. Alarmed, she placed her ear against the partition. She was not deceived; they were stifled groans, moans that were repeated at short intervals.

Carefully yet quickly she left her bed, and as the dawn was already shining in the windows, she was able to leave the room without making any noise. Reaching the door of her husband's room she listened; she was not deceived; they were indeed groans, but louder and sadder than those she had so often heard during the night. She tried the door, but it was evidently locked on the inside. What was the matter with him? She must know, must go to him, and give him relief. She thought of knocking, of shaking the door; but as he did not reply when she tried to open it, it was because he did not hear or did not wish to hear. Then she thought of the terrace; from there she could see what happened, and if it were necessary she would break a pane to enter.

She found the window open and saw her husband on the bed, sleeping, his head turned toward her; she stopped and asked herself if she should cross the threshold and wake him.

At this moment, with closed lips, he pronounced several words more distinctly than those that had so many times escaped him: "Phillis— forgive."

He dreamed of her. Poor, dear Victor! for what did he wish her to pardon him? Doubtless for having threatened to hypnotize her:

Overcome by this proof of love she put her head through the opening of the window to give him a look before returning to her mother, but on seeing his face in the full white light of the morning, she was frightened; it expressed the most violent sorrow, the features convulsed with anguish and horror at the same time. Surely he was ill. She must wake him. just as she took a step toward him he began to speak: "Your brother—or me?"

She stopped as if thunderstruck, then instinctively she drew back and clung to the window in the vestibule to keep herself from falling, repeating those two words that she had just heard, not understanding, not wishing to understand.

Instead of returning to her mother, trembling and holding on to the wall she entered the parlor and let herself fall into a chair, prostrated, crushed.

"Your brother—or me?"

This was, then, the truth, the frightful truth that she had never wished to see.

She stayed there until the noises in the street warned her that it was getting late, and she might be surprised. Then she returned to her mother.

"I am going out," she said; "I will return at half-past eight or nine o'clock."

"But your husband will not see you before going to the hospital."

"You will tell him that I have gone out."

She returned at half-past nine. Madame Cormier had finished dressing.

"At last you have come," she said.

But at sight of her daughter's face she saw that something had happened.

"My God! What is the matter?" she asked, trembling.

"Something serious—very serious, but unfortunately it is irreparable.

We must leave here, never to return."

"Your husband—"

"You must never speak to me of him. This the only thing I ask of you."

"Alas! I understand. It is what I foresaw, what I said would happen. You cannot bear the contempt that he shows us on account of your brother."

"We must hereafter be strangers to each other, and this is why we leave this house."

"My God! At my age, to drag my bones—"

"I have engaged a lodging at the Ternes; a wagon will come to take the furniture that belongs to us, what we brought here, only that. We will tell the concierge that we are going to the country. As for Josephine, you need not fear indiscreet questions, for I have given her a day off."

"But the money?"

"I have two hundred francs from the sale of my last picture; that is enough for the present. Before they are gone I shall have painted and sold another; do not worry, we shall have all we need."

All this was said in a hard but resolute tone.

A ring of the bell interrupted them. It was the express wagon.

"See that they do not take what does not belong to us," Phillis said.

"While they fill their wagon I will write in the parlor."

At the end of an hour the wagon was ready. Madame Cormier entered the parlor to tell her daughter.

"I have finished," Phillis said.

Having placed her letter in an envelope, she laid it in full view on Saniel's desk.

"Now let us go," she said.

And as her mother sighed, while walking with difficulty

"Lean on me, dear mamma, you know I am strong."

CHAPTER XLIV

AFTER LONG YEARS

Saniel did not return until quite late in the afternoon. When he opened the door with his key he was surprised at not seeing his wife run to him and kiss him.

"She is painting," he said to himself, "she did not hear me."

He passed into the parlor, convinced that he would find her at her easel; but he did not see her, and the easel was not in its usual place, there nor anywhere else.

He knocked at the door of Madame Cormier's room; there was no reply; he knocked louder a second time, and after waiting a moment he entered. The room was empty; there was no bed, no furniture, no one.

Stupefied, he looked around him, then returning to the vestibule he called: "Phillis! Phillis!"

There was no reply. He ran to the kitchen, no one was there; he went into his office, no one there. But as he looked about him, he saw Phillis's letter on his desk, and his heart leaped; he grasped it eagerly, and opened it with a trembling hand. It was as follows:

"I have gone, never to return. My despair and disgust of life are such, that without my mother and the poor being who is so far away, I should kill myself; but in spite of the horror of my position I was obliged to reflect, and I do not wish to aggravate by folly the wickedness that is going on about me. My mother is no longer young; she is ill and has suffered cruelly. Not only do I owe it to her to brighten her old age by my presence, by the material and moral support that I can give her,

but she must have faith that I am there to replace her, and to open my arms to her son, to my brother. The least that I can do for them is to wait courageously for him; and, however weary, terrible, or frightful my life may be hereafter, I shall bear it so that the unfortunate, the pariah, whom a pitiless fate has pursued, will find on his return a hearth, a home, a friend. This will be my only object, my reason for living; and in order to save myself from sluggishness and weariness, my thoughts will always be on the time when he will return, he whom I will call my child, and whom my love must save and cure. I know that long years separate me from that day, and that until it comes my broken heart will never have a moment of repose; but I shall employ this time in working for him, for the brother, for the child, for the cherished being who will come to me aged and desperate; and I wish that he may yet believe in something good, that he will not imagine everything in this world is unjust and infamous, for he will return to me weighed down by twenty years of shame, of degrading and undeserved shame. How will he bear these twenty years? What efforts must I not make to prove to him that he should not abandon himself to despair, and that life often offers the remedy, compassion to the most profound, to the most unjust human sorrows? How can I make him believe that? How lead his poor heart, closed to confidence, to feeling, to the tears that alone can relieve it? God who has so sorely tried me, without doubt will come to my aid, and will inspire me with words of consolation, will show me the path to follow, and give me the strength to persevere. Have I not already to thank Him for being alone in the world, outside of a mother and brother who will not betray me? I have no children, and I am spared the terror of seeing a soul growing in evil, an intelligence escaping from me to follow the path of infamy or dishonor. I leave, then, as I came. I was a poor girl, I go away a poor woman. I have taken the clothing and personal effects that I brought into our common home, nothing that was bought with your money; and I forbid you to interfere with my wish in this question of material things, as well as in my resolution to fly from you. Nothing can ever reunite us; nothing shall reunite us, no consideration, no necessity. I reject the past, this guilty past, the responsibility of which weighs so heavily on my conscience, and I should like to lose the memory of the detested time. It would be impossible for me to accept the struggle, or supplications, if you think it expedient to make any. I have cut our bonds, and hereafter we shall be as far apart as if one of us were dead, or even farther. Have no scruples, then, in leaving me alone to face a new life, a beginning that may appear difficult to one not situated as I am. The trials of former times were good for me, since they accustomed me to the difficulties of work. The desolation of to-day will sustain me, in the sense that having suffered all I can suffer, I no longer fear some discouraging catastrophe that will check me in my resolutions. In order not to compromise you, and more fully to become myself again, I shall take my family name—a dishonored name—but I shall bear it without shame. I shall live obscurely, absorbed in work and in trying to forget your existence; do the same yourself. If you think of the past, you will find, perhaps, that I am hard; yet this departure is not an egotistic desertion. I am no good to you, and the repose that you want would shun you hereafter in my presence. On the contrary, strive for forgetfulness, as I shall. If you contrive to wipe out of your life the part that is associated with me, perhaps you will be able to banish the remainder, and to recover some of the calm of other days. I can no longer remember that I have loved you, for my position is such that I have not the refuge of memory; at my age I must remain without a past as without a future; the consolation of the unfortunate is lost to me with everything else. I cannot rise out of my sorrow to try to find one hour when life was sweet to me; those hours, on the contrary, make me tremble, and I reproach myself for them as if they were a crime. Thus, whichever way I turn, I find only sadness and sharp regrets; everything is blighted, dishonored for me."

Standing in the middle of his office he read this hastily written letter breathlessly. Arrived at the end he looked about him vaguely. His chair was near his desk; he let himself fall into it and remained there prostrated, holding the letter in his shaking hand.

"Alone!"

It was an October afternoon, dark and muddy; in the Rue des Saints-Peres, in front of the houses that hide the Charity Hospital, coupes were standing, and their long line extended to the Boulevard Saint-Germain, where the coachmen, having left their seats, talked together like persons who were accustomed to meet each other. At half-past four o'clock, in the deepening twilight, men with grave looks and dark clothes—members of the Academy of Medicine—the Tuesday sitting over, issued from the porch, and entered their carriages. Some of them walked alone, briskly, in a great hurry; others demonstrated a skilful tardiness, stopping to talk politely to a journalist, and to give him notes of the day's meeting, or continuing, with a 'confrere' who was not an Academician, the conversation begun in the room of the 'pas-perdus'; it was the Bourse of consultations that was just closed. Not all the members of the Academy have, in truth, a long list of patients to visit; but each one has a vote to give, and they are those whom the candidates surround, trying to win them.

One of the Academicians who appeared the last at the top of the steps was a man of great height but bent figure, with hollow cheeks and pale face lighted by pale blue eyes with a strange expression, both hard and desolate at the same time. He advanced alone, and his heavy gait and dragging step gave him the appearance of a man sixty years of age, while in other ways he retained a certain youthfulness. It was Saniel, twenty years older.

Without exchanging a bow or a hand-shake with any one, he descended to the pavement and walked to the boulevard, where he opened the door of a coups whose interior showed a complete ambulant library—a writing table with paper, ink, and lamp, pockets full of books and pamphlets.

Just as he was about to enter, a voice stopped him.

He turned; it was one of his old pupils, who had recently become a physician in the suburb of Gentilly.

"What is it?" asked Saniel.

"I want to ask you to come and assist me in a curious case of spasms, where your intervention may be decisive."

"Where?"

"At the Maison-Blanche, a poor woman. What day could you give me?"

"Is it urgent?"

"Yes."

"In that case I will go at once. Give the address to my coachman, and get in with me."

But at this moment a white-haired man dressed in chestnut velvet, wearing a felt hat and sabots, came toward them, accompanied by two young men with whom he discoursed in a loud tone while gesticulating. People turned to look at them, so original was the appearance of old Brigard, the same man from head to foot that he had always been.

He came to Saniel with outstretched hands, and Saniel, taking off his hat, received him with marked respect.

"Enchanted to meet you," Brigard said, "for I went to your office yesterday and did not find you."

"Why did you not send me word beforehand? If you need me I am at your disposal."

"Thanks, but happily I do not need your advice, neither for myself nor my family; it was simply that I wished to see you. Arriving at your house before your office hours, I waited in your reception-room and several patients came after me—a young woman who appeared to suffer cruelly, an old lady who was extremely anxious, and lastly a man who had some nervous disease that would not permit him to sit still. And, looking at them, I said to myself that as I was only making a friendly visit I would not remain and prolong the waiting of these unfortunates who counted the minutes, so I came away."

"May I ask to what do I owe the honor of this visit?"

The two young men who accompanied Brigard, and Saniel's old pupil discreetly withdrew.

"The desire to present you my congratulations. When I learned of your candidature to the Academy of Medicine I said to myself: Here is one who has no chance; friend Saniel has originality and force; he has succeeded brilliantly; but these qualities are not exactly academic. I was deceived. You have broken open the doors, which is the only way that I understand of entering these places. That is why I congratulate you. And, besides, I did you wrong formerly—"

"Wrong? You?"

"I accused you of believing yourself stronger than life; in truth you were. My compliments!"

After warmly pressing Saniel's hands, he went on his way with his two disciples, preaching to them.

The young doctor approached Saniel.

"He is an original," he said.

"A happy man!" was the only reply.

ETEXT EDITOR'S BOOKMARKS:

He did not sleep, so much the better! He would work more
One does not judge those whom one loves
She could not bear contempt
The strong walk alone because they need no one
We are so unhappy that our souls are weak against joy
We weep, we do not complain

End of this Project Gutenberg Etext of Conscience, v4 by Hector Malot