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ADRIANI

BY
GEORGE SAND

NEW EDITION

[ML]

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RUE VIVIENNE, 2 BIS, AND BOULEVARD DES ITALIENS, 15
AT THE NEW BOOKSHOP

1863
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WORKS

OF

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TO MRS ALBERT BIGNON

When I start a book, I need to seek the sanction of
thought that dictates it to me, in a friendly heart, not importuning it from my
project, but thinking of it and contemplating, so to speak, the soul
that I know the best disposed to enter into my feelings.

You who expressed on the stage so many strong and touching nuances
passion, you are not only a famous artist in my eyes,
you are, as a woman of heart and merit, the best judge of
high and warm feelings that I would like to know how to paint.

It is therefore you that I think of as the most capable reader
to appreciate the sincerity of my essay, and to bring it the encouragement
with a faith similar to mine. When you read this novel, when it
will be written, it is quite certain that the execution will not satisfy me, and

that, as usual, I will not have made the design that seems lively and cheerful to me at first. That's why I want you in dedicate the _intention_, which will probably make it all worthwhile.

This intention is here. If I stray from it, I will have filled my goal.

Love is the inexhaustible theme that has served, that will always serve, I believe in the creations of the novel and the theatre. Why would he run out? There are as many ways to understand and feel love as there are of human types on earth. The poet's love, the scholar's love, the love of the poor and that of the rich, that of the cultured man and that of the ignorant, sensual love and idealistic love, all the loves of Finally, this world each have their theory or their fatality.

Beautiful souls alone can approach the plenitude of affections. I do not believe them to be so rare that their power seems implausible.

However, we often see, in novels, great loves being born in types that are too exceptional or in situations that are too particular. It is not often admitted that man living in the world and enjoying the full manifestation of his faculties, attaches himself to a unique feeling. We choose the _lovers_ in the class of dreamers, loners, inexperienced enthusiasts, natures incomplete or excessive. It is the skepticism and the mockery of the century that often cause this author's shyness.

Let's overcome it, I said to myself, and dare to believe what many skeptics know, what we ourselves knew to be true, in the middle and despite the sorrowful doubts of youth: it is that love is not an infirmity, the bitter or pale compensation for impotence intellectual property, incapacity for collective and social life. It's not nor a trembling virginity, a violent appetite hiding under the flowers of poetry. It is rather a young maturity, but solid, of mind and heart; proven strength, a beach where waves rise with energy, but that they do not involve in the abysses.

Whatever results from this design, whether my pen betrays it or complete, know, noble and dear friend, that I formed it thinking of you.

GEORGE SAND.

Nohant, September 1853.

ADRIANI

I

Letter from Comtois to his wife.

Lyon, August 12, 18...

My dear wife, this is to tell you that I have left the service of the Count. He is a quintessential man who could not suit me, and I left without regret, I can say. He made me a scene in which he said words to me, and looked for bad reasons. But I I've already been replaced, and I haven't been on the pavement for more than an hour. In the hotel where we were staying, there happened to be a gentleman who was looking for a valet. Although I didn't know him, and that I didn't have the smallest piece of information about him, I presented to see at least, at his mine, if I could manage it.

Her air came back to me right away, and it seems that she liked mine. too, because he just glanced at my certificate in saying to myself:

"I know that the Comte de Milly valued you and that you leave following a vivacity on his part on which he does not want to come back. He told me that you write legibly, that you put spelling well enough, and that you used to copy. You will therefore be useful to me and I take you for the price he gave you: I don't remember the number, remind me."

Thereupon, here I am engaged, because, since my new master knows my old, something I didn't know, it can only be a decent man, and, to her travel wardrobe, strewn about her room, as well as to his jewelry and the way the people at the hotel served him, I very quickly since he was passably rich, or that he knew how to live in man of the world. I also asked in the house; but I was told that he was not otherwise known, and that he called himself M. of Argères, period.

It really upset me a bit, because it's the first time that I serve an untitled person. But I have in my mind that it is a fancy he may have to hide his, because I know myself in people of quality, and I assure you that I have never seen a more beautiful twist and in prettier ways. Besides, it seems very soft and made the advance of my disbursements. Finally, I think that I will not have disagreement with him. We left Geneva, and now we are in Lyon, from where I am writing these lines to tell you that I am okay and I don't know where we're going yet. everything sir told me is that we would be in Paris in two months at the latest. not don't worry about me, and write me news of our children and if you are still happy with the house where you are. I'll let you know soon where do I need to address this. I won't give you great details, but you will get them later from my diary, which I still have used to hold, day by day, for my amusement and for usefulness from my memory.

Farewell then, my dear Celeste; I embrace you with all the friendship that I extend to you door, as well as your sister and our little family.

Your husband for life.

COMPOIS.

Journal de Comtois.

Lyon, August 15, 18...

Here I am, like in a novel, at the service of a man I don't know not at all, and which leads me I don't know where. Sir does not receive letters whose address I can see. He will take them himself position, office remaining. He goes out and sees people outside; but he does receives no one at the hotel, and seems very busy reading or walking in his room, the little time he stays there during the day. He feeds well; his clothes are of a good tailor, and he wears his shoes can better. He speaks little, and commands nothing except with honesty. He ... not does not seem prone to impatience, nor to any other fault, except that I believe him to be of little wit. He is a very handsome man, who has no more twenty-five to thirty years old. He has a beautiful beard and hair, and pronounces so well, you can hear everything he says, even when he speaks very low. This is a great advantage for the service; but he says the things in so few words, that it is clear that he lacks ideas.

August 19, Tournon.

Here we are in a small town on the banks of the Rhône, whether Monsieur there has business, or he has taken it into his head to stop here. We came by steamer. Mr. talked there with people

who no doubt knew him; but, as it was a strong wind, I could not hear how and what they were talking to him about, unless approach me indiscreetly, which would be bad company. I saw that the gentlemen who spoke to monsieur were distinguished. I do not have could not allow me to question them.

Monsieur asked me this evening to make him some coffee. He found it good and shut himself in to write or to read, I don't know.

20 August.

Here I am still in this little town, waiting for Monsieur to be returns. He took a boat this morning, and I heard it was for a walk. I got in the mood because seeing that I was going to be alone all day and bored in a place that is hardly beautiful, I asked Monsieur if we would stay there long.

--Why do you ask me that? he said to me with an indifferent air.

I took courage to tell him that it was to be able to receive news of my family, and that if I knew where we were going, I would give my address to my wife.

"Look, Monsieur Comtois, what did he say, are you married?"

"Yes, monsieur le comte, that I ventured to answer him.

"Why do you call me _monsieur le comte_?"

And then me:

"It's the habit I had with my old master. If I knew how should i talk to sir..."

--And you have children perhaps?

--I have three, two boys and a lady.

--And where is your family?

"In Paris, Monsieur le Marquis."

"Why do you call me _monsieur le marquis_?"

--Because my penultimate master...

--It's fine, it's fine, he said, I'll tell you where we're going when I find out myself.

Thereupon he turned on his heels and off he went.

I don't know if he's an original who doesn't think about what he's doing, or if he had the idea to make fun of me, but I'm starting to get worried. We see so many adventurers on the roads, that I could have deceive about his appearance as a great lord. I will have to watch it from near. It is not so much for the risk to run on the side of the pledges that for the shame of being commanded by a man without a confession. There is a lot of people made to command servants, but there are also some who deserve to serve those who serve them, and that is a great mortification to be duped by these scoundrels.

Mauzeres, August 22.

Here we are in a pretty castle, or rather a pretty country house, at a friend of Monsieur, who is an author and a baron. It's not very rich, but it is comfortable, as my lord used to say, and the The manner in which we received monsieur this evening, reconciles me a little with him.

It was time, because it gave me many doubts. And then it's a man who has a superficial mind, who has no conversation with people, and who is so distracted at times, that the talents we have are to no avail. He doesn't just pay attention to it, and his politeness has nothing flattering.

However, I have not been able to learn anything about him from the people of the house. They are all from the country and do not know him. It is, moreover, people very simple and without education which facilitates their conversation.

Tomorrow I'll know what to expect, because I'll be serving at the table. This evening,
I had a bad toothache, and Monsieur said to me:

--Rest, Comtois.

That's what I'm going to do.

Narration.

M. Comtois' hope was deceived. He served at table the next day; but the Baron de West was absent. M. d'Argères was not in the habit of speak alone while eating: also Comtois was not more advanced than the first day.

Baron de West was indeed a rather distinguished writer. He seems that he regarded his host as an excellent judge, for he received him with open arms and had a blast keeping him for a whole week. A letter received on the morning of the second day forcing him to go twenty-four hours in Lyon for important business, he made her give his word of honor that he would wait for him and constitute himself master from home in his absence.

D'Argères was hardly asked, although he was not closely linked with his host. He knew that by using and abusing as needed his hospitality, he could always regard the Baron as his obligee. The baron wanted to read him a manuscript, and we will see later how it mattered to him that d'Argères tasted its content and form, and associated himself completely with the thought which had dictated this work.

Letter from d'Argères.

Château de Mauzères, by Tournon (Ardèche).

My good comrade, finally know where I am. I used my time well rest and freedom. I have traveled through Switzerland, I have climbed glaciers, I didn't break anything. I let my beard grow, I cut it; I read nothing, wrote nothing, studied nothing. I didn't think of anything, not even to the beautiful Swiss women, who, by the way, are only beautiful in health, and show big ugly legs at the end of their short petticoats. I came back via Geneva and Lyon. I sent back Clodius, who robbed me; I took a servant who only annoys me with his face of pedantic. I set off for the Mediterranean, and I stop at our Baron's, who is on my way. I'm there alone for the moment, and I'm not complaining about it. He's still the most gallant man in the world; but when he talked to me about fine arts and showed me his notebooks, I had great difficulty in hiding an abominable grimace. He it will however be necessary to carry out, to hear, to judge, to promise. It won't be certainly not bad, what he will read to me; but that would be Virgil quite pure, that it wouldn't be worth the trees, the sun, the movement, the unexpected, finally the delicious doing nothing, so rare and so precious in a restless and often subjugated life.

I still have two days off, because he was forced to leave, and I'm going to take advantage of it to stupefy myself a bit more on the hunt. But I you can hear me say to me from here: "Why hunt? why give you a pretext, when you have the right and the time to beat the woods and

get lost in the paths?" You are quite right. It's heavy, a rifle, and that does not kill; at least I never met one that was enough just for me. Perhaps there is one in the Baron's arsenal; but I have so few noses that I could never put my hand on them.

Let's talk about our business. You will place as you see fit, etc.

* * * * *

We delete this part of the letter from d'Argères, which did not contain only a detail of material interests, and we pass to the diary of Comtois.

Journal de Comtois.

Mauzeres, August 23.

I'll be in a lot of trouble here if this continues. Sir told me that he would make me copy, and he gives me nothing to do. No doubt he has any job in Paris; but, in the meantime, he is doing his own correspondence, and, as far as I can judge, it is not substantial. He is a smoker and a stroller. He always seems to be dreaming, and I don't think he's thinking of anything. He serves himself, which gives me the idea that he is selfish and does not depend on anyone. The country where we are very naughty. You lose your shoes there. It's a desert where there are only rocks, woods, water falling from the rocks, and not a soul to speak to, for there reigns in the country a kind of patois, and the people are quite savage.

The house is nice and well kept. The wine is harsh. The coachman is very rude. Mr. de West is quite rich and does works for his pleasure. They say he puts a lot of self-esteem into it. No doubt that gentleman takes it upon himself to write too, for the valet told me that his master told him:

--You will advise me.

But I don't believe Monsieur capable of writing with wit. He loves too much to run, and, besides, he speaks too simply.

It is always a mistake to want to write after M. Helvétius, M. Voltaire and M. Pigault-Lebrun, who made the glory of their century. All that can be written has been written by very illustrious people, and, as a lady of great talent said, whose letters I wrote to his friends, there is nothing new to print. At least if these gentlemen occupied themselves with politics! It is a horizon which changes and which always brings you something new. But, to judge politics, one must go to court, and I don't think Monsieur is considerable enough to be received there. The best thing is to cultivate philosophy when you have the way. It would be my taste, if I had an income, and if my wife didn't spend it all.

Narration.

While M. Comtois regretted not being able to be a philosopher, his master was walking. He returned, at nightfall, in the company of a game warden he had met and who was very useful to him for find the way to the manor of Mauzères, when passing at the bottom of a small hill covered with vines, he noticed a faint gleam which whitened this short horizon.

--Is it the moon rising? he asked his guide.

The guide smiles.

"I don't believe," he said, "that the moon rises on the side where the sun rises. layer.

"That's right," said d'Argères, laughing altogether at his inattention.

What is this clarity?

--It's nothing. It's a house that's just on the other side of the hill. It is the house of _la Désolade_.

--_The Desolade_? That's a very sad name.

--Lady! it's a name that we left him like that in the country, because of the poor lady who stays there. She is a very pretty young woman, my faith, who lost her husband after six months of marriage and who cannot console. She is sick and lost at times. We are even afraid so that she doesn't go completely mad.

--Wait! resumed d'Argères, who, following his guide on the path, got a little closer to the invisible abode, I think I mean music.

They stopped and were silent. A woman's voice and a sonorous piano made a few sounds heard, carried away at every moment by the broken. In the phrases that reached the practiced ear of d'Argères, he recognized the admirable air of the gondolier in _Otello_:

Nessun maggior dolore, etc.

"There is no greater pain than to remember the happy times in misfortune."

* * * * *

D'Argères, with his carefree air and his momentary need to forget art, was an artist from head to toe. He was greatly impressed by these three circumstances: the name of _Désolade_ given to the house or the person who inhabited it, the choice of song, and the voice, the accent of the singer, who, either in reality or by the effect of distance, expressed with infinite charm the lament of a broken soul. One moment he almost left his guide there and ran towards this house, towards this complaint, towards this woman; but he was restrained by the fear of seeing a crazy. He had, for the spectacle of alienation, this fear painful experience of vivid imaginations.

Besides, he was worn out with fatigue, he was dying of hunger.

--And, after all, he said to himself, I am no longer eighteen years old to dream the honor, often too easy, of consoling an inconsolable widow.

He therefore returned to the manor very philosophically. Nevertheless, he does not felt more willing to question the game warden. It seemed to him that the prose of this man would quickly blow away the poetic impression that he had just collected.

Journal de Comtois.

August 24.

Monsieur is a handsome singer; because, while going to bed, he took a fancy to her to repeat an Italian tune, which he says, well, as well as the jesters of the theater of Paris. I pointed this out to him, which was a bit out of place; but it was on purpose to see if i would cause. He looked at me like I pulled him out of a dream, laughed in my face and didn't say a word. I clearly saw by that that Monsieur is stupid.

II

Narration.

D'Argères, having become very tired, and undergoing the frequent

sufferings of the nervous organizations, slept little and badly. He had a obstinate dream which made him hear to satiety the romance of the gondolier, and which made pass in front of him at the same time the image, at each instant transformed, from the _sorry_. Sometimes it was an angel from heaven, sometimes a perished, a fairy or a monster.

Tired of this discomfort, he got up with the day and mechanically took the way to the house, the light of which he had seen at first light stars.

--I want to try to find out, he said to himself, if she is really a madwoman. who sang so well. In this case, I will always stay away from this place, I will not go through this trail again. I always imagined myself that madness was contagious to me, and what I experienced that night makes me believe that I have a predisposition...

He found himself at the top of the hillside of vines and at the level of the roof of the house, which rose, or rather fell before him, on the terrain sloping in the opposite direction.

The day was beginning to whiten the landscape and mingled its pink tones with the bluish tones of the night. The surrounding land, largely watered of running water, exhaled masses of silvery mist which gave a fantastic appearance to everything. The undulations of the ground, exaggerated by these floating vapors, seemed to open in depths immense, and, in all these doubtful forms, the imagination could see lakes instead of meadows, precipices where there were only peaceful valleys.

At first glance, the site seemed splendid to our traveler. In reality, it was a set of smooth lines and charming details as it is found everywhere, even in the most extensively hilly countries.

As you go down the Rhône, after Lyon, you go through a series of paintings of a grandiose appearance. Mountains whose situation at the edge rapid waves, bold shapes and sharp tones, sometimes white as polished bones, sometimes dark under the vegetation, increase the importance and make the aspect threatening or severe; some pics jagged, crowned with old fortresses looming over a sky already blue and pure like that of the Mediterranean; valleys widely indented and which lower majestically towards the shore: everything seems imposing in this panorama of the river which brings you closer to the Provence.

But, behind this belt of rocks, nature, while preserving as a whole the harsh character of volcanic upheavals, offers a thousand charming nooks where one can live in full idyll; from green meadows, chestnut trees as beautiful as those of Limousin, walnut trees as round as those of the Creuse, finally vines and bushes under which disappear the ancient lavas and the dark basalts whose soil is sown.

In the valleys that open onto the Rhône, terrible winds blow where burning suns fall; but, as we go up the course from the rivers that flow into the river, we rise, towards the Cévennes, in a different atmosphere, and, in a day's journey, one could, from the river to the mountain, leave a burning region for an absolutely cold one, and a fiery sun for snows almost eternal.

It is between these two extremes, in one of the most fertile parts of the Vivarais, which was our traveler, and the valley which presented itself to his looks were laughing and peaceful. However, from the point where he found placed, besides the caprices of the mist which transformed all the objects, the foregrounds retained the strange and harsh character that is specific to places disrupted by the first efforts of the land training. By one of those geological accidents which often encounter, the hillside of the vines was suddenly torn apart at its summit, and the house of _la Désolade_, leaning against this tear,

rested on a natural terrace of fairly volcanic rocks steep. A steep slope, strewn with debris and, so to speak, paved of slag, led from the dwelling to the meadow, crossing teeming streams and dotted with beautiful masses of trees. Others vineyards lined the surrounding hillsides which rose quickly towards the north and enclosed the sky in a frame of horizons of little relaxed. It was a natural retreat and like a large enclosed garden great walls, that this graceful valley, surrounded by hills smiling, whose steep flanks nevertheless showed themselves here and there under the greenery, and seemed to say, "Stay here, it's a paradise, but don't forget it's a prison."

Such was, at least, the impression of d'Argères, and the sadness seized in the midst of his admiration. The appearance of the house located immediately under his feet did not contribute a little to it. It was one of those small indefinable constructions only transformations successive have made mysterious by making them counterfeit. The true name of this house was the Temple, a denomination widespread in abundance in all the nooks and crannies of France, the order of Templars having owned everywhere and built everywhere. I don't know if this property had mattered and whether the small building to which the tradition had retained its solemn name was the main body or the last vestige of more extensive constructions. The massive base heralded remote times. The first floor signaled the intention of some embellishments at the time of the renaissance; the summit, crowned heavy attics in bull's eye with scarred masks from the time of Louis XIV, formed an absurd contrast; but these disparate melted, as much as possible, into a general tone of greenish-gray and under masses of ivy that announced abandonment in the past, indifference in the present.

The garden which surrounded the house and its slender outbuildings, namely a dovecote without pigeons, a yard without dogs and a barnyard without poultry, with a few empty sheds and ruined cellars, was quite large and well planted. Roses and carnations bloomed there still with great brilliance in baskets of parched grass. Some predecessor, less apathetic than the sorry, had cured these walkways and planted these groves; but they were pretty much delivered to themselves under the hand of an old peasant who grew vegetables in the squares, and who, having no pretensions to horticulture, came there once or twice a week give a spade and a look, when he had nothing better to do. So the grass was growing in the middle sand from the walkways, and along the walls, rubble and cement collapsed bleached the grass. The branches, laden with fruit, blocked the way, the fruits were strewn on the ground, the water was green in the basins. Borage and thistle had a blast to smother the violets; the strawberries tracing around them with a truly disheveled way, extending, a great distance from their bushy foot, these long stems which replant themselves and form huge unproductive networks when left to their own devices. mad health.

D'Argères saw all this while touring the establishment. He could even enter the garden, which had no gate and whose fence had disappeared in many places. The day was quite done and the sun appeared, without any noise disturbing the house or the the enclosure the gloomy silence of desolation.

The kind of curiosity that drove d'Argères to this examination could not resist. against the overwhelm of a day of fatigue and a night without sleep, increased by the feeling of horrible boredom that distilled, for so to speak, the place where he was. Sitting on the shapeless debris of ancient statues that some owner, half indifferent, had placed on the lawn in a corner of the garden, he promised himself to go without trying to see anyone. But, on getting up, he found himself face of an old woman he hadn't heard coming.

She was a pretentious, communicative chambermaid, devoted enough to bear the boredom of this stay, not enough not to complain about it to the first comer. A stranger, a passerby, a human being, whoever he was, was good fortune for her, and, far from reporting the crime

of indiscretion in which d'Argères was afraid of being surprised, she welcomed her with all the graces of which she was still capable.

She had been pretty, she was dressed with as little research as the involved abandoning such a retreat and the early hour, and yet her threadbare silk petticoat had not a single stain, and her white camisole was flawless. Her blond hair, which twirled to yellowish-gray, were well smoothed under his night cap. She had long, white, pointed fingers sticking out of cut gloves and which revealed, by their particular form, the curious woman, alive projects, and carried to the plot by need of imagination. This woman, familiar with the paneling and the furniture where the world is agitated, had a appearance of distinction which could be misleading for a few moments. D'Argères was caught there, and, thinking he was dealing with a mother, he got up and bowed most respectfully, though that withered and problematically dew in the morning seemed to him rather heterogeneous.

Antoinette Muiron (that was her name, which her young mistress abbreviated to calling him Toinette since childhood) had raised Mademoiselle de Larnac with genuine tenderness. Romanesque without intelligence, stirring, nervous, flirtatious without passion, in love without object, Toinette was become an old maid without realizing it. She had forgotten to live for herself, by dint of wanting to make others live for her way. She was a good, sweet creature at heart, because her fixed idea was to arrange the happiness of the beings she cherished and cared for tirelessly. But this claim made her haunting, and she exercised a sort of secret and hidden tyranny over anyone who was not not on guard against his innocent and dangerous insinuations.

D'Argères learned very quickly, and almost in spite of himself, the whole romance of the sorry. Mademoiselle Muiron, struck by the good air and the beautiful face of this unexpected listener, seized him as prey. She was of those people who, without having much judgment, have a certain superficial penetration. From the first greeting exchanged with him, she understood very well that the stranger felt a secret embarrassment and did not was only looking for an escape to escape quickly from the reproach that he deserved. It wasn't good Muiron's account. She went ahead of his scruples and provides him, with a rare presence of mind, the pretext he had sought in vain to justify his presence at this time in the garden.

"Monsieur was curious to see our antiques?" she said to him with an air considerate. Oh! my God, we don't hide them, and I wish they deserve the trouble he took to get in here.

From Argères, struck by the pretty and easy pronunciation of the one he persisted in taking for a mother, thought he saw an epigram unchecked in this naive advance, and apologized profusely.

"Indeed," he said, glancing at the broken torsos that had served as headquarters and of which he did not care in the least, I am a passionate amateur... busy with research... and very distracted from my nature. I shouldn't have allowed myself, among women... Enter thus, I am unforgivable... I withdraw sorry...

--But no but no! cried Toinette, barring her way. the narrow alley in which he wanted to rush; stay and watch your ease, sir! It seems to be very beautiful, although badly damaged. Me, I don't know anything about it, I confess, but they are curiosities. It was Madame de Monteluz's great-uncle, an educated man, who lived here formerly, and who had collected it around. He seems to be from the time of the Romans.

"Yes, indeed, it is Roman," said d'Argères, with an air capable of which he laughed to himself.

--There are some who claim that it is even from the time of the Gauls.

"Faith, yes," resumed d'Argères, "it could very well be Gallic!"

--If Monsieur wants to draw them...

--Oh! I would be afraid to abuse...

"Not at all, sir; madam is not up and you will not interfere nobody.

D'Argères, finally understanding that he was not in the presence of an authority superior, suddenly felt very comfortable.

"Thank you," he said a little abruptly, "I don't draw.

--Ah! I understand, sir writes!

"No more, I swear to you.

"No doubt, no doubt!" write about things that are so uncertain...
Monsieur has a taste for collections? gentleman is building a museum?

--No more.

--Ah! Monsieur is quite right, it is ruinous; sir is content to be knowledgeable and knowledgeable. It's the best, of course.

--Yes-da, thought the traveler, I came here out of curiosity, but here a servant who wants to punish me for it by exercising hers on me with wear!

And, as he did not answer, Toinette resumed:

"Monsieur is from Paris, it shows.

--You find?

--It feels right away. The accent, the dress... Oh! certainly, you are not a provincial. Sir is visiting probably with the Baron de West? It's a stone's throw from here. It's a very honorable man, of a mature age, and who would be a good neighbor and a real friend, I'm sure, if she didn't persist in receive no one.

"After all," thought D'Argères again, "since I have come to know what can I say about the mental state of this neighbor, and that it is so easy to satisfy me, why shouldn't I satisfy this maid's chatterbox while listening to it? Questioning and answering are one and the same pleasure for these kinds of natures.--What do you call your mistress? he said in a softly familiar tone, sitting back down on marble blocks.

Toinette, charmed by the process, did not ask twice, and, also sitting on a large ball which could well have represented the head of a god:

"But I have already named it to you!" she exclaimed: it is Madame de Monteluz!

"Who was Mademoiselle de?" said d'Argères with the air of a man who knows all the women of the great world and who seeks to remember.

"It was Mademoiselle Laure de Larnac."

--A Languedoc family? All names in ac...

--Yes sir. Originally from Languedoc; but for a long time Larnac were fixed in Provence, near Vaucluse. A beautiful country, sir! the loves of Petrarch! And properties! Madam has there a castle... If she wanted to live there, instead of this dreadful hovel, of this wild country! At all times, sir, the Larnacs have done honor to their wealth. The Monteluz too, because they are two families of equal stolen. There was a Marquis de Monteluz, grandfather of the Marquis whose Madame is a widow, who never went to Paris and to the court, by

consequently, without spending...

"How old was Madame's husband?" asked d'Argères, who feared a genealogy.

--Alas! sir, twenty years! Mrs. age. Two beautiful, two good children who had been raised together! They were first cousins. The Larnacs and the Monteluz...

--And Madam has now?...

"Twenty-three, sir, exactly. Monsieur the Marquis did not live only six months after his marriage. He killed himself hunting... An accident awful! Jumping a ditch, his gun...

"Why the devil did he go hunting?" said d'Argères abruptly; after six months of marriage, he was therefore already no longer in love with his

--Oh! that if done, sir! In love like crazy, like an angel he was, the poor child!

"Then he was stupid," said d'Argères, "fatally carried away by I don't know what an instinct of jealousy to denigrate the deceased.

"No, sir," resumed Toinette. He was not stupid, he knew make love.

She made this answer in a half sublime, half ridiculous tone, which was the whole expression of his naive and cunning soul, of his character poseur and sincere at the same time; then she continued lowering the voice in a confidential way:

--He had not received a very scholarly education, he was very good-natured: people of birth suck manners with their mother's milk; but he had very little left his province, and Mademoiselle de Larnac would have been able to choose a husband more brilliant, more cultured, more like her, but not a more gallant man nor a more generous heart. They had been brought up together, I told you, under the eyes of Madame de Monteluz and under mine, because Mademoiselle was an orphan from the age of four to five years old, and his aunt was his tutor before becoming his stepmother. We lived in this beautiful chateau near Vaucluse, where the Marquise came to settle down, and the two children were inseparable. Octave was so sweet, so complacent, so big, so strong, so beautiful, so good! When Mademoiselle was twelve years old, despite being innocence itself, and that she spoke of her little husband with the same idea that a sister can have for her brother, Madame de Monteluz said to me:

"My dear Muiron, these children love each other too much. Here is the moment when this friendship can harm their peace of mind, their reason, even their reputation. Laure being richer than my son, we cannot fail to say that I the pupil with the thought of making a good marriage to Octave and that I monopolizes it for our benefit. She has to spend a few years convent, far from us, that she learns to know herself, to appreciate herself herself. When she is old enough to marry, she will not have been influenced, because she will have had time to forget; she will be free, and if, so she still loves my son, so much the better for my son. I won't have anything to reproach me for.

This plan was very wise, but it could not be understood by these poor children, who parted with heart-rending tears. You would have said, sir, the separation of Paul and Virginie. Madam of Monteluz had a firmness of which I would not have felt capable for my go. She even advised me not to talk too often about her Octave to my Laura; for I accompanied him, sir; Oh! I never have left! Her poor mother had confided her to me too well when she died! We were sent to Paris to the convent of the Sacred Heart, where Mademoiselle had a private room, and where I was permitted to serve her and socialize after class. Mademoiselle was adored by nuns and her companions. She was first in all

the studies. She succeeded in the arts better than all the others, and she seemed not to suspect it, for which she was grateful infinite. But his greatest pleasure was to come and chat with me. And who were we talking about, I ask you? From Octave, always from Octave! There was no other way, because it was a great love, a holy passion that absence increased instead of diminishing. When mademoiselle was singing or studying her piano:

"That will please Octave," she said; he likes music.

"If she drew or learned languages, poetry:

"He will like all that," she said again.

"Finally, it was all for him, and it was him she was thinking about all the time. She wrote him letters. Ah! sir, what pretty letters! if child, so honest and so tender! There is no novel where I have one never found such. Madame de Monteluz forbade me to lend myself to this, but I did not know how to resist. Laura told me like that:

"I know well now why my good aunt wants to cross me. It is out of pride, out of delicacy; but I will die if I don't receive letters from Octave, and I'm sure she doesn't want me dead.

"And Octave's letters, how were they?" says d'Argères, who could refrain from listening attentively.

--Ah! lady! Octave's letters were very kind, very honest and very loving too; but it wasn't that style, that grace, that strength. You had to guess what he meant. Octave did not like not the study. He was too fond of movement, castle life, hunting, the great outdoors...

--When I told you! cried d'Argères. He was stupid! Those we adore are always like that.

"Well, he was a bit simple, I grant you that," replied Toinette. who took pleasure in being listened to; he had a rustic temperament, and, in terms of talents, he had no great dispositions.

--Yes, as far as music is concerned, he liked the big trumpet, and as far as tongues, he scratched his own. I bet he had the accent Marseille?

--Not much, sir; but what does it matter when one loves?

--If he had loved, he would have learned to be worthy of a woman like your Laura.

"If he had thought he should do it, he would have done it. But he never thought of it not, and since my Laura never thought of it either, he remained as he was. When the time of trials seemed to be over, mademoiselle was eighteen years old. The two lovers saw each other again under the eyes of the mother, in Paris. Octave wept, Laure fainted. By recognizing that this passion had only grown, Madame de Monteluz was well embarrassed. Her son was too young to marry. She wanted that he was at least twenty years old. Should Laure wait until then to settle? Laure swore she would wait, and she waited. Madam of Monteluz made her son travel, and remained in Paris, where she took miss in the world, always saying and thinking, the noble lady, that she should not avoid, but seek, on the contrary, the opportunity to make known to his ward the advantages of his fortune, the good parties where she could claim and the men who could make her forget his childhood friend. All of this was useless. Miss went to through balls and salons like a star. She was noticed there, admired, adored... That's where Monsieur must have met her.

This question was launched with a flash of sudden penetration which made Argères smile.

D'Argères had forgotten to put himself on his guard, and the curiosity of the Muiron seemed to have dozed off in her chatter; but she woke up with a start and seemed to exclaim: "But by the way, to whom did I the pleasure of opening my heart? Your papers, sir, please, before I continue."

A mocking smile, where the fine Muiron guessed a teasing intention, touched the lips of d'Argères; but suddenly, by an illumination memory, he saw passing in front of him a figure whose image had struck him, and whose name alone had flown away.

--Laure de Larnac? he cried. Yes! at the Music Conservatory, a Lent. She knew Father Habeneck! He was going to talk to her his lodge. The aunt, still beautiful, dignified, a little stiff, and the young girl, an angel! always dressed with taste, simplicity!... black eyes admirable features, stature, grace!... What a beautiful forehead! what hair! and looking intelligent, melancholy, attentive. Pale, with an air of strength and health, however; firmness in softness. Yes yes, I saw it, I still see it!

"So Monsieur is a musician?" said Toinette looking at him with persistence as if to remember in turn. He came a lot of artists in these ladies, and yet.

"Do me the pleasure of continuing," replied d'Argères in a tone of authority which dominated Toinette.

"Well, sir, I am coming to the denouement," she resumed. The twenty years bygone lovers, they had to be married, because the young man mad, and mademoiselle persisted in refusing all parties and only wanted him. We returned to have our wedding in Provence, and six months after, a terrible death...

"Who left the widow inconsolable, they say?" Let's see, is it true Miss Muiron? Hand on heart, you who are one person of wit and sense, do you believe in eternal regrets?

"My God, I was like you, I didn't believe it at first; I myself I said: "It's real despair, but after all Madame is so young, so beautiful, life is so long! And then Madame will still have passions in spite of herself, and, one fine day, she will want to exist: she will love new, she who has lived only on love, and who still lives on it by memory: she will remarry!"

--And now?...

"Now, sir, do you know that she has been widow, and that she is worse than the first day?

--They say she is mad; is it in fact?

D'Argères launched this question as Toinette had launched the his own, out of the blue, determined to seize his first moment of surprise.

But the Muiron did not flinch and replied with a sad air:

"Yes, I know very well that people believe it, because _vulgar souls_ do not don't understand real pain. Would to heaven she was a little, crazy! It would be a crisis, the doctors could do something about it, and I would hope for a revolution in his ideas; but my poor mistress has as much strength to regret as she had to hope. Yes, sir, she regrets how she knew how to wait. She is calm to do fear. She walks, she sleeps, she lives pretty much like everyone else, except that she seems a little preoccupied; you would never say, to see her, she has death in her soul.

"I would very much like to see her," said d'Argères, naively. Is it

impossible?

"Impossible, no, if I know who you are," said Toinette triumphantly. to have finally put the unknown at the foot of the wall.

"Mademoiselle Muiron," replied d'Argères, with an energetic accent without emphasis, I'm an honest man, that's what I am.

The sentimental and thoughtless side of Toinette's character yielded a instant. She looked at the beautiful and sympathetic face of d'Argères with irresistible interest; but his cunning instincts and his silly habits took over.

"Yes, you are a charming fellow," she resumed; but fate did not have you perhaps not placed in a position to be able to claim...

--Pretend to what? cried d'Argères, revolted by the ideas that seemed provoke in him this sort of duenna.

But the duenna was innocently perverted; still perverse isn't it not the word; she was only dangerous, and all the more dangerous that deep down she was in good faith.

"I won't cut corners," she said. pretend to love him; because, if you have a free heart, I challenge you good...

"You believe that hearts are quite inflammable, Dona Muiron! said laughing from Argeres.

"Monsieur thinks he is joking," she answered, smiling too. This title belongs to me: I come from a Spanish family, my parents were nobles.

--Is! but, admitting that my heart is not free,--and, besides, don't be so solicitous for me--what danger do you suppose for your mistress that I see her pass or sit in the garden, or look over his hedge, assuming that I need your protection to satisfy this fantasy?

--Oh! for her, there is none, unfortunately perhaps; because if she could notice that you are handsome and well made, that you have a her enchanting voice and perfect manners, she would be half saved; but she might just not see you, all the while having eyes fixed on you.

-- Well, then! What time does she get up? when does she put her head at his window?

--She has no time. But listen, mister the mysterious! I know everything, because I guess everything.

--What? exclaimed d'Argères in stupefaction.

--You are in love with Madame, in love for a long time. You there know. You did not come here by chance. you ask me, not to learn what concerns her in the past, but to to hear about her, to find out if she returns a bit of her despair. Finally, for an hour, you have been making fun of me by doing seeming to vaguely remember the beautiful Laure de Larnac. Hold, you are one of those who proposed to her, and, rejected as so many others, you couldn't have forgotten. You hope that now...

--Your your your! what an imagination you have! said d'Argères. You are a blue stockings, doña Antonia Muiron! you write novels. Well I will tell you one which is the truth.

"I had a friend, a poor sentimental friend, romantic like you. He wasn't rich, he wasn't handsome. He had talent, he was in the second violins at the Opera; he was from the concert society in the conservatory. It was there that he saw the beautiful Laura, and that, without

to know, without hoping for anything, without even daring to make him sense his love, he conceived for her one of those beautiful passions that one finds in books and sometimes also in reality. He showed it to me this charming girl; he named her to me, for he knew her name from M. Habeneck, and I think that's all he knew about her. He the devoured eyes; he could see that there was a whole world between her and him. He hoped and tried nothing. He lived happily in his mute contemplation. He was so made. It was a cloudy spirit: it was German.

He lost sight of her; he forgot it. He loved another, two more, three or four, perhaps, the same way. He married her laundress. He was a real Petrarch, minus the sonnets. He is left for Germany, where he is choirmaster of I don't know what little ruler.

"You see it wasn't me, and I give you my word of honor that I do not otherwise know your mistress, and that, without the chance that brings me to this country, joined to the chance of your pleasant conversation, his name might never have entered my memory.

--Poor young man! said Toinette, who seemed to think only of the hero from the story of d'Argères. He was... So, sir is a musician?

--Still? said d'Argères, laughing. Well, yes, I know the music; I love him with passion. I heard your mistress sing last night, passing behind this vine. She sings beautifully. We told me that she had no reason. It scared me; I dreamed of it. I am came here not really knowing why. I am the guest and friend of the Baron de West. I am what, in your ideas, you call well-born. My name is from Argeres. I am neither a bad subject nor in debt. Are you satisfied? are you calm? and may I claim the badge of honor to see the tip of your mistress's nose?

"Here she is, sir," replied Toinette, rising with vivacity and running to meet a person whom d'Argères did not see not yet, but who had made the garden door creak weakly.

Journal de Comtois.

I find myself in a very hopeless position, which is to be bored at die in this barbaric country and not know how many more days you will have to stay there. Here is the Baron de West who had left for twenty-four hours in Lyon, and who, on his return, stops in Vienna, restrained, say his people, by disagreeable affairs. It would seem that he has great embarrassments of fortune. We don't understand anything fancy of my master, who, instead of going to Vienna to talk with his friend, as he seems to have undertaken, prefers to continue to wait here. After that, maybe it's the fear that I have that makes me makes me speak, because he does not do me the honor of telling me his wishes. But he still had a funny air when he said to me this evening:

"Comtois, you will whiten six ties for me.

Monsieur is more and more singular. He's out all day and scarcely is daybreak when he resumes his campaign. He doesn't hunt he does not make herbariums, he does not court country girls, because we already know it, and we always meet it alone. Finally, it is to me came an idea that torments me: it is that Monsieur, with his air distracted, maybe crazy. For gold or silver, I wouldn't stay service of a madman, even if I should abandon it on a path. I am not selfish, but the sight of a man for no reason causes me fear that has always prevented me from drinking.

I will write to my wife to send me news of her here; it will force well sir tell me where we are going, when it will be a question of doing follow the letters.

Fragments of a letter from d'Argères.

* * * * *

By the way, if you have any news of our poor Daniel, you will consider give it to me. I thought of him, for two days, more than I did perhaps in all my life, thanks to a rather romantic circumstance.

Do you remember his ecstatic passion for the beautiful Laure, this brunette pale, who, from her little proscenium box, was not only throwing a look at him and never suspected that she had a worshiper under his feet. He made us notice it so much and he celebrated it with a way so comical, that she had to be as beautiful as thirty hours so that he would not attract our mockery; but she was indisputable, and the very poetry of Daniel could not prevent us to look at it with the disinterested admiration that was commanded of us by fate.

Well, imagine that yesterday morning, while strolling in the countryside, I discovered this same Laura, still beautiful, but a desperate widow, and voluntarily cloistered in a kind of ruin, at the bottom of the deserts slightly rugged Vivarais.

"That, you will say, is what it is to marry a marquis!" If she had deigned to inquire about our friend Daniel and make him happy, she would not be a widow. Only people die of love and hunger to escape all dangers and become centenarians.

I can tell you, however, without joking, that she gave me a very strong impression, this poor desolate one, for that is how one calls him in the country. I don't believe there's room for desire of possession, in the minds of those who see it, without being brutes, for one might as well be engaged to death (morally speaking); but he is a fine character to study. It moves you, it moves you like a dreamy Desdemona, like a neglected Ariadne; and I don't see why, when we allow ourselves to shudder or cry in front of fictional plays or novels, we don't would not be interested as artists in the grief of a natural person. The artist is not _what a vain people think_. He is neither jaded nor skeptical, nor mocking when he looks deep within himself. It is believed that we do not cry real tears, we others, and that all our soul is in our nerves. They only have the usurped title of the artist, those who do not feel in them a focus of sensitivity always lively and of enthusiasm always ready to blaze.

I was already aware of the story of her marriage and her widowhood, when I saw, yesterday morning, the desolate beauty in the rising sun. There is not many women one can look at at such an hour without cast off. This one wins again: the better we see it, the more we find she is good to see. And yet, it is sad. Imagine, my friend, the image of pain, despair personified, or, for better say, living despair, for there are neither tears nor sighs nor cries, nor contortions. Quietness is frightening, on the contrary. It's dreary and immeasurable like a sea of ice. She is always dressed in white; it is her way of continuing her mourning, that she not want to make it officially exaggerated. She thus claims never leave on his clothes or in his life, and manage not to afflict nobody's eyes. I know a lot of other things about her, thanks to the chatter of an old-fashioned attendant who fell in love with me, God knows why.

What my eyes alone have taught me so clearly is that she is struck without remedy. I was afraid at first that she was mad; you know my terror of madmen! and, for a few moments, I felt very uncomfortable; but his oddity seemed very understandable to me, and even very logical, as soon as I found myself in his intimacy.

Because here we are very close in forty-eight hours, and it's so singular, that I must tell you. It's like nothing that can arrive in the world to which she belongs and to which I belonged; and it requires an exceptional disposition like that of his sick soul, so that our knowledge is thus made.

The next, Toinette, is dedicated in her own way. At all costs, she would like to distract her and console her, even if it were necessary to compromise her and lose; but, when I was in the mood to take advantage of this fine zeal, a virtue which has its source in the very heart would defend itself, I believe, without danger, against all the duennas and all the serenades of Spain and Italy.

The said Toinette, when her mistress entered the garden, where I introduced myself without grave premeditation, and where, for an hour, we were talking about her, ran to meet her and seemed to want to turn back before she noticed me. But the lady is stubborn like inertia, and she was already close enough to me, when I saw her look for me saying:

--Ah! Or so? who is it?

"He's a traveler, a Parisian," replied the other.
West, a _decent_ man.

--Is he asking to see me? resumed the sorry woman, stopping.

--Oh! no of course! It's not an hour to pay visits.

--It's true. So what does he want?

--He looked at the statues and was about to retire.

"Very well, let him look at them.

"He will doubtless be afraid of being importunate."

--Nope; tell him he doesn't bother me.

She was opposite me; she gave me a polite greeting where there had natural grace, and nothing more. Then she passed and disappeared behind the trees.

La Muiron said to me:

--You are happy, I hope; you have seen it. Now you are going save you.

Why should I have run away, since I was allowed to stay? It was Toinette who came out of the garden or pretended to come out, curious probably from seeing how I looked at the beautiful Laure. During moments, I thought I felt myself under his Argus eye, winking at through some thicket. But I soon forgot it to think only of indeed look at his mistress.

As for this one, after slowly going around a square of greenery grilled by the sun, she returned to sit on a bench against a wall laden with vines, and so close to me, so well placed in profile, that a fool might have thought that she was posing there to be admired.

But, unfortunately for my self-esteem, the truth is that she had already completely forgotten about me. So I could let myself go to a contemplation which would have made the bliss or rather the catalepsy of our friend Daniel.

I wasn't quite calm though. To find her if absorbed, the idea of madness came back to me, and I was always afraid of see indulging in some distressing eccentricity. It did not happen. She remained motionless for nearly a quarter of an hour like a statue. The sun rose, and, getting warm already, fell on his bare head, without let her take heed of him more than of me. She still has those beautiful bushy, bouffant brown hair that looks like a natural crown at its head Muse; but it is not the ancient Muse who watches and order: it is the Muse of the Renaissance who dreams and contemplates.

She suffered a great deal, no doubt, and the Muiron told me that she had

been dangerously ill for over a year; but the strength and the health returned. The most complete detachment from life has spread over her beauty, the expression of which we once noticed gently serious, an even sweeter seriousness. It is even very strange; she does not look sad, she looks attentive and collected, as she had it while listening to Beethoven's symphonies. But it seems that she listen to even more beautiful music, and may it be gathered in deeper satisfaction. She even got a little overweight which lacked the contours of her face and bust. Her complexion is always pale, with that slightly amber shade that excludes the painful idea of an organization that is too lymphatic. There's still blood and life under this beautiful marble. What seems dead, really dead, is the will.

Yet the facial expression betrays neither weakness nor the reduction. This soul is not exhausted; she gets attached to I don't know what certainty which is certainly not of this world.

I also noticed that, contrary to my expectation, there was no disorder in her hair, nor cowardice in her dress. Her dress and bathrobe muslin were floaty and not trailing. Its admirable forms give to his loose garments the chaste elegance of antique draperies.

I had never seen his feet or noticed his hands. Those are models, perfections. In short, this woman is quite an ideal. But our crazy Daniel was right to tell us, in his jargon, that it was a poem to delight the soul, and not a being to move the sense.

The old maid returned with tea on a tray. She approached a small green table and chatted with his mistress for a moment, while I was about to leave; but I was imprisoned in a kind of impasse. I had to cross the very place where Madame de Monteluz lunched, or cut through the bushes, which might have seemed to him extraordinary. I made up my mind to go and greet her as I retired; but she stopped me on the way with a politeness that threw me into the most great astonishment.

As she returned my greeting with an air that showed neither surprise no discontent, I ventured to ask her forgiveness for my importunity. I thought I was dreaming when she answered me without embarrassment or circumlocution:

--It is I, sir, who beg your pardon for not having be carefull; but here I have lost the habit of behaving in housewife. This house is so ugly and so poor that I do not dream of doing the honors. I wouldn't dare you either invite me to share my meager lunch; but we take care of you prepare a better one.

I needed to remember the hospitable customs of the country so as not to not find this sudden invitation out of place. I looked at the wife of room, who quickly nodded to me to accept.

"Yes, yes, sir," she cried, pushing me a garden chair. vis-à-vis his mistress, I run to see to it, and I will return warn you.

And she left, light as an old linnet.

I was embarrassed like a schoolboy. We may have use, we is not comfortable in an incomprehensible situation.

--Sir, said the sorry beauty to me, looking at me with a visible effort of attention, it's very impolite to admit to you that I don't don't remember you at all. It's not my fault; I made a great illness, I forgot many things; but the woman who heals, and who is a friend to me much more than a servant, assures me that I saw you, _formerly_, at my aunt's, at my mother's...

Here the conversation fell, for I stammered I don't know what

unintelligible, and Madame de Monteluz was already thinking of something else. She did not hear my denials, which were perhaps not very energetic. I confess that the lure of adventure won me over and that by scandalizing me a little, the unofficial lie of the extravagant Toinette didn't bother me much.

I looked at this woman who looked like a sleepwalker and who, after the effort of such a gracious reception, was already a hundred leagues from me and repeated: *„Chez ma mère“*, as if she were talking to herself.

It took me, to guess how this connection of ideas, my aunt, my mother_, plunged her back into her pain, reminding me that she had married the his aunt's son. I saw that she was not alone with me, but with the specter of his dear Octave, seated between us two, and this discovery suddenly put me at ease by destroying any germ of fatuity in myself.

After a fairly long pause, she looked at me in astonishment, like a person waking up, and asked me if I was staying away.

"My God, no, madame," I answered; I'm set for a few days only in Mauzères.

"Yes, it's two or three leagues from here, isn't it?" she says speaking out of kindness and without knowing what, because she cannot ignoring that Mauzères is ten minutes away from his house.

"It's much closer than that," I replied, smiling.

She made an imperceptible movement as if to shake her head. sore, in order to get rid of the fixed idea, and, resuming the word with a certain volubility, as if she were afraid of forgetting, before having said it, what she meant:

"It is true," she said; the Baron de West is my near neighbour, at this it seems. I don't see it, and it's only out of savagery, out of inertia. I know his character is as honorable as his talent. He is loved and highly esteemed in the country. He came to give me back visit; I was ill, I could not receive it; but he has too much of mind not to know that a person like me is all excused in advance, and that if I do not beg him to return, the deprivation is all for me and not for him.

"I am sure, madam, that Mr. de West thinks quite the contrary.

She didn't answer. I saw that it was almost impossible for him to carry on a conversation, not that she felt reluctant to do so, but because she had absolutely lost the habit of exchanging ideas. I got up, very unwilling therefore to take advantage of the good intentions by Toinette, who made me play an indiscreet and importunate character. But, at that moment, the crazy old woman came and shouted at me with an air triumphant:

--Monsieur is served! If he wants to follow me... I refused. Madam of Monteluz insisted.

--Ah! sir, she said to me, do not deprive me of the opportunity to repair my wrongs to Mr. de West in treating his guest as mine; you me would make believe that he bears a grudge against me and that he forbade you to forgive in his name.

I mechanically followed La Toinette. It is quite certain that I was dying of hunger and weariness. She led me to a very dilapidated pavilion where there were two straw chairs, a table laden with food enough rustic chairs and an old loveseat covered in torn calico. By compensation, the local wine is good and the view magnificent.

La Muiron sat down opposite me, a person accustomed to eating with masters, and did me the honors, while resuming her chatter. I learned from her that after the death of dear Octave, *„madame“* had always resided near his mother-in-law around Vaucluse, but that these two

women, while esteeming each other highly, could not console each other the other. The mother is a strong and rigid soul in whom the pain has changed into devotion. It is sustained by prayer, by practices meticulous; it is entirely on the idea of duty and salvation. It seems that it agrees in her with the taste of the world, which she calls respect for propriety and the need for good example. As much as I could judging by the appreciations of the Muiron, who is a bit crazy, but not very stupid, Madame de Monteluz, the mother, is a rather cold spirit and absolute, which, unwittingly, offends the extreme sensitivity of sorry, and who is slowly getting impatient not to find her more resigned in the depths of the soul. From there a little persecution, sometimes to about religion, sometimes about etiquette. The poor young woman found herself uncomfortable under this domination, which did not bother not just his actions, but who wanted to expand on his feelings most intimate. She took her wound away in loneliness, pretexting a visit to I don't know what relatives in Upper Languedoc, and interests to watch. She left as if to travel and she randomly walked. She found on her way this pretty little land and this ugly little house, which a great-uncle gave him left as a legacy and that she did not know. This loneliness has enjoyed. The idea of not knowing anyone around and being able to to forget there, was for her like a necessary relief, after a constraint beyond his strength. She's been there for three months and shudders at the idea of returning to the Vaucluse grandparents. This unfortunate savors the horror of her isolation and the deprivations of a cenobite's life, like a schoolboy on vacation savoring the pleasure and freedom. It is the unofficial Muiron who, for these three months, took it upon herself to lie by writing to the mother-in-law that her daughter-in-law had to take care of her Temple property, that she took care of it, that it was doing good, adding each week that she had more to one week. But all these weeks are coming to an end, not so much because the mother-in-law is worried there, than because the Muiron bored here.

However, for two days, things have changed as I I will tell you tomorrow, because I realize that I am writing you a volume, that it is late, and that you can rest, as well as me, on this first chapter.

IV

Continuation of the letter from d'Argères.

August...

Seeing all these pages on my table that I don't have time to reread, I wonder how I was so verbose on a subject that does not no doubt interests you in no way and which could not interest me more another day or two. I want to throw it all in the basket and pick up my letter where I left it before embarking on the story of this adventure, if adventure there is. And, as, by the way, there is does not seem to, I can continue without indiscretion towards my beautiful sorry and without fear of making you jealous of my happiness. If I bored, forgive me for thinking that I am alone in a big silent house; that the evening is long, and that you are the only one victim that I have to sacrifice to my idleness. Besides, my story goes increase by one more day, which gives more consistency to the memory that I want to keep of this unique encounter, and the way to preserve it is to write it down, even if I have finished it, keep it to myself.

I _left myself_, in my previous chapter, at table with Miss Muiron. Although his confidences had for me something interest, I found myself imperceptibly on the loveseat more disposed to sleep than to listen to it. She had charitably invited me to smoke my

cigar, assuring that his mistress would not notice. My eyes closed, and I fell asleep to the slight sound of plates and cups which she took with care.

When I awoke it was at least noon. The heat was overwhelming; the cousins invaded my pavilion, and, except their hum and the distant noises of field work, a deep silence reigned around me. I left, a little ashamed of my sum; but I found myself completely alone in the garden. I penetrated in the yard, realizing that Madame de Monteluz had forgotten me long enough so that it would not be necessary to go and ask her forgiveness for my rude sitting at her house, and wanting at least to take leave of the duenna. The courtyard was deserted, the house silent. I pushed up to the backyard. It was occupied only by a flock of sparrows which fled at my approach. Finally I found a fat maid in the back of a stable. She was milking a skinny cow, and told me, without disturbing himself, that madame must be in the little wood, at the end of the meadow, because it was his time to walk there; that Mademoiselle Muiron must have been at the miller's, by the river, because it was his time to go and buy poultry. As to gardener, it was not his day.

"But if monsieur wants something," she added with a candid air, I will be at his orders when I have beaten my butter.

I charged her with my compliments for Mademoiselle Muiron, and I was coming back to the house, in order to take the path that leads to Mauzères, when, through an open window on the ground floor, my eyes fell on a pretty Pleyel piano which shone like a pearl in the midst of the poorest and dullest furnishing of which ever woman elegant contented herself. The cowgirl, who had followed me, carrying her vase of cream towards the kitchen, saw my gaze fixed with a certain lust on the instrument, and said to me:

--Ah! you look at the pretty music to madame! We had never seen anything so beautiful here, and madam music, it's a pleasure to hear it! It was Mademoiselle Muiron who bought this at the sale of the Château de Lestocq, not far from here. She saw it estimate as she passed by strolling; she said, "That might please the lady." She put on it, and she got it. Lady! she does whatever she wants, that one! If you want to music, don't be shy, come on, that's what it's for. Come in, come in! Mademoiselle Muiron will not be angry, since she made you have lunch with her.

Thereupon she pushed open the door of the drawing-room, which was not even not latched, and went off to make his butter.

I told you, the other day, that I had an extreme pleasure forget everything, even art, this tyrant jealous of our destinies, this eater of existences, this ball and chain which for a long time riveted me to a thousand kinds of slavery; but one shuns art like a beloved mistress. There are two months that I have encountered only the cauldrons of the inns of Switzerland, two months since I drew a sound from my throat, and, at the sight of this pretty instrument, I had an extravagant urge to make sure that I was not damaged by inaction. I entered resolutely, I opened the piano, and, quite naturally, the first thing that came to me on the lips was the *Nessun maggior dolore*, which, the night before, I had heard singing from afar by the desolate, and who needs her accompaniment to be complete. I sang it at first in a low voice, by instinct of discretion; but I repeated it above, and, the third times, I forgot that I was not at home and I gave all my voice, satisfied to hear myself in a bare and sonorous room, and to recognize that the rest of my journey had done me great good.

This experience done, I forgot my little individuality to savor enjoyment that this short and complete masterpiece should provide, even after a thousand repetitions and a thousand auditions, to an artist who is still young. I do not don't know if the old practitioners get bored on their emotion, or if it becomes so personal to them, that they operate with an equal

pleasure a drug or a pearl, provided they exploit it well. You you often told me, my friend, that, in front of a Rubens, you did not remember more than you had been a painter, and that you contemplated without being able analyze. Yes, yes, you are right. We are happy not to remember if we are someone or something, and I believe that we only become really something or someone only after having melted and like consumed in adoration for the masters.

I don't know how I sang this verse for the fourth time. I had to sing it very well, because it was no longer me I was listening to, but the melancholy gondolier of the lagoons under the balcony of the pale Desdemona. I saw a stormy sky, phosphorescent waters, mysterious colonnades, and, under the tendin of purple, a shadow white leaning on a harp that the breeze touched elusive harmonies.

When I had finished, I got up, satisfied with my vision, my emotion, and wanting to be able to take them away virgin of any other thought; but in turning around, I saw, at the back of the apartment, Madame de Monteluz, seated, her head in her hands, and the kneeling Muiron in front of her. There was a moment of amazement on my part, of stillness of theirs. Then Madame de Monteluz, her face covered with her handkerchief, and pushing gently Toinette, who wanted to follow her, went out hastily.

"My God, did I do him a lot of harm, perhaps?" I say to the next. It seems to me that she is crying! And yet she likes this air, she sings it!

"She sings it well," replied Toinette, "but not so well as you, and she doesn't make herself cry. You just snatched her first tears she has shed since her illness, and it is good or bad that you have done to him, I don't know yet; but I believe it will be good. She is a great musician, but she does not no longer cared about anything, and it is out of complacency for me that she sings and plays sometimes, since I brought this piano here. I figure that she needs a few moral jolts, even if she suffer, and that the worst thing for her is the species of indifference where it fell.

I found that the Muiron did not reason badly for the moment.

"But is it because of that, I asked him, that you have held here with a lie?

"Well, yes," she replied, "it is because of that. I saw you were an artist musician: whether by status or by taste, what is does it do? And then you are amiable, you are charming, and, if Madame could enjoy your company, even for an hour or two, that would perhaps give him a taste for living like everyone else. Is it therefore such a great sacrifice that I ask you, to interest you all a morning to the most beautiful, to the most unfortunate and to the best woman there is on earth?

I was touched by the sincerity with which this girl spoke, and I offered to sing again, should Madame de Monteluz come back to hunt. La Muiron almost kissed me and said:

--Hold! if you knew something beautiful that Madame did not know? It is very difficult, but if only it met! all she knows reminds him of the past. A music that would remind him of nothing and who would be good, because she knows all about it, would perhaps only do her good.

I sang my last unpublished composition; a cheerful and rustic idea that came to me while crossing the Oberland, and of which I am so happy that one can be of an idea that has taken shape. For me, ideas _latents_, if I may say so, have a charm that the realization destroy.

Madame de Monteluz, who had escaped into the garden to weep,

heard me. Toinette, who was worried about her, and who went to find her, came back to tell me that she was asking me, as a charity, to start over.

When I had finished, the desolate woman no longer giving any sign of life, I took definitive leave from Toinette; but I had not won the reverse of the hillside, which Toinette caught up with me.

"I am running after you to thank you on his behalf," she said to me. She cried so much that she hardly had the strength to say a word, and she has a pain so quiet, she wouldn't want you to see her like this. She says it would be very wrong to reward you for what you did for her because she thinks the tears are unpleasant to see.

"Does she want me to come back another day?"

"She didn't say that; but she said, "Ah! my God, it's already finished! when will I find...?" She stopped. Then she resumed: "Tell him... No, nothing, nothing, thank him; tell him it's good to his part, for having sung for me! that I am very grateful." I tell you, sir, and you go away?

"I will come back, Toinette!"

--When?

--When should I come back?

--Lady! the earliest would be best.

--Well, tonight. I will not introduce myself. She won't see me. I thus spare him the fatigue of looking after me. I will sing in the countryside, within reach of being heard. But don't warn him. I believe that the unexpected will be for much in its enjoyment.

--Ah! sir," cried Toinette, "I would like to be young and pretty make you happy by kissing you!

She says this, blushing under her lipstick, as if she believed herself still as appetizing as modest, and fled as if I had been in the mood to pursue it.

This scatterbrained old woman is spoiling my Desdemona a little. But, after all, it's not his fault; I don't have to kiss the Muiron, and basically this confidante of tragedy has a very good heart.

I kept my word: I returned to the Temple at nightfall, no without being spied on, I believe, by M. Comtois, my valet de chambre, who is very curious and worried about my morals. I heard Madame de Monteluz, who had remembered almost all of my ballad, and who was looking for the end with his fingers on the piano. Placed under his window, along the rock, I repeated it several times. There was silence for a long time; but suddenly I saw a ghost near me: it was her. she held out both hands saying to me:

--Thanks thanks! you are good, you are really good!

Her voice was moved; but the darkness prevented me from seeing if she had cried a lot and if she was still crying. I did not distinguish of her than her elegant figure under her white veils and the pale oval of his head bent towards me with languid good-nature.

"I don't want you to tire yourself any more," she said to me in a tone almost friendly. Come and rest while playing the piano a little.

I then heard the Muiron, whose less slender shadow took shape behind his, say to him in a low voice:

--Your house? at this hour? as if she were eager to see a given to his policy.

--Well, why not? replied Madame de Monteluz.

"It's because of what one might say," resumed Toinette, who spoke even lower and of which I guessed rather than heard observation.

To which Madame de Monteluz replied aloud:

--I ask you a little what it can do to me!

At the same time, she slipped her arm through mine and took a few steps next to me on the way up to the house.

"Take care, madam! exclaimed Toinette. Sir, support madam.

In fact, the path was very dangerous; I took it during the twilight to reach an isolated rock whose bold situation had tent; but night had fallen, and to regain the terraces of the garden, you had to skirt a small rather threatening abyss.

--Do not be afraid for me, and look at your feet, says the sorry taking the lead with confidence. Muiron, take care yourself.

"You will bring me down if you are imprudent!" shouted to him again the Muiron, clinging to me with fear. See, sir, if this is not unreasonable! it freezes the blood! Don't pass that way, lady; let's go around!

Madame de Monteluz did not seem to hear him. She takes the step dangerous without seeming to think about it, and, quite astonished afterwards by the de la Muiron, she said to him:

"But what are you worried about? You know very well that I no longer have the fear of heights.

My friend, there was a lot in those few words, and even more maybe in that _What can it do to me?_ that she said previously. For a delicate woman, to _no longer_ feel dizzy in skirting the precipices means no longer worrying about life. For a pure woman, not caring about opinion is to abdicate what the women place above their virtue. There is an abyss of disgust there everything, deeper than those to which life or reputation.

I wondered, walking in the garden, silent at his side, if I must have been hurt by the deep disdain for my person that this confidence and this friendliness covered with such a transparent veil. I have been a little spoiled, you know that. I almost became fat or vain at beginning of my career; you warned me, you saved me... Yet the _old man_, or rather the young man apparently reappears still sometimes. I was stung, I was stupid.

When we got back to the room the previous owner was decorating no doubt from the usurped title of salon, the face of Madame de Monteluz knocked as if seeing her for the first time. It was no longer the same woman who had surprised and frightened me in the morning. She had cry; her beautiful limpid eyes had suffered a little, but all her countenance was softened and embellished. A veil of melancholy had spread over this sculptural tranquillity. It was no longer the sea shining and petrified under the ice, to which I had it compared, it was a blue lake gently moved under the plaintive breaths of autumn.

I made him some more music; she served me tea herself with charming cares which no longer seemed to cost him anything but light efforts of presence of mind. She talked about music and painting with me, and the names of several people known to her and me in the art or in the world came naturally into our interview and form a common bond in our memories. She tells me that I was a great artist, questioned me about my studies; but, although Muiron, who did not leave us, took the opportunity to try to question me

indirectly on my position and my relations, Madame de Monteluz held in respect by an exquisite discretion on all that came out so be little in the field of art. She seemed to accept me with confidence.

My vanity rose to its feet. I thought for a moment that I had started the work of his healing; but, looking at it better, I saw that the grace of this reception was only a greater effort of abnegation. The bit of curiosity she showed me, in the midst of an artist's admiration more than satisfactory for my self-esteem, was the greatest possible proof of oblivion, where, as a man, I am destined to be buried by it.

In short, she is a ravishing woman, an adorable nature. You there know, if you remember his face correctly, which is the exact mold of his spirit and his character. It's a serious spirit, it's a angelic character. We see that this mouth has never been able to say a slander, wickedness, any harshness. We feel that this soul never admitted the thought of evil. It is a music that his voice, and all the sweetness, all the equality of his soul, are in his least inflection, in its most insignificant word. Yet she has the clean pronunciation and the somewhat vibrant _r_ of southern women. But a distinction that is both innate and acquired erases what this habit is vulgar and affected among the Languedociennes, not to mention leave only what is harmonious and secretly energetic. I I didn't dare ask her to sing; it was Muiron who took charge of it, and I supported the proposal.

--Singing after you, she said to me, would be a great proof of humility Christian, and I wouldn't hesitate if I could; but today, Nope! I couldn't! Another day, if you will.

--Another day? I tell him standing up. I will therefore be allowed to come and distract you a little more with my songs?

--Did I say another day? she replied. It is very presumptuous! I dare not ask you.

"Well, me," I said to him, "I ask it as a favor; but before everything, I don't want to deceive a person whose sadness, whose trust I venerate. There was a misunderstanding between Mademoiselle Muiron and me, for sure. She told you that I had the honor of being known to you, since you accused yourself this morning from a lack of memory. Mademoiselle Muiron was absolutely mistaken. I never showed up in your family, never did you met in the world, I only saw you at the Conservatory, there is four years without you ever paying the slightest attention to me.

"Well," she replied with nonchalant benevolence, "it's all the same, we know each other now.

--No Madam. I believe that I have the good fortune to know you, because it just see you...; but...

"Well, it's the same for you," she said, interrupting me. just hear you; you have a just mind and a true heart. I I don't need to know more to listen to you sympathetically.

--So, you don't order me, you perhaps forbid me to tell you who I am? It is the height of indifference.

The slightly bitter tone that, in spite of myself, I put in these words, seemed the hit. She looked at me with astonishment and even in the eyes, with an absence of timidity which was the supreme expression of a total lack of coquetry; then she held out her hand to me with a big honesty by saying to myself:

--No, it's not indifference, it's trust, you you said it. If your face is not that of a gallant man, I am become blind; if your intelligence is not superior, I am become inept. On your side, you didn't look at me for a second without seeing that I am a hundred years old; you didn't come back tonight to sing

expressly for me, without bringing me the alms of a deep pity. This don't humiliate me, you see! I accept it, on the contrary, with a real recognition. Don't tell me who you are, and come back tomorrow.

Muiron was very disappointed with the first part of this conclusion. She followed me again on the pretext of driving me home, and ends up telling me naively:

"Well, let's see, sir, since you wanted to give Madame clarifications on your position, give them to me; it will be the same thing!

"No, my amiable Toinette," I replied, laughing; my position, as you say, becomes here, thanks to you, a secret that I would make a point of revealing to your mistress, but that I make myself a pleasure to keep you quiet.

--Monsieur is having fun! she said, good luck! Yet he is wrong of me treat so badly. It puts me in a very delicate position.

--Where you have resolutely thrown yourself.

--Complain, ungrateful! you were itching to see madam, and here you are welcomed by her as a friend.

"You are wandering, my dear. I didn't yearn to see her and I'm not, and I shall never have the happiness of being his friend.

"So... are you leaving us?" won't you come back? she said with dread.

"I will come back tomorrow and leave the day after tomorrow. Good evening, Miss Toinette.

"Here, you are in love," she said between her teeth, turning my back. Well, since you don't trust me, it will be so bad for you!

I left her on this beautiful conclusion, and I laughed at her inside, because I swear...

* * * * *

I don't know why d'Argères didn't swear. He did not complete his letter, he did not send it to his friend, he did not leave. Eight days afterwards, he sent her a more concise one, which is as follows:

V

Letter from d'Argères to Descombes.

No, I haven't forgotten you. I've been writing you volumes in the last few days. I put them aside to show you the thickness, like coins supporting evidence for this assertion. But I won't make you read them. At beginning of a love which one does not know in oneself, one is very-talkative. When you feel truly taken, you become mute. With me, it's not consternation, it is rather recollection. There you are in fact. I am under the influence of a passion. If it was shared, I wouldn't tell you not even about me. It is not: therefore, I confess that I do not am not a happy lover, but I am nevertheless happy to feel that I love.

I stop on these two words, because I see from your letter, dear friend, that your spirits have really taken a flight that is not mine. I owe you sound ridiculous. Does not matter to me; but I don't want to seem like you importunate by my indifference to your business. you complain about not being

more artistic. I don't believe it. Can we have tasted the supremes enjoyments of life and despise them for vulgar enjoyments? No. The speculation fever that possesses you at the moment is none other thing itself than the ardor of an artist. I was surprised the day when, hanging your palette on the poor walls of your studio, you said to me:

--Art is the thirst for everything. It takes wealth to satisfy the needs that the imagination creates for us!

I answered you, I remember:

--Be careful! the thirst quenched, there is perhaps no longer an artist.

--Well, you said, the artist dies and with him the suffering!

I fought you; but then I appreciated your situation and your faculties. Son of a rich and skilful speculator, there were in you innate tendencies, an undeveloped but certain capacity for speculation. Art had seduced you, it called you to its side. You had taken, from childhood, in the rich gallery of your father, the understanding and enthusiasm for painting. Maybe also my example had you affecting. Blamed, pushed away from your family, reduced to suffering privations that you had not known, you had more talent than happiness and you got discouraged, perhaps at the moment of victory!

Reconciled with your father on the condition that you would give up this unproductive career to follow him in his, you threw yourself, first with disgust, and then soon with ardor, in the games of fortune. You experienced new emotions there, more lively, more absorbent than others. And now you admit that pleasures that fortune buys are nothing and are exhausted in an instant. You say that enjoyment is precisely in the work, the agitation, the means of transportation required and procured by the chances of gain and loss. I understand you, player that you are! Impressionable and eager for excitement, artist in a word, you do, speculation, a kind of passion that you could call art for art's sake.

Shall I tell you that I suffer from seeing you launched into this burning arena? I would have had grace, when it is through you that I myself... But this it's not about me. I only think of the peril of your situation. I don't mind the chances of disaster: you would bear them valiantly as soon as the disasters were an accomplished fact, since your honor will never be at stake. But I am thinking, dear friend, of the rapidity of these feverish existences, to the enormous expenditure of strength they absorb, to the premature etiolation of the faculties that have been given for a calmer happiness and better managed emotions. I think of those we have seen shine and fade, jaded, sick or sad, weary or extinct, in the midst of their pursuit, and until they have achieved their apparent goal, wealth! Back to my sad saying: the quenched thirst, the artist, the man, perhaps, are wiped out!

I still do not grant you that it is an evil consummate. I am far from to think so, and, since you utter this cry of terror: "I don't already feel more artistic!" is that you feel that there is still time to stop. Allow me to believe that I will decide you, and that I will have, when I return in Paris, some influence on you: not to bring you back, to the great despair of yours, in the attic where we may have too much suffered, but to return you to rest, to intellectual pleasures, to truth, to love, that you begin to deny! Love! stop in front this blasphemy! You speak to a lover who pursues his ideal in the eyes of a woman, as you chase yours on the wheel of fortune. This goddess is blind like Cupid, and, in short, we walk both in darkness; but I believe my goal more real than the yours, and the paths that lead me there are lined with the flowers of the poetry.

Don't laugh, my dear Adolphe: I almost want to cry when I see our dreams of the past mocked and our miseries full of hope and courage.

As for the main object of your letter, I say no; and a thousand times thank you my friend. I'm not holding onto it; I think that's enough. For nothing in the world I would not like to embark on these unknown seas. I must, I want, with you, to lead by example.

Journal de Comtois.

Monsieur is, I fear, a sad sire. I don't know this yet he is, but he hides it so well that it must be very annoying. As soon as I find out, I will leave him. The whole thing is that he brings me back in Paris; otherwise, the trip would be at my expense.

I met a neighbor who bores me a little. It is the housekeeper of a mad lady who lives near here. She is called Antoinette Muiron, and has a lot of conversation and wit. This crazy lady is rich and of great family, which is why monsieur would like to take advantage of the fact that she has no brains to marry her.

Mademoiselle Muiron does not say the thing as it is, but she very worried about knowing who the gentleman is, and I see to his torment that things go quickly. After all, I can't do anything to him learn from Monsieur, since I know him neither from Eve nor from Adam; but the trouble he takes to marry a madwoman proves enough that he has neither penny or mesh, and that he does not respect himself infinitely.

Mademoiselle Muiron is very amiable, but very distrustful, and when I tell him that his mistress is insane, she pretends to be the one who makes fun of me; but they don't catch me the way they want, and I know very well that this lady never goes out, that she receives no one except my master, that she sings at night, and that she is always dressed in white. Monsieur flatters his mania, which is music, and, from song to songs, he will put her in the situation of being forced to marry him. Here is his plan, which is clearly visible, despite hiding it, even with me.

Narration.

The day after the day that d'Argères had related to his friend, story who remained in her papers, Laure de Monteluz, shaken for a moment by the tears caused by truly admirable singing, fell back into her inertia, and d'Argères found her like a Galathée already tired of living. Let's say a few words about this young a man whom Comtois and Toinette found so cruelly mysterious.

He had had what is called a stormy youth. handsome, smart, richly endowed, confident, prodigal, impressionable, he had eaten his heritage. Forced to work to live, it had not been more unfortunate. Despite some pain and some transient sleepers, everything had smiled on him in life: art, success, earnings, women above all. In this his existence resembled that of all artists elite, of all men favored by nature, welcomed and adopted by the world.

What made him remarkable in the times in which we live is that after having used and abused a life of triumphs and pleasures, he was still, at thirty, as young in body and mind, as impressionable, as naive of heart, as judgmental as the first day. It was such a fine organization that no excess had been able to wither her physically, no disappointment deflower her morally. The disastrous intoxications which devour so many vulgar existences, and even many chosen existences, had exhausted nothing, tarnished nothing in hers. This is a phenomenon which the affectation of skepticism renders very difficult to ascertain nowadays, but whose existence is not pure novel fiction. He is still one of those privileged natures whose moral virginity is inviolable and who do not know it themselves.

D'Argères had often loved, and loved very much; but, for want of meet his like, he had never been bound by love. He had suffered, he had caused suffering. Born to be faithful, he had

been fickle. Sincere, he had deceived by deceiving himself on the duration and extent of his affections. Easy loves did not have it not prevented from being the eternal lover of the difficult. The ideal fulfilled its soul without saddening it. The positive had access in his life without the devour. Entirely devoted to what fascinated him, he looked little behind him, in front of him even less. For the past, he had generosity; for the future, the courage of the strong.

This man, forgetful without ingratitude, enterprising without presumptuousness, knew no enemies, because he neither envied nor hated nobody. He loved art with his imagination and with his entrails. He therefore did not know what jealousy and the thousand odious pettiness which desolate the profession of the artist.

He loved the world and solitude, complete inaction and work devouring, noise and silence, enjoyment and dreams. The rapid succession of his tastes and changing habits could to appear capricious and inconsequent: it was, on the contrary, the effect of a natural logic which pushed it to be completed by various enjoyments.

He also loved traveling. He had traveled through Europe, and, while running fast, while living a lot for his account, his big eye blue, who saw well, had embraced, in a just appreciation, the men and things. This experience had made him neither bitter nor pessimistic in any way. Beautiful souls have a sovereign goodness that makes them an easy law of indulgence, a solid faith of progress.

"One would have to be stupid not to see the evil," he said; it's necessary be ruthless to believe it eternal.

D'Argères therefore had great religious instincts. It is hardly of true artist without sincere and profound spiritualism. The faith of the artist is even more solid than that of the philosopher. She is not debatable for him, it is his instinct, his breath, his very life.

D'Argères was both a great mind and a good child. It was man, and it is to admit that the insensitivity of this beautiful Laure, that he admired him too much not to love him already a little, made him feel, in the first moments, a certain interior mortification; but his Common sense easily took over and he laughed at himself.

"After all," he said to himself, "it was I who wanted to see her, and having view, it was I who wanted to perform in front of her. Her tears and her trust are a very honest payment for my little merit. What to me does she owe more?

And then, seeing her so heartbroken and as if incurable, he tender compassion for her. He blamed himself generously for having fun to the trifles of self-love, in the face of such absolute and so unobtrusive. Can one be irritated by the silence of the tombs?

The kind of illness or rather moral stiffness that weighed on this woman brought between her and d'Argères a rather unusual way of being, and the kind of abyss dug between them by his pain was precisely the because of a kind of strange and sudden intimacy. He is very sure that at that time, without ever having had any symptoms of alienation, the Octave's widow did not, however, enjoy complete lucidity. For having contained the manifestations of violent despair too much, she had into a habit of amazement that it was not always up to her to to go out. Immersed or delighted in inner contemplations, sometimes painful, sometimes sweet, she had become so foreign to the world exterior, that she did not always have the notion of time which was flowing and beings around him. She spent a few days in a redoubled fatigue during which d'Argères remained whole hours observing it and following it, sometimes closely, sometimes distance, without her being fully aware of his presence. She the greeted several times, as if each time he had just arrived, forgetting that she had already greeted him. She left him in the middle of a exchange of courteous words and returned, after having dreamed alone at the end of an alley, resume the conversation where she left off, without

realize that she had interrupted him.

At other times, she came to finish a reflection or a daydream she had begun within herself. Finally, there was in his brain of the shortcomings which allowed this young man, already in love, to see more often and for longer than propriety seemed allow, and which would have compromised it in a less deserted country, in a home less isolated, and under the eyes of a less devoted person than Toinette.

As long as d'Argères believed in the impossibility of falling in love with a ghost, he gave way to the kind of curious attraction he felt to observe it.

The piano also had something to do with the instinct that drove him towards the Temple, and which kept him there part of the day. He had his soul full of musical thoughts which began to torment him again and the final sanction of which he asked at his own hearing. The sorry listened to him from afar, wanting to give him complete freedom and not hamper the hesitations of his fancy by indiscreet waiting. The delicate reserve that she brought to it sometimes led the artist to believe that her musical enjoyment was exhausted, and that she became insensitive to this distraction like all the others. He asked Toinette if he didn't become more boring than enjoyable. She replied that he should fear nothing: either Madame de Monteluz listened to him with pleasure, or she didn't hear him at all, because she had the ability to completely abstract.

Laure had got into the habit of spending most of the day in the air. The house offering him no resources for well-being and sensibly saddening him, she sought the sun, the sight of the trees, and walked slowly, but relentlessly, never leaving the enclosure which, both garden and grove and meadow, presented, on the back of the hill, quite a wide course. However, this stubbornness ambulatory, this absolute inaction, with an absorbed countenance, were frightening symptoms that Toinette dared not confide to person, and who, increasing with the apparent health of her mistress, made him lose his head too, and throw himself in the hope of a adventure of a novel, as one clings to an anchor of salvation.

D'Argères also observed these symptoms with secret terror. Her repugnance for madmen made him believe that the beautiful Laure could ever be in his eyes but an object of pity; but, by a well-known phenomenon of vivid imaginations, this pity and fear fascinated him and captured his contemplation, his reverie, his continual thought.

He thought he was forgetting it while making music. The house being deserted and the invisible hostess, he sat down in front of the piano, where his ideas the most cheerful took, in spite of him, a tint of sombre sadness. He was terrified, and wanted to flee the contagion which seemed to have attached to this dreary abode, and even to this instrument which suddenly seemed wet with tears or burning with fever. But, everything Suddenly, too, the desolate woman passed within sight of him, and he suffered the magnetic influence of its slow and sustained gait. This beauty, ecstatic in a dream of infinity, seized him as if to win in an unknown world, through dead-end thoughts and riddles without a word. It was a sphinx which, without looking at it, without seeing it, embraced her irresistibly in the endless spirals of her walk fantastic.

Oppressed by terrible anguish, the artist rushed outside and crossed the footsteps of the desolate as if to break the spell. She would then wake up and come to him first without recognizing him; then his astonished gaze softened, a faint smile wandered over his features; she said a few words to him without continuation, and, after a few gropings of her will to return to the real world, she spoke with penetrating sweetness. Little by little, she took back the graces of the woman, graces all the more persuasive that they were involuntary. Sometimes she apologized for her lack of consideration, treating naïvely from Argères like a religiously moved artist treats a great

master; sometimes apologizing for his indiscretion and saying with a childlike simplicity:

--Stay, I'm going! I will listen no more, I will stay far away!

It seemed then that she had forgotten that she was at home, and that she imagined that d'Argères was the master of the house and the owner some piano.

This unusual and bizarre state of affairs lasted several days, during which of Argères, attracted and retained like iron by the magnet, returned to Mauzères only constrained and forced by the hour and the feeling of conveniences. Those few days, who could have in mind the sorry the duration of a moment like that of a siesta, is enough to create in the latter a habit, a need to hear from Argères and to see him at every moment, a need she could not meet account, but that she really felt, as we will see.

Towards the end of the week, as M. Comtois wrote in his diary: "Thank God we're leaving! gentleman told me to ask for his ties again lingerie," from Argères, feeling overcome by an inner turmoil that there was still time to fight by flight, resolved not to return to the Temple and to join, in Vienna, the baron, whose the absence threatened to be prolonged.

Consequently, he ordered the happy Comtois to pack his trunk for the next morning, and he shut himself up to write letters and put in order his papers. He thought he should address Madame de Monteluz a few words of apology to warn her that unforeseen business prevented her to go and take leave of her; but he could never find the expression respectful without coldness, and affectionate without passion. He tore his letter three times, and he grew impatient with the problem that stirred inside him when there was a knock at his door. He cried, _Enter_, and saw appear Antoinette Muiron.

--What the devil are you doing here? he said to her with the kind of annoyance that one experiences at the thought of being fatally defeated by a weak opponent. Why do you leave your mistress, who is alone, or worse than alone, with your milkmaid maritorne?

"Monsieur," replied Toinette, without being troubled by such a sullen reception, I am not worried about Madame at one moment more than at the next. She's not mad, as your valet pleases say: she never had the idea of suicide...

"And what do I care what my valet thinks?" why do you know my valet? why are you coming here to question?

--I came to ask him about your departure, because I saw sometimes in your eyes that you didn't want to come back.

--Well, after?

"Why leave tomorrow, sir, since you still had a week to give us?

"And why stay, I ask you?" The sadness of Madame de Monteluz communicates to me and hurts me; I did not hide it from you; I can't distract him in any way...

--Ah! That's where you're wrong, sir! Your music made him so much good!

--My music, my music! Let her hire a singer!

"Come on," said La Muiron with a smile of triumph, "it's an annoyance. of lovers; I knew it well!

"Well, that would be one more reason to save myself!" And you who me hold back in such a ridiculous way, to say nothing more, when you

know very well that there is no danger except for me, I find you haunting, crazy, almost odious! Didn't you say it would be _too bad for me_? Well, go to hell, and I'll say too bad for you!

Despite his usual gentleness, d'Argères was irritated. The Muiron the disarmed by bursting into tears.

"Yes, I'm mad," she said, "but I'm not odious! I love my mistress, and I see her lost if she stays that way.

"Take her away from this solitude," said d'Argères, softened; take her back at their parents place.

"Yes, sir, I will; but it will be worse. She won't have more than consolation, and they will torment her to boot.

--Make her travel!

"Yes, if she consented to it; but how to govern a person who begs you to leave her alone, as a dying man would beg the executioner not to torture him?

"But what can I do to all that?" Nothing, you know it remains!

"Who knows, sir?" You made him cry; it was already a big miracle. Since that day, she's been even sadder, it's true; but she is also less dejected. She talks to you ten times a day, while she spent forty-eight hours without saying a word. She sees you, she hears you.

--Not always!

--Almost always! while she neither heard me nor saw me there half the time. Well, she's tormented today, tonight above all; she doesn't know what.

"Isn't that my departure?" She just doesn't suspect it.

--She didn't notice your way of saying goodbye to her, and yet she feels that you are leaving her. Something tells him. She believes that it does nothing to him, and it hurts him.

D'Argères felt that Toinette was right. He defended himself more more weakly, and ends up taking his hat to drive her home.

In the vestibule of Mauzères, they saw Comtois under observation, who whispered to Toinette with a horribly sardonic smile:

"Well, Monsieur is going to see your patient?"

"Yes, Monsieur Comtois," replied Toinette, with confidence; don't you know not that your master is a doctor?

Comtois, stunned by this news, returned to the antechamber and wrote in his diary:

"I had always suspected it, Monsieur is a man of few: he is a doctor."

VII

Narration.

The evening was saddened by wind and rain, and the trails soggy made walking difficult. D'Argères persuaded himself that he only accompanied Toinette out of humanity, and did not seem to go to any

of the reasons she used to delay her departure. When they were at the gate of the enclosure, a kind of tacit agreement pushed them to come together, while speaking generally about what interested each other. Toinette was careful not to make him observe that he was crossing the threshold: he could have changed his mind. From Argères was careful not to appear to notice his distraction: he should have to himself not to take a step further.

Madame de Monteluz spent the evenings seated on the terrace: but the rain had brought him inside. They found her in the living room, on a chair straw, gloomy, arms crossed, eyes fixed on the ground; but she shuddered against his habit, seeing himself surprised, and rising:

--Ah! my friends, she cried, you have not abandoned me?

She pressed d'Argères's hand with a trembling and icy hand, and kissed Toinette. Two big tears flowed slowly down her play.

--Abandoned! said Toinette distraught. What idea did you have there! Me, abandon you!

"I don't know," answered Laure, ashamed of her outpouring, "but I thought..."

She stifled another nervous flinch, and sat down broken.

"So what did you believe?" said to him from Argères, irresistibly trained to bend the knees close to her and take her hands back into hers. Come on, I was telling you, Mademoiselle Muiron, you were wrong to leave her alone. She was afraid of the night, of isolation, silence. She was cold, she was scared.

And from Argères, taking from Toinette the white woolen burnous that she was bringing, wrapped Laure in it and for a few moments left her arms around her as if to warm her. In this friendly embrace, the artist noticed or did not notice that he was putting all his soul into it. He was overcome by his own training; he no longer thought of question the sphinx. If life had quivered in this marble, it would not would not have felt it, he was so agitated himself. He was invaded by passion, but completely invaded, as are beautiful natures, who do not need to tame their drunkenness, because their love is a whole respect, a whole cult. Only those who don't love completely fear to profane their idol by any audacity. They are impure, since they fear to impart impurity.

D'Argères felt nothing like it in the depths of his thoughts. Laura remained in his arms, motionless and chaste, but she looked at him with a gentle astonishment in which there was no fear.

"She will love me," said d'Argères to himself, "if she can still love; because I love her, and therefore I deserve her. If she loves me, she'll believe in me, it will belong to me.

From that moment he was calm. Laure had perhaps not felt her embrace, but she had noticed it and hadn't pushed it away. She was his, if not by love, at least by friendship, since she had faith in him. Stranger to the alarms of a false modesty, forbidden from everything danger near a good man by true modesty of the soul, she accepted his interest and his consolations without having provoked them voluntarily. A noble feeling, whatever it was, ardent or fraternal, already united them, thanks to the sovereign revelations of the great instincts. No bitterness, no feigned reserve, could no longer find a place in their relationships.

"Go away," said d'Argères to Toinette after she had served the tea. I want to talk to him.

--How! sir, said Toinette in awe, am I in your way?

--Yes, because you would not understand me. I want to be alone with she. Do you hear! I want it.

She went out in dismay, telling herself that she had brought the wolf into the sheepfold, and falling back into one of those alternatives where his character, mixed with poetry and prose, constantly threw her: dare and tremble.

D'Argères presented the tea to Madame de Monteluz; he made her sit on the worst chair he could find; he put a pillow under her feet, and, kneeling thereon:

"Make a great effort on yourself," he told her without preamble, and with bold conviction. Listen to me and answer me.

Still surprised, but silent, she answered him with her eyes that she was getting involved.

"What did you believe this evening, finding yourself alone?"

--Did I believe something?

--Yes, you began this sentence: "I thought..." You have to finish it.

--I do not remember anymore.

--Remember! said d'Argères.

She closed her eyes as if to look within herself, then she replied:

--I thought I was completely neglected.

--By who?

--By you two. By you, it was so simple, and I couldn't help it astonish nor complain about it; but by Toinette... I didn't understand a thing... Wait! Yes, I was under the influence of a bad dream.

--Did you sleep?

--I do not believe. I dream as much when I'm awake as when I sleep; and, moreover, I do not always clearly distinguish my eve from my sleep... Ah! she added after a worried pause, don't you know i'm crazy?

--Why do you take your hands away from me? said d'Argères struck by his movement.

--Because one is not interested in madmen, I know that. some sweet and submissive as they are, we are afraid of them. If so you don't know my situation, if Toinette didn't tell you that I was some kind of idiot quiet, deprived of memory and unable to follow a reasoning, he you need to know that.

--Why?

--Because I see that you take a generous interest in me, and that I don't want to usurp more than I deserve.

--You deserve all that I am capable of, if your moral evil is involuntary. There is the question; confess.

--To confess? said Madame de Monteluz, whose face darkened; and why is that?

--So that I know if I ought to love you.

--Love me! me? she cried, rising in terror. Oh! Nope!... Never, nobody, get along!

--Do you think I'm asking you for love? said d'Argères.

Why this fear?

"It's the fright of an imbecile child, if you will," she said, turning to herself. reassuring; but, for me, the word love is a terrible word; and when someone close to me pronounces it... No! Nope! I do not want only that Toinette tell me that she loves me! To love a dead being is awful! I know what it is!

"So you just want to be pitied?" You do not accept as you say, only pity?

--Why should I reject her? It is a good, a divine feeling, which does even more good to those who experience it than to those who are the object. I feel this in myself when I realize that I am forgetting my evil with other unfortunates.

--If you still know pity, you are still capable of loving, for pity is love.

--A general love that does not attach itself to a single being to the detriment of all the others. This is the one I accept, and that I can pay by recognition.

"That's very logical," said d'Argères, smiling to hide his fear. what caused him the firmness of his accent; and, for a foolish person or mad, that's pretty powerful reasoning. Since you are so lucid, let's sum up. You don't want to be loved in the state individual, but aided and consoled by charities all Christians, because you are not worth dedicating ourselves to you in particular. However, if Toinette is absent for an hour or two, you are worried, you are saddened.

--Yes, I am weak, but I am not unjust; I do not address him, neither of the lips nor of the heart, no reproach.

--But yet his whole life is absorbed in yours, and you accept this devotion. So you can make an exception to your rigidity of abnegation in favor of someone, and you feel that this someone loves you.

--Ah! sir, even from Toinette, who raised me, who fact, to look after me, an imperious habit and a jealous duty, that causes me remorse. Shall I confess...? Yes you want me confess! Well, there are hours, whole days when this remorse is so poignant, where I am so revolted against myself to monopolize thus, for the benefit of my miserable half-existence, the devotion of a person who has the right and the need to exist for himself; Finally, I sometimes makes me so ashamed and averse, that I have thoughts of suicide and that I would give in to it if I were not afraid of leaving remorse imaginary to this poor girl. So, you see, it takes me wild desires to flee her, to flee everyone, to no longer be burden to no one... Ah! if i knew a desert that i could reach freely! This freed me from the suffering of my loved ones; but I'm already being called for, I'm being called back... and it's not enough deep, since here I am with Toinette who loves me, and you who speak to love me.

"The reasoning is unassailable," thought d'Argères, who was listening to him without spite, because he saw in her complete sincerity. I won't win not his painful wisdom. Let's see if the entrails are mute and if every instinct of human affection is extinguished forever.

He rose in silence, kissed her hand, and left. Toinette was on the landing, trying to see and hear.

He pushed her away with authority and remained alone and attentive for a few moments. at the slightest noise.

"May God forgive me for torturing her perhaps!" he thought while sticking his ear to the door. It will be his salvation.

He finally heard a sudden sob and came back quickly. Laura was dropped sitting on her knees, hands dangling, hair untied, tears on her cheeks, in an attitude of Madeleine in the desert. She was so beautiful in her pain that he was dazzled. He had dared to kiss her tears if he had been certain, in the first moment, of having them sink.

But the sphinx remained silent. She got up quickly when she saw d'Argères at her side, and seemed to believe that she had been mistaken in thinking he was leaving her forever.

"What were you doing there on your knees?" said to him sadly from Argères a little discouraged.

"I was praying," she said.

--And what did you ask of God?

"To give you happiness and to make me soon die," she replied. in a tone of angelic candor.

--To die! resumed d'Argères dejected. Yes, it is the refuge of frozen souls who no longer want to love.

--Say who can no longer! Listen, don't think I'm such a coward not having struggled. Don't judge me like my mother-in-law does, who tells me that I feed my pain because I love my pain. No no, no one likes suffering! all beings flee it. I wanted, I wished to be cured; I would still want it if I hoped to come to end. I obeyed all the physical and moral prescriptions. I have listened to the priest and the doctor. I have recovered the health of the body, and believe that it is not without pain and without mortal boredom that I have been able to go on a diet and devote time to growing myself like a plant precious, when I felt forever deprived of sun and perfumes. I was told: "Heal the body, moral health will return." What moral health? Resignation? We have some rest in front of the evils accomplished and without remedy. Submission to the will of God? How could I revolt against what crushed me? Hold on, we succumb to that healing. It is made in me, and yet I enter all alive in the darkness of death. I'm doing well and I'm losing my faculties. My will escapes me, my intellectual forces are blunted. I don't even suffer anymore, I'm bored!

"Then," said d'Argères, deeply saddened, "you no longer want to wrestle? You won't try anything more to save your soul?"

"I did not say that," she continued, "I will never say it." I believe in the boundless goodness of God; but I also believe in our duties on the earth. Until my last day of lucidity, I will defend myself from my better against the dizziness that overwhelms me. You can see that I do; you demand that I speak of myself, and I speak of it! It is however the hardest and most painful thing I can order myself to myself.

--You are right to do so, and I don't want to thank you for it. This it is not for me that you do it: it is for you; say with truth this is for you!

--It is for my family, who are saddened, humiliated and scandalized to my state of mind; it is especially for this poor girl who serves, who has never left me, who has his failings, I know that, but whose affection and patience erase all stains before God and before me; this is for you right now! for you to whom I do don't want to bequeath, to thank you for a few days of commiseration, the example of an abandonment of myself, which could, if ever you are unhappy, make you believe in the abandonment of God towards his creatures.

--So it's not for yourself?

"For me? Ah! sir, you don't know a scary thing... No, I don't want to tell you.

--Say it! exclaimed d'Argères, whose growing passion armed itself with a will capable of exercising a kind of magnetic ascendancy.

"Well," she replied, "moral suicide has greater attractions even though material suicide, if we let ourselves go... There is in oblivion of reality, in the dream of nothingness, in the confusion of madness, a dreadful charm that sometimes seems the reward and the relief promised to the violent pains long compressed!

--Shut up! said of Argeres; this thought should make you shudder. She is impious; banish it from your heart forever; fear that she is contagious for those who would understand you!

--Yes you are right! she answered quickly, seizing his arms as if she were afraid, this time, of rolling into an abyss open under his feet. You are right! you really have a soul believer, you! you talk to me like a father... you make me feel good, that's what you have to tell me! And what else? Talk to me, you do good!

"If so," cried d'Argères, seizing her in his arms and keeping it there, you are saved, I swear it before God! Stay there without shame, without fear, and rest this sick head on a heart full of youth cl strength! Trust me, who asks nothing of you and who Could want anything from you but what you can't give me, complete and absolute affection. Trust yourself entirely, Laura; I am too proud to dream of misleading the mind of a woman like you; I myself respect myself too much not to respect you. Your modesty alarmed at this moment would be a mortal insult to me. So listen to me and believe me. It's not me, a stranger, a passer-by talking to you: it is something which is in me and which commands me to speak to you; something greater than your will and mine; it's the voice of the very love that fills my breast and overflows, but without delirium, without fear, without hesitation. Laura, I love you. I could you to hide that it is a passion which invades me, to offer you only, for reassure you, a sweet and fraternal friendship. I would deceive you; it would be a plan of seduction, it would be infamous. You must accept my love to accept my friendship, for friendship is in true love, and if one frightens you, the other is necessary to you. You want to heal, you want not to lose the notion of God, nor the sacred title of human creature. Away then the disappointing abyss of madness! May it be forever closed! Forget you dived in it guilty look. Have the will; respect yourself, love yourself, that's all I ask of you, all I claim of you persuade by loving you. Don't worry, don't care me; see in me only the serious doctor of your noble intelligence shaken. I don't want to suffer from my role: I have faith. All the same I would suffer, moreover! I am not without courage, and I tell you to reassure you: Know that I would suffer more if I left now.

He spoke to her again with effusion and found the eloquence of the heart for the to convince. She listened to him without imposing silence on him, without raising his head, which he had drawn on his shoulder, without expressing, without feeling the slightest doubt about the sincerity and strength of the feeling that he expressed. There was even a moment when, lulled by the sound of her voice, she closed her eyes and heard him as in a dream. D'Argères had partially won the cause he was pleading: she had faith in him.

But she could not regain faith in herself so quickly, and, rising gently, she said to him with a heartrending smile:

--Yes, you are great, you are true, you are young, pure and good. I accept holy friendship from you; I wish I could accept the divine love! Well, I wondered while listening to you, and each of your words enlightened me about myself. I can't accept one if noble passion, and, so that it fades away in you, so that friendship only I have left, we must part for a long time. You suffer near me from feeling unworthy of being so well loved. Yes, yes! I know what you would suffer from the disproportion of our feelings. Ah! those who allow themselves to be loved...

--What do you mean?

--Nothing; don't ask me; let's not awaken my memory; don't think not too much in the future either. I'm afraid of everything that isn't when I live. I live so rarely! Right now I'm living, thanks to you; I believe in the tender interest, in the infinite solitudes, in the immense dedication; that is enough to do me immense good. So be blessed, and may the most sublime side of your attachment to me be satisfied and rewarded. I can tell you that I may recover, or at all less than I want, that I desire to heal. This is all the balm that, when now you can pour on my wound. More would be too much. I might succumb to it. I don't have the strength to look at the sky, me whose eyes can't even bear the shadow. I would become blind; I would burst like clay in too hot a fire. leave me, and just tell me it's not forever! Still! it is a dreadful idea is like death! When I thought, tonight, that I wouldn't see you again... I believed it twice: first in a sort of hallucination, while Toinette was absent, and then suddenly the time with a crueler lucidity, when you went out... eh well, in my fright, I wept for you... because I loved you, and I love you! yes, as much as I can love now! Make no mistake about it no, it's a small thing, at the price of what you offer me. It's a selfish movement, like that of a child clinging to help, without being able to reciprocate. You don't have to devote your life, not even a short phase of your life, to a being stricken with the most fatal ingratitude, that which admits itself and cannot be conquered. Even if you had the admirable courage, I would refuse! because I would hold myself in horror, and my scruple would become intolerable. Farewell, farewell! leave me, forget me for a while; live! If I healed, if I feel reborn, were I only worthy of the friendship that you will have preserved me, I will claim it from you. you are too perfect for not having already inspired ardent loves. They do not, however, have not lived up to your soul, since you have no ties that has prevented you from offering me this devoted soul; but it is, in your destiny, a gap that will soon be filled. Evil or good, you will be rewarded still better than by me, until the hour when you you will meet the woman entirely worthy of you. This thought does not disturb not the hope that I keep of finding you, and of being for you something like a respectful and tender sister.

Such was the often interrupted summary of Laure's answers. In the finding so clear in his ideas and so strongly entrenched in a painful humility, the artist grieved more than once, but he did not don't despair for a moment. He rejected the idea of a separation; he refused the test of absence. He felt that love was communicates by will. If Laure was not one of these organizations weaklings who feel and undergo the physical surprise of it, she was all the more ready to understand and share a passion complete and true. She was a woman whose heart and mind. D'Argères was not below such a task.

He didn't want to increase her fear of herself and promised to submit to all its decisions; but he asked for two or three days before accepting a definitive one, and he was authorized to return the next morning.

VII

The same evening, on returning, d'Argères wrote the following letter:

"Laure, I am very happy! you believe in me. You didn't admit no doubt about my loyalty. You made me very proud, well grateful to myself. Never have I felt the prize so keenly of a conscience _without fear and without reproach_.

"You have filled me with pride for the first time in my life. Yes, really, this is the first time i get a glory that lifts me up

above myself. Is that you are a unique woman on the earth. Was it nature or pain that made you like this? Nobody don't look like you. You subjugate as if in spite of yourself. You ignore, not only the childish coquetry of your sex, but still the legitimate power of your physical and moral beauty. You are humble like a true Christian, naive like a child, simple like genius. I still don't know what genius you have, Laure: maybe none that the vulgar can appreciate; but you have the one of all things for those who know how to understand you. You have especially that of love. It manifests itself in the very terror it causes you, in your refusal to try it again. Well, I'll wait. I will wait ten years, if necessary; but, certain of finding nowhere a treasure like your soul, I will never give up trying to conquer it; my hope will only be extinguished with my life.

"Before seeing you again, Laure, and since I don't want to be with you, take care only of you, I come to talk to you about myself, my past, my outdoor life. Despite your sublime trust, I owe it to myself to make you known, not the man who loves you, he is entirely in the love he has laid at your feet, but the man that the others know, the artist you might think belongs in the world and which will only ever belong to you.

"You told me, the first evening I spent with you, that you had heard of Adriani, a singer of some merit, who said his own music, and whose compositions had seemed to you beautiful. It was a memory which, with you, dated from before your sorrows. I asked you about him, pretending not to know, in order to know what you thought of him. You didn't have it never seen, you said, because, at the time when he began to make a little noise, you had just left Paris to live in Provence. You had known that he had left soon afterwards for Russia; and then, misfortune having struck you, you had lost track of his steps and the memory of its existence; but you said you had sometimes sung or read his compositions lately, and that you find, in what I had sung to you, the same day, shapes that reminded you of his way.

"You told me again:

"I have little hope of ever hearing it. If he comes back to France (he may be there now), he's not a man to run the provinces, and we will never see him in any theatre. We told me that he had enough to live on a meager basis without selling himself to the public and that he sang only for friendly salons, for an elite audience, without accept no compensation. We didn't even dare to offer him one, unless it was for the poor. He retained the independence of a man of the world, although he himself is poor. This is to his praise.

And you added:

"I once regretted not having known him; but today, I am quite consoled. Despite everything I've been told about his originality, it does not seem to me that he can be superior to you.

"Well, Laure, that Adriani is me. My name is actually from Argères, and I am from a noble family; but my baptismal name is Adrian. Born in Italy, I was able, without childish disguise, to Italianize this first name. My father held fairly senior positions in diplomacy. I had been brought up with care, I was born a musician. I developed as a voice and as an instinct, under a more musical sun than ours. I lived a lot, in my adolescence, with the inspired people of the south of Europe and the Mediterranean coasts. All my genius consists in not to have lost, in the technical study and in the commerce of a world jaded, the taste for the simple and the true that had charmed my first impressions, formed my first thoughts.

" Orphaned early, I found myself without direction and without brake at the age of passions. I had some fortune and many friends, artists always have them, because people were already listening to me with pleasure.

Italian

as French, until the age of my majority, I did not know the France than in the world of major cities in Italy. I dissipated my resources in an easy, enthusiastic, even crazy life, according to my family council, and in which, however, I find nothing that make you blush. Ruined, I didn't want to live on chance and industry like so many others; I did not want to go into debt; I decided to shoot part of my talent. My grandparents let out loud cries and offered me to contribute to make me a pension. I refused: it seemed an outrage; but, in order not to hurt their prejudices in the face, I wines in France; I got in touch with artists; I sang in several meetings; I was relished in it, encouraged, and I tried to procure pupils; but this resource was coming slowly, and the teaching job was unsympathetic to me. Demonstrate beauty, explain the true in the arts, it is possible in a course, by dint of talent and eloquence; but spend all my might on pupils, the most of them unintelligent or frivolous, I could not resign myself to it. My time is let him absorb, moreover, by lessons to some young people gifted and poor, who compensated me intellectually for my fatigue, but which could not ward off my misery.

"Misery, I do not fear it extraordinarily; I don't even feel it not much when it does not turn into loneliness. The loneliness was threatening. I put love in my attic. He deceived me. Ideal for for me, it's to live together. It did not come true. I respect my memories; but the environment where I could deserve and savor happiness true did not happen around me; and I was, moreover, too thirsty ardent with perfect joys, which are not sown in this world and which we probably only meet there once.

"I broke nothing, I escaped everything. I felt and caused sorrows for which it was not for me to find the remedy. The escape alone could put an end to its renewal. I left. I traveled. The very modest product of a few musical publications, which had of success, enabled me to owe nothing to the liberality of my enthusiastic. For a man who has some special talent and point of ambition, the world is accessible, and everywhere I feel fulfilled of consideration, which I preferred to being showered with money. I could consent to to be associated with the pleasures of the rich and great of the earth, and I can say that I was not only wanted there as a singer. We wanted to treat me like a man, when they saw me driving male. I don't know that I had to pay any other cost, than that of being and stay myself. And, in truth, I hardly understand that a self-respecting artist needs anything other than a black coat and of a complete absence of vices and pretensions, to be at the height of all social propriety. I do not make myself, for the rest, that a very light person deserves to have known how to renounce vanities and outbursts of youth, from the day when the satisfaction of these violent appetites was refused me by fortune. I did not become a wise: the pleasures run enough of themselves after the one who knows in to procure for others and who does not appear too hungry for it. But I I corrected in me the fault of disorder, which is a laziness of spirit, and I recognized that I had conquered the freedom of tomorrow with a little forethought in the present day.

"Finally, I did not suffer from enjoying the luxury of others, and from telling myself that I would only have in my possession what was necessary. These needs that artists to become or to appear great lords have always seemed upstart weaknesses. The man who owned by himself no longer has that fever of dazzling which devours the wealthy poor. Raised in well-being, I neither despised nor envied the goods of which my prodigality had cheerfully made the sacrifice to my pleasures, but that I could not have won back without sacrificing my pride and of my independence.

"Fortune is sometimes like the world: it smiles on those who do not not follow in his footsteps. A very unexpected little inheritance enabled me to return to Paris. I made myself heard again, I had great successes. the public grew in the meetings first selected, then numerous and ardent where I allowed myself to be carried away. The public wanted to have me.

The Opera gave me and still gives me a considerable commitment. The students besieged my door. The concerts promised me a rich harvest. I refused everything, left everything to go see Switzerland again, last month. I had trusted my small fortune with a friend who, without telling me, had risked her in a commercial operation which I neither know nor understand, but which he regarded as certain. If he had lost her, I would never have known; he would have restored it to me; he overwhelmed her. As I climbed the glaciers and my soul sang to the noise of the cataracts, I became rich without my knowledge: I am! I have five hundred thousand francs. I did not know my happiness all of after. I have so few desires in the material order of things now, that I would have lost without fear this relative wealth, the day after it was announced to me; but today, today, Laure, she makes me happy, since she allows me to give to you. I belong! Where you wanna live, I can live and live free from deprivation. Your Toinette told me that you are rich; I don't know what she means by that; I don't know if you are anymore or less than me. I confess to you that I do not concern myself with it and that is indifferent to me. There are feelings that do not allow this kind of thoughts. I know you enough to know that if you loved me enough to be mine, you would have accepted me poor as I would accept rich, without worrying about the suspicions of a world to which neither neither my life nor my conscience belong.

"If you cherish loneliness, we will seek loneliness; we there we two will easily find; because, for a woman, she does not exist nowhere without protection. You won't have to be afraid of tear me away from a restless and brilliant life. I'm sated with movement, and my own sun is in my soul: it is my love, it is you! Besides, I have never understood this other factitious need that most artists experience being in contact with the crowd. I am not one of those. I neither hate nor despise what is called the audience. The public is a small deputation of humanity, in short, and I love, I respect my fellow men. But it's by my soul, it's not not by my eyes nor by my ears that I am related to them. If a good and beautiful thought arises in me, I know it will benefit, and I feel their sympathy apart from time and space. The revulsion or craze of the immediate audience may wander, but the reflection of the masses corrects the error. We must therefore consider the truth in man face to face, to be, so to speak, face to face with the soul of humanity in the conceptions of intelligence and in the inspirations of the heart. This is the respect, this is the affection that we owes to men, and, in this notion of their brotherhood with ourselves, those of the future as much as those of today appear to serve as judges, advisers or friends.

But, in need to see them smile, to breathe their incense, as in the poignant fear of not being understood from the outset, there is something sickly that wouldn't hold up against a thought serious, if the talent that occurs was serious and took its seat in consciousness.

"Laure, you will be able to love me, I feel it, I want it! Never, when I am prostrated in spirit before God, source of truth and good, for him ask to keep me in his ways, he only left me helpless to produce true accents, lofty ideas. Right now I asks for his most sublime gifts, true shared love; and I implores him with so much fire and naivety that he will hear me.

"We will go where you want; we will stay here, we will travel countries new, we'll hide underground, we'll spend my little fortune in a day, or through it we will ensure the balance of our coming. You have no wills, I know that. I want, I wait for you have it. I will be very happy the day when I will only see the dawn a fantasy, and I feel that, to satisfy it, I will transport, if necessary, mountains...

"Let me love you, don't pity me for loving alone. Don't you know that it is already happiness that you give me by raising me to the fullness of my own faculties, placing myself at the peak of my own energy!

"Let yourself be loved, wounded angel! One day, I swear to you, you will thank God for allowing me.

"To you, in spite of yourself, and forever.

"ADRIANI."

Journal de Comtois.

Sir is a nobody. It is an artist! I was always doubt. I read, by chance, this evening, an old piece of newspaper which I use it to put my curlpapers on. There was on it, on the date of last January:

"The famous singer and composer Adriani, whose real name is d'Argères, finally came back from the snows of... and made himself heard in the salons of..., where he delighted a crowd of... method... the women... his ideal beauty... a commitment... the Opera..."

The rest of the lines are missing; but it's clear enough as it is; and here I am in a nice position! Valet de chambre of a singer, of a histrion, without a doubt! I am going to write to my wife to find me a place. In meanwhile, I do hope that he will not bankrupt my trip. Besides, the schemer will make a fortune. He marries his madwoman, since he came back this evening after midnight. She'll beat it, that's all I wish him for catching me so well.

Narration.

D'Argères, or rather Adriani, because it is under this name that his existence brightened up, slept better than he had in eight days. He closed his letter, which he wanted to send to Laure before see you again, and tasted a delicious rest, lulled by the laughing fictions of hope. On waking, he rang Comtois to charge him with his missive. But Comtois had a face and an attitude so extraordinary, that he hesitated to put his secret in the hands of a to be talkative, stupid and curious.

"Here, sir, awake!" said Comtois with an air that he thought was mocking and who was only stupid. No doubt sir slept well? He doesn't suffer from toothache! It's not like me, who didn't couldn't close my eyes: which led me to read old newspapers where I found some very funny things!

"If you are ill, Comtois, go back to bed." I will do without you.

"I would prefer Monsieur to give me a little consultation."

--For the teeth? I would not know. I haven't had a bad time in my life.

--Ah! is that what I thought doctor doctor?

Here, Comtois, wanting to indulge in a sardonic laugh, made a grimace so ugly, that Adriani believed him to be in violent pain. He insisted on firing him; but Comtois would not budge, and persisted in shaving his master.

"Let monsieur fear nothing," he said to him, giving himself up to this daily operation in which he excelled and from which he derived immeasurable vanity, I would shave, as they say, my feet in the fire. My hand is so light that, were I to have convulsions as a result of my teeth, you would not feel me. I know what we owe precautions, especially when you bring the razor close to a throat like the one of sir. As for me, they could well cut my whistle, the Opera would lose nothing; but maybe there are thousands and hundreds in sir's throat.

--The rogue knows who I am, thought Adriani: I did well to write. He

I must hurry to run over there, before he has had time to chatting with Toinette.

As he was going out, Adriani saw the Baron de West, who was returning from Vienna, and who, from afar, made him great arm. Sorry for this setback, he pretended not to recognize it and threw himself into the vines. Through the vines he saw the car which stopped, which made him fear that the Baron was running after him. He slipped along a hedge, and found himself face to face with the cowgirl of the Temple, who took the shortest route through the vines to reach the road.

--Where are you going? he said to him.

"I am going to take a letter to M. d'Argères," she answered. is it you who is called like that?

Adriani opened the note. It was from the hand of Toinette.

"Madame did not sleep well last night. She will keep the room this morning. She begs Monsieur not to come until after noon."

"Return quickly to the Temple," said Adriani, "and deliver this to Madame herself, as soon as you can enter her home.

He added a louis to his message, so that Mariotte understood that there benefited her by doing it well.

Then he retraced his steps, pretending to see the baron, who was coming to him.

VIII

The Baron embraced her cordially; but he had seen the exchange of letters, he knew the face of the messenger, and, noticing a certain agitation in his host, he joked about it.

--Ah! artist head! he said to him, returning with him to the castle, you here is already launched in a novel. Leave the children alone! you will no sooner have turned on their heels, than they will fly away for the country fantasy. I who came back transported with gratitude for the you had the courage to wait for me in my desert! Ah! you have you already known how to people solitude, my beautiful hermit! Well, it's beautiful, that. There is only one beautiful woman in the neighborhood, you discover her; she is an inconsolable widow, you console her. Well, you have been cleverer or bolder than me. I broke my nose at his door. How the hell did you do it? We've never seen a better nun locked, princess or fairy better defended by the spirits invisible. Ah! I guess, your voice is the enchanted horn that has struck down the monsters of despair and broke down the barriers of memory. That's up to you, my young master. I worry about you all the more my compliment that it is a nice match: twenty-something years, no children and a fortune of fifteen or twenty thousand francs annuity in land, which supposes a capital of...

"She has only that?" cried Adriani naively, who, in spite of himself, feared to aspire to a woman rich enough to be told that he sought her out of ambition.

The baron misunderstood this exclamation and answered, laughing:

--Lady! it's not the Potose, and I see you gave in the gasconades of his old servant, a great chatterbox who often comes here to play the lady, and who, humiliated to reside in the hovel of the Temple, boasts to all comers the wonders of the Château de Larnac, located, she said, in the canton of Vaucluse. The country is famous, I

agree; but we, the inhabitants of the South, we know very well that there gives the name of castle to thin dovecotes. Know this too, my dear child, and do not be dazzled by beautiful eyes bathed in tears; especially since, I don't know if it's true and if you have been in a position to notice it, the Chatelaine du Temple passes for be a little crazy.

"Very well," resumed Adriani; you think I'm thinking of establishing myself according to the habits and calculations of bourgeois life!

"My God, dear friend, forgive me," said the baron. I know you are a great artist, most proud, incorruptible when it comes to Muse; but I'm a bit skeptical, you know! I am fifty years old, and I know that the day after the artist is rich, he is already ambitious. Why wouldn't you be? Fortune is just a goal for those who, like you and me, aspire to poetic leisure... You you said a word just now that struck me, surprised me, I confess; a word that swore in your inspired mouth...

--Yes, I said: _She only has that?_ and it was a cry of joy. Listen to me, dear Baron: I love this woman. I see her every day, and, as, by keeping silent, I could compromise her with you, since you are already laughing at an adventure that you consider accomplished or inevitable, I want to tell you everything, and I swear it will be the truth.

Adriani recounted with detail and fidelity, to the baron, all that had passed between Madame de Monteluz and himself.

The baron listened with interest, marveling at the rapid invasion of a love so complete in a man he thought he knew, and until then he had not known all the way to the bottom, and ended up advising caution to his young friend. The baron was a worthy man and an excellent mind to many regards; but the poetry of his soul had taken refuge in his towards, and provincial life had magnified in his eyes the importance of positive things. Delicate in the field of the arts, but plagued by material worries that he hid as best he could, he had, despite his lyricism and his literary and musical enthusiasms, contracted somewhat something of the dryness of old boys.

Adriani suffered from having confided in him, but he did not reproached point. He had been forced to do so to keep the halo intact of purity around his idol.

According to the Baron, there was no great pain without a little assignment in the long run. If he didn't quite dare to say and think that Madame de Monteluz expressed regrets, he admitted none the less the likelihood of a flirtatious instinct sternly draped in her mourning. Basically, he was perhaps a bit offended at not having been received and to see his young guest admitted from the start; and then he was upset about find the latter preoccupied and absorbed in love, when he arrived loaded with hemistiches that he naively burned to make snore in a sound salon, long widowed of intelligent listeners.

The baron had written epic poems which would never have drawn him from obscurity if he had not fortunately taken it into his head to translate into verse some Greek masterpieces. Great Hellenist, gifted with easy verse and harmonious, he had a real talent for nobly dressing the thought from others. For his own account he had few ideas, and the form does not can cover the void without ceasing to be form itself. She is then like a splendid garment, flabby and hanging on a pole.

The success of his translations had almost distressed the baron. He was smiling praise, but he was humiliated inside. He always aspired to shine by itself, and, after thirty years of assiduous work and meticulous, he dreamed of glory and spoke of his literary future as a twenty-year-old poet. After many more creditable attempts entertaining in different genres, he had made up his mind to publish a small collection of selected verses entitled _la Lyre d'Adriani_.

Here is what its purpose was:

Adriani often did his own lyrics to his music. It was a great poet without claiming to be one. A simple but clear idea, a logical deduction, a harmonious language, which was itself a rhythm all done for the singing, it was enough, according to him, to motivate and carry his musical ideas. He was right. Music can express ideas as well as feelings, whatever may have been said of them; especially more than, no more than Adriani, do we clearly see the limit where the feeling becomes an idea and where the idea absolutely ceases to be a feeling. The rage for distinctions and classifications has bitten the criticism of this century, and we have become so learned that we are stupid. But, when, by the eminently contemplative sense which is in it, the music rises to aspirations which are truly ideas, literary expression must be all the more simple, and proceeds, so to speak, by the naive letter of the parables. Otherwise, the words crush the spirit of the melody, and the form takes away the substance.

On hearing Adriani reason on this subject and modestly apologize for to write verses for his own use, the baron, who found them too simple, dreamed of creating a small fund of poetry for him from which he could draw his musical inspirations. Having seen in Paris the enthusiastic success of the young artist, he thinks, with good reason, that his mouth would be for him that of Fame, and he returned home to set to work.

Adriani therefore had to undergo this reading, or rather this declamation, and, when he saw that his host was really suffering from his concern, he complied and asked him to release the manuscript, waiting for the hour when he would be permitted to go to the Temple.

It was a big mistake on the Baron's part to want to infuse his breath to the most individual and independent genius he was possible to meet. From the very first words, Adriani felt that his soul would be imprisoned in this chiseled and diamond-cut case by the hands of the baron. Sincere and loyal, he tried to make her understand, while giving him the share of praise which was justly due to him. the eternal a fight between the maestro and the libretto poet ensued. the baron did not agree that the description should be lightly sketched and that the music must have filled the subject thus indicated with its own poetry.

--When you paint me in four towards the lark rising towards the sun, through the fragrant morning breezes, said Adriani, you make a painting that leaves nothing to the imagination. However, the music it is the imagination itself; it is she who is in charge of transporting the listener's dream in morning poetry. If you tell me everything well, _the lark climbs_, or _the lark flies_, that's quite enough for me. I have many more images than you at my service, since, in a short sentence, I can sum up the infinite feeling of my contemplation.

"Do you say," cried the baron, "sounds prove more than words?"

--In politics, in rhetoric, in metaphysics, in all that is not of his domain, certainly not; but in music, yes.

--It's because we haven't yet done really lyrical poetry in our language, my dear. Didn't the ancients sing poems epic? Don't the gondoliers of Venice sing Ariosto and the Cup?

--Not! They chant them to a rhythm in the manner of the ancients, and it's a bit like that that the makers of romances and ballads have punctuated the romantic verses of our day. Everyone can do everyone makes that kind of music; but it is not music, I tell you. Peace in the Ashes by Hippolyte Monpou and consorts! Pierre Dupont does things more openly; he arranges his song for his words, to which he rightly gives preference. I will give with all my heart the step, in my esteem, to your verses on my music; but I cannot make my music for your verses. They are beautiful, if you will, they are too done. They exist too much to be sung.

The discussion lasted until lunch and resumed with dessert. To

finish, Adriani promised to try; but the great difficulty is that the volume was to bear the title of *Lyre d'Adriani*, and that the baron had wanted a serious commitment from its host.

"You have glory," he said to her, "and I am your old and faithful friend. I have worked long to obtain the success that you conquered in two mornings. You acknowledge that I own the limpid and harmonious vocabulary which does not stick to the throat of the singer like fish bones. You told me a hundred times that, in this respect I was the most musical of poets. So help me straddle my Pegasus and be the sun that will stretch its wings.

--Yes, thought Adriani, that is to say, you would like us to be, I the horse, and you the rider.

The baron had forgotten the rendezvous his host was expecting with such a eagerly impatient. Adriani was forced to remind him.

--Ah! mad youth! said the baron. Go then, run to your doom, and forget the Muse for the woman; it's in order!

Adriani arrived at the Temple two minutes after noon. He was tormented by Toinette's note. Madame de Monteluz had to be well sick to keep the room, she so early and so active in her worried slowness. Perhaps it was also a reassuring symptom for his moral healing. Isn't calm the health of the soul?

Toinette, against her custom, did not come to meet Adriani. the garden was deserted, the house closed. He ventured to knock gently: nothing moved. He walked around and found all the doors, all the windows closed. He looked for Mariotte, the only inhabitant of exterior buildings. She beat her butter with as many tranquility than the first day he had spoken to her.

"Madame is not up?" he said to him.

"Not that I know of," she replied.

--And Toinette?

"Well, I haven't seen her yet. She must have slept badly, and Madam same.

"So you haven't been able to deliver my letter yet?"

--No sir; there she is with your louis d'or, on the edge of the trough my cow. Take them, since you are going to see Madame yourself, and maybe before me.

Adriani took the letter back and left the louis.

--Well, and that? said Mariotte.

--It's for you.

--To me? Well, why so?

Adriani had already left the pantry and was heading home. Everything to Suddenly an idea struck him. He retraced his steps.

"Mariotte," he said to the girl with the low forehead, who was examining her louis laughing all alone and very loud, what time is Mademoiselle Muiron did she deliver this letter for me?

"Faith, sir, she woke me up in the middle of the night to say that, as soon as you get up, you should take it to you. I don't know what hour it was, but the day did not appear at all.

Adriani was frightened by this circumstance. Or Laure had been seriously sick in the night, or the ticket had been written in advance for delay, perhaps to avoid the promised interview.

He waited two mortal hours in the enclosure. His concern became of terror. He finally heard a noise in the house. He searched an open door, and saw Mariotte in the kitchen door. She was laughing still all alone.

--What are you laughing at? he asked her; aren't you afraid of wake up lady?

--Ah! said the fat girl; I thought she was up. Don't you haven't seen it yet? Didn't she go down to the garden?

--No, I'm coming. But Toinette is up, no doubt?

--I do not know.

"Who were you talking to just now?"

"With my louis d'or, sir." Lady! you don't often have six in your poached. "So it's the rendezvous of gold! I thought to myself. Madam who makes me give five, tonight..."

"She made you pay your wages last night?"

--Oh! much more than my wages, which are...

--Anything. How were you given this? At what time?

--When I tell you that I don't know. It was pitch black. Mademoiselle Muiron gave me her letter for you, and then she put that gold, which was in paper, on the chair next to my bed, saying to myself: "Mariotte, I have just done my accounts. I bring you your due and a small present from Madame, because she was happy to you." Thereupon I said, "That's good," and fell back to sleep on the other ear without opening the paper.

--But it is a departure or a testament! exclaimed Adriani, to whom a sweat cold rose to the forehead.

And he rushed into the house.

--Ah! my God, sir, you scare me! said Mariotte in the next. Would Madame have killed herself?

Adriani walked downstairs. He found the living room as he had left it the day before. We hadn't put it away. The cushion he had placed himself under Laure's feet was always near the armchair, and the armchair near the fireplace, where he had burned pine cones to warm the saltpetered atmosphere of the apartment. The piano was open. The candles had burned until the bobèche.

Mariotte had knocked on Toinette's room. Nobody had answered. She had entered it. The bed was unmade, the cupboards open and empty. Adriani, at this news, sent Mariotte to knock on Madame of Monteluz. Same silence; but Mariotte could not enter: they had taken away the room key. Adriani, terrified, broke down the door: even empty, same desertion as with Toinette.

--Where did they put the trunks, the travel boxes? he said to the servant.

"There," she replied, entering the cabinet. They are no longer there; Madam is gone!

This word fell on the heart of the artist like a mountain. He heard buzzing in his ears like a belfry ringing the funeral of a collapsed world. He sat down on the bottom step of the stairs, head in her hands, while the carefree peasant woman began to philosophically sweep the corridors.

We are allowed to lift the veil that covered the feelings intimate of our heroine. But, to make them well understood, it is necessary briefly retrace the history of these same feelings before the time when Toinette related to d'Argères-Adriani the events of the life of his mistress.

When we say our heroine, it's to stay classic in this very simple story; because Laure de Larnac was nothing less than this which is generally understood by the nature of a heroine in a novel. She was in no way romantic, and the imagination, which throws into the adventures and in the exceptional life, was not the engine of his will or actions.

She was, however, a poet, in the sense that she was all poetry, and Adriani had found the true word to paint her: she looked quiet and powerful of a dreamy muse. But his perpetual reverie, even in the time when she lived without pain, was a kind of ecstasy of love, a constant absorption in the fullness of the heart. He is beings made in this way, extraordinarily intelligent beings, who are intelligent only because they are loving. Let's see it, at risks falling into the critical spirit of our century and dissecting a little too much the human being: the feeling and the thought, the affection, the reason, the imagination become one and the same faculty in their action on a healthy soul; but the initiative always belongs to one of these principles, and, to put it simply, the finest natures, according to us, are those which begin by loving, and which then bring their wisdom and their poetry into line with their tenderness.

Laure, intelligent and strong, did not only need to love. As a child, she had mourned her mother with a despair above her age. The friendship of her cousin Octave, a child like her, had been her refuge.

She had cherished him as if the spirit of that mother had passed through him. Of there a habit and a need to love Octave which had something fatal and to which the forces of puberty did not change and did not add anything significant for itself.

What was Octave? Toinette had said it: a beautiful and good child, who loved as much as it was possible for him; but could this possible compare himself to the power of Laura? Not at all. Physical life played too pronounced a role in this organization of ancient hunters. The divinity could fall in love with him, he admired her without understanding her. He was glad to be seized and taken away by her; but he remained a hunter. This was the legend of Adonis, whom the goddess ravished at night in her sanctuaries, but which, at daybreak, returned to the beasts of the woods: "And he returned there so well, as the good people say, that he found there the death."

The obstinacy of the preference of which he was the object is explained by absence. Laure, torn from her childhood companion, made him a lover in her soul, as soon as she understood the social impossibility of consecrate to her brother, unless he became her husband. She did not hesitate for a moment, and, until the day of the marriage, she was unaware that the role of wife was not identical to that of sister.

Octave's transports of passion, followed by invincible despondency of mind, should have thrown some sudden clarity into the mind of Laura. She closed her eyes instinctively, and her exquisite chastity never understood that the love of the senses is only one of the faces of love. She believed in an inequality of character which she accepted with her unalterable softness, the result of a magnificent balance in its own organization. But, little by little, she became mortally frightened by these shortcomings in the care of her husband. Octave was a kind of savage uneducated and uncultivable. The talents and intelligence of his wife inspired a naive respect, a peasant vanity that

eyes seeing her little girl read and write; but he would have vainly tried to understand and feel; he did not try.

Laure did not have the foolish self-respect to be hurt by it. When she saw him fall asleep beside his piano, she continued to contemplate and played as if on velvet, or sang in the voice of a mother cradling her child. If Toinette, who was recklessly epilogue in her days of gaiety, said to her: "Alas! madam, what good to have learned so many beautiful things?" she responded with a angel smile: "Perhaps it serves to give him sweet dreams!" But she saw clearly that inaction was the torture of her young husband, and that, for lack of being able to fill, only an hour, an occupation any intellectual, he had to fill all his days with movement and physical emotions.

Submissive and devoted in intention, Octave would have sacrificed his tastes to society.

of his wife. He even attempted it in the first days of their union, by seeing her astonished to the point of amazement at the need he to leave her; but this change of habits made him sick. He turned blue when he wasn't in the open air, and there's none wasn't enough, even in a garden, to feed his vast lungs. He needed the wind of the race and the top of the mountains.

The day when, seeing him leave at the first rays of the sun, she said with a heavy heart: "So I won't see you again before nightfall?" he wondered at himself, and answered him:

--It's true, by the way! Come with me. We'll do a little hunting calm, and we will not leave each other.

For a week Laure tried to follow him on horseback; but she soon recognized that, even by not imposing quiet hunting on him, even while enduring fatigue and facing dangers, she bothered him without realizing it. The real hunter likes to be alone. His sweetest moments are when he leaves his companions and relishes its perils, its discoveries, its ruses, its obstinacy, its skill, without sharing the emotion with them. The most positive hunter tastes a particular charm in the mystery of the woods, in the independence absolute in its movements, its fantasies, its halts. It's his art is his own poetry.

Laure understood this and no longer followed him. Octave, that muffled cries of his wife held back on the edge of the abyss, felt relieved of a great weight when he could abandon himself again to his strength, his skill and to his uncommon temerity. Laure not only thought of sending him a reproach: as long as he was happy, she did not worry of herself; but she involuntarily felt boredom and sadness of abandonment. She fought this languor. She cultivated her talents, she devoted herself to the care of the interior, she even initiated herself into her affairs, which Octave would never have known how to govern. She fills her days of an activity which would have preserved a livelier head from reflection, but who could not fill the emptiness of his heart. He needed the presence diligent to be loved. She had bravely passed away from him the teenage years, aspiring with naive faith to the future that would reunite with him without distraction, without sharing, without failure of happiness. She had left Paris and the world with joy, at the thought of absorbed in the calm of infinite bliss, and she found herself live one-on-one with a mother-in-law who esteemed him without the understand and who honored him without loving him. Madame de Monteluz, the mother, was one of those cold, decent, honest beings who, out of a spirit of justice, do not want to violently disturb the happiness of others, but who, through insensitivity of character, can neither increase it nor soften the loss.

Laure was therefore overwhelmed by a moral malaise which she did not realize. take care of itself. Octave simply had no idea. He found this way of life quite natural. He had been raised by his mother in the idea that men should not clutter the house, and that women like to devote themselves to domestic care without undergoing the control of these idlers. He did as his father had done: he

lived outside so as not to disturb the women, and he could not defend himself to find them bothersome when walking. When he wasn't hunting with the rage of an Indian, he fished with the patience of a Chinese. He had some horses to train, to groom, to contemplate, great fellings of trees to monitor, operations whose noise and disorder were for him a spectacle and music in harmony with the harshness of its organs. At return from these agitations, he adored his wife, but he had no idea to share with her. You had to eat and sleep, two big operations in the existence of such a robust man. The short bursts of his passion, which was nevertheless real, did not translate into any delicacy. It was physical passion in friendship. Tenderness and enthusiasm were equally unknown to him.

These two spouses did not live together long enough for the wife could tell herself that she was unhappy. Maybe not had she ever said: his power of abnegation, his instinct of fidelity would have made her accept the eternal widowhood of a living husband. When this mourning became that of a dead, she did not remember disappointments that she had not yet confessed; but one fact remained in his past: it was that she had known neither love nor happiness, and that she naively wept for possessions she had never owned.

Adriani's love therefore brought him a whole world of revelations that she hadn't anticipated. Through him she could be initiated into her own energy, which she ignored and which had always been repressed in she for fear of making Octave suffer. When Octave saw her sad, he was affected and frightened until he had attacks of nerves, but without understanding how he could have been the cause of his sadness. It was Laure who must have reassured him, consoled him, cheered him up. and urge him to return to his forests and ponds.

Adriani hadn't felt worried about Laure's past. Some words escaped from Toinette had sufficed to deprive him of all feeling of jealousy about the late husband. He understood very well that he it would not be difficult for him to love better and to give more happiness; but Laure had to agree to put him to the test, and there encountered a resistance he had not anticipated so vigorous in a soul so tried and so tired.

We believe we can affirm, however, that this widow's despair, if real and so deep, that at times it had numbed and threatened to to destroy reason or life in Laure, did not have its source in a regret of the days of his marriage. What she thought she regretted, he was indeed the handsome and good young man to whom she had devoted herself; but what she actually regretted was the time of her own aspirations, of his own illusions. In losing this husband, she had saw the purpose of fifteen years of existence disappear; because, from the first childhood, she had devoted herself to him; she had been separated from him then for eight years (from twelve to twenty); so that was all a life she had lived for nothing, and the blow that overwhelmed her, beginning of a new life, made her believe that she would never recover never. She thought she was dead with Octave; she wanted to die for the join; she regretted not succumbing to her terror before the future.

Hope is a law of life, especially in youth. lose it, it is a violent state which cannot be prolonged without bringing destruction of the being thus deprived of the regenerating breath. It was all Laure's illness, but it was serious.

Nature struggled, however, and unfulfilled love, latent love, without known goal, without formulated desire, brooded under the ashes. Laura was there come to the point of dreading her own pain, and desiring to be there to subtract; but she thought she had found the remedy in oblivion; she does not didn't want to believe and she didn't know, inexperienced and candid she was, that love is the only good that replaces love.

She therefore tried to annihilate in herself the feeling of real existence, and getting lost in the dream of the unknown. She looked at the clouds and the stars, immersed in aspirations religious and metaphysical who supported it for some time;

but the human soul cannot follow these boundless roads with impunity and No Exit. Catholicism has written the word mystery on the pediment of its temple, knowing well that, to believe, it is not necessary to seek too much. the sky does not reveal itself. It opens up to hope, enthusiasm, to science, and immediately closes up, or becomes peopled, in our dazzled eyes and deceived, with delirious fantasies. Laure felt that these Hallucinations threatened her. Terrified, she looked away and fell back broken on the ground, convinced that she could not embrace infinity, and that its positive organization in affection (that is to say, essentially human and therefore excellent) refused more than any other.

She was there when she saw Adriani. Her first step towards him was greater attention than she had yet been able to give to any man since his misfortune; the second step was admiration for a beautiful nature which revealed itself in a sympathetic talent; the third was recognition. But, when she saw love face to face, she was frightened like a ghost, and while the artist was writing a letter, which she was not to receive, she wrote him the one which follows:

"Noble heart, farewell! Be blessed. I leave! I must leave you. I'm too afraid to take the consolations I would receive from you for the ones I would give you. I would still have many things for you say about me, friend! Why didn't I tell you earlier when you were there? why did they not come to me? There that they appear to me like bright lights. That is sure the pride which acted in me and prevented me from accusing myself completely in front of you! Yes, here is the danger of my situation: it is to leave me intoxicate by the feeling that you express to me, to the point of being vain and to hide from you how little I deserve it. Well, I have to punish the past and the present, I must tell you everything.

"You love me without knowing me. It can't be my person has charmed you: you have undoubtedly been able to aspire to the most beautiful, the most lovely women of the universe, and I am no more than the ghost of a to be already very ordinary. I only had a reason to respect myself: I believed myself capable of great, eternal love. there was my error, there is also yours. You venerate in me the shadow of a power that never existed. I've been below my ambition, below my task. Friend, pity me, and no longer admire, you who admired me for having known how to love! I didn't know, I didn't like it!

Yes, that's my story in two words. I haven't been for the man who entrusted to me the care of her happiness the saint, the angel that I flattered to be. I didn't know how to absorb it in me, because I have too much wished to absorb it. This is not the way to love; you give it to me prove it well, you who ask nothing of me but to let myself be cherished! Me, I would have liked him to love me to the point of being bored far from me. His distractions, his amusements were not mine. If I had dared, I would have hated his pleasures which I did not share. I don't have it never said, I never told anyone; but where is the merit of silence? Submission is only a calculation of personal interest which agrees to suffer a lot so as not to risk suffering more. I would have feared that the complaint would alienate completely from me the one whom my selfishness would have liked to detach from itself and annihilate for my benefit. My heart was cowardly, he was discontented, that is to say, guilty. The outward docility is only a transparent mask: one is not clever, one is not strong when one is not sincere. Lack of power or knowing how to accept Octave's tastes, I spoiled his enjoyment of them by a badly disguised sadness because it was badly fought and never beaten. Two or three times I disturbed her rest, frightened her aware of her affection and makes her tears flow. Thrice! yes, in six months of union which were numbered to us and of which I should have make a century, an eternity of unalloyed joy, I troubled him and afflicted three times! And the same day... I must have the courage to stir up these dreadful memories, you force me! The very day that was to part us forever, I saw him leave my side and dress for go out, without having the strength to say a word to him. It was a while

awful. I was foolishly offended that he faced the rigors winter for a purpose that wasn't mine. I then took the sorrow violent that I had felt at that moment for a presentiment. Maybe it was? It's one last favor from heaven, one last goodness of God towards us, these mysterious warnings that he given! We should guess them and follow them! I could not disentangle what was happening in me. I wouldn't have prevented anything, I didn't know how to fight Octave's desires; but at least I would have kissed him one last time; he would have left with the consciousness of my love.

I remained motionless, absorbed in my selfish dread of abandonment. He leaned towards me to kiss me: I closed my eyes to hold back my tears, I pretended to sleep; I did not return her last caress. He was brought back to me bloody and torn, dead! dead without me gave only the farewell of each morning! dead without my being able to forgive in the evening, with a smile, the daily anxieties of my weak heart! died the very day when, for the first time, my soul jealous exhaled this impious cry: "He does not love me!" Ah! that is what killed him! Doubt is a curse, and the curse of love opens the abyss of fatal destinies.

"The unfortunate! It was not he who did not love, since his conscience was so quiet. It's me, I told you, I repeat it to you, who I liked it badly!

"You see, my life is remorse even more than regret, and I have profited so badly from my happiness, I have poisoned it so much by my dumb demands, that it is not the past that I mourn, it is the future, which I could have devoted to the tranquil happiness of Octave, and of which I had already spoiled the beginnings.

"So I do not deserve to be consoled; I might not be. I suffered, in the horror of my loneliness, an inevitable expiation. She didn't last long enough; I am not yet forgiven, since the benefit of the love that offers itself to me, instead of making me to quiver with joy, makes me recoil in terror.

"In early youth, we believe we can give as much as we receive; we don't care how little we are and how little we are worth. When we are aged and withered like me by a heavenly chastisement, we shudder at the idea of making suffer what one has suffered. Bigger and better than me, you would suffer even more. More attentive and more thoughtful that Octave, you would be disillusioned with me, and, chained perhaps by generosity, by respect for yourself, you would be most to be pitied Of us two.

"Look, divine love is only made for beautiful souls. Mine is not a sanctuary worthy of receiving it. Farewell, farewell! don't see in my flight only a tribute paid to the greatness of your character and to the nobility of your affection.

"Laure."

The old peasant who weakly fought the invasions of nettles and bindweed in the Temple garden, handed this letter to Adriani at the when he got up, desperate, to run away from home forever abandoned. Before reading, Adriani questioned the good man; the message had been given to him, without any explanation, by Madame de Monteluz herself, at the moment when she had dismissed him from the next relay of post. It was he who had taken her there, as well as Toinette, with his mules. He had been called around two o'clock in the morning by Toinette herself, her cottage being at a very short distance from the Temple. He had found the trunks packed, he had loaded them onto the carriage, and had only seen Madame de Monteluz when she was going up there, and when where she got off. All this had happened without the rude Mariotte's sleep was disturbed. Toinette had instructed this peasant to keep the house. An earlier arrangement had given his son the management of the small domain. We didn't know when we would come back, we didn't know yet where we were going directly. It would depend on business letters that Madame would receive at Tournon. We would go down

perhaps the Rhone by boat, we would perhaps go up by the road of Lyons. In short, this man knew nothing, except, like Mariotte, that _madame was gone. He regretted her; he said that the good young lady was well a little out of whack in her mind, but mistress never more gentle and more generous had spoken to the poor world.

It was like a funeral oration, for he added:

--I really believe that we shall never see her again and that she is not for make old bones. She has too much trouble in her idea!

Adriani returned to the parlor. He threw himself on the armchair where Laure had sat down the night before and devoured her letter. He started it with depression; he ended it by kissing it with transport. What sweeter confession could he accept only this confession? What greater charm Could Laure dress in his eyes but confess to him, in his naive repentance, and without knowing what she was confessing, that her conscience that his heart was faithful to the memory of Octave, and that this heart was virgin of a shared love, consequently of a complete love?

Adriani had already sensed that he didn't have to fight a dead man. He was not mistaken about the true meaning of this ingenuous letter. He recognized that the urn could be crowned with flowers and inaugurated by him, without bitterness, on the threshold of his future. Laure would lose her remorse and would stand up to herself the day she knew what is that true love, and how little she had offended God by dreaming it on Octave's helpless heart.

Thus, believing to discourage Adriani and keep him away from her, Laure had tightened the bond she wanted to break. Extreme candor often acts as extreme skill would do. She obeys the law of truth of one quite fatal way. If cunning takes on the mask of loyalty, it is because she knows well that loyalty is the only infallible power on good spirits.

X

Adriani was disturbed in gentle meditations by the old peasant who came to pack the piano.

"Where were you told to send him?" he asked her.

"Nowhere, sir. I was commanded not to leave it at humidity, to put it immediately in its crate and to keep it all ready, because it would be claimed soon. It seems that Mrs. I really care about it, because she recommended it to me herself.

Adriani made a hasty resolution.

"Where she is going, I will know," he said to himself; where she is, I will join her.

He knew the hour and the place of the first post departure. It was not enough. He returned to Mauzères, kissed the baron, borrowed a cabriolet and left with Comtois.

At the relay, he learned that the two travelers had indeed taken the Tournon road. He ordered post horses and arrived at the edge of the Rhone before dark. There he had an inspiration. Toinette owed him to have written; she must have foreseen his anxiety and his pursuits. Or she would assist them, or she would do her best to discourage him; but she was not the woman to remain idle in the midst of such an adventure.

He ran to the post office, showed his passport, and took out a letter to his address:

"Monsieur," said Toinette, "madame wanted it." It's good in spite of me! But also why did you not deign to tell me if your fortune

responds to your manners and if the name you bear is yours? I've had afraid of having gone too far, and I found myself helpless, when lady said to me:

--Let's go, I want it!

--What is his idea? Would you believe that I know nothing about it? I never saw her as she is. It is a will, an activity that smells of fever. I no longer recognize her. I write to you from the steamer where we are already on board, waiting for the departure bell. Everything that I know, it's that we go down to Avignon. It looks good to me impossible for us not to at least say hello to Madame la Marquise at the Larnac Castle. You will find another letter from me, office remaining, like this one, in Avignon.

"Tournon, seven o'clock in the morning."

Adriani went down the Rhone and found another bulletin from Toinette which told him that we were indeed going to the Château de Larnac, where, Since the marriage of her son, the Marquise de Monteluz had, at the Laura's prayer, established her residence.

"I don't think we'll be staying there for a long time," said Toinette. not don't come and join us there, sir. I've told you enough about the character and ideas of Madame la Marquise so that you understand that an imprudence could bring us sorrows. If you want write, send me your letters."

The detailed address followed.

Adriani ignored Toinette's terrors. He continued his road and went to settle in the village of Vaucluse, one league from Larnac, determined to confront the mother-in-law and the whole family rather than give up on his hopes. He had the best excuse in the world to be in a place that attracts all travelers by the beauty of the surrounding sites, the neighborhood of the famous fountain and the memories of the great poet.

He soon learned that the young Marquise de Monteluz was back in his castle. Better known in this country than in the Vivarais, she did not pass for crazy in the least. Everyone respected his mourning and complaining about his misfortune. Adriani was condemned to hear, from the mouth of his host whom he had carefully questioned, the story epic of the death of the young marquis, and to pretend to listen to him like a new thing. He was recompensed for it by the high praise given to the beauty of her who was called the new Laure de Vaucluse. We also spoke of his kindness, grace and talents.

After having thus heard, while breakfasting, the talk of his host, Adriani, who had arrived an hour ago and was unable to taste a moment of rest before reaching the goal of his race, got ready to go out, telling Comtois not to wait for him and not to worry about him.

--What! sir," cried Comtois in awe, "you won't sleep a moment?

"You are free to sleep all day, my dear Comtois.

"But it's because monsieur leaves me there in a dreadful country, where I don't don't know a soul... What if Monsieur doesn't come back?

"I intend to return, Comtois, and I am not undertaking anything tragic. Do I look like a man about to drown?

"No, sir... But anyway... if sir takes it into his head to go further without me...

"So you are very attached to me, Monsieur Comtois?" said Adriani with an air mocker.

"That's not why," replied Comtois, piqued; but we are always worried when you can't see ahead. With sir, we walk always _in darkness_.

--Darkness? said Adriani, starting with a burst of laughter which finished mortify Comtois. It's the most beautiful sun in the world, my dear!

"Never mind," resumed Comtois, irritated. I did not know Mr. an artist; I entered his service, in confidence, and I would like that monsieur take the trouble to reassure me or to dismiss me.

--Very good! you despise the arts! said Adriani, that the anxieties of his valet began to entertain, and who, on finishing get dressed, was not sorry to return his contempt in teasing disturbing; it's bad for you, Monsieur Comtois. Between people of nothing, like you and me, we should support each other, instead of suspecting each other.

"Has he seen my journal?" thought Comtois.

He sensed the irony and lowered his voice.

"My God, sir, I do not claim that sir...

-- If so, you think that I brought you to the end of France and that I will forget you there. Artists are all crazy, selfish, indelicate. Lady! you know them well, I see it, and there is no way to make you believe it!

--Monsieur is joking! said Comtois, terrified.

And, believing himself to be grappling with an adventurer who lifted his mask, he calculated unlimited living expenses in Vaucluse, in vain waiting for his return, and travel expenses to return alone to Paris.

Adriani took his hat and headed for the door, without further explanation. Comtois turned pale. His master had left almost all his effects in Mauzeres. In a hurry to leave, he had taken only a light suitcase and a very simple travel kit. There was no there what to compensate Comtois.

Adriani was waiting for him to address him with some impertinence, in order to know what to think about his character; but Comtois did not have no other vice than stupidity. A slave to duty, he felt condemned to confidence by that which his master had shown him in a thousand occasions. Adriani smiled as he saw this suppressed anxiety from the human respect.

"By the way," he said, retracing his steps, as if struck by a memory: I put my wallet in that drawer. Take it on you. Comtois; although the people at this hostel seem honest, it will still be safer.

He gave her the key to the drawer and left.

Comtois opened the wallet hastily and saw that it contained a ten thousand francs in banknotes. There was calm in his soul, his appetite returned. He quietly finished his lunch. master, and savored the excellent trout from the Sorgue accommodated with a veritable _mastery_ by the host of _Petrarque_'s hotel. He put away everything, then, with the greatest respect for the room of his master, cleaned his travel inkwell and used it to record in his diary the following thoughts:

"Bourgade de Vaucluse, September 1, 18...

"Monsieur is only an artist, it is the truth; but, despite this, it is a very gallant man, who shows people, on occasion, the case that he makes of their probity. Monsieur is also a very kind man. He chatted with me this morning for the first time, and put me to even to see that he is not without spirit and without education."

After which, Comtois went to see the grotto and the underground lake of Vaucluse; which provides him with material for a descriptive letter addressed to his _wife_, and which began thus:

"Nothing more astonished than I at the sight of this water sung by Mr. Petrarch! etc."

Let's note a fact, before leaving Mr. Comtois to his fantasies: it was because he had a protective affection for his wife. He confessed willingly told his friends that he had made a _garrison marriage_, for she was a simple cook and did not spell a word; but she had a natural mind, he said, and guessed things above its reach. That's why he wasn't sorry to dazzle him, on occasion, by a superiority which he judged indisputable.

Adriani had however passed in front of the source without granting him a glance. He had crossed the surrounding mountains, heading for as the crow flies towards the village of Gordès, which he had been told was neighbor of Larnac. He arrived in the middle of the day, insensitive to fatigue and oppressive heat at the end of its race.

Only there could he think of admiring the country, which was superb, and fertile valleys, protected by mountains of a rather beautiful character. Larnac was an old mansion of an imposing aspect by its situation, of mediocre importance, however, but made comfortable by the long residence of a wealthy family and the care that the mother-in-law of Laure had donated there during her tutelage. In the first days of her marriage, Laure herself had filled her home of a certain elegance, without inappropriate luxury. She would have liked to make people love this interior to her young husband. Since Octave's death, Laure has not had no longer cared or occupied herself with anything; but the Marquise had maintained all things with punctuality.

The word punctuality is the one that best suits to sum up the character and the entire existence of this woman that those around her distinguished from Laure by calling her _the marquise_, while Laure, marquise too, but held in a kind of inferiority of convenience, was designated under the name of _Madame Octave_. We will follow this given as to the mother-in-law, to avoid any confusion.

Her _maiden name_, as they still say in the old families, was Andrée d'Oppedete. She had been very beautiful, but cold, without charming and graceless. Raised in a convent in Avignon, then produced in the world of Avignon, Marseille, Nîmes and Uzès, married to a gentleman without having, but whose ancestors had provided viguiers to all the vigueries of Provence: loveless wife, mother without weakness, woman without reproach, she had led, under the most beautiful sun of the world, a life frozen by aristocratic prejudices and monks, so obstinate in the south of France. These prejudices were not not at home in a violent state. All violence was unknown to him. They were in a state of unshakeable, blissful, indestructible faith. View of a only side, it was a very-respectable nature, rigid on all the points of honour, disinterested, liberal as much as allowed him his ideas of order and the mediocrity of his fortune; as indulgent as can be a sixteen-quarter orthodoxy: chaste as much as can be being a woman who, by order of the confessor, undergoes the law without love marriage.

For a long time the beautiful Andrée shone in the world of Provence as a piece of furniture pageantry that adorned parties without brightening them up. Without leaving its family, which branched out by its alliances to an entire population of cousins, uncles, siblings and descendants of siblings, she found herself widespread. Family duties thus created for him habits of representation and hospitality, and, when she had said _the world_, object of her respect or consideration, she thought she was talking about the universe, and did not suspect that public opinion could dictate its judgments elsewhere than in the small group formed, in short, by his great relations in the

within a small caste.

The account of Toinette, relative to the long opposition of the Marquise to the marriage of Octave and his ward, was perfectly truthful. This rigid mother, this proud poor patrician, would have let of love and pain his son and his niece rather than letting suspect of calculation and capture. She only gave in when she saw Laure reach his majority without varying his preference; but, by yielding, she was careful not to show any joy in a marriage that was restoring a little his family crest. She didn't even feel any admiration for the constancy and generosity of his pupil. She looked at them like very simple things, up to which his pride, if not his sensibility, would have placed it, and she contented herself with saying:

--It's good, I surrender!

The tragic death of her son did not weaken this male courage. She had probably maternal entrails, and she felt the tear; but, the first consternation over, no one noticed her pain only at the complete disappearance of the rare and pale smile that sometimes touched his austere features. A few silver threads mingled with his hair, until then black as ebony. It was judged that she had suffered mortally under his resigned air. It is possible, it is likely; but it was not piety alone that triumphed over his regrets, it was pride and even vanity. There is no woman beautiful without secret self-indulgence. For lack of charms, the beautiful Andrée had never pleased anyone. She knew it, she had it felt. She also knew that she could shine neither in spirit nor by instruction. She enveloped herself in her firmness of character, which in more than one occasion had been noticed, and which her husband boasted for have something to brag about in its interior. She locked herself in it if well, that no Roman matron had put more pomp and solemnity.

As Adriani approached the castle, Laure and her mother-in-law, seated in a fairly handsome drawing-room, which passed for sumptuous in a country where luxury has penetrated very little, were talking together for the first times for a long time. Laura, involuntarily, but deeply offended by the intolerant stoicism of the marquise, had almost always enclosed in a respectful silence, telling herself, with reason, that a person whose whole moral action was limited to the science of respects_ was not entitled to anything other than respects. Arrival the late and very tired, Laure had gotten up late and was starting with the marquise an interview which could not be an outpouring and which took the character of an explanation.

"Well, my daughter," said the Marquise, whose inflexible voice did not know put no sweetness in this maternal talk, you are rested, you can tell me about yourself. Mademoiselle Muiron, whom I questioned this morning about your health, replied to me that you were both better and very bad; but this good person has so little judgment, which I love better to rely only on you. I cannot follow her in her affected language and in his muddled responses. Let's see how you find yourself physically and morally, after the strange journey you just did?

Laure felt reluctant to respond to expressions of interest sounded like a review. She just smiled with melancholy and to ask why the Marquise called her trip strange.

"I do not pretend to ridicule your proceedings, my dearest," replied the Marquise, much less blame them. I only allowed myself to to think that you were very young to leave the maternal wing like this, and very weak in health to throw you into solitude.

Laure kept silent, determined never to start any fight with her stepmother. She resumed:

--You are mistress of your actions, I know it, and I recognize your independence rights. It is therefore not to me that you will report

never, but the conveniences of a world that will not have for you the indulgence to which you claim.

"I claim nothing," answered Laure; but can i know what sovereign world accuse me?

--Nothing that I know of; but he is a little surprised, and perhaps will you find with me that we should not even worry about the human judgments.

"I think you are always right, dear mother," said the young woman with a gentleness without abandon. You can't go wrong, and your thoughts are a code, as your actions are an infallible model vis-à-vis the world: but I am no longer of the world, you know that.

"I'm sorry," resumed the marquise, without showing her displeasure by the slightest emotion, that you persist in this oddity of you to believe freed from all the bonds that souls undergo without effort well born. I would have thought that time and the contemplation of solitude, that the fruits of prayer and the seriousness of your role as a widow, you would finally provide the courage to set a good example. I am persuaded that you do not sense the danger in which you put souls, showing you so dismayed, so indifferent to the tokens of esteem that surround you. Allow my affection to tell you that we must to others, and that the most well-founded regrets, the deepest grief legitimate, can take on the appearance of romance and passion which does not suit a young woman...

The Marquise was there in her sermon when Toinette entered, her face upset, saying to Laure:

"Madam, would you please come a moment?"

--What is it? said the marquise, rising. Did a accident to someone at home?

"No, madame," replied Toinette, embarrassed. It's someone who asks to see Madame Octave.

--A country man? resumed the Marquise. That he comes; we let's listen to everyone.

"No," said Laure, who had understood, at first glance, the confusion of Toinette, and whose heart opened unexpectedly to a profound satisfaction: it's a visit, isn't it, Toinette?

"Well, what is this manner of announcing?" said the marquise to Toinetta. Are you up, my daughter? You go ahead of the anyone?... Know who it is first.

"He's a person I know," replied Laure, going up to the living room door, and holding out his hand to Adriani.

Adriani entered, kissing that hand with transport. The marquise remained amazed.

Adriani was so moved, so intoxicated at being received like this, that he did not see only the marquise.

"Mom," said Laure to her mother-in-law with the least ambiguous ease, "I introduce you to M. d'Argères, whom I have not yet had time to talk, but who deserves a warm welcome from you.

"I have no reason to doubt it, my daughter," replied the marquise, bowing. Adriani, according to the one you give him. You knew Mr. in your journey, and it must be a man of great merit so that such a new acquaintance has already taken place in your privacy.

Adriani, who was still holding Laure's hand in his, woke up with a start, not so much at the words of the marquise,

that he heard confusedly, that at the terrible gaze she fixed on him. Yet there was no anger in that look; but he gets away an icy cold escaped which passed through all the limbs.

Adriani left Laure's hand after having fucked her a second time; he bowed deeply to the Marquise, and, overcoming the kind of paralysis that the appearance of this woman caused him, he also stared at her, waiting for it to pass from epigram to reproach.

The Marquise remained standing, and this attitude was very significant. Laure could neither sit down nor make her guest sit down, before the old lady, accustomed besides to the role of first mistress of the house, would have given them the example.

This bizarre situation lasted almost a minute, that is to say a century, if we imagine Adriani's inner embarrassment.

But he had too much use not to seem as comfortable as if the Marquise would have received him with open arms, and this ease struck her deeply. She felt something higher in this unknown, and, as, at his eyes, superiority, it was a great name or a great position in the world, she feared she had gone too far and sat down inviting, with a royal gesture, his daughter-in-law and his guest to make so much. Then she closed herself in a majestic silence, but upright in his chair and waiting for an explanation.

It was not up to Laure to give it. She could not have the revelation, which Adriani probably did not want to make to a third party, of his secret feelings. She would have been very embarrassed to give the slightest clarification of the position he occupied in society, since she hadn't even thought of asking.

Toinette, who, through the privilege of seniority, had a place in the drawing-room, taking refuge in a corner where, pretending to put away a work basket, appalled at the attitude things were taking, but curious to see the outcome, it offered the living image of perplexity.

XI

The calmest person, apparently, in this petrified group, it was Adriani. Laure, quiet for herself, who felt nothing reproach himself, was not without concern for the one who, in him marking such a clear-cut attachment, exposed himself for her to unfair slights.

Adriani was a man of resolution, and seeing very clearly that the marquise would not leave the place without knowing what to expect, he spoke thus, addressing the old lady with an assurance respectful:

"It is quite simple that Madame la Marquise de Monteluz, for it is at she whom I have the honor to speak... (the Marquise made a slight nod), please know which person is enough audacious to present himself in front of her. This person is audacious indeed, very audacious; she does not hide it from herself; but Madame la Marquise has no reason to be alarmed, since it is not before her that the bold expected to be admitted. It would have happened present to it according to all the required formalities and with all the respect he knows he owes her, if the honor of paying court to her had been the purpose of his visit.

The person, the pronunciation, the manners of Adriani had so many natural and acquired distinction, and, at this moment, his will gave something so decided in her countenance, that the Marquise, vainly asking where she had heard the name of d'Argères, imagined that she saw some foreign prince before her. She therefore peacefully accepted the kind of lesson given to her by

stranger, certain that he was going to add something quite flatterer to compensate her.

Adriani continued:

--However, since the occasion serves me so well, and here I am favored to the point of finding myself in the presence of the two chatelaines of Larnac, I'm not schoolboy enough not to enjoy it with eagerness. I would have thought at first that it was enough for me to be introduced by the daughter to the mother to be trusted; but lady marquise deigning to question me...

The Marquise did not flinch. She put propriety far above courtesy, and false propriety above the true, which would have demanded that she accept, eyes closed, her daughter-in-law's bail. She waited for the continuation, like a woman who does not compromise.

Adriani, who watched him attentively without being able to surprise the shadow uncertainty or accommodation in his clear eyes, continued without worrying:

--I therefore see myself forced to make my own apology, in spite of all the rules of modesty. I will make it very short. I am a man blameless. I have some talent, some fortune. I belong to a honorable family. I am passionately in love with Madame Laure de Monteluz. I dared to tell him and put my existence at his feet. Far to encourage me, she fled me; I followed her, because I persist, and that I have decided not to give up my hopes until chased from here by herself.

Laure remained motionless and as though absorbed in calm meditation. A pale smile lit up her face.

The marquise was more petrified than ever. Toinette held back his breath.

Yet the Marquise was not opposed to this sort of solemnity. abrupt, which she attributed to the aplomb of a great character. She loved the struggle and the stubbornness of controversy.

"Monsieur," she answered, "in the manners of the southern nobility, a marriage proposal requires the meeting of the principal members of a family; but I believe to guess that you are foreign, at least to this part of France where we are, my daughter and I.

"Yes, madame," answered the artist with vivacity, and looking at Laure, that he longed to instruct better and more quickly than his mother-in-law. I am half a foreigner, since my mother was Italian, that I was born in Naples, and that I gladly bear the name of Adriani.

Laure shuddered, blushed weakly, as if at the joy of a pleasant discovery, and held out his hand again to the artist, without making the less attention to his mother-in-law's astonishment and dismay by Toinetta.

It was an intoxication of happiness for Adriani that this spontaneous movement. Laure knew he was an artist, and it was a title in her eyes.

As for the marquise, who, without being a musician, had always shown much encouragement and condescension for Laure's passion for the place of the music, where she did not remember having heard of a singer named Adriani, or, if she remembered reading that name engraved in her daughter-in-law's notebooks, she did not want to assume that it was the one who presented himself as rich and well-born. She confirmed herself in the supposition of a most brilliant destiny, and resumed his summary.

"I believe, sir, from your person and your language, that your pursuits can be very flattering for my daughter; but, with the Italian vivacity that characterizes you, you want to walk too fast. The thing is as delicate as possible in the minds of two women called by you to decide without taking advice except on their own. You

allow us to consult first, my daughter and I, and then to reunite our family before making a resolution as well severe. That's my daughter's opinion and mine.

Adriani questioned Laure's gaze, which remained gentle, but waves.

"What are you thinking of, my daughter?" said the Marquise, astonished at her concern.

Laure woke up and said calmly:

"I was thinking of him, mother, of what he tells us. What do you want I wonder when he is there? I love him as much as it is possible for me to love, and yet I cannot answer him yet. I can't, he knows well.

"So, Laure, nothing has changed between us?" cried Adriani. Well, thank you for the share of confidence that you keep in me. I feared to have to win her back. I was not frightened by it however: I was there so well solved! Be blessed, if this flight does not hide the desire to escape forever.

"My flight conceals nothing," answered Laure. Didn't you get my letter? I never took a step or said a word that hid something thing; don't you know?

--Yes, I know. I am wrong to speak as I do. I you understand, I know you, and that is why I adore you. You you thought you had to detach me from you and help me. You know, Laura, that I don't accept your opinion of yourself. Determined more than ever to fight it, here I am at your feet. You have to leave me there until your friendship for me becomes love or the version. As for me, I will only accept one judgment from you: that hatred or contempt.

"That one will never happen, Adriani. It is also impossible for me to to believe that you will become odious to me, that it is impossible for me to know if I will share your passion. In this uncertainty, my role vis-à-vis you can it be prolonged? Do you want that, I who have only one virtue, that of frankness, I accept the character of a flirtatious, and that I am entertaining perhaps ill-founded hopes? Leave me and give me time, that's what I asked you, this I ask you again.

--And here, replied Adriani impetuously, what I cannot grant you, me! I know very well against what memories, against what discouragements I have in struggling to overcome you. From afar, I will fail for sure. My letters, assuming you engage reading them, will not prove anything in my favour. Words are not shares. If you hunt me, I am lost, I know it; I am damned!

Adriani, at this thought, was so deeply moved that his face changed and that tears came to the edges of his eyelids; real tears that a voluntary excitation did not tear from the nervous system of a artist, but that a real pain spread in the voice and on the face of a man, in spite of himself.

Laure saw them, and the effect on her was so sudden and so sympathetic, that his eyes also moistened.

"No," she said to him, "I don't want you to go away sad; I do not want not have made you unhappy, even temporarily! You will stay with us until I have made you consent to you away without bitterness. Toinette, go, I beg you, have the room of Mr. Adriani. I invite him to spend a few days at me.--Mamma, she added as soon as Toinette had gone out, I ask you forgive me for taking this course without consulting you. He is circumstances, I see, where the conscience and the heart are in agreement to order our conduct, even if it is not approved by the beings we respect the most. It's up to me now to get you

humbly persuade to think like me on the account of the _ami_ that I dare to present you again as such, and who aspires to your kindness.

The marquise was so bewildered by what was happening before her eyes, that she could not at first find a word. All his _use_ abandoned him. She thought she was dreaming.

She knew Laure as _stubborn_. It is the word that, since childhood of her ward, she applied, without gaiety or bitterness, to her character. The result of this persistence in the feelings having been a happy marriage for the marquise's son, she must have recognize that she did not regret having been _defeated and dominated_ (so she spoke) by _that little girl_. Since death of Octave, the despondency of Laure, equally invincible, her hatred for this that the marquise called the world, especially her recent absence, which looked a bit like a disguised revolt against the habits of the family, had shocked the ideas of the old lady; but she flattered to bring his daughter-in-law back to absolute submission, at least in her presence. She was therefore stunned to see her become engaged, somehow. sort of to his beard (she had a little), with a stranger, without having regard to the wise delays and the minute investigations that she reserved to bring, in obstacle or in aid, in any project of marriage that Laure could form.

"You were very quickly indeed, my dear Laure," she said at last, with a your tone was all the more sour because he was more reserved. The Very Strange Party that you take to retain sir, at the risk of compromising your reputation, is the unfortunate result of imprudence committed no doubt in your unfortunate journey. It's definitely too late to get away with it. afflict, and I am not in the habit of being persecuted without usefulness. Since you are no longer perfectly in control of your actions, and that you thought it your duty to testify to a tender adorer of feelings after the avowal of which there are only possible transactions, I must lower my head in silence, and pray that the outcome of the novel be happy for you, edifying for others.

Having thus spoken, and said all these harsh things in a very soft voice, the lady got up, greeted Adriani, and left the apartment with the affectation of a person who feels too much.

It was time for her to withdraw, she had felt it herself seeing the fire of indignation rise in Adriani's face. This generous spirit revolted entirely against the dryness of the heart, and this harshness, almost insulting to a woman as tried as the poor Laure, seemed to him a crime. Even apart from his love for her, he would have felt the need to avenge her for these cold sarcasms. When the marquise had pushed the door back on her, he was standing, his eye menacing, mouth contracted in disdain. Laura took her arm to rouse him from his anxiety.

"Well," she said, smiling, "you didn't know what to do. brave to approach me here?"

"Yes, I knew it," he answered. I came anyway.

--And you will stay all the same.

--Not all the same, but because. The sight of this woman makes me bless my perseverance, and she explains everything to me. It's not to have lost Octave is to have remained under the yoke of his mother, which makes you to despair of all things and of yourself. This is the breath of death who would kill you, and to whom my influence and my will owe you to subtract.

--Forgive him, Adriani. It obeys a belief, and, moreover, this is not the time to curse her: it is to her that you owe your being here for a few days. If I had not been certain that in learning who you are she was going to insult you, I don't would not be so easily parted with the conduct that I had laid down for myself toward you; but I took the lead, reminding him that I am

here at home and that she can't chase anyone away.

--May it be blessed, then, this iron bar which encloses you, but which will bend or break before you, I swear. Forget it for the moment, and let me tell you about myself, about what you just said. What I am, I can see she doesn't know. Again; it's time you found out for yourself.

--No no! answered Laure, I know enough. You are the admirable Adriani whose pride and disinterestedness equal the genius and inspiration. If you are indeed wealthy (I was told the contrary), let me ignore it or only learn it by chance. Ah! my friend, do you believe that if my heart refuses the love that is had to, the obstacle be in you? No, of course. Whatever your condition in life, I want to know of you only yourself.

"Well," resumed Adriani, "it is of myself that I will speak to you in telling you that I owe my fortune to chance, and not to work who could distract me from you.

He then related all that was contained in the letter we have brought back, and which he hadn't been able to get Laure to hold.

They had been talking together for two hours when Toinette came back to say to the young woman that her mother-in-law wanted her to ride in his room for a moment.

"What is it, Toinette?" said Laura, getting up. Are we really angry against us?

--Alas! yes, Madame, answered Toinette, who had red eyes and swollen; madam has asked me a thousand questions, and never a criminal judge has tortured a witness in this way. What could I answer him? Sir would have much better to tell me his secret. I could have presented the truth in its best day.

"What secret, Toinette?" said Adriani impatiently. Of what I travel under my family name to avoid the importunities that overwhelm a artist whose pseudonym is known to all amateurs, and whose fortunately the figure is less known than the works, should we conclude that I blush for my profession? Is this the opinion of the marquise? Does she take the kind of modesty, which is the refuge of my independence of a walker, for the cowardice of an imbecile?

"I cannot tell you what she thinks; but your name Adriani has it intrigued. She has a desolate memory. She suddenly asked me if You were singing. I replied that it was through the music that you had made acquaintance with us. I thought I'd fix everything by telling the truth, me! She exclaimed: _That's it!_ And, after having treated me like an intriguing one, with her pinched little words that freeze your blood, she ordered me to call madam.

"I'm going," said Laure calmly. You did well to be sincere, TOINETTE And you, my friend, don't worry about me. I have maybe more energy than you would think.

Laure found her mother-in-law kneeling on a prie-dieu. The small bedroom and dark that she occupied at the castle of Larnac was poor, naked and clean as that of a nun. Laure had never been able to do it consent to take her share in the well-being she had brought in family. Haughty and stoic, the noble lady slept rough, and, as much by pride as by humility, she did not suffer the velvet a cushion between his knees and the oak wood of his kneeler.

She had not, however, put herself in prayers at that moment by ostentation or hypocrisy. She felt indignant, and she asked God not to show it. Sincere, but completely unintelligent of the delicacies of the heart, she thought she had won a decisive victory over itself, when, without raising its voice, nor feel the slightest acceleration of her blood, she had managed to premeditated injury to the dignity or sensitivity of others.

"My daughter," she said, getting up, "sit down, and please listen to me. with wisdom. You apparently, on the importance of distinctions social, ideas that are entirely different from mine?"

"I believe so, indeed, dear mother," replied Laure.

"I had sometimes suspected it," resumed the Marquise, "especially in these last time; but the distance that we have for each other any kind of idle discussion has prevented us from getting on well know until now, and I regret it. I could have fought you from the dangerous tendencies to the revolutionary ideas of this unfortunate century. I like to believe, however, that these tendencies are fought in yourself by the feeling of your own dignity, and that by postponing the wounding hopes of M. Adriani, you remember _what_ he is and _who_ you are."

She paused to wait for the answer of her interlocutor, who had, from childhood, acquired the habit of never interrupting it. Laura answered by summarizing, in a few words, without any reflection, the story Adriani had just told him. Then she waited at her turn the judgment that the Marquise would pass.

"From what you tell me," replied the latter, "and I want to suppose that M. d'Argères told you the truth, I see that he deserves to esteem and respect. His birth, though sortable, as far as I believe, does not seem to me to measure up to yours; her fortune, if she is real, is greater than what you own; but i you esteem enough to believe that it would not be in your eyes a sufficient compensation. However, I admit the inclinations of the heart who make people accept wealth without blushing, even though my son had no never obtained my consent to marry you, if your origin had been below his. These are, my daughter, scruples and personal convictions that I would not claim to impose on you, if there was no other obstacle between you and the unheard-of projects of Mr. from Argeres; but there is one so real that I cannot dispense with tell you about its importance. You know, my daughter, that I don't have the foolishness to despise artists any more than I despise any honest condition. I've known, compared to you, and I made you know famous musicians, among others Mr. Habeneck, who was a a very well brought up man, and who, by giving you some lessons accompaniment to please your piano master, has nothing wanted to receive as the price of his trouble. This forced me to invite her to dinner, and I did not regret it, seeing that he was not _drinking_ like do most musicians, and could talk about his art from a interesting way. You wanted us to make music at we. I was reluctant to do so, because your fortune, sufficient elsewhere, did not allow us to exercise a very suitable hospitality in Paris, and that I feared an air of intimacy on our part with artists. I gave in, however, and consented to small meetings where chosen musicians, attracting each other, came to procure the people in your company pleasant moments. I was wrong certainly, if you were able to conclude from there that these artists were your equals. I am reprehensible for not having foreseen that this idea sooner or later would germinate in a head that I didn't know was so elated that she was, or has become. My goal was first to to satisfy your tastes and to employ therein revenues which were yours; then, to make you shine in an elite world, where your talents and your beauty could put you in a position to establish yourself more advantageously, pecuniary speaking, than you did not wish to do so. I was, I still am, a provincial; I'm not blushing, well on the contrary! But I wanted to make you a Parisienne, in order to not have to reproach me for having kept you in an environment where love of my son became a sort of necessity for you. Well, my dear Laura, all my precautions have been foiled by you. First you have married my son; then you thought it was possible for you to remarry an artist. Come on, isn't that your thought lately?"

"I know, mother," replied Laure, "that I would like in vain to modify your ideas about the inequality of conditions. I will not undertake it. Unable to modify mine, my respect for you commands me to

shut up when you have spoken.

--So you think you may be entrenching yourself on what M. d'Argères isn't what you call an artist? You would try it in vain, my very expensive. Misfortunes that I am not much disposed to pity, since he confesses to having lost his fortune in the dissipations of a young man, voluntarily reduced it to undergo this degradation. I say voluntarily, because you claim that his family offered him a pension to make him give it up. I have a mediocre opinion, I tell you confess, of a man who openly hurts that of his parents, and I would much prefer M. d'Argères for you, ruined, but faithful to the proprieties of his caste, which Mr. Adriani enriched by chance and illustrated by his know-how. I know we had, in emigration, very great lords reduced to making use of their pleasure talents in a foreign country. It was out of necessity that they took this party, and they are well excused by the revolutionary persecution; but, in the case of your M. d'Argères, it is not so. It is his taste which pushed him to work, and work does not degrade man, but it moves him forever. Mr. d'Argères has ceased to exist for his peers the day he left print, on a poster of concert or show, the name of Adriani, and to appear in his person in front of paying spectators. You think he never rode on the trestles? You are mistaken, and his memory deceives him himself. I am perfectly reminded just now of the way in which our cousin, M. de Montesclat, spoke to us about him about three years, on his return from Paris. He too prides himself on pomp, and he said he had heard nothing more perfect in his journey than a certain Adriani who had sung, I no longer know in which theatre, at the benefit of I don't know what... Wait! it was for the benefit of Italian refugees. Yes, that's it. Sad pretext or sad motive, my daughter, who would prove that this gentleman has opinions very contrary to those of your world!

The marquise spoke for a long time in this tone and demonstrated by a more b that a man, delivered to criticism, was so to insult: in what way does it was not much mistaken: but, counting for nothing, even ignorant quite what true vocations order artists to know to suffer, she made subtle distinctions between the honor of the gentleman, who can demand reason from a clumsy, and that of the artist, who cannot make a whole room draw his sword, and who, to receive the alms of applause, exposes himself with joy of heart in spite of the whistles. Finally, it was logical from his point of view, eloquent in his own way, and concludes by begging his daughter-in-law for him take an oath on the Gospel: it would dismiss the artist the next day, after having radically taken away from him the pretension of being his husband.

XII

Like all thoughtful people, who discuss internally, Laure never argued in words. She let this flood of reprobation on the head of Adriani, with whom she identified herself in the feeling of resistance; then, summoned to promise, she refused clearly.

--No, mother, she said, never! In the crisis of my deadliest pains, I almost formed wishes that now would destroy your fears, but which would cause me remorse. I would gladly have sworn, in those moments, never to love again; now I'm not sure not to love. As long as this affection is uncertain and incomplete, I am resolved to remove the man who inspires me; but, if, after having tried in turn the effect of his presence and his absence, I feel capable of attaching myself to him, certain of not never meet a more worthy object, I will obey my heart. It will be for me the will of God; because, far from having to fight me until present, I do nothing but ask him for the benefit of the life, and if love triumphs over my dejection, I will receive it as one

receives grace. These are my thoughts, these are my resolutions; I do not you will never cheat. Deign to see no personal resistance against you in this resistance of my whole being to your opinions.

--Laure! Laura! cried the marquise, more moved than she had ever been. been in a quarrel, you smash your life and mine!

There was a kind of pain in his accent. Laura was touched, and, throwing herself on her knees before her, she took her hands:

"My dear aunt," she said to him, instinctively returning to the habit of his youthful years, do not withdraw your concern from me, some unworthy that I appear to you. God is my witness that in fighting you I respect...

--Ah! you never loved me! said the Marquise, surprised by a feeling of sadness.

But it was a quick flash; she went on, with the coldness of the obstinate insinuation:

--If you had the slightest attachment to me, you would renounce chimeras rather than afflict me thus!

"Yes, yes," said the young woman still at her feet, "I would give up chimeras; but to a certainty, I do not owe it. Hear me like a mother; this will be the first time in my life that I have tried you tender, and, if I fail, I will have nothing to reproach myself for. You do me don't know, you've never known me, or else it's you who do not love your children and who cannot sacrifice any of your austere principles to their happiness, to their existence. It is not a reproach that I address to you; you have the greatness of a mother Spartan!...

"Say of a Christian mother," replied the marquise. That of Maccabees saw his sons tortured and preached to them the true faith even in the arms of death.

"Well, know my sufferings and see my agony," replied Laura with strength; you will add this palm to your triumphs, if you remain indifferent and unwavering. I'm dying, my mother, I'm fading, I become mad or stupid if someone does not save me and impose on me, for his faith and his will, the love that I no longer have the strength to find in myself. I have suffered too much, you see! I have suffered since my childhood. You never wanted to suspect that, you who can't suffer! You never saw that I was dying, child, of the death of my mother. You never had a tear for the one who was your sister, and this insensitivity or this strength made you, to my eyes, an object of dread, an incomprehensible power. When You made me say my prayers, on my knees in front of you, like here I am again, the sobs were choking me. You took my handkerchief, you pass roughly over my flooded face, and you say to me:

--Do not weep, child; it's bad, since your mother is in heaven!

"You were right; but children need tenderness. It's their religion, to them, and you would have done me more good by pressing me on your heart and mingling one of your tears with mine, than by breaking my knees and crushing my feelings in prayer. You do not have never had for me the sweet assistance of pity, more fruitful, believe me, only the remonstrances of courage. We only fortify helping, taking on a part of the burden of the afflicted. You me let everything carry while shouting to me:

--Deliver thyself!

"Oh! never a caress! never a complaint! Also I was not demanding in terms of commiseration, and, when Octave said to me: "Come play, my poor Laure!" I followed him without resistance and I contained my sadness so as not to share it with him. Everything is here, do you see! When one is loving, one finds one's own energy only in

the desire to please others. Left to oneself and sure of to suffer alone, one succumbs! When we have recognized that the encouragements of cold reason only express impatience and weariness of seeing suffer, we learn to contain ourselves, we take the exterior of resignation, and you devour yourself. That's what you made me! a calm and silent being, who lives in the inside and which is forced to burst or perish. And, during my long love for Octave, didn't you work tirelessly to take my only dream of happiness to which I had attached myself? It's your resistance who made the strength and duration of this love. During my union with him, you saw me suffer from a frightful terror; sometimes i have dare to tell you:

--I think he doesn't love me!

"He loved me though, but he wasn't all about affection, and indoor life was impossible for him. You trained him to this contempt for the domestic hearth, fearing for him no danger, not admitting that the society of a son or a husband was necessary to his mother or his wife! My concerns for his life made you smile, and, as for those whose object was his love, you answer:

"He has no mistress elsewhere; he has religious principles; so he loves you, and if you're not happy, it's because you dream of romantic feelings that the sanctity of the marriage.

"Well, you may be in reality, you may have the just appreciation of the fatality which presides over human destinies! But you accept his judgment effortlessly, and I cannot; no, look, mother, I can't! I only asked you for one thing: it was to let me mourn my husband all alone, there, in a corner, to savor my pain until it was exhausted. You do not you didn't want it. The day after a terrible disaster, you reproached me for being deaf to the compliments of condolence of your countless family. It was necessary, on returning from the funeral ceremony, do the honors of a meal: your family was hungry! Then every days, visits from morning until night! We had to listen to these odious questions of curious idleness or heartless pity delicacy, hearing your parents tell each other the story of the event, the horrible description of the injuries!... You could face it all and say to all things, "God's will be done!" Me, I fled, I locked myself in, I stifled my cries. Toinette guarded me, fainting or wandering, for whole nights. And when I I was hanging out in your living room, you wouldn't forgive me for a distraction, a misunderstanding of name or person, which could not be taxed rudeness than by heartless friends and heartless relatives. entrails.

"Well, you have reduced me to such a state of moral constraint, that I I felt, one day, stupefied and like falling back into childhood. It is while I moved away from you to breathe, to try to come to my senses. I had no goal in front of me; I was leaving randomly. I found on my way a poor, very ugly house which belonged to me, where I had the right to belong to myself, to lock me up, to make me forget. The love of a generous and tender man came to find me there. I thought I couldn't answer it. By respect for him, I came to take over my channel, believing that he would forget me. He followed me, he's here, he says I'll love him, he wants That I like. He will wait for me to know him, to appreciate him; he accept all hardships, all delays, and I would push him away without hearing it! and I would give up my last chance of salvation! Why? So as not to shock prejudices that I do not share? You you are however mistaken in thinking that I am infatuated with new ideas and that I carry exaltation in my resistance. Alas! is it that I have ideas, me? Is, raised as I was, and only alive moreover that for Octave, I never wondered what it was than a misalliance? Never have I understood injustice so well and the error of the opinions that you defend, that for an hour that I listens to you. I would perhaps never have reproved them if my heart,

who wakes up and stirs, no longer made me hear truths persuasive, more Christian and more human than yours. You me believe impious! No, my mother, I am not impious. I believe as much as you to the law of the Gospel, but I understand it differently. I see it a doctrine full of tenderness, devotion and humility, which commands me to love otherwise than in view of the vanities and ambitions of this world.

Laure stopped, exhausted, and looked in her mother-in-law's eyes the emotion that filled his soul and his voice. She found only one profound disbelief, a kind of mute mockery that was atheism fanaticism. Forget this antithesis, seemingly paradoxical. The fanatic only loves God in God and outside of humanity. He forgets or he ignores that we are all formed from his essence, animated of his life, and that to count our misfortunes and our rights as nothing is restore _Christ on the cross_ in the person of humanity.

The marquise did not reply to any of her daughter-in-law's reproaches. She took no notice of it. She even accepted them as praise, as justice done to him. By addressing them to her, Laure knew though she wouldn't be hurt.

She hadn't hoped to bend her either: she knew her too well good. She had wanted to explain herself, to formulate herself once and for all.

The marquise got up and left her on her knees. Laura had to get up of herself without having obtained the slightest mark of tenderness or of indulgence.

"You are very eloquent, my daughter," said the marquise, "and I understand the prestige you can exercise over vivid imaginations; but the mine is not of that number, and I do not take the awakening of your senses for an utterly divine need of your soul.

"Enough, madame, enough!" said Laure indignantly. Don't love me, I agree; but don't insult me, I don't deserve it.

--Insult you, my daughter! God forbid! There's nothing there but strong natural and even legitimate, when a well-matched marriage of good example sanctions our desires and puts an end to the troubles of widowhood. But we are guilty when we yield to the restlessness of the passions, regardless of the respect we owe ourselves. You would be in this case if you refused me the promise that I claimed to you just now.

"I still refuse it to you.

--You will think about it tonight, and tomorrow, like your aunts in Roqueforte and Roquebrune come to spend the day here with their children, I hope you will spare me the shame and embarrassment of introducing them Mr Adriani.

"And if it were otherwise, madame?" if I presented it to them myself?

--Oh! free to you, my daughter! said the marquise with a frightening smile, for it was the first since the death of his son, and he looked like a curse. You are in control of your actions, and I have neither the neither the right nor the desire to impose eternal mourning on you. You know I am selfless for my dead son, as I was for my son alive. But, like my duties to the rest of my family will remain as long as I am of this world, it does not suit me to violate to make you happy. No human power will decide to insult my parents by sending them away from here, and the worst insult would be to announce to them the possibility of their alliance with a singer. So you will think about it and you will choose. Or Mr. Adriani will no longer be here tomorrow at noon, or I will be leaving your house never to return.

Laure approached her mother-in-law, took her hand and kissed it with a coldness equal to his own, saying to him:

"No, my mother, you will not leave here; you won't leave a house which has become yours, and where your son's grave tie forever.

She left without explaining herself further, went to her room and wrote to Adriani:

"Leave, my friend, so that my mother-in-law does not leave. I owe him here the sacrifice of my own satisfaction. But I promised you some days. Leave this evening for Mauzères, I will leave tomorrow for the Temple."

Toinette took this note to Adriani without knowing what it contained. Adriani had no hesitation, no doubt. He left on time even without saying a word. The marquise dined with a good appetite. It was all satisfaction she expressed to her daughter-in-law. The next day when she woke up (and she was very early in the morning), she learned that Laure and Toinette had also left during the night, without telling anyone.

Roqueforte's aunt and Roquebrune's aunt, cousin of Miremagne and Montesclat's cousin arrived exactly at noon, with a swarm of noisy little cousins and little cousins dressed up. All these people, who came running to greet the return of _madame Octave_, was more or less disappointed, but above all intrigued to learn that she had already left. In a less intimate environment, the marquise could have explained this mystery by the classic defeat of the family affairs; but neither the Larnacs nor the Monteluz could have hidden interests for the two or three hundred people who, from near or far, demanded their trust as parents. The curiosity of the provincials is ardent and naive. Overwhelmed with questions, the marquise decided to say what she believed, in good faith, to be the truth.

"Listen," she said, "I neither can nor want to deceive you; but, for the rest and the consideration of the family, this must remain between us and not become the pasture of the country. that the people and the bourgeoisie therefore believe that Madame Octave has serious business in the Would live. It is a duty for all of you to speak thus.

"Without doubt, without doubt," said Roqueforte's aunt; we understand although there is something else, and that is...

"That is the saddest thing in the world," resumed the Marquise. My stepdaughter is crazy!

Thereupon, she related as what, _without appreciable motives to the human reason_, Laure, after leaving to travel, had returned, when she announced in her letters the intention to extend his absence; how she had arrived, two days before, at Larnac, with the apparent intention of staying there, and as if she had left after twenty-four hours, without any explanation.

"Everything leads me to believe," added the Marquise, "that she has taken a liking to her small property in the Ardèche, and that she has the fancy to do there build, to spend the summers in a climate less hot than ours. In all this, I see nothing to blame, except the silence that she keeps on his projects; but even that cannot offend me, since the poor creature does not really know itself what it wants, and that the air distracted and almost bewildered that you have seen him at times is maintaining his usual physiognomy. I'll wait to find out where she is to advise what I should do. If his pain increases to the point that my care is necessary, I will try to bring her back here, or else I will follow her where she wants me to follow her. So here I am among you like the bird on the branch, and waiting, in this as in all things, the will of God!

There was no mention of Adriani. We knew, after a few days, that a stranger had paid a visit to the ladies of Larnac; home did not learn about this visit anything particular enough to make it coincide with Laure's sudden departure. The marquise answered, on this point, so as to rule out any idea of rapprochement, and says that she

believed that she had received offers that day from a commercial traveler from whom she didn't even know the name.

XIII

Journal de Comtois.

Mauzères, September 10, 18...

I was right to think that I would have trouble with my artist. It's not that he's a bad boy: he's, on the contrary, a very good child, and whom I consider a true comrade. But all artists are either crackpots or scoundrels. Mine is in the crazy. It makes me fly from Mauzères to Vaucluse, and from Vaucluse to Mauzères, the time to unpack his suitcase, brush his coat and repack your suitcase. Luckily I had hurried to see the fountain of M. de Petrarque; otherwise, I would not have seen it. If this Isn't that I believe he has friendship for me, I would wonder why does he keep me, because I only use him to shave him, and again do I have to watch him to prevent him from shaving himself. I think although he has not always had the means to be served and that he does not not used to it. But it seems that he has the one to run and to torment his world, because I am on the teeth, which, by the way, always hurt badly.

Narration.

Adriani received a new note from Laure in Valence.

"Don't be worried, she would tell him, I'm on my way; but the poor Toinette has one of those violent migraines which require twenty-four hours of rest. I take care of her, in order to arrive more quickly. I will be at Temple Tuesday evening."

Adriani was therefore thirty-six hours ahead of Laure. He put them to profit to give him a surprise. He stopped one morning in Valencia and used all the stores in town to procure furniture, curtains, ornamental vases, rugs, whatever he could find less junk, in the junk that Paris provides to the province. Comtois had the wit to discover a bric-a-brac where his master got his hands on some pretty nice things. In this circumstance, Comtois, despite his constant toothache, knew how to make himself useful. He haggled, paid, had the parcels packed and loaded, and won much time by the order he brought in these details. Adriani also wanted flowers. Comtois ran to one side, as he ran on the other, and the nurserymen of the suburbs delivered crates orange and pomegranate trees in bloom, oleanders, dahlias, heliotropes, verbenas, well what you can find roughly everywhere now, but in large enough quantities to rejuvenate the appearance of the sad Temple garden.

A boat took this load, and Adriani reached Tournon to arrange immediately the means to transport by land without interruption.

Almost everything went smoothly. The artist and his valet, aided by laborers hired by the day, hastily arranged the poor mansion whose ugliness and inconvenience Laure had endured with so much of indifference. There were many curtains that were too long, hangings that were badly adjusted, but the blackened walls on the ground floor disappeared under the fabrics, and the disjointed tile under the rugs. nettles, which grew up to the threshold of the vestibule, were uprooted. Sand spread everywhere around the house. Shrub crates were Arranged in clumps of a pleasant appearance, the flowerbeds received flower pots. Large terracotta vases, of a rather

happy, furnished the corners of the salon and the embrasures of the windows. Candelabras and chandeliers of the same material and of equal simplicity, but whose clay tone went well with the garlands of ivy that Adriani rolled up in it himself, took on this feeling of grace that the artist knows how to give to the smallest things. Finally, within a day, everything was transformed as if by magic in the residence of Laure, and the workmen were dismissed at sunset, in order to that she find there the solitude and the silence that she loved.

Comtois remained the last to dust, to remove the sprigs of moss and rose leaves left on the carpet, to light the fire scented with resinous branches, to give the draperies the touch of master's hand. Then he retired, quite satisfied with Adriani's praise, to go and sleep at Mauzères and announce his master there, who had not still took the time to show up. Yet Comtois, who had accustomed to complaining, complained in his diary, as we have seen at the beginning of this chapter, to be exhausted and to have nothing to do. He made no mention of the Temple embellishments. Having guessed far beyond reality, and beginning to feel for _his artist_ a kind of attachment, he did not want to comment further on his loves. Besides, Comtois counted for nothing for having worked as a nigger all day, and what he called being useful to his master would have consisted, according to him, of pampering to his person, accompanied by _interesting conversations_. Conversation was Comtois' dream, and any contrary concerns on the part of his masters seemed to constitute the crime of ingratitude.

When Adriani found himself alone in the rejuvenated and fragrant little salon of the Temple, he tried the piano, which he had had taken out of its box and place in the center of the apartment. The room had become less noisy; the song, more veiled, seemed more intimate and more mysterious. Then, overwhelmed with fatigue, the artist threw himself on a chair in a corner. He ... not didn't want to tread on the first velvet couch reserved for Laure. He looked at all of its ornamentation, that twenty lighted candles made them more cheerful. He remembered the moment when he had entered this place after Laura's flight, and, comparing the terror and the distress that he had experienced in the hope and the joy that he brought now he looked into this life of four or five days as in a dream.

"And if she didn't come!" he suddenly said to himself; if it was her was ill!... an accident while traveling... no! but the will of his mother-in-law, housework, homework...

He imagined everything, rather than a lack of faith; but a vague terror gripped him with every passing minute. Finally, around nine hours, he heard the distant rumble of a car. He rushed outside. Laura was indeed arriving. She had found, at the post house, mules from his farm led by old Ladouze, whom Adriani had sent in advance to meet it to lead it through the inevitable crossroads. If he had had the time, Adriani would have cleared a path.

Laure's surprise was very lively and very sweet when she saw the miracle performed in his home. A few days earlier, she she might not have noticed; but she saw everything through the eyes of the heart. No foresight, no research escaped him. By entering in the living room and seeing the open piano, she looked for the enchanter.

--Where is he then? she cried.

"Sir... sir thing?" Mariotte said to him, who could not restrain no name; he was there just now, and he worked well the whole day to arrange everything that Madame had been buying at the city. He said many times: "Try to make Madame happy!" He took care of everything, even the supper awaiting Madame; he told me not to put only two place settings and it's gone; but this is what he gave me for Madame.

It was a ticket.

"Laure," he said to her, "when you deign to receive me, send Mariotte by the vineyard path."

"Right away," said Laure to Mariotte, "run!"
a third cover.

Mariotte did not go far, Adriani was waiting at the entrance to the first vine. He did not, in his mind, demand to be called so soon; but, from the back of the hill, he listened to the soft sound of the arrival of his mistress, and he contemplated with delight the little gleam that the lighting of the house made rise behind the black vines to the top of the ravine. He remembered that, if, the day after his arrival in Mauzères, he would not have noticed this gleam and asked a game warden if it was moonrise, he might never have known Laure. It was this man's response that made him slow down and hear the penetrating voice of the desolate.

How many times, since, Adriani, taking or avoiding the path, questioned this point closer to the horizon, to find out if we slept or watched in the Temple? Very few times in fact, since so few days separated the invasion of this love from its first outbreak; but these days of intoxication are so full, that they seem to sum up centuries.

Until then, the dimly lit house had sometimes stood out to Adriani's approach by a reflection so faint that, for eyes indifferent, he would have been elusive. In that moment she was shining like a lighthouse, despite the curtains with which he had somehow veiled it; but the fire from Mariotte's kitchen cast its light all around, and it was like a lucky omen in the sky, like a fanfare of living in the house.

Adriani jumped for joy when he saw Mariotte arrive. surprise in darkness, she uttered a cry so vigorously accentuated that Laure heard it from the living room, and, easily struck by the expectation of something disaster like the one that had taken Octave from her, she went out and ran impetuously to meet Adriani.

It was the first time in three years that she had felt a lively emotion, produced by an external fact, and that his numbed body resumed the movement of the race. She fell breathless, trembling, in Adriani's arms, but rejuvenated, in fact, by a hundred years of languor which had gathered on his head.

It was, relative to the past, the sweetest moment in the life of the artist. Laure, recovering from her fright, wept, but it was with joy. She led Adriani quickly into the living room. She looked and admired naively, leaning on her arm, and going into ecstasies like a provincial, but understanding like an artist how taste had triumphed over the lack of luxury elements. She wanted to see by torchlight the improvised parterre around the house, and, when Mariotte announced that supper was served, she still admired all the little marvels which had made the dining room almost elegant and the appearance of the less cenobitic table. Comtois had tracked down, at the bric-a-brac of Valence, an almost complete service in old decorated earthenware, very beautiful, and some other objects from, to all appearance, of the seizure or looting of some seigniorial furniture at the time revolutionary. Mariotte had washed, rubbed and slightly broken the whole daytime. In short, the little room was cheerful, lighted, dry. From Indian bands with pink flowers, attached to the walls with a few nails hastily planted in the cornices, hid the ugly yellow paper ragged ochre, and gave the air of freshness and cleanliness which is, in short, the only necessary luxury.

It was quite a revolution in the life of a woman who had not not thought of having a window replaced, the absence of which gave him a cold. unwittingly, than to accept with pleasure this return to the delicacies of life. The delicacies of the soul, of which those of this material well-being were expression, also deeply touched this widow whose husband rough, heavy and stoic, had mocked and almost despised the tender thoughtfulness. Adriani gave Laure the kind of care she got

offered in vain to Octave. So he loved how she understood that we had to to like.

Laure felt a kind of playful tenderness during supper. She had free spirit, as present as if she had never felt the suffering from moral paralysis. She felt no fatigue from his trip. However, she was really tired, and during the dessert, her cheek resting on her hand, her eyes heavy under her long eyelids, her mouth rosy and smiling, she dozes off to the sound of the voice of Adriani, who was chatting gaily with Toinette.

--Ah! my dear child, said poor Muiron, lowering her voice, madness you make us do! But also how many miracles you know To do! If the marquise saw us there, all three, I believe that her large enamel eyes would turn us into statues; but, after all, what what she says and whatever happens, I am so happy to see my Laure healed, that I would dance if I weren't afraid to wake her up. Because she sleep, sir! And here's something that hasn't happened to him since his woe, to doze off before three or four o'clock in the morning! If she sleeps a whole night, I'll say you're a magician. And so see how beautiful she is, how happy she looks! She has her figure of child. She was pretty like that in her cradle. Ah! hold on, if she truly begins to love you, you will be everything that you please, prince or wanderer: I, I will also love you with all my soul for saving me.

La Muiron still said many encouraging things to Adriani. Her him said that the marquise had already tormented Laure many times since one year to engage her, not to get married right away, but to accept the idea, and she had obsessed him with the tributes of several more or less disagreeable suitors. However, there were two _very well_, said Toinette: young, rich, also handsome boys than Octave and more civilized. Laure had been revolted, indignant internally of their pretensions. She had discouraged them from the first day. Also, I despaired of ever seeing her console herself, added Toinette; I wondered what _demi-god_ one had to be to open his eyes, and, if you succeed, I will think that you are a whole god.

When Toinette learned, little by little, Adriani's story, she only fought more his hopes by useless apprehensions. She wished very much that the Marquise's prejudices were counted for nothing, and her role concentrated in that of advocate and enthusiastic panegyrist of the young artist with his mistress.

Happy days, but too quickly troubled, dawned on destiny from Adriani. Laure had made him promise not to send her any question about the future, during the whole week that she came to him devote. She consented to listen to him plead the cause of her love, to test his constant submission and devotion. Was she still uncertain within herself? Could she resist so much true eloquence, so much exquisite attention, so much of respect and charms of intimacy that the artist knew how to put at the service of his passion? And if she no longer resisted it inside, if she gained confidence in herself, if she associated her future with his, why did she delay telling him? Sometimes Adriani, whose young soul and boiling had difficulty in identifying with the despondency of this soul tried, imagined that Laure obeyed an instinct of coquetry legitimate and delayed his joy to make him feel the price. It was happy and proud: this sweet and naive pride of Laure seemed to him the awakening of nature in the heart of woman.

But it was not yet so. Laura was more perfect and less happy than she seemed. She made neither desire nor wait; she was waiting, she herself still desired the awakening complete with his being. There was in her a singular tenacity and difficult to overcome, for a given situation in the moral life. Blindly devoted in her affections, she knew so well that she could not to pull herself together, that she was really trembling at the thought of to give. She had such a lofty idea of shared love that she had a sort of religious terror at the entrance to the sanctuary. More

jealous of herself that Adriani felt entitled to be, she was afraid to see in his memories the shadow of Octave disputing her to a new love. And, as each day dimmed this image for grow that of Adriani, as each point of comparison was at the triumphant and indisputable advantage of the latter, she said to herself that the longer she waited, the more worthy she would be of him. She had regarded as a crime, towards this lover so abandoned to his empire, to reward so much pure flame with an equivocal tenderness or insufficient.

--No, no, she told him at the end of the promised week, I don't want half love you. A passion that is not paid for by a passion equivalent is a torture. God forbid I do it to you to know! Let's wait again. Aren't we fine here?

Adriani, who feared she was talking about separation, thanked her with drunkenness. She took his arm and said to him:

--Let's get out of the enclosure; you have made it so pretty and so precious to me, that I feel good there; but now I remember locking myself in voluntarily as a result of I do not know that she monastic mania. I want shake off all these cowardly fantasies. Come! we will take possession set of these hills where I have only walked with the eyes.

As she walked, she admired with him, at sunset, the beauty of the surrounding country, and from the top of an eminence she saw the turrets of Mauzeres.

"It seems very pretty to me," she said to him, "and it's so close!" Ah! why is it not yours! we could spend the fall in this country. We would see each other, as now, every day, without scandalizing nobody, and I believe that nowhere else we would be more free. I am not afraid of public opinion, and I would know how to defy it if it had to; but I don't like pointless attacks that seem cause attention. Happiness is not arrogant. He knows very well that we jealous him and he humiliates those who have not been able to find him. Mine would like to hide, not out of cowardice, but out of modesty.

"Mauzères will be mine," said Adriani to himself.

That same evening, finding himself with the baron, he brought the conversation with him about the amenities of his property, pretending to be very interested in agricultural and domestic matters which shared his life with the _commerce of the Muses_. The baron drew from his within one of those problematic sighs that belong only to owners, and said to him:

--Alas! my friend, this is all well and good; but the saying is true: "Who has land, has war!" You believe me here the happiest of men; well, if I found of my property what it is worth (I do not say what it cost me in embellishments and repairs), I would bless the purchaser who would relieve me of my worries.

The baron hesitated a little before continuing; but, seeing that Adriani listened to him with interest:

"I am going to confide my position to you as to a friend," he said to him. almost as much as I own.

--What! you so wise? Adriani said smiling.

--My dear child, poetry is a ruinous taste! You ignore it, you which combine the ode and the song; but know that verses don't sell point and that purely literary successes cost a man the scholarship and life. My poems are read, but bought so little, that I had to pay all the publication costs, which are never returned. I did not want, by offering them to publishers, to put my fame at the mercy of their interests. I wrote a lot, a lot printed, not worrying about cluttering the booksellers' shop,

provided that the critics and the public were kept in suspense, and that my name was made at the cost of my fortune. I don't regret it. I preferred art to wealth. Having, thank God, neither wife nor children, what more noble use could I make of my goods than to spread them in my Hippocrene? I also liked the commerce of scholars. I lived in Paris, I opened a salon, I gave dinners, literary evenings. I rendered services to artists; I traveled to retemper my inspiration and being able to sing *ex professo* the wonders of nature and ancient civilizations. What shall I tell you? I was thought to be rich because that I ate my fund with my income and that I had the liberality real rich. I had, however, only a mediocre fortune, and the little what I have left is burdened with mortgages; I still live honorably; but every year snowballs, and I'll soon be forced to sell Mauzères, which is all I have, to pay the capital and the interest arrears on my debts.

"Well, sell Mauzères without waiting for the disease to get worse.

"No doubt, no doubt!" it would take the power!

--Who prevents you?

--My unfortunate position, which is finally known in the country, and which makes that one awaits the day of the expropriation to buy with cheaper. And then the drop in price that particular bad weather and livestock mortalities have brought to our localities and which is so considerable, that I would find myself reduced to nothing. For example, Mauzères worth three hundred thousand francs; I might not sell it for a hundred fifty thousand this year. I would literally be without bread, since, in front of two hundred thousand francs, I wouldn't even have enough pay off my creditors. It's serious! I am no longer young, and, if I had to suffer the humiliation of prosecution, I would burn my brain.

"Thus, by selling Mauzères today for three hundred thousand francs, if that was possible, would you still have a hundred thousand francs to live on?

"I would consider myself very happy; for, with the interest, of which I pay only a part, I do not have the income of this sum.

"Well, my friend, would you sell Mauzères to me?"

"To you, my dear Adriani?" No. For half the amount he gave me should, you will find, at the moment, twenty properties in this countries here, which will be of the same value.

--Never mind, said Adriani, I love Mauzères and I pay for propriety: it is rational and legitimate.

--You save me! cried the baron.

But he had the scruples of an honest man and changed his mind.

"No, no," he went on, "I mustn't let you do this madness! you have two motives for doing it: your love first, I guess rest; and then the generous idea of saving a friend!

--These are two excellent patterns, and I know of none better on the ground. Have no qualms about it: Mauzères is worth, apart from your precarious position and a moment of particular crisis at this province, three hundred thousand francs.

--On honor!

"You said it, that is enough for me without any oath on your part; I do not question you any longer, I reason. So I say that in two or three years (perhaps before), this building will have recovered all its value. I do not I will therefore not be wronged, and the service I render you may be considered a simple cash advance. Do you like this residence? stay there, and just allow me to pay you and stay there with you.

"No, no," said the Baron. I burn to live in Paris; I rust, I wither me here. Oh! my five thousand livres a year and Paris, that's my dream for ten years!

However, there was still a certain fight of delicacy between the two friends. Adriani insisted so well that the Baron yielded and let it be seen as eager to sell as Adriani felt to buy.

XIV

The next day, Adriani and M. de West went to Tournon, to M. Bosquet, banker and friend of the latter, who, on the proofs of solvency provided by the artist, and on the moral guarantee of the baron, paid one hundred thousand francs to the latter and undertook to satisfy all its creditors within a week, on the condition that it would be subrogated in their mortgages on the land of Mauzères and in the seller's privilege, in case Adriani's funds are not available to him. still reimbursed.

Adriani was all the more able to inspire complete confidence, as he presented to M. Bosquet a letter from Descombes, dated September 12, and received at the same time, who spoke to him about his financial situation and was summed up as follows (it was the answer to a letter that we have not thought necessary to report, in which Adriani, without him indicate the mode of investment of its funds, said to him to dream the acquisition of a country house):

"Here you are at the head of five hundred thousand francs, and you have no debts. For you, it's wealth. However, if you were tempted to double, maybe triple your capital, I would do my best to succeed before a few days. I resist the temptation before your philosophy and your rural dreams. So buy an Arcadia, if you find it under your hand. I will hold the funds at your disposal, at your first request."

In the evening, Adriani ran to Laure. She hadn't worried about her absence during the day. He had warned her with a note, without him say what it was about; but she had found the time mortally long, and she hastened to tell him with the naivety joy of a patient who announces to his doctor the obvious symptoms of his healing.

"Mauzères is mine," said Adriani to him, kissing his hands. As long as you will want to stay in the Temple, and whenever you want come back, I could be there under your hand, under your feet, without my happiness to be your slave is betrayed by improbabilities of situation.

Laure was for a moment torn between gratitude and fear. This arrangement was almost a marriage, and she blamed herself yesterday's workout. Adriani guessed her and hastened to tell her that this affair was for him a wise investment, and that moreover it was doing Mr. de West a great service.

"If my neighborhood were to worry you," he added, "I would not live never Mauzères without your order.

--Ah! my friend, cried Laure, taking both her hands with outpouring, you love me too much! What will I do to deserve it?

Journal de Comtois.

September 16, 18...

There are so many amazing things. My artist is rich. He buys Mauzères, he draws thousands and cents from his pocket, and M. le Baron de West calls him his savior, when he thinks we don't listen to what they

say. I don't really know if I'll stay here, in case Mr. Adriani wants to stay there for a long time. I don't hate the countryside; but, as the baron says, you get very rusty there. It is true that Mr. Adriani would perhaps take my wife as a cook and that I would raise my children in the countryside, which would save me money. But he let's see how it turns out. I can't believe an artist has earned so much money by natural means. This one is very nice and very honest man, but after all it is not much.

Letter from Descombes to Adriani.

September 14.

I told you, the day before yesterday, to buy your Arcadie. Wait a bit; I hold such a magnificent operation, that one would have to be insane not to not associate yourself with it. You told me to place as I saw fit, while forbidding me to seek to enrich you more; but there are blows wealth which are such safe investments, that I would reproach myself forever for not making you win one hundred percent when I could. Sleep peacefully; tomorrow or the day after, you will be a millionaire.

Narration.

Adriani slept peacefully, after however having answered, mail by mail, to his friend, to confirm to him the news that he had bought at Mauzères and that he had disposed of the sum of three hundred thousand francs, reimbursable, within a week, to M. Bosquet, of Tournon. His first opinion, dated 14 and left Tournon itself, had already to reach Descombes when he repeated it to him.

Adriani, with his disinterestedness and his liberality, was not a weak-headed as it pleases greedy people to qualify indiscriminately noble characters and fools. He had ruined himself with the joy of heart in the first phase of its youth, but not without having aware of his sacrifices. He threw himself into pleasure, but not in the stupid vanities which are not pleasure, and, if he had done his accounts, he could have noted that these trainings had always had a goal of love, friendship or charity, poetry or trust chivalrous, with whom his material satisfactions had had no only a small part in the disaster.

He had realized his risks, he had faced them and suffered with a playful philosophy. He therefore understood his present situation. and would not have exposed himself to a new risk, as long as his new fortune was in his eyes a means of freedom in the dream of his love. He was not frightened by Descombes' letter, and yet he hastened to renew his injunction.

He spent the next day with Laure. She was more beautiful than usual, and, in a way, radiant. Each day brought a tremendous progress. She decided to sing with him, and it was a new delight for the artist. She was singing, not with as much skillfully, but with as much purity and truth as Adriani himself, in the order of sweet and tender feelings. Adriani knew what was going on stand on the merit of the difficulties overcome. Most singers of profession sacrifice accent and thought to feats of force, and, in the salons of Paris or the provinces, the young girl or the beautiful lady who knew how to acquire the roulade by dint of exercise dazzles the audience suddenly crushing the timid boarder romance.

To these miserable and hackneyed talents, Adriani much preferred the song of the villager who spins her spinning wheel or rocks her doll. He had rarely experienced complete enjoyment by listening to others artists; he could have counted those who had transported him through the beautiful in the simple, and by the great in the true. He had one of these transports of joy on discovering in Laure a superior instinct and faculties of interpretation which the lessons had been able to develop, but not create in it. She was not the first student of such and such a teacher making people say, with each effort in the manner: "I recognize you, method!"

He was an adorable individuality, who was aided by the knowledge scientific enough to occur vis-à-vis itself, in its nature of intelligence and heart; it was one of those elite powers that, in a lifetime, one encounters at most two or three times, to let you hear what's on your mind.

Adriani was especially happy to note that this individuality had had to understand his own, down to its most exquisite delicacies. It is always a secret suffering for an artist that to see oneself admired and applauded on the faith of others, or in relation to those of his qualities which he esteems the least. Until then he had felt, with Laure, an intelligence enlightened by the heart as much as by special knowledge; but he did not know that a genius equal to his took into account all the treasures he lavished on her in the only purpose of distracting her and pleasing her. He saw himself appreciated as he had never been by any public, and all he could say to her was to exclaim:

--Ah! I found my sister. I will become an artist! what hours delicious, what full days, what fusion of enthusiasm, what identification of sublime expansion the artist dreamed of as he descended towards Mauzères by the vineyard path, at sunrise! From celestial choirs sang in the pale clouds, and all the echoes of his soul were awake and sound.

He found the Baron busy putting away his papers and sorting final. The brave man was well consoled for not being able to title his volume: *the Lyre of Adriani*. He dreamed of writing an opera libretto.

--What a pity that you are rich! he said to his host; you would be first subject at the Opera, and what a role I have there for you!

He touched in turn his forehead and the loose leaves of his subject draft. Adriani trembled that he didn't want to tell her. Fortunately, the Baron had no such hateful thought.

"We'll talk about it again when you come to Paris," he resumed; because you won't spend the winter here!

--It's not likely, Adriani said randomly and to do it wait.

--Yes, yes, I will communicate it to you there, and you will give me advice. I will have prepared my ground. I know all the staff administrative and artist of lyrical theatres; I will have a turn favor whenever I want. Hold on, my child, you don't just have me saved from my ruin, you have made my fortune. I was perishing here; forced to annihilate myself in material worries, I no longer had any inspiration! Oh! don't say otherwise! I know it, I know myself, come on! Hey Well, I'm going to bloom again in the sun of intelligence! I'm not done for this bourgeois and rustic life. I was wrong when I believed that the solitude and the sun of the South would be favorable to me. I am a northern plant, me, and I feel like a stranger here. I need it mysterious fog and the harmonious tumult of large cities; he is need the conversation, the exchange of ideas, the vigorous emotions of art and the struggles of literary ambition. You will see, you will see! Rid of the dirty bailiff and notary paperwork, I'm going spring into my true sphere. I will have success, and glory, and money! for it is necessary, you see, to sustain the dignity of art. When I've made the companies millions theaters, all these people will believe in me, and I will be able to try new things, bringing lyrical drama into ways unexplored. It's a gold mine that the hundred thousand francs that you put me there in your pocket, not for me, I don't care, but for the progress of the beautiful and for the rise of the Muse! Besides, I want I have to earn some for myself too, some money! I don't forget that this is a contingent loan you made to me. If in three years Mauzères is not in a position to be sold for three hundred thousand francs, I buy it back from you at the same price, do you hear? I demand it be thus!

Comtois wrote to his wife, among other information:

"It will be fine if it lasts. He would intend to put me at home head of his house, and I would no longer be a valet, but rather thrifty. Well, I laugh at it, but it seems that we have to serve the artists to make their way."

The baron fell asleep dreaming of fame and fortune, Adriani dreaming of it happiness and love. When he woke up, the artist received from the hands of Comtois the following letter from Descombes:

"Your advice comes a day too late. I risked everything, lost everything! I ruined you, I ruined my father and me! My father is gone; me I rest. Oh! yes, I stay, go! Farewell, Adriani. Ah! you had good reason!..."

Adriani quiveringly opened another letter. She was of a certain Valérie, mistress of Descombes.

"Run up, Mr. Adriani. He took poison. We rescued him despite him. He is still alive, but only for a few days. I got it have him transported to my house, where I keep him hidden. Everything is captured at him. Come, because he is in his right mind and thinks only of you. You him procure a less ghastly death; for you are great and generous, you, and he only esteems you in the world. Come quickly! it is said that he will spend the week."

Adriani was so overwhelmed by his friend's misfortune that he did not think first to his own. He immediately asked for horses, and while harnessed, he ran to the Temple. It was only half of his race that he realized the disaster that was befalling him. He had not said nothing to the baron of these horrible letters. No one could have remember that he owed three hundred thousand francs and that he only had nothing. It was therefore a new thunderbolt which, added to the first, stopped him, as if paralyzed, in the middle of the vines.

--But I am dishonored and dead too! he cried. Descombes did not not only killed himself: he killed my love, my future, my life! That will i become?

He dropped onto the back of a shady ditch and caught himself weep for his hope with childish despair.

"The poor fellow," he said to himself, "he killed Laure too." I almost had it cured, I would have saved her, and here she is alone forever. who will love it like me, who will convince her as I could have done? who will be free, as I was, to devote years of patience and a whole happy life? Who will understand it? Who will forgive him for having loved? who guess her and judge her capable of loving again? Yes, Laura is lost, for she must relapse into her gloomy despair or accept the love of a man without resource and without pride: a man damaged by the most fatal coincidence... a coincidence in which no one will perhaps believe!... A bankrupt, me too!

He calmed down by stopping his thoughts on this last point. No one could accuse him of having speculated on an alleged fortune, since he had not received an obol for his account. It would be easy for him to to prove. The cold public, which attends as an amateur the disasters of the reality, would laugh at his adventure. Looks like:

"Here is a poor devil who believed himself lord, overnight, and whose awakening is very gloomy.

That would be all. But what a sad character was going to play the lover, almost the bridegroom of the young Marquise! As we were going to accuse him of attach to her to repair her debacle by a good marriage! What blame, how ironic, the noble family of Laure, the old marquise in head, was going to pour on her and on him! On him he could easily defy these proud provincials; but humiliation and ridicule would reach the woman foolish enough to attach herself to an adventurer, to a schemer. It wouldn't be in softer terms that we would do

mention of Adriani: he had to expect and prepare for it.

The idea came to him that the land of Mauzères had not melted into the cataclysm, that she was always there to guarantee the banker from Tournon and return to the baron the precarious existence, but still possible, that he had had the day before; but this consolation did not hold against the reflection. The banker had lent a sum double the value of the current and possibly future building. He would repent bitterly of his confidence, and he would demand of the baron, as compensation again insufficient, the repayment of the hundred thousand francs he had paid. The baron, chivalrous on occasion, would be the first to want to get rid of it. Thus, in effect, the seller would find himself ruined, and the lender still injured.

"That solution is impossible," thought the unfortunate artist. she leaves odious and reviled; it makes me cowardly and guilty if, by my work, I am not repairing this disaster.

Once on this ground, Adriani could have no illusions about the means of rapidly regaining this relatively immense sum. It was there in his part and strong from his own experience. modest life and easy of the composer who had sung _gratis_ his music no longer had anything possible. He would have to give concerts and run the world, no longer as an amateur, but as a man who speculates on friendships and honorable relationships formed in other times. This means seemed to him not only full of humiliations, but also precarious. He is silent generously given, lavished. Very few people are enough grateful to pay, afterwards, for the pleasure they had for nothing. Any direct complaint in this regard would be odious to a man of his character. The noblest virtuosos do not hide that a gig is a tax levied on the stock market of each of their knowledge and that you should not come back to it too often, or resign yourself not to see all the smiles on the presentation of the tickets that we dare not refuse. Besides, Adriani did not know and could not never organize a rewarded success himself. Very few people understand and seek genius; you have to dazzle them with a certain staged to attract them. The _pouf_ was also unknown impossible for Adriani.

Only one door opened before him, that of the theatre. There the success is all organized in advance, with a collective goal, for any artist the value of which is quoted under the expenses of the administration. There, in three years, with holidays, Adriani could earn three hundred thousand francs, for he could also give lessons at a very high price, as soon as he would be popularized; and only then would glory emerge behind closed doors closed which he had preferred to the brilliance of the stage; there, finally, it would be operated for the benefit of a commercial enterprise and does not belong really to the public than in relation to talent. It is not him directly that we would come and pay at the door. We would buy there, as the old marquise had said, the right to whistle it; but, of least, he would not have sold it in person and for his profit purely individual.

--There is still time! he says to him; the offers made to me are all recent: here is my assignment drawn up. It's the death of the artist maybe, because my vocation was not there, but it is the salvation of the man.

He got up to go and announce his resolution to Laure.

"She will pity me, he thought, but she will encourage me. She will understand that my honor, my conscience require that I move away, and perhaps that...

He stopped frozen, aghast. He remembered that Laure, talking to him d'Adriani, when she only knew d'Argères, had done a great merit to the artist for never having wanted to sell himself to the public. He himself then boasted of it, and it had been very obvious to him, in several circumstances, that Laure felt a real

repugnance for the profession he was about to embrace.

Was it due to a prejudice strongly anchored in the mores of his caste, in his devout family particularly? Had she sucked that prejudice with the milk and kept it, unbeknownst to him, while despising the prejudices in general? Wasn't it rather a result of his character concentrated, modest, a little wild, which made him look with dread and disgust the provocations of the talent to the applause of the crowd? He is certain that she made a secret of her own, that she adored the discretion of that of Adriani vis-à-vis the vulgar, and that she had said twenty times, when he refused to equal the great singers of our time:

--Ah! let, let! actors! They gave it their all the universe! There is nothing left in their souls for those who love!

Laura was wrong. Real great artists have diamonds in store hidden, whose mine is inexhaustible; but she didn't have enough frequented to find out, and she was moreover disposed to a tender jealousy in art as in love.

And then, what a struggle he would have to engage with his family to become attached to the destiny of an actor, since she was already almost cursed by her mother-in-law, for being fond of the least comedian of all virtuosos! It would no longer be the blame of pride noble: that would be the most absolute religious anathema, the most lightning. There would never be a possible return. That she would have said of an actor: "Yes, I love it!" she was forever postponed, alone with him in the world.

"She is capable of this sacrifice," he thought; but do I know if she loves me? And, if so, what have I done so far for her? what right have I acquired his devotion, to go and impose it on him? No, if she offered it to me at this moment, I would be a coward to accept it. If I had been engaged at the Opera, three weeks ago, would I even think to offer myself to her to take charge of her destiny? I would have thought myself foolish to think about it. And now, from what front will I say to him: "I I'm not free, I don't belong to myself anymore, I don't even have anything make you live from my work, since I am a debt slave money as much as a slave of the public and the theatre. all i want you asserted is a dream, all I promised you is a decoy. Follow me, sacrifice everything to me; I have no protection, no independence, no rest, no loneliness, no privacy to you give in return; I don't even have that pure and modest glory that you cherished. Come, love me anyway, because I want you. Be the wife of an actor!"

All these reflections, all these pains followed one another quickly. He took a last look at the highest branches of the hillside, those which he knew so well as those closest to the Temple. He snatched a tuft of vines, crumpled it, covered it with kisses and threw it in front of him, imagining that Laure would perhaps set foot there; then he hid his face in his hands and ran away like a madman, holding the sobs in his chest and dizzy in the fever of his race.

He found the carriage ready in the courtyard of his fatal castle of Mauzères, and Comtois, who was waiting for him, happy to see his wife again. and his little family. He went up to his room and hastily wrote these three lines:

"Laure, one of my dearest friends is dying a terrible death. He is request; I cannot delay for an hour, for a moment. I you will write from Paris; I will tell you..."

He could write no more; he erased the last three words, signed, and sent an express. Then he went to see the baron, who had just getting dressed and who, pale, trembling, held an open newspaper. Adriani understood that he knew everything. The baron stammered, did not hear what he said the artist, and suddenly throwing himself into his arms:

--Ah! my poor child! he exclaimed, you are lost, and so am I! But it's my fault! Ah! there they are, these goods of the earth! Their source is impure and they do not benefit honest people. Why poets and artists want to possess! Their lot in this world has always been and always will be to wander like Homer, lyre in hand and eyes closed!

"Reassure yourself on your account and on mine, my friend," replied the artist by kissing him. My despair is great enough; don't make it worse not out of vain fears; you are not ruined, neither am I. My have remained intact. I had forbidden poor Descombes to dispose.

--No, you say that to reassure my conscience. let's run home Bosquet, and let's pay him back.

-- Leave it! said Adriani putting the wallet back in his hands of his friend; I give you my word of honor that M. Bosquet will be paid in eight days and that I will be the owner of Mauzères like you your five thousand pounds a year. Come on, be brave! I will see Bosquet in passing through Tournon; I will reassure him if he is worried. complete your packaging and come join me in Paris. I can't wait for you only day: my poor friend is still breathing and waiting for me. Besides, I am too overwhelmed to be a pleasant traveling companion.

XV

Adriani left with his eyes closed, not that he thought of the precept of baron, but because he was afraid of seeing Toinette or Mariotte by the vines. He found M. Bosquet appalled at the news of the bankruptcy Descombes, the repercussions of which caused him a rather serious harm. He was an impressionable man and still inexperienced in deals. He was so disturbed that he hardly understood what he was saying his debtor. Adriani therefore had no difficulty in reassuring him about his own account. Bosquet knew the probity of the baron; he took mortgage, and, when he should have lost fifty thousand francs on the sale of Mauzères, he was one of those who believed in great successes, hence to the great literary profits of M. de West. Besides, he had just made a much bigger loss in the Descombes family, a certain loss. The one he risked with Adriani was less and gave him hope. She didn't move him as she would have done the day before, and, although the artist did not give her no guarantee, he humiliated her with no hurtful doubt.

Adriani's rapid journey seemed to him like a century of anguish and pains. The certainty of being forced to renounce Laure constituted she alone had such bitterness that the rest seemed lessened to her. At least, anything that could derail his plans for work and rehabilitation did not occur too much to his mind. It was enough to mourn the past, without worrying about the future. Everything was withered and disenchanted with the moral and intellectual life of the artist.

He entered Paris in the gray fog of morning, like a condemned man who walks towards the scaffold and who does not see the path that is being made for him to take. He went down to Valerie's. Descombes was still breathing, but the dull moans of agony had begun. He revived in recognizing his friend and was able to tell him several times:

--Forgive me! forgive me!

Adriani succeeds in making him understand, in making him believe that the sum fatal had not been paid by Bosquet, and that its ruin had not none of the fatal consequences which, above all things, tormented the dying person; but the unfortunate Descombes, while exhaling his last breaths, still had all his head, all his memory. He felt soon that Adriani was cheating on him to console him.

--Generous! he told her with a look of supreme pain.

Then his reason was suddenly lost; he shouted slang words from the Stock Exchange, saw formidable figures pass before his eyes, and tried to erase them with his convulsive hands; then he took to laugh, saying:

-- Misery!... art!... I am a painter!...

These were his last words. His teeth cracked in dreadful squeaks. He expired.

Adriani remained overwhelmed by this deathbed, which was that of his own moral destruction. Valerie took him into her living room.

"Adriani," she told him, "I am appalled and sorry. Yet my sorrow cannot be compared to yours: Descombes did not love me. Apart from you, the unfortunate no longer loved anything or anyone. He had maybe right! He despised his own pleasures and paid for them beautifully, without attaching any price to it. What I own comes to me from him. Well, take everything here. I never knew how to keep money; but all this luxury was his. He adorned this house, no to please me, but to gather his friends there and talk business people looking like they are having fun. Although all of this is under my name, I believe, I feel it's yours: you the only one stripped that I esteem and I pity, because the others pushed him to his ruin, and, after exciting and sharing his fever, they all cursed him and abandoned. You, who look like no one else, stay here, you are your house.

Valérie added, turning pale:

--I'll get out of it if you demand it.

Adriani knew he was loved by Valérie. He had resisted this kind training than an energized, somewhat lasting feeling that it may be, always exerts on a young man. He hadn't wanted to deceive Descombes, Valérie knew it well; she also knew very well that he would not accept his sacrifices, although she offered them with a exalted sincerity; but what she didn't know was that the heart d'Adriani had died of passing ailments.

"You don't think about what you say, my poor child, he he replied gently. In any case, it would be too early to tell. Won't you wait for this unfortunate man who is there to come out of your house to offer it to another?

--Ah! you don't understand me, she said, humiliated, and hastening to to do, out of self-love, still more than she had at first resolved; let's sell everything, take everything, and don't be grateful to me for it; I will be consoled if I save you.

--Good, Valerie! have such surges of heart, and meet an honest man who accepts them! but I cannot be that man.

--But what will become of you?

--I am engaged at the Opera.

--You?

--Yes, me, and from to-day. It must.

--Ah! I understand; you owe the sum. Well, hurry up: we're in talks with Lélío. Wait! yes, at five o'clock, Courtet will come here. (She was talking about one of the most influential personages in the destinies theater.) He does not know, like everyone else, that Descombes was here. I had to hide it to save it from prosecution and reproach. Hey Well, I'll know where the things that interest you are going.

Valérie did not add that she had such an influence on Courtet

more irresistible that he had been chasing her for some time and that she hadn't promised him anything yet. She felt that Adriani would reject his assistance; but she thought she should give him some advice which he recognized as very wise.

--Be careful not to make your position known to these people. she says. If you want a commitment of fifty or sixty thousand franc, pretend not to have the slightest need for money. Be actually owner of a castle in the South; that the bankruptcy of Descombes did not reach you. I will say you have a million; otherwise, you will be offered twenty thousand francs. Only the rich that one pays dearly, you know it well.

Adriani promised to return at five o'clock. He ran to his acquaintances to inquire on his side, and hid his disaster with all the less scruples because it was one less stain on the memory of poor Descombes. He learned with terror, at Meyerbeer, that the Opera had chosen its first tenor and that the treaty had to be signed during the day.

He was, in fact, but at seven o'clock, at Valérie's, between the director, whom Courtet summoned for this purpose, forthwith, and Adriani, for three years, and for sixty-five thousand francs a year. This that the most competent influences and the interests most determinants could have debated for a long time without success, as custom, the ascendancy of a woman prevailed by assault.

Valerie kept the two administrators to dinner. Adriani wanted flee.

"Stay," she told him. Tomorrow, all of Paris will know that Descombes is dead, and that he died at my house. As soon as his poor body is removed, I will confess the truth. Until then, I'm afraid they'll come to me torment. I took care to receive as usual. His room was isolated enough to be unaware of anything; but today, you see, my strength fails me, I am cold, I am afraid; I fear myself to betray; I'll go out after dinner, I won't come back until tomorrow. Leave a dead alone though! I'm sure my people won't dare to stay. If he's alone, I'll have to stay! But I will become crazy... Have pity on me!

Adriani remained, and when he was alone with the body of his unfortunate friend, he suffered less than during that dreadful dinner where he was not even not about art, but about business, projects and news from the world. He threw himself on a couch and slept for a few hours. He woke up in the middle of the night. The apartment was completely deserted and closed. Candles were burning in the mortuary chamber, the doors remained open on a small dark gallery filled with flowers. No religious ceremony was to take place for the suicide. He had formally forbidden that his remains be presented to the church, knowing that in such a case suicide is denied in order to bend the refusal of the clergy, and wanting that no one could doubt the punishment that he had inflicted on himself. However Valérie, obeying her childhood impressions, had placed a crucifix on the white sheet which drew the angular shapes of the corpse; but none of these prayers which are, in the absence of living faith, the last farewell of the family and of friendship, disturbed the gloomy silence of this funeral wake.

Adriani prayed for the unfortunate as he knew how to pray. He had towards God genuine impulses of the heart, deep tenderness and outpourings of hope, which, in short, sum up any invocation sincere. He had this pious, and perhaps legitimate, superstition of to think that a soul, which goes alone into the sphere unknown to alive, needs, in order to return to the home from which it emanated, the assistance of the souls from whom it separates here below. The rituals of religions are not vain simulacra; the songs, the tears, all ceremony which accompanies the mortal remains of a solemn exterior is the expression of this assistance beyond death.

Adriani was grateful to Valérie for entrusting him with the task of replacing all what the suicide lacked. An immense pity, a boundless forgiveness

stretched out over him, and Adriani's heart offered itself to God as the security for the rehabilitation of the unfortunate in a better world, or in a series of new tests. This forgiveness, he had expressed it to her to himself, but that wasn't enough. In a night of contemplation and of meditation, Adriani was able to question himself, strip himself, for the future as for the past, of all leaven of bitterness, and pronouncing on this falls the complete absolution that the priest would not have dared to grant.

Then, revived and strengthened by the awareness of his greatness of soul, Adriani attached himself to his own destiny by a sense of duty. He says to himself that man is condemned to work, not only to the one who amuses and fertilizes the spirit, but also to him who wears out and tears the soul. He ... not did not disguise that society should tend to make the burden more light for all; that the perfect state would be that which would establish a balance between pleasure and pain, between labor and enjoyment; but, faced with a society where too much evil weighs on some and too little about others, he understood that the choice of the proud and courageous must have been among the heaviest and most exposed. He lives opposite, on the contracted and already hideous features of the speculator, the traces of the excessive but abnormal work which consists in doing to serve as a stake, in an ardent and mad struggle, money, a sign material and product irrefutable to its origin of the work of the man. He surrounded with tender compassion the memory of his friend; but he condemned his work, source of illusions, pride and madness, pursuit of realities which are the scourge of truth, the goal diametrically opposed to destiny of man on earth and for the ends of Providence.

And, when he thought of his love, he wondered if he would have been worthy of it. savor without remorse the eternal sweetness. It seemed to him that, for to embrace and retain the ideal, one had to have suffered and worked more than he had done.

--This is why I loved Laure with idolatry from the first days, he said to himself: it's that she had drunk the chalice of pain and that I felt worthy to enter into the rest of well-earned bliss; and that is also why she did not love me in the same way; that's why she has hesitated, and why, despite her own efforts, she was preserved from my passion. I didn't deserve it, I who hadn't picked in life as artists as roses without thorns; I had not received the baptism of slavery; I had in fact immolated myself to nothing and to no one. She felt that I had not, like her, suffered my share of martyrdom and that I was not his equal.

He wrote to her under the impression of these thoughts, and informed her of all the truth by bidding him an eternal farewell.

There, his soul shattered again. He only regained courage by looking again the devastated brow of Descombes and his mouth contracted by despair even in the stillness of death.

"Come on," he said to himself, "better my desolate life is still worth to myself alone than this sad death for others.

He followed alone the convoy of this man of whom so many people were looking once opulence, audacity and success.

Then he took a day of rest, and prepared himself, by study, for his next start. The place had been empty for a month. We gave him fifteen days to be ready to begin in _Lucie_.

However, he had to take care of adjusting his position. He was linked with people of every condition, and from the number he could choose the capitalist who would look at his probity, his energy and his talent united as an infallible surety. He addressed himself to the one of whom he was the best known and best appreciated, confided his embarrassment to him, and asked three hundred thousand francs discounted over three years of his life. We refused to seize his salary in advance; we are happy to take mortgage on Mauzères. The sum was sent to Mr. Bosquet within the time of the promise made to him, and Adriani received, in exchange,

his title deeds to the land and castellany of Mauzères. When this matter was settled, Adriani breathed a little, and said to himself naively that in the midst of his misfortune his star did not abandon him. He ... not did not dream of telling himself that, to inspire so much confidence, it was necessary to be, as a talent and as a character, as capable as he of justify.

The day of the start arrived. Adriani was calm and self-possessed, but mortally sad at the bottom of the heart. He didn't have to organize his success. The management itself had no reason to worry about it. the whole world, as Parisian society is called, came himself, warned in advance in favor of the artist, resolved to support him in the event of a struggle, also curious to see him on the boards, and eager to to be able to say, in case of success: "It is I who protect him." The youth dilettante who invades this vast floor knew the story of Adriani, his recent fortune, his ruin, his resignation, his conduct towards Descombes: for, in spite of all his care, the truth had already come to light. We thus knew his character, and one was interested in the man before to love the artist.

The music of Lucie is easy, melodic, and carries by itself the virtuoso. A great tenderness takes the place of depth. This is weeps rather than sings, and, in terms of singing, the public love tears very much. Adriani, whose means were immense, was not afraid of this partition, and knew that there was no need to look for something other than the interpretation of heart found by Rubini. He also knew that the public of the French Opera demanded the acting more than singing in the actor, and does not always understand that the pain is more beautiful in the soul than in the arms. When Rubini mourns Lucia, the hand laying limply on his chest, the people who listen with the eyes find him cold; those who hear are seized to the bottom of the heart by this deep accent which issues from the entrails, and which, without childish imitation of the sobs of reality, without contortion and without grimace, penetrates you with its exquisite sensitivity. This is how Adriani heard him; but he was on the stage of the lyrical drama. He needed find what are called, in theatrical slang, effects. He the knew, and he had glimpsed some very simple ones, that his inspiration or his emotion had to make him succeed or fail. Having searched in the purer of his artistic conscience, he trusted to his destiny.

He therefore arrived at his lodge without any trouble, and waited for the signal without fear of heights. The man who watched with all his ability and all his will fitting out his ship, embarked peacefully, and surrendered to the hands of Providence, prepared for any event. Adriani was preserved by his character, by his experience, by his very sadness, of the thirst for to please, of the rivalry of talent, of the anguish of triumph, torments unheard of by most artists. He did not see, in the fight that he was going to deliver, that the fulfillment of an inevitable duty, the sacrifice of his personality, of his tastes, the abnegation of his just pride and his cherished independence. It was bad enough, without it join the tortures of vanity.

Costumed, made up, seated in his dressing room, surrounded by his warmest supporters and his most devoted friends, he was absorbed by a fixed idea.

--Farewell, Laura! farewell, love that I will never find again! he said in himself. In five minutes, when the faux purple curtain will have discovered my face, my person, my know-how, my whole being entire in the eyes of the congregation, your friend, your servant, your lover, your spouse will no longer be for you but a vanished dream, the memory of which will make you maybe blush. Ah! may it not make you cry! can you not not to have loved me! This is the last wish that I am reduced to form!

They asked him if he was moved, if he felt well, if his costume did not bother him, if he had not some preoccupation of which one could deliver him in this supreme moment. He thanked and smiled mechanically; but the questions which struck his ear transformed in his reverie. He imagined being asked:

"Do you still love her? Won't you console yourself not? Can you think of her at such a time?" And he answered inwardly: "I am under the sway of a strange fatality; I only see her, I only think of her, I only love her, and I don't think you can ever love anyone other than her."

They called him. The director grabbed him on the stairs, touched his heart laughing and exclaimed:

--Quiet really? That's wonderful! it's marvelous!

"I believe so," thought the artist, continuing to descend, "it's a dead heart!

This idea so stirred and revived what he believed to be the last breath of his moral life, that he entered the scene without remembering a word, a note of what he was going to say and sing. Good for him to know if well his role and his part, that the sounds and the words came out of him like an automaton. The first applause woke him up. Her beauty, its admirable timbre, the grace and nobility of all its person, which naturally gave the appearance of consummate art to all his movements, delighted the public before he had shown proof of talent or will.

"Come on, he said to himself with a bitter smile, my friends are here and suffering. to see me so lukewarm! Let's help them support me. And then they pay me dearly; you have to be conscientious.

He did his best, and it was so good that, from his first scenes, its success was indisputable and of good quality.

"It's taken away, my little one! someone from the theater asked him cheerfully. Still an act like that and Fire Nourishes is pressed!

--Ah! shut up, wretch! exclaimed Adriani, who had known and loved the admirable and excellent Nourrit, and who saw his tragic end and harrowing to pass before his eyes like the abyss of despair where the lives of great artists are sometimes swallowed up.

He found the Baron de West in his box, who hugged him in crying.

"I understand everything," exclaimed the worthy man. It's my fault, it is for me that you are reduced to that! I wouldn't be consoled never, if I were not sure that it was the god of the arts who wanted it, and that you turn your back on glory by burying yourself in the countryside. Come, you will sing my opera before it is three months old! Or do you stay, so that I can explain my plan to you?

--Tell me about her! cried Adriani. Where is she? What do you know of her? Have you seen her? Do you know...?

--What? who she? Ah! Yes but no. I don't know anything except that she didn't do anything eccentric about your leaving. We saw it in his garden as usual. She didn't seem sicker or more mentally deranged than before. Wait! yes, I was told that she was leaving, that we were packing at her place. She must be returned to her rock of Vaucluse. The devil be with this widow! How! you think about it that much!

--When did you leave Mauzères? resumed Adriani.

--Three days ago. I arrive an hour ago, I see your name on the poster, I think I'm dreaming; I'm informing myself; I put off until tomorrow the care of dinner, and here I am, not without difficulty; there is a world!...

"Have you been given anything for me?"

--Who? or? Ah! the low? But no; I would have told you right away. Doesn't she write to you?

Adriani left the Baron. Laure had not replied to her letter, and she was returning to Larnac.

--May the will of God be done! he says to him. She didn't love me; so much the better.

And this happy solution tore burning tears from him.

"Monsieur has a lot of nerves!" said Comtois to him, who did not stoop to the job of dressing an actor, but who, having remained in his service by attachment all the same, attended the performance and came on to congratulate. It doesn't surprise me that Monsieur is tired; he has to shout so much! Everyone is very happy with Monsieur. We say that gentleman has _ut_ in his chest; I hope it's not dangerous for the health of sir? But, if I were a gentleman, instead of drinking like that a drop of water in the intermission, I would put myself in the stomach a good leg of mutton and one or two good bottles Bordeaux to give me strength.

The final aria was sung by Adriani in a truly sublime manner. It was there that we expected him. He was a complete singer and actor there. charming; his pain was in the soul more than without; but his poses were naturally so beautiful and so happy, that they exempted him from epilepsy. He didn't shout, despite the expression Comtois; he sang until the end, and the emotion produced was so real, that his friends almost let the curtain fall without thinking of applaud him: they wept.

Immediately enthusiastic cries called him back. There were dissenters, without doubt; but those do not count and are silent when the majority speaks. Adriani made a great effort on himself to come back, in person, to receive the usual ovation.

It seemed to him that until then he had been _incognito_ on the stage, and that by ceasing to be the character of the play to greet and to thank the crowd, he received from them the necklace and the seal of slavery.

At the first steps he took on the stage to experience his triumph, a crown fell at his feet. At the same time, a woman dressed in pink and crowned with flowers hurried back into the tub upstage, where, hidden until then, she had not been seen by Adriani. He only glimpsed her now, and she disappeared like a vision.

"I am mad," he thought; I see her everywhere! A pink dress! from flowers! She here! Come on then, wretch! Go inside yourself and pick up this tribute from the first woman to come!

He nevertheless advanced as far as the ramp, in the midst of a rain of bouquets, mechanically holding the crown, and gazing into the lodge where this phantom had appeared to him; the box was empty and the door opened.

XVI

He was arrested for some time in the interior corridors, after had lowered the curtain, by the congratulations of all the staff of the theater. Both sympathy and envy had ardent praise for him: envy, in the theater, is even a little more complimentary than admiration.

As he arrived at his box, Comtois, radiant in his stupidity, ran up to meet him, crying out to him with a mysterious air:

"Monsieur, madame is here!"

--Mrs? said Adriani, who had a kind of dazzle and was forced to stop.

--Hey! yes, said the Baron, running up also; it is unheard of, but it is! Ah! we love you, it seems! No wonder! you are so handsome! Well, she's devilishly beautiful too; I didn't believe her though beautiful than that!

Adriani did not hear the baron; he was already at Laure's feet. But he was forced to get up immediately: ten people, followed by many others invaded his box. He was so distraught, that he didn't know who was talking to him or what they were saying to him. He soon lives all eyes fell on Laure with astonishment, with admiration.

She was, indeed, surprisingly beautiful in her evening. Bare arms, veiled bust, but triumphant in magnificence beneath waves of ribbons, her head adorned with flowers that could not contain her lush wavy hair, her face animated by a joy serious, with a frank and calm gaze, a modest air without confusion and attitude easy as that of chaste loyalty, she seemed to say to all these curious and charmed men:

--Well, see me here; I don't hide!

Toinette, in a silk dress and a bonnet with ribbons, looked rather like a fake actress mother. His embarrassment was laughable and we were already whispering on the beautiful mistress that Adriani had just bought; we did to him compliment in terms that would have exasperated him, had he not been drunk, when at an invitation to come to supper which was made to him, Laura stood up:

"Excuse me, gentlemen," she said in a tone of voice that tore a exclamation to several of the dilettanti present at this meeting, I am forced to take Adriani away from you. We have come a long way to hear it and see it. He must drive us home and have supper with us. we.

And, as we smiled at the naivety of this declaration, she added in a tone that felt, I will not say the woman of the world, but the woman highly placed by his education and his morals:

--We are provincials and we act with the frankness of our customs. We have the right vis-à-vis him.

"Yes, madame," replied Adriani, kissing Laure's hand with a deep respect. I am very proud to see you claiming the rights to friendship, and the one you deign to grant me is the only true triumph of my evening.

Laure then took the arm of the Baron de West, and begged him to lead her to her car, where she would wait until Adriani had left her costume for the join.

Adriani hurried on, amidst a crossfire of questions.

"This lady," he said, with that accent of deep conviction which imposes even though we have some, she's the woman I respect the most in the world. His name wouldn't tell you anything. She's from the province, she got it for you said.

--Parbleu! said the baron on his way back, she didn't come here in hiding place: you can tell who she is!

"You are right," said Adriani, who felt an air of mystery would compromise Laure, while the insurance of the deductible would triumph over suspicion up to a certain point: it is the Marquise de Monteluz.

--Laure de Larnac! cried one of the people present. I don't didn't recognize. How beautiful she is! A person who sang as no singer sings! a consummate musician, there! a

serious talent! I'm not surprised that she treats Adriani like her brother! Gentlemen, no comment on that woman. She loved as we no longer loves in our century, and her husband must not be jealous of nobody, not even Adriani, which says it all.

--But she is a widow! said the baron.

--True? Well, may she marry you, Adriani! I do not you wish for no less, and you deserve no less.

Adriani shook hands with him who spoke to him thus, and ran join Laura.

--Where are you going? he told her before giving orders to the coachman.

"At your place," she replied. I have many things to tell you; but I do not don't want to explain this to me while running, and I ask you for the calm of a hearing.

Adriani was suffocated with joy and spoke as if in a dream.

He was housed, almost sparsely, in premises spacious enough for his voice was not stifled and broken there in his studies; but he was barely furnished. Resolved to be content with what is strictly necessary, in order to discharge faster and safer, it was installed, not as a man who must spend, but like a man who must save a hundred thousand francs a year.

Comtois, who was really valuable as a valet, and who, finally knowing the facts, could no longer refuse his esteem to his artist, made up for this kind of voluntary scarcity by taking care and attentions which marked attachment and which prevented Adriani to part with it, although a servant seemed to him a luxury which he could have deprived himself too.

Thanks to Comtois, a decent enough ambiguous awaited Adriani at all event. He hastened to light the fire, for it was cold and the artist suffered from seeing his beautiful mistress so badly received.

"You give me better hospitality," she said to him, "than that which I offered you in the Temple in the early days.

And, sitting down to table with him and Toinette, she looked with tenderness the simplicity of the service and the nudity of the apartment.

"I expected that," she said. It's good! Everything you do is in the logic of the true and the just.

"Is it true," he cried, "that you...?"

"Eat, then," she replied, "we will talk afterwards. And me too, I are starving. I arrived this morning, I ran all day, do you know why? To achieve this pretty feat of making me dress fashionable in twelve hours. I wanted to be beautiful and ready for have the right to throw a crown at you and present myself in your lodge. Isn't this the biggest party of my life, and aren't you for me the first character in the world?

--And that pink dress? said Adriani, earnestly bringing to his lips a ribbons floating on Laure's arm. I have never seen you only in white.

--My mourning is over, she said, and I looked for the most laughing to bring you happiness.

When Toinette took away supper with Comtois:

--But speak to me! said Adriani to Laure; tell me if I'm dreaming, if it is you who are here, and if you are not going to fly away still! Here, I think I've gone mad, you're dead and that it's your shadow coming to see me one last time.

"Adriani," she replied, "listen to me.

And, kneeling on the floor with her beautiful robe of moire, without Adriani, amazed, could understand what she was doing, she took her two hands and said to him:

--You offered yourself entirely to me and forever. I do not you I haven't accepted, I don't want to accept you yet, I don't have the straight. I didn't prove to you enough that I deserved you. You don't have to therefore not that the question is posed like that. If you want me be calm and confident, you have to accept me as I am, out of kindness, out of generosity, out of compassion, out of friendship! As you asked me to suffer you near me, I ask me to suffer with you. My rights are less, I know, because you offered me a sublime passion and all the joys of heaven in the treasures of your heart. I dare not tell you anything about myself. There are so little time that I exist (I was born the day I saw you for the first time), that I don't know myself yet. But I think I become worthy of you if I live with you. so let me learn to love you, and, when you are happy with my heart, take my hand and take charge of my destiny.

Adriani was so distraught that he looked at Laure at her feet and listened to her. say these crazy things to her, without thinking of picking her up and to respond. He fell suffocated on a chair and wept like a child. Then he lay down at her feet and kissed them with idolatry. Laura was at him entirely by the will, and this divine possession, the only which establishes true possession, sufficed for outpourings of happiness, to intoxications of the soul which were to make the felicities inexhaustible of the future.

CONCLUSION

Three years later, Mr. and Mrs. Adriani, because they only took the name of d'Argères only on the acts, followed, holding each other by the arm and by the hands, the path of the vines to go and see the Temple again. Not only Adriani, supported and encouraged by his devoted companion, had earned in France and England the sum which made him owner of Mauzères, but still he had been able to embellish this residence, to rejuvenate the classic furniture of the baron, to create a convenient and charming retreat. Finally, he had arrived at ease, at freedom, and he owed these goods to his work. Far from diminishing its talent and to exhaust his soul, the theater had developed in him new faculties. He had acquired knowledge of the effects true, the understanding of the musical masses. He knew the theater, a word, not only as a virtuoso, but as a composer, in a sphere larger than that in which he had confined himself previously. He had not, like the Baron de West, sketched out the plan of a opera. He brought operas full of his heart and full of his head, enough to work at leisure and to create with delight all the rest of his life. He therefore did not enter into the idleness of the rich by coming to take possession of his little mansion.

Three years earlier, he probably would not have forgotten art, but he would have stopped in its flight; and who knows if Laura would not have hindered him in his progress, persuading him and herself that he had nothing to do? The artist dies when he divorces the absolutely public. It is also harmful to him to recover entirely than to give oneself to excess. He wears himself out remaining forever into the breach. The ardent and passionate struggle comes, in the long run, to disturb his sight and only excite his nerves. He needs go back to himself often, and come face to face, like Adriani had said so, with abstract humanity. But an abstraction does not not enough all the time: she manages to trouble him too, and everything excess of bias leads to the same vertigo.

Adriani had suffered, musically speaking, during those three years

of trials. He had been forced to sing bad things, he had heard clapping frantically. He had blamed himself for contribute with his talent. He had repeatedly cursed inside the triumphant bad taste of the works of genius. But he had struggled for genius, and sometimes he had won Mozart, Rossini, to Weber, brilliant victories. He had been betrayed, persecuted, irritated, as all formidable artists are; but, supported in these trials by the calm, generous and firm character of his wife, rewarded with boundless love, with a kind of cult whose testimonies had a sweetness of abandon unknown to most beings, he had found himself so happy, that he had hardly felt pass the sufferings attached to his condition. A word, a look Laure, erased the slight crease of external worries from her forehead. A kiss from her on that beautiful forehead brought it back, as if enchantment, the serenity of the ideal or the enthusiasm of belief.

Permanently installed in Mauzères, as in the nest where each development of their wings was to bring them back to rest and reimmerse themselves in each other's holy possession, they came to make a pilgrimage to this sad house which was like the paradise of their memories. She was as well looked after as possible by old Ladouze and by the faithful and laughing Mariotte. They thus found there this air of celebration that Adriani had brought there in a day of hope, and Toinette, who had taken the lead, with the _treasure_ in his arms, made them the honors.

The _treasure_ was a year old. His name was Adrienne. It already spoke little and rolled on the grass, under the pretext of knowing how to walk a little. He was the loveliest little being that Love, who gets on well with it, would have offered to the blessings of Providence and the kisses of a family. Adriani, contrary to the instincts and prejudices of most fathers, was delighted that it was a girl. Perfection, according to him, was a woman, since Laure was a woman.

The child already heard or felt the music, and when his father and his mother united their souls and their voices in a lullaby song made for her use, her eyes widened in her chubby cheeks, and his fixed gaze seemed to contemplate the wonders of this divine world, which the brats may still remember.

"Explain to me then," said Adriani to his wife, gently drawing her against his heart (the child was entwined around his neck), how is it that you love me! I confess to you that I still do not believe it, so much I understand with difficulty that an angel descended at my side and followed me in the strange and rough paths where I made you walk!

And he took pleasure in reminding her, what for three years she had endured smiling for his sake: the curses of his family, the abandonment of his former entourage, the astonishment of the world, the a life so difficult at first, usually so retired; because Laure had not wanted to procure any well-being, as long as her lover was denied to himself. Their interior had been so modest, that, relative to his early years and the stay in Larnac, the stay of Paris and London had been for her almost rigid with austerity. As she had also changed all her ideas to arrive at take an interest in the destiny of an artist sold and delivered to the crowd! As, overnight, she had abjured all her notions of dignity of art and on the mystery of happiness, to come, from the bottom of this desert, salute, in full theater, the triumph of a beginner!

"Tell me then, always tell me again," he cried, "what happened passed in you, here, the day when you knew my resolution and received my farewell!

"You know it," she replied, "although I have never been able to to explain; I felt I was going to die, that's all. I did not understand nothing, except that you renounced me; and forgive me, I thought you no longer loved me, since you told me to forget you. Your beautiful reasons seemed to me so silly in front of my love!...

"Did you love me so much already?"

"Certainly, but I didn't know that. I only knew it when I said to myself:

"So I shall never see him again!

"So I had one last fit of delirium. I threw myself on my bed, wrapped in a sheet like a shroud, and I said to Toinette, who tormented:

"Leave me, cover my face, don't look at me anymore, go dig in a corner of the garden, and remember the place, for him show, if he ever comes back here.

"Toinette answered me, speaking to me as when I was a child:

"Listen, my Laure, he is waiting for you there! He grows impatient, he mourns, he thinks you don't want him anymore because he's unhappy. Get up and come find it.

"I got up, asked where the car was, and then I cried, I laughed, I calmed down. I saw clearly then in the future, I reread your letter, I understood it; I put my things in order with the greatest freedom of mind. I've been to Larnac, I have nothing told my mother-in-law, otherwise I was leaving for a long time; I have it renewed all its powers to the government of Larnac and to the disposal of my income, in the event that she agrees to release herself from scruple she puts in passing them on to me without retaining anything for herself. I could see that she was very upset to see me so reasonable in all these positive things, at the moment when she pretended to be alienated by the family. I understood that for relieve her of great anxiety, I had to lock myself in my room, see no one and pass for maniac. For six months thereafter, she managed to make people believe or at least say that I was in Paris in a nursing home. When the truth broke like lightning, when charitable souls refused to believe that marriage had sanctioned our love, preferring the idea of a caprice of gallantry of my part in the certainty of a misalliance, you know what dryness curse has been cast upon me. Well, no more waiting for this anathema that in its accomplishment, I only thought of making you a sacrifice. I obeyed my selfishness, well proven for myself; I do not could live without you; I was looking for life, that's all!

--And, since then, that aversion you had previously felt for the state I embraced never returned to disturb your happiness?

--I never remembered that. I had therefore very cruelly pronounced on it?

--Yes, as much as myself!

-- Well, it is because of that! You didn't want to be an actor, I hated being an actor. You made yourself an actor, I recognized that it was the most beautiful state in the world.

--Not forever?

"It would have been forever if you had thought so. Come on, haven't I been, during these three years, the happiest being on earth? Outraged your love, which would have sufficed, and beyond, for all my desires, did you not surrounded by excellent friends, exquisite artists, lofty pleasures? How could I, in this environment so charming and so affectionate, regret the great-uncles and the little-cousins of Vaucluse? In truth, you seem to be laughing at me, when you remind me of my isolation and my obscurity. Is that, in case I would have liked the shine, I didn't have your glory? It is rather me who should wonder that a man such as you could see and pick up, in this corner lost, the poor desolate, half-idiot! Yes yes I I would be surprised if I did not know that only great souls are capable great loves.

"No," said Adriani, mingling the blond hair of his wife with his kisses.

his wife's black haired girl, you don't have to be a superior man to know how to love! It is also a monstrous mistake to believe that great passions are the fatality of weak souls. Love is neither an infirmity nor a supernatural faculty...

"You're right," said Laure, interrupting him, "love is true!" He it is enough to have neither a defiled heart nor a distorted mind to know that it is the most human law, because it is the most divine.

They returned early to Mauzères to receive the baron, whose they were expecting the visit. The Baron had not realized his dreams of fame and fortune at the Opera; but he had received a mission archaeological to explore Asia Minor and part of Egypt, and he had just filled it in a rather brilliant way. He was therefore rejuvenated and radiant, and he spent the fall with his two friends before undertaking new conquests over antiquity.

Laure tried, by all means, to bring her mother-in-law back to her. The marquise was implacable and predicted to Adriani's happy companion a life of abandonment, disorder and shame. An actor could not be honest and faithful. He would ruin his wife and dishonor his children. I don't know if she didn't give a little glimpse of the scaffold perspective. However, she took a serious illness and sent her pardon. She recovered quickly and dismissed him. Infirmities will soften it perhaps.

Toinette, considered, in Provence, as an infamous go-between, passed with reason, in Languedoc, for an excellent woman. She is treated by both spouses as an inseparable friend.

Comtois continues to be very prone to toothaches; but admission of his family in his master's house reconciled him with the crisp air of Vivarais. He continues to keep his diary and enriches it with reflections interesting about music, a subject in which he has become so proficient, that no one dares to open their mouths in front of him, not even Adriani, who greatly dreads his dissertations of all kinds, but who made him very happy giving him copy to make.

Comtois had never lost the habit of recording, at his point of view, the least actions of his master. For three years he had it designated under the friendly title of my artist. But, from the day when Adriani returned as squire to his domain of Mauzères, Comtois went back to write respectfully: Monsieur.

END.

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