**Th****e Red and the Black**(Le Rouge et le Noir)

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MarieHenri Beyle (January 23, 1783 – March 23, 1842), better known by his penname Stendhal, was a 19th century French writer. Known for his acute analysis of his characters' psychology, he is considered one of the earliest and foremost practitioners of the realism in his two novels Le Rouge et le Noir (The Red and the Black, 1830) and La Chartreuse de Parme (The Charterhouse of Parma, 1839). Source: Wikipedia

2Part 1

3The truth, the harsh truth

DANTON

**[Chapte 1 A Small Town](#a0)**

Put thousands together Less bad, But the cage less gay.

HOBBES

The small town of Verrieres may be regarded as one of the most attractive in the Franche-Comte. Its white houses with their high pitched roofs of red tiles are spread over the slope of a hill, the slightest contours of which are indicated by clumps of sturdy chestnuts. The Doubs runs some hundreds of feet below its fortifications, built in times past by the Spaniards, and now in ruins.

Verrieres is sheltered on the north by a high mountain, a spur of the Jura. The jagged peaks of the Verra put on a mantle of snow in the first cold days of October. A torrent which comes tearing down from the mountain passes through Verrieres before emptying its waters into the Doubs, and supplies power to a great number of sawmills; this is an extremely simple industry, and procures a certain degree of comfort for the

majority of the inhabitants, who are of the peasant rather than of the burgess class. It is not, however, the sawmills that have made this little town rich. It is to the manufacture of printed calicoes, known as Mulhouse stuffs, that it owes the general prosperity which, since the fall of Napoleon, has led to the refacing of almost all the houses in Verrieres.

No sooner has one entered the town than one is startled by the din of a noisy machine of terrifying aspect. A score of weighty hammers, falling with a clang which makes the pavement tremble, are raised aloft by a wheel which the water of the torrent sets in motion. Each of these hammers turns out, daily, I cannot say how many thousands of nails. A bevy of fresh, pretty girls subject to the blows of these enormous hammers, the little scraps of iron which are rapidly transformed into nails. This work,so rough to the outward eye, is one of the industries that most astonish the traveller who ventures for the first time among the mountains that divide France from Switzerland. If, on entering Verrieres, the traveller inquires to whom belongs that fine nail factory which deafens everybody who passes up the main street, he will be told in a drawling accent: 'Eh!It belongs to the Mayor.'

Provided the traveller halts for a few moments in this main street of Verrieres, which runs from the bank of the Doubs nearly to the summit of the hill, it is a hundred to one that he will see a tall man appear, with a busy, important air.

At the sight of him every hat is quickly raised. His hair is turning grey,and he is dressed in grey. He is a Companion of several Orders, has a high forehead, an aquiline nose, and on the whole his face is not wanting in a certain regularity: indeed, the first impression formed of it may be that it combines with the dignity of a village mayor that sort of charm which may still be found in a man of forty-eight or fifty. But soon the visitor from Paris is annoyed by a certain air of self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency mingled with a suggestion of limitations and want of originality.One feels, finally, that this man's talent is confined to securing the exact payment of whatever is owed to him and to postponing payment till the last possible moment when he is the debtor.

Such is the Mayor of Verrieres, M. de Renal. Crossing the street with a solemn step, he enters the town hall and passes from the visitor's sight.But, a hundred yards higher up, if the visitor continues his stroll, he will notice a house of quite imposing appearance, and, through the gaps in an iron railing belonging to the house, some splendid gardens. Beyond,there is a line of horizon formed by the hills of Burgundy, which seem to have been created on purpose to delight the eye. This view makes the visitor forget the pestilential atmosphere of small financial interests which was beginning to stifle him.

He is told that this house belongs to M. de Renal. It is to the profits that he has made from his great nail factory that the Mayor of Verrieres is indebted for this fine freestone house which he has just finished build ing. His family, they say, is Spanish,old, and was or claims to have been established in the country long before Louis XIV conquered it.

Since 1815 he has blushed at his connection with industry: 1815 made him Mayor of Verrieres. The retaining walls that support the various sections of this splendid garden, which, in a succession of terraces, runs down to the Doubs, are also a reward of M. de Renal's ability as a dealer in iron.

You must not for a moment expect to find in France those picturesque gardens which enclose the manufacturing towns of Germany; Leipsic,6Frankfurt, Nuremberg, and the rest. In the Franche-Comte, the more walls a man builds, the more he makes his property bristle with stones piled one above another, the greater title he acquires to the respect of his neighbours. M. de Renal's gardens, honeycombed with walls, are still further admired because he bought, for their weight in gold, certain minute scraps of ground which they cover. For instance that sawmill whose curious position on the bank of the Doubs struck you as you entered Verrieres, and on which you noticed the name Sorel, inscribed in huge letters on a board which overtops the roof, occupied, six years ago,the ground on which at this moment they are building the wall of the

fourth terrace of M. de Renal's gardens.

For all his pride, the Mayor was obliged to make many overtures to old Sorel, a dour and obstinate peasant; he was obliged to pay him in fine golden louis before he would consent to remove his mill elsewhere.As for the public lade which supplied power to the saw, M. de Renal,thanks to the influence he wielded in Paris, obtained leave to divert it.This favour was conferred upon him after the 182- elections.

He gave Sorel four acres in exchange for one, five hundred yards lower down by the bank of the Doubs. And, albeit this site was a great deal more advantageous for his trade in planks of firwood, Pere Sorel, as they have begun to call him now that he is rich, contrived to screw out of the impatience and landowning mania which animated his neighbour a sum of 6,000 francs.

It is true that this arrangement was adversely criticised by the local wiseacres. On one occasion, it was a Sunday, four years later, M. de Renal, as he walked home from church in his mayoral attire, saw at a distance old Sorel, supported by his three sons, watching him with a smile.That smile cast a destroying ray of light into the Mayor's soul; ever since then he has been thinking that he might have brought about the ex

change at less cost to himself.

To win popular esteem at Verrieres, the essential thing is not to adopt (while still building plenty of walls) any plan of construction brought

from Italy by those masons who in spring pass through the gorges of the Jura on their way to Paris. Such an innovation would earn the rash build er an undying reputation fot wrongheadedness, and he would be lost forever among the sober and moderate folk who create reputations in the Franche-Comte.

As a matter of fact, these sober folk wield there the most irritating form of despotism; it is owing to that vile word that residence in small towns is intolerable to anyone who has lived in that great republic which we call Paris. The tyranny of public opinion (and what an opinion!) is as fatuous in the small towns of France as it is in the United States of America.

[**Chapter** **2 A Mayor**](#a0)

Prestige! Sir, is it nothing? To be revered by fools, gaped at by children, envied by the rich and scorned by the wise.

BARNAVE

Fortunately for M. de Renal's reputation as an administrator, a huge retaining wall was required for the public avenue which skirts the hill side a hundred feet above the bed of the Doubs. To this admirable position it is indebted for one of the most picturesque views in France. But,every spring, torrents of rainwater made channels across the avenue,carved deep gullies in it and left it impassable. This nuisance, which affected everybody alike, placed M. de Renal under the fortunate obligation to immortalise his administration by a wall twenty feet in height and seventy or eighty yards long.

The parapet of this wall, to secure which M. de Renal was obliged to make three journeys to Paris, for the Minister of the Interior before last had sworn a deadly enmity to the Verrieres avenue; the parapet of this wall now rises four feet above the ground. And, as though to defy all Ministers past and present, it is being finished off at this moment with slabs of dressed stone.

How often, my thoughts straying back to the ballrooms of Paris,which I had forsaken overnight, my elbows leaning upon those great blocks of stone of a fine grey with a shade of blue in it, have I swept with my gaze the vale of the Doubs! Over there, on the left bank, are five or six winding valleys, along the folds of which the eye can make out quite plainly a number of little streams. After leaping from rock to rock, they

may be seen falling into the Doubs. The sun is extremely hot in these mountains; when it is directly overhead, the traveller's rest is sheltered on this terrace by a row of magnificent planes. Their rapid growth, and handsome foliage of a bluish tint are due to the artificial soil with which the Mayor has filled in the space behind his immense retaining wall, for,9despite the opposition of the town council, he has widened the avenue by more than six feet (although he is an Ultra and I myself a Liberal, I give him credit for it), that is why, in his opinion and in that of M. Valen od, the fortunate governor of the Verrieres poorhouse, this terrace is worthy to be compared with that of Saint-Germainen-Laye.

For my part, I have only one fault to find with the Cours de la Fidelite;one reads this, its official title, in fifteen or twenty places, on marble slabs which have won M. de Renal yet another Cross; what I should be in clined to condemn in the Cours de la Fidelite is the barbarous manner in which the authorities keep these sturdy plane trees trimmed and pollarded. Instead of suggesting, with their low, rounded, flattened heads, the commonest of kitchen garden vegetables, they would like nothing better than to assume those magnificent forms which one sees them wear in England. But the Mayor's will is despotic, and twice a year every tree belonging to the commune is pitilessly lopped. The Liberals of the place maintain, but they exaggerate, that the hand of the official gardener has grown much more severe since the Reverend Vicar Maslon formed the habit of appropriating the clippings.

This young cleric was sent from Besancon, some years ago, to keep an eye upon the abbe Chelan and certain parish priests of the district. An old Surgeon-Major of the Army of Italy, in retirement at Verrieres, who in his time had been simultaneously, according to the Mayor, a Jacobin and a Bonapartist, actually ventured one day to complain to him of the periodical mutilation of these fine trees.

'I like shade,' replied M. de Renal with the touch of arrogance appropriate when one is addressing a surgeon, a Member of the Legion of Honour; 'I like shade, I have my trees cut so as to give shade, and I do not consider that a tree is made for any other purpose, unless, like the useful walnut, it yields a return.'

There you have the great phrase that decides everything at Verrieres:

YIELD A RETURN; it by itself represents the habitual thought of more

than three fourths of the inhabitants.

Yielding a return is the consideration that settles everything in this little town which seemed to you, just now, so attractive. The stranger arriving there, beguiled by the beauty of the cool, deep valleys on every side,imagines at first that the inhabitants are influenced by the idea of beauty;they are always talking about the beauty of their scenery: no one can deny that they make a great to do about it; but this is because it attracts a certain number of visitors whose money goes to enrich the innkeepers,10and thus, through the channel of the rate-collector, yields a return to the town.

It was a fine day in autumn and M. de Renal was strolling along the Cours de la Fidelite, his lady on his arm. While she listened to her husband, who was speaking with an air of gravity, Madame de Renal's eye was anxiously following the movements of three little boys. The eldest,who might be about eleven, was continually running to the parapet as though about to climb on top. A gentle voice then uttered the name Adolphe, and the child abandoned his ambitious project. Madame de Renal looked like a woman of thirty, but was still extremely pretty.'He may live to rue the day, that fine gentleman from Paris,' M. de Renal was saying in a tone of annoyance, his cheek paler even than was its wont. 'I myself am not entirely without friends at Court… .' But albeit I mean to speak to you of provincial life for two hundred pages, I shall not be so barbarous as to inflict upon you the tedium and all the clever turns of a provincial dialogue.

This fine gentleman from Paris, so odious to the Mayor of Verrieres,was none other than M. Appert, who, a couple of days earlier, had contrived to make his way not only into the prison and the poorhouse of Verrieres, but also into the hospital, administered gratuitously by the Mayor and the principal landowners of the neighbourhood.

'But,' Madame de Renal put in timidly, 'what harm can this gentleman from Paris do you, since you provide for the welfare of the poor with the most scrupulous honesty?'

'He has only come to cast blame, and then he'll go back and have art icles put in the Liberal papers.'

'You never read them, my dear.'

'But people tell us about those Jacobin articles; all that distracts us, and hinders us from doing good.

As for me, I shall never forgive the cure.'

[**Chapte****r 3**](#a0)

**The Bread of the Poor**

A virtuous priest who does not involve himself in intrigue is a

blessing for the village.

FLEURY

It should be explained that the cure of Verrieres, an old man of eighty,but blessed by the keen air of his mountains with an iron character and strength, had the right to visit at any hour of the day the prison, the hospital, and even the poorhouse. It was at six o'clock in the morning precisely that M. Appert, who was armed with an introduction to the cure from Paris, had had the good sense to arrive in an inquisitive little town.He had gone at once to the presbytery.

As he read the letter addressed to him by M. le Marquis de La Mole, a Peer of France, and the wealthiest landowner in the province, the cure Chelan sat lost in thought.

'I am old and liked here,' he murmured to himself at length, 'they would never dare!' Turning at once to the gentleman from Paris, with eyes in which, despite his great age, there burned that sacred fire which betokens the pleasure of performing a fine action which is slightly dangerous:

'Come with me, Sir, and, in the presence of the gaoler and especially of the superintendents of the poorhouse, be so good as not to express any opinion of the things we shall see.' M. Appert realised that he had to deal with a man of feeling; he accompanied the venerable cure, visited the prison, the hospital, the poorhouse, asked many questions and, notwithstanding strange answers, did not allow himself to utter the least word of reproach.

This visit lasted for some hours. The cure invited M. Appert to dine with him, but was told that his guest had some letters to write: he did not wish to compromise his kind friend any further. About three o'clock,the gentlemen went back to complete their inspection of the poorhouse,after which they returned to the prison. There they found the gaoler standing in the doorway; a giant six feet tall, with bandy legs; terror had made his mean face hideous.

'Ah, Sir,' he said to the cure, on catching sight of him, 'is not this gentleman, that I see with you, M. Appert?'

'What if he is?' said the cure.

'Because yesterday I received the most definite instructions, which the Prefect sent down by a gendarme who had to gallop all night long, not to allow M. Appert into the prison.'

'I declare to you, M. Noiroud,' said the cure, 'that this visitor, who is in my company, is M. Appert. Do you admit that I have the right to enter the prison at any hour of the day or night, bringing with me whom I please?'

'Yes, M. le cure,' the gaoler murmured in a subdued tone, lowering his head like a bulldog brought reluctantly to obedience by fear of the stick.

'Only, M. le cure, I have a wife and children, if I am reported I shall be dismissed; I have only my place here to live on.'

'I too should be very sorry to lose mine,' replied the worthy cure, in a voice swayed by ever increasing emotion.

'What a difference!' the gaoler answered promptly; 'why you, M. le cure, we know that you have an income of 800 livres, a fine place in the sun… '

Such are the events which, commented upon, exaggerated in twenty different ways, had been arousing for the last two days all the evil passions of the little town of Verrieres. At that moment they were serving as text for the little discussion which M. de Renal was having with his wife.That morning, accompanied by M. Valenod, the governor of the poor house, he had gone to the cure's house, to inform him of their extreme displeasure. M. Chelan was under no one's protection; he felt the full force of their words.

'Well, gentlemen, I shall be the third parish priest, eighty years of age,to be deprived of his living in this district. I have been here for six and fifty years; I have christened almost all the inhabitants of the town,which was no more than a village when I came. Every day I marry young couples whose grandparents I married long ago. Verrieres is my family; but I said to myself, when I saw the stranger: "This man, who has come from Paris, may indeed be a Liberal, there are far too many of them; but what harm can he do to our poor people and our prisoners?"'The reproaches of M. de Renal, and above all those of M. Valenod, the governor of the poorhouse, becoming more and more bitter:

'Very well, gentlemen, have me deprived,' the old cure had cried, in a quavering voice. 'I shall live in the town all the same. You all know that fort-yeight years ago I inherited a piece of land which brings me 800 livres; I shall live on that income. I save nothing out of my stipend, gentlemen, and that may be why I am less alarmed when people speak of taking it from me.'

M. de Renal lived on excellent terms with his wife; but not knowing what answer to make to the question, which she timidly repeated: 'What harm can this gentleman from Paris do to the prisoners?' he was just about to lose his temper altogether when she uttered a cry. Her second son had climbed upon the parapet of the wall of the terrace, and was running along it, though this wall rose more than twenty feet from the vineyard beneath. The fear of alarming her son and so making him fall restrained Madame de Renal from calling him. Finally the child, who was laughing at his own prowess, turned to look at his mother, noticed how pale she was, sprang down upon the avenue and ran to join her. He was well scolded.

This little incident changed the course of the conversation.'I am quite determined to engage young Sorel, the sawyer's son,' said M. de Renal; 'he will look after the children, who are beginning to be too much of a handful for us. He is a young priest or thereabouts, a good Latin scholar, and will bring the children on; for he has a strong character, the cure says. I shall give him 300 francs and his board. I had some doubts as to his morals; for he was the Benjamin of that old surgeon, the Member of the Legion of Honour who on pretence of being their cousin came to live with the Sorels. He might quite well have been nothing better than a secret agent of the Liberals; he said that our mountain air was good for his asthma; but that has never been proved. He had served in all Buonaparte's campaigns in Italy, and they even say that he voted against the Empire in his day. This Liberal taught young Sorel Latin, and left him all the pile of books he brought here with him. Not that I should ever have dreamed of having the carpenter's son with my children; but the cure, only the day before the scene which has made a permanent breach between us, told me that this Sorel has been studying theology for the last three years, with the idea of entering the Seminary; so he is not a Liberal, and he is a Latin scholar.

'This arrangement suits me in more ways than one,' M. de Renal went on, looking at his wife with an air of diplomacy; 'Valenod is tremendously proud of the two fine Norman horses he has just bought for his calash. But he has not got a tutor for his children.'

'He is quite capable of taking this one from us.''Then you approve of my plan?' said M. de Renal, thanking his wife,with a smile, for the excellent idea that had just occurred to her. 'There,that's settled.'

'Oh, good gracious, my dear, how quickly you make up your mind!'

'That is because I have a strong character, as the cure has had occasion to see. Let us make no pretence about it, we are surrounded by Liberals here. All these cloth merchants are jealous of me, I am certain of it; two or three of them are growing rich; very well, I wish them to see M. de Renal's children go by, out walking in the care of their tutor. It will make an impression. My grandfather used often to tell us that in his young days he had had a tutor. It's a hundred crowns he's going to cost me, but that will have to be reckoned as a necessary expense to keep up our position.'

This sudden decision plunged Madame de Renal deep in thought. She was a tall, well-made woman, who had been the beauty of the place, as the saying is in this mountain district. She had a certain air of simplicity and bore herself like a girl; in the eyes of a Parisian, that artless grace,full of innocence and vivacity, might even have suggested ideas of amildly passionate nature. Had she had wind of this kind of success, Madame de Renal would have been thoroughly ashamed of it. No trace either of coquetry or of affectation had ever appeared in her nature. M.Valenod, the wealthy governor of the poorhouse, was supposed to have paid his court to her, but without success, a failure which had given a marked distinction to her virtue; for this M. Valenod, a tall young man,strongly built, with a vivid complexion and bushy black whiskers, was one of those coarse, brazen, noisy creatures who in the provinces are called fine men.

Madame de Renal, being extremely shy and liable to be swayed by her moods, was offended chiefly by the restless movements and loud voice of M. Valenod. The distaste that she felt for what at Verrieres goes by the name of gaiety had won her the reputation of being extremely proud of her birth. She never gave it a thought, but had been greatly pleased to see the inhabitants of Verrieres come less frequently to her house. We shall not attempt to conceal the fact that she was reckoned a fool in the eyes of their ladies, because, without any regard for her husband's interests, she let slip the most promising opportunities of procuring fine hats from Paris or Besancon. Provided that she was left alone to stroll in her fine garden, she never made any complaint.

She was a simple soul, who had never risen even to the point of criticising her husband, and admitting that he bored her. She supposed,without telling herself so, that between husband and wife there could be no more tender relations. She was especially fond of M. de Renal when he spoke to her of his plans for their children, one of whom he intended to place in the army, the second on the bench, and the third in the church. In short, she found M. de Renal a great deal less boring than any of the other men of her acquaintance.

This wifely opinion was justified. The Mayor of Verrieres owed his reputation for wit, and better still for good tone, to half a dozen pleasantries which he had inherited from an uncle. This old Captain de Renal had served before the Revolution in the Duke of Orleans's regiment of infantry, and, when he went to Paris, had had the right of entry into that Prince's drawing-rooms. He had there seen Madame de Montesson, the famous Madame de Genlis, M. Ducrest, the 'inventor' of the PalaisRoyal.These personages figured all too frequently in M. de Renal's stories. But by degrees these memories of things that it required so much delicacy to relate had become a burden to him, and for some time now it was only on solemn occasions that he would repeat his anecdotes of the House of Orlean s. As he was in other respects most refined, except when the talk ran on money, he was regarded, and rightly, as the most aristocratic personage in Verrieres.

[**Chap****ter 4**](#a0)

**Father and Son**

E sara mia colpa, Se cosi e?

MACHIAVELLI

'My wife certainly has a head on her shoulders!' the Mayor of Verrieres remarked to himself the following morning at six o'clock, as he made his way down to Pere Sorel's sawmill. 'Although I said so to her, to maintain my own superiority, it had never occurred to me that if I do not take this little priest Sorel, who, they tell me, knows his Latin like an angel, the governor of the poorhouse, that restless spirit, might very well have the same idea, and snatch him from me, I can hear the tone of conceit with which he would speak of his children's tutor!… This tutor, once I've secured him, will he wear a cassock?'

M. de Renal was absorbed in this question when he saw in the distance a peasant, a man of nearly six feet in height, who, by the first dawning light, seemed to be busily occupied in measuring pieces of timber lying by the side of the Doubs, upon the towpath. The peasant did not appear any too well pleased to see the Mayor coming towards him; for his pieces of wood were blocking the path, and had been laid there in contravention of the law.

Pere Sorel, for it was he, was greatly surprised and even more pleased by the singular offer which M. de Renal made him with regard to his son Julien. He listened to it nevertheless with that air of grudging melancholy and lack of interest which the shrewd inhabitants of those mountains know so well how to assume. Slaves in the days of Spanish rule,they still retain this facial characteristic of the Egyptian fellahin.Sorel's reply was at first nothing more than a long-winded recital of all the formal terms of respect which he knew by heart. While he was repeating these vain words, with an awkward smile which enhanced the air of falsehood and almost of rascality natural to his countenance, the old peasant's active mind was seeking to discover what reason could be inducing so important a personage to take his scapegrace of a son into his establishment. He was thoroughly dissatisfied with Julien, and it was for Julien that M. de Renal was offering him the astounding wage of 300 francs annually, in addition to his food and even his clothing. This last condition, which Pere Sorel had had the intelligence to advance on the spur of the moment, had been granted with equal readiness by M. de Renal.

This demand impressed the Mayor. 'Since Sorel is not delighted and overwhelmed by my proposal, as he ought naturally to be, it is clear,' he said to himself, 'that overtures have been made to him from another quarter; and from whom can they have come, except from Valenod?' It was in vain that M. de Renal urged Sorel to conclude the bargain there and then: the astute old peasant met him with an obstinate refusal; he wished, he said, to consult his son, as though, in the country, a rich father ever consulted a penniless son, except for form's sake.

A sawmill consists of a shed by the side of a stream. The roof is held up by rafters supported on four stout wooden pillars. Nine or ten feet from the ground, in the middle of the shed, one sees a saw which moves up and down, while an extremely simple mechanism thrusts forward against this saw a piece of wood. This is a wheel set in motion by the mill lade which drives both parts of the machine; that of the saw which moves up and down, and the other which pushes the piece of wood gently towards the saw, which slices it into planks.

As he approached his mill, Pere Sorel called Julien in his stentorian voice; there was no answer. He saw only his two elder sons, young giants who, armed with heavy axes, were squaring the trunks of fir which they would afterwards carry to the saw. They were completely engrossed in keeping exactly to the black line traced on the piece of wood,from which each blow of the axe sent huge chips flying. They did not hear their father's voice. He made his way to the shed; as he entered it,he looked in vain for Julien in the place where he ought to have been standing, beside the saw. He caught sight of him five or six feet higher up, sitting astride upon one of the beams of the roof. Instead of paying careful attention to the action of the machinery, Julien was reading a book. Nothing could have been less to old Sorel's liking; he might perhaps have forgiven Julien his slender build, little adapted to hard work,and so different from that of his elder brothers; but this passion for reading he detested: he himself was unable to read.

It was in vain that he called Julien two or three times. The attention the young man was paying to his book, far more than the noise of the saw,prevented him from hearing his father's terrifying voice. Finally, despite his years, the father sprang nimbly upon the trunk that was being cut by the saw, and from there on to the cross beam that held up the roof. A violent blow sent flying into the mill lade the book that Julien was holding;a second blow no less violent, aimed at his head, in the form of a box on the ear, made him lose his balance. He was about to fall from a height of twelve or fifteen feet, among the moving machinery, which would have crushed him, but his father caught him with his left hand as he fell.

'Well, idler! So you keep on reading your cursed books, when you ought to be watching the saw? Read them in the evening, when you go and waste your time with the cure.'

Julien, although stunned by the force of the blow, and bleeding profusely, went to take up his proper station beside the saw. There were tears in his eyes, due not so much to his bodily pain as to the loss of his book, which he adored.

'Come down, animal, till I speak to you.' The noise of the machine again prevented Julien from hearing this order. His father who had stepped down not wishing to take the trouble to climb up again on to the machine, went to find a long pole used for knocking down walnuts, and struck him on the shoulder with it. No sooner had Julien reached the ground than old Sorel, thrusting him on brutally from behind, drove him towards the house. 'Heaven knows what he's going to do to me!' thought the young man. As he passed it, he looked sadly at the mill lade into which his book had fallen; it was the one that he valued most of all, the Memorial de Sainte-Helene.

His cheeks were flushed, his eyes downcast. He was a slim youth of eighteen or nineteen, weak in appearance, with irregular but delicate features and an aquiline nose. His large dark eyes, which, in moments of calm, suggested a reflective, fiery spirit, were animated at this instant with an expression of the most ferocious hatred. Hair of a dark chestnut,growing very low, gave him a narrow brow, and in moments of anger a wicked air. Among the innumerable varieties of the human countenance,there is perhaps none that is more strikingly characteristic. A slim and shapely figure betokened suppleness rather than strength. In his child hood, his extremely pensive air and marked pallor had given his father the idea that he would not live, or would live only to be a burden upon his family. An object of contempt to the rest of the household, he hated his brothers and father; in the games on Sundays, on the public square,he was invariably beaten.

It was only during the last year that his good looks had begun to win him a few supporters among the girls. Universally despised, as a feeble creature, Julien had adored that old Surgeon-Major who one day ventured to speak to the Mayor on the subject of the plane trees.This surgeon used now and then to pay old Sorel a day's wage for his son, and taught him Latin and history, that is to say all the history that he knew, that of the 1796 campaign in Italy. On his death, he had be queathed to him his Cross of the Legion of Honour, the arrears of his pension, and thirty or forty volumes, the most precious of which had just taken a plunge into the public lade, diverted by the Mayor's influence.As soon as he was inside the house, Julien felt his shoulder gripped by his father's strong hand; he trembled, expecting to receive a shower of blows.

'Answer me without lying,' the old peasant's harsh voice shouted in his ear, while the hand spun him round as a child's hand spins a lead soldier. Julien's great dark eyes, filled with tears, found themselves starting into the little grey eyes of the old peasant, who looked as though he sought to penetrate to the depths of his son's heart.

[**Chapt****er 5**](#a0)

**Driving a Bargain**

Cunctando restituit rem.

ENNIUS

'Answer me, without lying, if you can, you miserable bookworm; how do you come to know Madame de Renal? When have you spoken to her?'

'I have never spoken to her,' replied Julien, 'I have never seen the lady except in church.'

'But you must have looked at her, you shameless scoundrel?'

'Never! You know that in church I see none but God,' Julien added with a hypocritical air, calculated, to his mind, to ward off further blows.

'There is something behind this, all the same,' replied the suspicious peasant, and was silent for a moment; 'but I shall get nothing out of you,you damned hypocrite. The fact is, I'm going to be rid of you, and my

saw will run all the better without you. You have made a friend of the parson or someone, and he's got you a fine post. Go and pack your traps,and I'll take you to M. de Renal's where you're to be tutor to the children.'

'What am I to get for that?'

'Board, clothing and three hundred francs in wages.'

'I do not wish to be a servant,'

'Animal, who ever spoke of your being a servant? Would I allow my son to be a servant?'

'But, with whom shall I have my meals?'

This question left old Sorel at a loss; he felt that if he spoke he might be guilty of some imprudence; he flew into a rage with Julien, upon whom he showered abuse, accusing him of greed, and left him to go and consult his other sons.

Presently Julien saw them, each leaning upon his axe and deliberating together. After watching them for some time, Julien, seeing that he could make out nothing of their discussion, went and took his place on the far side of the saw, so as not to be taken by surprise. He wanted time to consider this sudden announcement which was altering his destiny, but felt himself to be incapable of prudence; his imagination was wholly taken up with forming pictures of what he would see in M. de Renal's fine house.'I must give up all that,' he said to himself, 'rather than let myself be brought down to feeding with the servants. My father will try to force me; I would sooner die. I have saved fifteen francs and eight sous, I shall run away tonight; in two days, by keeping to sideroads where I need not fear the police, I can be at Besancon; there I enlist as a soldier, and, if necessary, cross the border into Switzerland. But then, goodbye to everything, goodbye to that fine clerical profession which is a stepping stone to everything.'

This horror of feeding with the servants was not natural to Julien; he would, in seeking his fortune, have done other things far more disagree able. He derived this repugnance from Rousseau's Confessions. It was the one book that helped his imagination to form any idea of the world. The collection of reports of the Grand Army and the Memorial de Sainte-Helene completed his Koran. He would have gone to the stake for those three books. Never did he believe in any other. Remembering a saying of the old Surgeon-Major, he regarded all the other books in the world as liars,written by rogues in order to obtain advancement.

With his fiery nature Julien had one of those astonishing memories so often found in foolish people. To win over the old priest Chelan, upon whom he saw quite clearly that his own future depended, he had learned by heart the entire New Testament in Latin; he knew also M. de Maistre's book Du Pape, and had as little belief in one as in the other.

As though by a mutual agreement, Sorel and his son avoided speaking to one another for the rest of the day. At dusk, Julien went to the cure for his divinity lesson, but did not think it prudent to say anything to him of the strange proposal that had been made to his father. 'It may be a trap,'he told himself; 'I must pretend to have forgotten about it.'

Early on the following day, M. de Renal sent for old Sorel, who, after keeping him waiting for an hour or two, finally appeared, beginning as he entered the door a hundred excuses interspersed with as many reverences. By dint of giving voice to every sort of objection, Sorel succeeded 22in gathering that his son was to take his meals with the master and mistress of the house, and on days when they had company in a room by himself with the children. Finding an increasing desire to raise difficulties the more he discerned a genuine anxiety on the Mayor's part, and being moreover filled with distrust and bewilderment, Sorel asked to see the room in which his son was to sleep. It was a large chamber very decently furnished, but the servants were already engaged in carrying into it the beds of the three children.

At this the old peasant began to see daylight; he at once asked with as surance to see the coat which would be given to his son. M. de Renal opened his desk and took out a hundred francs.'With this money, your son can go to M. Durand, the clothier, and get himself a suit of black.'

'And supposing I take him away from you,' said the peasant, who had completely forgotten the reverential forms of address. 'Will he take this black coat with him?'

'Certainly.'

'Oh, very well!' said Sorel in a drawling tone, 'then there's only one thing for us still to settle: the money you're to give him.'

'What!' M. de Renal indignantly exclaimed, 'we agreed upon that yesterday: I give three hundred francs; I consider that plenty, if not too much.'

'That was your offer, I do not deny it,' said old Sorel, speaking even more slowly; then, by a stroke of genius which will astonish only those who do not know the Franc-Comtois peasant, he added, looking M. de Renal steadily in the face: 'We can do better elsewhere.'

At these words the Mayor was thrown into confusion. He recovered himself, however, and, after an adroit conversation lasting fully two hours, in which not a word was said without a purpose, the peasant's shrewdness prevailed over that of the rich man, who was not dependent on his for his living. All the innumerable conditions which were to de termine Julien's new existence were finally settled; not only was his salary fixed at four hundred francs, but it was to be paid in advance, on the first day of each month.

'Very well! I shall let him have thirty-five francs,' said M. de Renal.

'To make a round sum, a rich and generous gentleman like our Mayor,'the peasant insinuated in a coaxing voice, 'will surely go as far as thirty six.'

'All right,' said M. de Renal, 'but let us have no more of this.'For once, anger gave him a tone of resolution. The peasant saw that he could advance no farther.

Thereupon M. de Renal began in turn to make

headway. He utterly refused to hand over the thirty-six francs for the first month to old Sorel, who was most eager to receive the money on his son's behalf. It occurred to M. de Renal that he would be obliged to describe to his wife the part he had played throughout this transaction.

'Let me have back the hundred francs I gave you,' he said angrily. 'M.Durand owes me money. I shall go with your son to choose the black cloth.'

After this bold stroke, Sorel prudently retired upon his expressions of respect; they occupied a good quarter of an hour. In the end, seeing that there was certainly nothing more to be gained, he withdrew. His final reverence ended with the words:

'I shall send my son up to the chateau.'

It was thus that the Mayor's subordinates spoke of his house when they wished to please him.

Returning to his mill, Sorel looked in vain for his son. Doubtful as to what might be in store for him, Julien had left home in the dead of night.He had been anxious to find a safe hiding-place for his books and his Cross of the Legion of Honour. He had removed the whole of his treasures to the house of a young timber-merchant, a friend of his, by the name of Fouque, who lived on the side of the high mountain overlooking Verrieres.

When he reappeared: 'Heaven knows, you damned idler,' his father said to him, 'whether you will ever have enough honour to pay me for the cost of your keep, which I have been advancing to you all these years! Pack up your rubbish, and off with you to the Mayor's.'

Julien, astonished not to receive a thrashing, made haste to set off. But no sooner was he out of sight of his terrible father than he slackened his pace. He decided that it would serve the ends of his hypocrisy to pay a visit to the church.

The idea surprises you? Before arriving at this horrible idea, the soul of the young peasant had had a long way to go.

When he was still a child, the sight of certain dragoons of the 6th, in their long, white cloaks, and helmets adorned with long crests of black horse-hair, who were returning from Italy, and whom Julien saw tying their horses to the barred window of his father's house, drove him mad with longing for a military career.

Later on he listened with ecstasy to the accounts of the battles of the Bridge of Lodi, Arcole and Rivoli given him by the old Surgeon-Major.

He noticed the burning gaze which the old man directed at his Cross.But when Julien was fourteen, they began to build a church at Verrieres, one that might be called magnificent for so small a town. There were, in particular, four marble pillars the sight of which impressed Julien; they became famous throughout the countryside, owing to the deadly enmity which they aroused between the Justice of the Peace and the young vicar, sent down from Besancon, who was understood to be the spy of the Congregation. The Justice of the Peace came within an ace of losing his post, such at least was the common report. Had he not dared to have a difference of opinion with a priest who, almost every fortnight, went to Besancon, where he saw, people said, the Right Reverend Lord Bishop?

In the midst of all this, the Justice of the Peace, the father of a large family, passed a number of sentences which appeared unjust; all of these were directed against such of the inhabitants as read the Constitutionnel.The right party was triumphant. The sums involved amounted, it was true, to no more than four or five francs; but one of these small fines was levied upon a nailsmith, Julien's godfather. In his anger, this man exclaimed: 'What a change! And to think that, for twenty years and more,the Justice was reckoned such an honest man!' The Surgeon-Major,Julien's friend, was dead.All at once Julien ceased to speak of Napoleon; he announced his intention of becoming a priest, and was constantly to be seen, in his father's sawmill, engaged in learning by heart a Latin Bible which the cure had lent him. The good old man, amazed at his progress, devoted whole evenings to instructing him in divinity. Julien gave utterance in his company to none but pious sentiments. Who could have supposed that that girlish face, so pale and gentle, hid the unshakeable determination to expose himself to the risk of a thousand deaths rather than fail to make his fortune?

To Julien, making a fortune meant in the first place leaving Verrieres;he loathed his native place. Everything that he saw there froze his imagination.

From his earliest boyhood, he had had moments of exaltation. At such times he dreamed with rapture that one day he would be introduced to the beautiful ladies of Paris; he would manage to attract their attention by some brilliant action. Why should he not be loved by one of them, as Bonaparte, when still penniless, had been loved by the brilliant Madame de Beauharnais? For many years now, perhaps not an hour of Julien's life had passed without his reminding himself that Bonaparte, an obscure subaltern with no fortune, had made himself master of the world with his sword. This thought consoled him for his misfortunes which he deemed to be great, and enhanced his joy when joy came his way.The building of the church and the sentences passed by the Justice brought him sudden enlightenment; an idea which occurred to him drove him almost out of his senses for some weeks, and finally took possession of him with the absolute power of the first idea which a passion ate nature believes itself to have discovered.

'When Bonaparte made a name for himself, France was in fear of being invaded; military distinction was necessary and fashionable. Today we see priests at forty drawing stipends of a hundred thousand francs, that is to say three times as much as the famous divisional commanders under Napoleon. They must have people to support them. Look at the Justice here, so wise a man, always so honest until now, sacrificing his honour, at his age, from fear of offending a young vicar of thirty. I must become a priest.'

On one occasion, in the midst of his new-found piety, after Julien had been studying divinity for two years, he was betrayed by a sudden blaze of the fire that devoured his spirit. This was at M. Chelan's; at a dinner party of priests, to whom the good cure had introduced him as an educational prodigy, he found himself uttering frenzied praise of Napoleon.

He bound his right arm across his chest, pretending that he had put the arm out of joint when shifting a fir trunk, and kept it for two months in this awkward position. After this drastic penance, he forgave himself.

Such is the young man of eighteen, but weak in appearance, whom you would have said to be, at the most, seventeen, who, carrying a small parcel under his arm, was entering the magnificent church of Verrieres.

He found it dark and deserted. In view of some festival, all the windows in the building had been covered with crimson cloth; the effect of this, when the sun shone, was a dazzling blaze of light, of the most imposing and most religious character. Julien shuddered. Being alone in the church, he took his seat on the bench that had the most handsome appearance. It bore the arms of M. de Renal.

On the desk in front, Julien observed a scrap of printed paper, spread out there as though to be read. He looked at it closely and saw:

'Details of the execution and of the last moments of Louis Jenrel, executed at Besancon, on the … '

The paper was torn. On the other side he read the opening words of a line, which were: 'The first step.'

'Who can have put this paper here?' said Julien. 'Poor wretch!' he added with a sigh, 'his name has the same ending as mine.' And he crumpled up the paper.On his way out, Julien thought he saw blood by the holy water stoup;it was some of the water that had been spilt: the light from the red curtains which draped the windows made it appear like blood.Finally, Julien felt ashamed of his secret terror.

'Should I prove coward?' he said to himself. 'To arms!'

This phrase, so often repeated in the old Surgeon's accounts of battles,had a heroic sound in Julien's ears. He rose and walked rapidly to M. de Renal's house.

Despite these brave resolutions, as soon as he caught sight of the house twenty yards away he was overcome by an unconquerable shyness. The iron gate stood open; it seemed to him magnificent. He would have now to go in through it.

Julien was not the only person whose heart was troubled by his arrival in this household. Madame de Renal's extreme timidity was disconcerted by the idea of this stranger who, in the performance of his duty, would be constantly coming between her and her children. She was accustomed to having her sons sleep in her own room. That morning, many tears had flowed when she saw their little beds being carried into the apartment intended for the tutor. In vain did she beg her husband to let the bed of Stanislas Xavier, the youngest boy, be taken back to her room.

Womanly delicacy was carried to excess in Madame de Renal. She formed a mental picture of a coarse, unkempt creature, employed to scold her children, simply because he knew Latin, a barbarous tongue for the sake of which her sons would be whipped.

[**chapt****er 6**](#a0)

**Dullness**

Non so piu cosa son, Cosa facio.

MOZART (Figaro)

With the vivacity and grace which came naturally to her when she was beyond the reach of male vision, Madame de Renal was coming out through the glass door which opened from the drawing-room into the garden, when she saw, standing by the front door, a young peasant, almost a boy still, extremely pale and showing traces of recent tears. He was wearing a clean white shirt and carried under his arm a neat jacket of violet ratteen.

This young peasant's skin was so white, his eyes were so appealing,that the somewhat romantic mind of Madame de Renal conceived the idea at first that he might be a girl in disguise, come to ask some favour of the Mayor. She felt sorry for the poor creature, who had come to a standstill by the front door, and evidently could not summon up courage to ring the bell. Madame de Renal advanced, oblivious for the moment of the bitter grief that she felt at the tutor's coming. Julien, who was facing the door, did not see her approach. He trembled when a pleasant voice sounded close to his ear:

'What have you come for, my boy?'

Julien turned sharply round, and, struck by the charm of Madame de Renal's expression, forgot part of his shyness. A moment later, astounded by her beauty, he forgot everything, even his purpose in coming.

Madame de Renal had repeated her question.

'I have come to be tutor, Madame,' he at length informed her, put to shame by his tears which he dried as best he might.

Madame de Renal remained speechless; they were standing close together, looking at one another. Julien had never seen a person so well-dressed as this, let alone a woman with so exquisite a complexion, to speak to him in a gentle tone. Madame de Renal looked at the large tears which lingered on the cheeks (so pallid at first and now so rosy) of this young peasant. Presently she burst out laughing, with all the wild hilarity of a girl; she was laughing at herself, and trying in vain to realise the full extent of her happiness. So this was the tutor whom she had imagined an unwashed and illdressed priest, who was coming to scold and whip her children.

'Why, Sir!' she said to him at length, 'do you know Latin?'The word 'Sir' came as such a surprise to Julien that he thought for a moment before answering.

'Yes, Ma'am,' he said shyly.

Madame de Renal felt so happy that she ventured to say to Julien:

'You won't scold those poor children too severely?'

'Scold them? I?' asked Julien in amazement. 'Why should I?'

'You will, Sir,' she went on after a brief silence and in a voice that grew more emotional every moment, 'you will be kind to them, you promise me?'

To hear himself addressed again as 'Sir', in all seriousness, and by a lady so fashionably attired, was more than Julien had ever dreamed of;in all the cloud castles of his boyhood, he had told himself that no fashionable lady would deign to speak to him until he had a smart uniform.

Madame de Renal, for her part, was completely taken in by the beauty of Julien's complexion, his great dark eyes and his becoming hair which was curling more than usual because, to cool himself, he had just dipped his head in the basin of the public fountain.

To her great delight, she discovered an air of girlish shyness in this fatal tutor, whose severity and savage appearance she had so greatly dreaded for her children's sake. To Madame de Renal's peace-loving nature the contrast between her fears and what she now saw before her was a great event. Finally she recovered from her surprise. She was astonished to find herself standing like this at the door of her house with this young man almost in his shirt-sleeves and so close to her.

'Let us go indoors, Sir,' she said to him with an air of distinct embarrassment.Never in her life had a purely agreeable sensation so profoundly stirred Madame de Renal; never had so charming an apparition come in the wake of more disturbing fears. And so those sweet children, whom she had tended with such care, were not to fall into the hands of a dirty,growling priest. As soon as they were in the hall, she turned to Julien

who was following her shyly. His air of surprise at the sight of so fine a house was an additional charm in the eyes of Madame de Renal. She could not believe her eyes; what she felt most of all was that the tutor ought to be wearing a black coat.

'But is it true, Sir,' she said to him, again coming to a halt, and mortally afraid lest she might be mistaken, so happy was the belief making her,'do you really know Latin?'

These words hurt Julien's pride and destroyed the enchantment in which he had been living for the last quarter of an hour.

'Yes, Ma'am,' he informed her, trying to adopt a chilly air; 'I know Latin as well as M. le cure; indeed, he is sometimes so kind as to say that I know it better.'

Madame de Renal felt that Julien had a very wicked air; he had stopped within arm's length of her. She went nearer to him, and murmured:

'For the first few days, you won't take the whip to my children, even if they don't know their lessons?'

This gentle, almost beseeching tone coming from so fine a lady at once made Julien forget what he owed to his reputation as a Latin scholar.

Madame de Renal's face was close to his own, he could smell the perfume of a woman's summer attire, so astounding a thing to a poor peasant. Julien blushed deeply, and said with a sigh and in a faint voice:

'Fear nothing, Ma'am, I shall obey you in every respect.'

It was at this moment only, when her anxiety for her children was completely banished, that Madame de Renal was struck by Julien's extreme good looks. The almost feminine cast of his features and his air of embarrassment did not seem in the least absurd to a woman who was extremely timid herself. The manly air which is generally considered essential to masculine beauty would have frightened her.

'How old are you, Sir?' she asked Julien.

'I shall soon be nineteen.'

'My eldest son is eleven,' went on Madame de Renal, completely reassured; 'he will be almost a companion for you, you can talk to him seriously. His father tried to beat him once, the child was ill for a whole week, and yet it was quite a gentle blow.'

'How different from me,' thought Julien. 'Only yesterday my father was thrashing me. How fortunate these rich people are!'

Madame de Renal had by this time arrived at the stage of remarking the most trivial changes in the state of the tutor's mind; she mistook this envious impulse for shyness, and tried to give him fresh courage.

'What is your name, Sir?' she asked him with an accent and a grace the charm of which Julien could feel without knowing whence it sprang.

'They call me Julien Sorel, Ma'am; I am trembling as I enter a strange house for the first time in my life; I have need of your protection, and shall require you to forgive me many things at first. I have never been to College, I was too poor; I have never talked to any other men, except my cousin the Surgeon-Major, a Member of the Legion of Honour, and the Reverend Father Chelan. He will give you a good account of me. My brothers have always beaten me, do not listen to them if they speak evil of me to you; pardon my faults, Ma'am, I shall never have any evil intention.'

Julien plucked up his courage again during this long speech; he was studying Madame de Renal. Such is the effect of perfect grace when it is natural to the character, particularly when she whom it adorns has no thought of being graceful. Julien, who knew all that was to be known about feminine beauty, would have sworn at that moment that she was no more than twenty. The bold idea at once occurred to him of kissing her hand. Next, this idea frightened him; a moment later, he said to himself: 'It would be cowardly on my part not to carry out an action which may be of use to me, and diminish the scorn which this fine lady probably feels for a poor workman, only just taken from the sawbench.' Perhaps Julien was somewhat encouraged by the words 'good-looking boy' which for the last six months he had been used to hearing on Sundays on the lips of various girls. While he debated thus with himself, Madame de Renal offered him a few suggestions as to how he should begin to handle her children. The violence of Julien's effort to control himself made him turn quite pale again; he said, with an air of constraint:

'Never, Ma'am, will I beat your children; I swear it before God.'And so saying he ventured to take Madame de Renal's hand and carry it to his lips. She was astonished at this action, and, on thinking it over,shocked. As the weather was very warm, her arm was completely bare under her shawl, and Julien's action in raising her hand to his lips had uncovered it to the shoulder. A minute later she scolded herself; she felt

that she had not been quickly enough offended.

M. de Renal, who had heard the sound of voices, came out of his study; with the same majestic and fatherly air that he assumed when he was conducting marriages in the Town Hall, he said to Julien:

'It is essential that I speak to you before the children see you.'He ushered Julien into one of the rooms and detained his wife, who was going to leave them together. Having shut the door, M. de Renal seated himself with gravity.

'The cure has told me that you were an honest fellow, everyone in this house will treat you with respect, and if I am satisfied I shall help you to set up for yourself later on. I wish you to cease to see anything of either your family or your friends, their tone would not be suited to my children. Here are thirty-six francs for the first month; but I must have your word that you will not give a penny of this money to your father.'

M. de Renal was annoyed with the old man, who, in this business, had proved more subtle than he himself.

'And now, Sir, for by my orders everyone in this house is to address you as Sir, and you will be conscious of the advantage of entering a well ordered household; now, Sir, it is not proper that the children should see you in a jacket. Have the servants seen him?' M. de Renal asked his wife.

'No, dear,' she replied with an air of deep thought.

'Good. Put on this,' he said to the astonished young man, handing him one of his own frock coats. 'And now let us go to M. Durand, the clothier.'

More than an hour later, when M. de Renal returned with the new tutor dressed all in black, he found his wife still seated in the same place.She felt soothed by Julien's presence; as she studied his appearance she forgot to feel afraid. Julien was not giving her a thought; for all his mistrust of destiny and of mankind, his heart at that moment was just like a child's; he seemed to have lived whole years since the moment when,three hours earlier, he stood trembling in the church. He noticed Madame de Renal's frigid manner, and gathered that she was angry because he had ventured to kiss her hand. But the sense of pride that he derived from the contact of garments so different from those which he was accustomed to wear caused him so much excitement, and he was so anxious to conceal his joy that all his gestures were more or less abrupt and foolish.

Madame de Renal gazed at him with eyes of astonishment.

'A little gravity, Sir,' M. de Renal told him, 'if you wish to be respected by my children and my servants.'

'Sir,' replied Julien, 'I am uncomfortable in these new clothes; I, a humble peasant, have never worn any but short jackets; with your permission, I shall retire to my bedroom.'

'What think you of this new acquisition?' M. de Renal asked his wife.With an almost instinctive impulse, of which she herself certainly was not aware, Madame de Renal concealed the truth from her husband.

'I am by no means as enchanted as you are with this little peasant;your kindness will turn him into an impertinent rascal whom you will be obliged to send packing within a month.'

'Very well! We shall send him packing; he will have cost me a hundred francs or so, and Verrieres will have grown used to seeing a tutor with M. de Renal's children. That point I should not have gained if I had let Julien remain in the clothes of a working man. When I dismiss him, I shall of course keep the black suit which I have just ordered from the clothier. He shall have nothing but the coat I found ready made at the tailor's, which he is now wearing.'

The hour which Julien spent in his room seemed like a second to Madame de Renal. The children, who had been told of their new tutor's arrival, overwhelmed their mother with questions. Finally Julien appeared.

He was another man. It would have been straining the word to say that he was grave; he was gravity incarnate. He was introduced to the children, and spoke to them with an air that surprised M. de Renal himself.

'I am here, young gentlemen,' he told them at the end of his address,'to teach you Latin. You know what is meant by repeating a lesson. Here is the Holy Bible,' he said, and showed them a tiny volume in 32mo,bound in black. 'It is in particular the story of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that is the part which is called the New Testament. I shall often make you repeat lessons; now you must make me repeat mine.'

Adolphe, the eldest boy, had taken the book.

'Open it where you please,' Julien went on, 'and tell me the first word of a paragraph. I shall repeat by heart the sacred text, the rule of conduct for us all, until you stop me.'

Adolphe opened the book, read a word, and Julien repeated the whole page as easily as though he were speaking French. M. de Renal looked at his wife with an air of triumph. The children, seeing their parents' amazement, opened their eyes wide. A servant came to the door of the drawing-room, Julien went on speaking in Latin. The servant at first stood motionless and then vanished. Presently the lady's maid and the cook appeared in the doorway; by this time Adolphe had opened the book at eight different places, and Julien continued to repeat the words with the same ease.

'Eh, what a bonny little priest,' the cook, a good and truly devout girl,said aloud.

M. de Renal's self-esteem was troubled; so far from having any thought of examining the tutor, he was engaged in ransacking his memory for a few words of Latin; at last, he managed to quote a line of Horace. Julien knew no Latin apart from the Bible. He replied with afrown:

'The sacred ministry to which I intend to devote myself has forbidden me to read so profane a poet.'

M. de Renal repeated a fair number of alleged lines of Horace. He explained to his children what Horace was; but the children, overcome with admiration, paid little attention to what he was saying. They were watching Julien.

The servants being still at the door, Julien felt it incumbent upon him to prolong the test.

'And now,' he said to the youngest boy, 'Master Stanislas Xavier too must set me a passage from the Holy Book.'

Little Stanislas, swelling with pride, read out to the best of his abilitythe opening words of a paragraph, and Julien repeated the whole page.

That nothing might be wanting to complete M. de Renal's triumph, while

Julien was reciting, there entered M. Valenod, the possessor of fine Nor

man horses, and M. Charcot de Maugiron, Sub-Prefect of the district.

This scene earned for Julien the title 'Sir'; the servants themselves dared

not withhold it from him.

That evening, the whole of Verrieres flocked to M. de Renal's to behold the marvel. Julien answered them all with an air of gloom which kept them at a distance. His fame spread so rapidly through the town that,shortly afterwards, M. de Renal, afraid of losing him, suggested his signing a contract for two years.

'No, Sir,' Julien replied coldly, 'if you chose to dismiss me I should be obliged to go. A contract which binds me without putting you under any obligation is unfair, I must decline.'

Julien managed so skilfully that, less than a month after his coming to the house, M. de Renal himself respected him. The cure having quarrelled with M. de Renal and Valenod, there was no one who could betray Julien's former passion for Napoleon, of whom he was careful to speak with horror.

[Chapter 7](#a0)

Elective Affinities

They can only touch the heart by bruising it.

A MODERN

The children adored him, he did not care for them; his thoughts were elsewhere. Nothing that these urchins could do ever tried his patience.Cold, just, impassive, and at the same time loved, because his coming had in a measure banished dullness from the house, he was a good tutor.For his part, he felt only hatred and horror for the high society in which he was allowed to occupy the very foot of the table, a position which may perhaps explain his hatred and horror. There were certain formal dinners at which he could barely contain his loathing of everything round about him. On Saint Louis's day in particular, M. Valenod was laying down the law at M. de Renal's; Julien almost gave himself away;he escaped into the garden, saying that he must look after the children.

'What panegyrics of honesty!' he exclaimed; 'anyone would say that was the one and only virtue; and yet what consideration, what a cringing respect for a man who obviously has doubled and tripled his fortune since he has been in charge of the relief of the poor! I would wager that he makes something even out of the fund set apart for the foundlings, those wretches whose need is even more sacred than that of the other paupers.

Ah, monsters! Monsters! And I too, I am a sort of foundling, hated by myfather, my brothers, my whole family.'

Some days earlier, Julien walking by himself and saying his office in a little wood, known as the Belvedere, which overlooks the Cours de la Fidelite, had tried in vain to avoid his two brothers, whom he saw approaching him by a solitary path. The jealousy of these rough labourers had been so quickened by the sight of their brother's handsome black coat, and air of extreme gentility, as well as by the sincere contempt which he felt for them, that they had proceeded to thrash him, leaving him there unconscious and bleeding freely. Madame de Renal, who was out walking with M. Valenod and the Sub-Prefect, happened to turn into the little wood; she saw Julien lying on the ground and thought him dead. She was so overcome as to make M. Valenod jealous.

His alarm was premature. Julien admired Madame de Renal's looks,but hated her for her beauty; it was the first reef on which his fortune had nearly foundered. He spoke to her as seldom as possible, in the hope of making her forget the impulse which, at their first encounter, had led him to kiss her hand.

Elisa, Madame de Renal's maid, had not failed to fall in love with the young tutor; she often spoke of him to her mistress. Miss Elisa's love had brought upon Julien the hatred of one of the footmen. One day he heard this man say to Elisa: 'You won't speak to me any more, since that greasy tutor has been in the house.' Julien did not deserve the epithet; but, with the instinct of a good-looking youth, became doubly attentive to his person. M. Valenod's hatred was multiplied accordingly. He said in public

that so much concern with one's appearance was not becoming in a young cleric. Barring the cassock, Julien now wore clerical attire.

Madame de Renal observed that he was speaking more often than before to Miss Elisa; she learned that these conversations were due to the limitations of Julien's extremely small wardrobe. He had so scanty a supply of linen that he was obliged to send it out constantly to be washed,and it was in performing these little services that Elisa made herself useful to him.

This extreme poverty, of which she had had no suspicion, touched Madame de Renal; she longed to make him presents, but did not dare; this inward resistance was the first feeling of regret that Julien caused her.Until then the name of Julien and the sense of a pure and wholly intellectual joy had been synonymous to her. Tormented by the idea of Julien's poverty, Madame de Renal spoke to her husband about making him a present of linen:

'What idiocy!' he replied. 'What! Make presents to a man with whom we are perfectly satisfied, and who is serving us well? It is when he neglects his duty that we should stimulate his zeal.'

Madame de Renal felt ashamed of this way of looking at things; before Julien came she would not have noticed it. She never saw the young cleric's spotless, though very simple, toilet without asking herself: 'Poor boy, how ever does he manage?'

As time went on she began to feel sorry for Julien's deficiencies, in stead of being shocked by them.

Madame de Renal was one of those women to be found in the provinces whom one may easily take to be fools until one has known them for a fortnight. She had no experience of life, and made no effort at conversation. Endowed with a delicate and haughty nature, that instinct for happiness natural to all human beings made her, generally speaking,pay no attention to the actions of the coarse creatures into whose midst chance had flung her.

She would have been remarkable for her naturalness and quickness of mind, had she received the most scanty education; but in her capacity as an heiress she had been brought up by nuns who practised a passionate devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and were animated by a violent hatred of the French as being enemies of the Jesuits. Madame de Renal had sufficient sense to forget at once, as absurdities, everything she had learned in the convent; but she put nothing else in its place, and ended by knowing nothing. The flatteries of which she had been the precocious object, as the heiress to a large fortune, and a marked tendency towards passionate devotion, had bred in her an attitude towards life that was wholly inward. With an outward show of the most perfect submission,and a self-suppression which the husbands of Verrieres used to quote as an example to their wives, and which was a source of pride to M. de Renal, her inner life was, as a matter of fact, dictated by the most lofty disdain. Any princess who is quoted as an illustration of pride pays infinitely more attention to what her gentlemen are doing round about her than this meekest of women, so modest in appearance, gave to anything that her husband said or did. Until Julien arrived, she had really paid no attention to anyone but her children. Their little illnesses, their sorrows,their little pleasures absorbed the whole sensibility of this human soul,which had never, in the whole of her life, adored anyone save God,while she was at the Sacred Heart in Besancon.

Although she did not condescend to say so to anyone, a feverish attack coming to one of her sons threw her almost into the same state as if the child had died. A burst of coarse laughter, a shrug of the shoulders, accompanied by some trivial maxim as to the foolishness of women, had regularly greeted the confessions of grief of this sort which the need of an outlet had led her to make to her husband during the first years of their married life.

Witticisms of this sort, especially when they bore upon the illnesses of the children, turned the dagger in Madame de Renal's heart. This was all the substitute she found for the obsequious, honeyed flatteries of the Jesuitical convent in which she had passed her girlhood.She was educated in the school of suffering. Too proud to speak of griefs of this sort, even to her friend Madame Derville, she imagined that all men resembled her husband, M. Valenod, and the Sub-Prefect Charcot de Maugiron. Coarse wit and the most brutal insensibility to everything that did not promise money, promotion or a Cross; a blind hatred of every argument that went against them seemed to her to be things natural to the male sex, like the wearing of boots and felt hats.

After many long years, Madame de Renal had not yet grown accustomed to these money-grubbing creatures among whom she had to live.Hence the success of the little peasant Julien. She found much pleasant enjoyment, radiant with the charm of novelty, in the sympathy of this proud and noble spirit. Madame de Renal had soon forgiven him his extreme ignorance, which was an additional charm, and the roughness of his manners, which she succeeded in improving. She found that it was worth her while to listen to him, even when they spoke of the most ordinary things, even when it was a question of a poor dog that had been run over, as it was crossing the street, by a peasant's cart going by at a trot. The sight of such a tragedy made her husband utter his coarse laugh, whereas she saw Julien's fine, beautifully arched black eye-brows wince. Generosity, nobility of soul, humanity, seemed to her, after a time, to exist only in this young cleric. She felt for him alone all the sympathy and even admiration which those virtues arouse in well-bred natures.

In Paris, Julien's position with regard to Madame de Renal would very soon have been simplified; but in Paris love is the child of the novels.The young tutor and his timid mistress would have found in three or four novels, and even in the lyrics of the Gymnase, a clear statement of their situation. The novels would have outlined for them the part to be played, shown them the model to copy; and this model, sooner or later,albeit without the slightest pleasure, and perhaps with reluctance, vanity would have compelled Julien to follow.

In a small town of the Aveyron or the Pyrenees, the slightest incident would have been made decisive by the ardour of the climate. Beneath our more sombre skies, a penniless young man, who is ambitious only because the refinement of his nature puts him in need of some of those pleasures which money provides, is in daily contact with a woman of thirty who is sincerely virtuous, occupied with her children, and never looks to novels for examples of conduct. Everything goes slowly,everything happens by degrees in the provinces: life is more natural.Often, when she thought of the young tutor's poverty, Madame de Renal was moved to tears. Julien came upon her, one day, actually crying.

'Ah, Ma'am, you have had some bad news!'

'No, my friend,' was her answer: 'Call the children, let us go for a

walk.'

She took his arm and leaned on it in a manner which Julien thought strange. It was the first time that she had called him 'my friend'.

Towards the end of their walk, Julien observed that she was blushing deeply. She slackened her pace.

'You will have heard,' she said without looking at him, 'that I am the sole heiress of a very rich aunt who lives at Besancon. She loads me with presents. My sons are making … such astonishing progress … that I should like to ask you to accept a little present, as a token of my gratitude. It is only a matter of a few louis to supply you with linen. But—' she added, blushing even more deeply, and was silent.

'What, Ma'am?' said Julien.

'It would be unnecessary,' she went on, lowering her head, 'to speak of

this to my husband.'

'I may be humble, Ma'am, but I am not base,' replied Julien coming to a standstill, his eyes ablaze with anger, and drawing himself up to his full height. 'That is a point which you have not sufficiently considered. I should be less than a footman if I put myself in the position of hiding from M. de Renal anything that had to do with my money.'

Madame de Renal was overwhelmed.

'The Mayor,' Julien went on, 'has given me thirty-six francs five times since I came to live in his house; I am prepared to show my account-book to M. de Renal or to anyone else, including M. Valenod who hates me.'This outburst left Madame de Renal pale and trembling, and the walk came to an end before either of them could find an excuse for renewing the conversation. Love for Madame de Renal became more and more impossible in the proud heart of Julien: as for her, she respected, she admired him; she had been scolded by him. On the pretext of making amends for the humiliation which she had unintentionally caused him,she allowed herself to pay him the most delicate attentions. The novelty of this procedure kept her happy for a week. Its effect was to some extent to appease Julien's anger; he was far from seeing anything in it that could be mistaken for personal affection.

'That,' he said to himself, 'is what rich people are like: they humiliate one, and then think they can put things right by a few monkey-tricks.'Madame de Renal's heart was too full, and as yet too innocent for her,notwithstanding the resolutions she had made, not to tell her husband of the offer she had made to Julien and the manner in which she had been repulsed.

'What,' M. de Renal retorted, with keen annoyance, 'could you tolerate a refusal from a servant?'

And as Madame de Renal protested at this word:

'I speak, Ma'am, as the late Prince de Conde spoke, when presenting his Chamberlains to his bride: "All these people," he told her, "are our servants." I read you the passage from Besenval's Memoirs, it is essential in questions of precedence. Everyone who is not a gentleman, who lives in your house and receives a salary, is your servant. I shall say a few words to this Master Julien, and give him a hundred francs.'

'Ah, my dear,' said Madame de Renal trembling, 'please do not say anything in front of the servants.'

'Yes, they might be jealous, and rightly,' said her husband as he left the

room, thinking of the magnitude of the sum.

Madame de Renal sank down on a chair, almost fainting with grief.'He is going to humiliate Julien, and it is my fault!' She felt a horror of her husband, and hid her face in her hands. She promised herself that she would never confide anything in him again.

When she next saw Julien, she was trembling all over, her bosom was so contracted that she could not manage to utter a single word. In her embarrassment she took his hands and wrung them.

'Well, my friend,' she said to him after a little, 'are you pleased with my husband?'

'How should I not be?' Julien answered with a bitter smile; 'he has given me a hundred francs.'

Madame de Renal looked at him as though uncertain what to do.

'Give me your arm,' she said at length with an accent of courage which Julien had never yet observed in her.

She ventured to enter the shop of the Verrieres bookseller, in spite of his terrible reputation as a Liberal. There she chose books to the value of ten louis which she gave to her sons. But these books were the ones which she knew that Julien wanted. She insisted that there, in the bookseller's shop, each of the children should write his own name in the books that fell to his share. While Madame de Renal was rejoicing at the partial reparation which she had had the courage to make to Julien, he was lost in amazement at the quantity of books which he saw on the bookseller's shelves. Never had he dared to set foot in so profane a place;his heart beat violently. So far from his having any thought of trying to guess what was occurring in the heart of Madame de Renal, he was plunged in meditation as to how it would be possible for a young student of divinity to procure some of these books. At length the idea came to him that it might be possible, by a skilful approach, to persuade M. de Renal that he ought to set his sons, as the subject for an essay, the lives of the celebrated gentlemen who were natives of the province. After a month of careful preliminaries, he saw his idea prove successful, so much so that, shortly afterwards, he ventured, in speaking to M. de Renal, to mention an action considerably more offensive to the noble Mayor;it was a matter of contributing to the prosperity of a Liberal, by taking out a subscription at the library. M. de Renal entirely agreed that it was wise to let his eldest son have a visual impression of various works which he would hear mentioned in conversation when he went to the Military School; but Julien found the Mayor obdurate in refusing to go any farther. He suspected a secret reason, which he was unable to guess.'I was thinking, Sir,' he said to him one day, 'that it would be highly improper for the name of a respectable gentleman like a Renal to appear on the dirty ledger of the librarian.'

M. de Renal's face brightened.

'It would also be a very bad mark,' Julien went on, in a humbler tone,'against a poor divinity student, if it should one day be discovered that

his name had been on the ledger of a bookseller who keeps a library. The

Liberals might accuse me of having asked for the most scandalous books;for all one knows they might even go so far as to write in after my name

the titles of those perverse works.'

But Julien was going off the track. He saw the Mayor's features resume their expression of embarrassment and ill humour. Julien was silent. 'I have my man hooked,' he said to himself.

A few days later, on the eldest boy's questioning Julien as to a book advertised in the Quotidienne, in M. de Renal's presence:'To remove all occasion for triumph from the Jacobin Party,' said the young tutor, 'and at the same time to enable me to answer Master Adolphe, one might open a subscription at the bookshop in the name of

the lowest of your servants.'

'That is not at all a bad idea,' said M. de Renal, obviously delighted.'Only it would have to be specified,' said Julien with that grave and almost sorrowful air which becomes certain people so well, when they see the success of the projects which have been longest in their minds, 'it would have to be specified that the servant shall not take out any novels.Once they were in the house, those dangerous works might corrupt Madame's maids, not to speak of the servant himself.'

'You forget the political pamphlets,' added M. de Renal, in a haughty tone. He wished to conceal the admiration that he felt for the clever middle course discovered by his children's tutor.

Julien's life was thus composed of a series of petty negotiations; and their success was of far more importance to him than the evidence of a marked preference for himself which was only waiting for him to read it in the heart of Madame de Renal.

The moral environment in which he had been placed all his life was repeated in the household of the worshipful Mayor of Verrieres. There, as in his father's sawmill, he profoundly despised the people with whom he lived, and was hated by them. He saw every day, from the remarks made by the Sub-Prefect, by M. Valenod and by the other friends of the family, with reference to the things that had just happened under their eyes, how remote their ideas were from any semblance of reality. Did an action strike him as admirable, it was precisely what called forth blame from the people round about him. His unspoken retort was always:

'What monsters!' or 'What fools!' The amusing thing was that, with all his pride, frequently he understood nothing at all of what was being discussed.

In his whole life, he had never spoken with sincerity except to the old Surgeon-Major; the few ideas that he had bore reference to Napoleon's campaigns in Italy, or to surgery. His youthful courage took delight in detailed accounts of the most painful operations; he said to himself: 'I should not have flinched.'

The first time that Madame de Renal attempted a conversation with him on a subject other than that of the children's education, he began to talk of surgical operations; she turned pale, and begged him to stop.

Julien knew nothing apart from these matters. And so, as he spent his time with Madame de Renal, the strangest silence grew up between them as soon as they were alone together. In her own drawing-room,humble as his bearing was, she found in his eyes an air of intellectual superiority over everyone that came to the house. Were she left alone for a moment with him, she saw him grow visibly embarrassed. This troubled her, for her womanly instinct made her realise that his embarrassment was not in the least degree amorous.

In consequence of some idea derived from a description of good society, as the old Surgeon-Major had beheld it, as soon as conversation ceased in a place where he found himself in the company of a woman,Julien felt abashed, as though he himself were specially to blame for this silence. This sensation was a hundred times more painful when they were alone. His imagination, full of the most extravagant, the most Spanish notions as to what a man ought to say, when he is alone with a woman, offered him in his agitation none but inadmissible ideas. His soul was in the clouds, and yet he was incapable of breaking the most humiliating silence. Thus his air of severity, during his long walks with Madame de Renal and the children, was intensified by the most cruel suffer ings. He despised himself hideously. If by mischance he forced himself to speak, he found himself saying the most ridiculous things. To increase his misery, he saw and exaggerated his own absurdity; but what he did not see was the expression in his eyes, they were so fine and revealed so burning a soul that, like good actors, they imparted at times a charming meaning to what was meaningless. Madame de Renal remarked that,when alone with her, he never expressed himself well except when he was distracted by some unforeseen occurrence, he never thought of turn ing a compliment. As the friends of the family did not spoil her by offering her new and brilliant ideas, she took a delight in the flashes of Julien's intellect.

Since the fall of Napoleon, all semblance of gallantry in speech has been sternly banished from the code of provincial behaviour. People are afraid of losing their posts. The unscrupulous seek support from the Congregation and hypocrisy has made the most brilliant advances even among the Liberal classes. Dulness increases. No pleasure is left, save in reading and agriculture.

Madame de Renal, the wealthy heiress of a religious aunt, married at sixteen to a worthy gentleman, had never in her life felt or seen anything that bore the faintest resemblance to love. Her confessor, the good cure Chelan, was the only person almost who had ever spoken to her of love,with reference to the advances of M. Valenod, and he had drawn so revolting a picture of it that the word conveyed nothing to her but the idea of the most abject immorality. She regarded as an exception, or rather as something quite apart from nature, love such as she had found it in the very small number of novels that chance had brought to her notice.Thanks to this ignorance, Madame de Renal, entirely happy, occupied incessantly with the thought of Julien, was far from reproaching herself in the slightest degree.

[chapter8](#a0)

Minor Events

*Then there were sighs, the deeper for suppression, And stolen glances, sweeter for the theft, And burning blushes, though for no transgression.*

Don Juan, I. 74

The angelic sweetness which Madame de Renal derived from her own character as well as from her present happiness was interrupted only when she happened to think of her maid Elisa. This young woman received a legacy, went to make her confession to the cure Chelan, and revealed to him her intention to marry Julien. The cure was genuinely delighted at his friend's good fortune; but his surprise was great when Julien informed him with a resolute air that Miss Elisa's offer could not be accepted.

'Pay good heed, my son, to what is taking place in your heart,' said the cure, frowning; 'I congratulate you on your vocation, if it is to it alone that must be ascribed your scorn of a more than adequate provision. For fifty-six years and more have I been cure at Verrieres, and yet, so far as one can see, I am going to be deprived. This distresses me, albeit I have an income of eight hundred livres. I tell you of this detail in order that you may not be under any illusion as to what is in store for you in the priestly calling. If you think of paying court to the men in power, your eternal ruin is assured. You may make your fortune, but you will have to injure the poor and needy, flatter the Sub-Prefect, the Mayor, the important person, and minister to his passions: such conduct, which in the world is called the art of life, may, in a layman, be not wholly incompatible with salvation; but in our calling, we have to choose; we must make our fortune either in this world or in the next, there is no middle way.Go, my dear friend, reflect, and come back in three days' time with a definite answer. I am sorry to see underlying your character, a smouldering ardour which does not suggest to my mind the moderation and complete renunciation of earthly advantages necessary in a priest; I augur well from your intelligence; but, allow me to tell you,' the good cure went on,with tears in his eyes, 'in the calling of a priest, I shall tremble for your salvation.'

Julien was ashamed of his emotion; for the first time in his life, he saw himself loved; he wept for joy, and went to hide his tears in the great woods above Verrieres.

'Why am I in this state?' he asked himself at length; 'I feel that I would give my life a hundred times over for that good Father Chelan, and yet he has just proved to me that I am no better than a fool. It is he above all that I have to deceive, and he sees through me. That secret ardour of which he speaks is my plan for making my fortune. He thinks me unfit to be a priest, at the very moment when I imagined that the sacrifice of an income of fifty louis was going to give him the most exalted idea of my piety and my vocation.

'For the future,' Julien continued, 'I shall rely only upon those elements of my character which I have tested. Who would ever have said that I should find pleasure in shedding tears? That I should love the man who proves to me that I am nothing more than a fool?'

Three days later, Julien had found the pretext with which he should have armed himself from the first; this pretext was a calumny, but what of that? He admitted to the cure, after much hesitation, that a reason which he could not explain to him, because to reveal it would injure a third party, had dissuaded him from the first from the projected marriage. This was tantamount to an indictment of Elisa's conduct. M.Chelan detected in his manner a fire that was wholly mundane, and very different from that which should have inspired a young Levite.'My friend,' he appealed to him again, 'be an honest yeoman, educated and respected, rather than a priest without a vocation.'

Julien replied to these fresh remonstrances extremely well, so far as words went; he hit upon the expressions which a fervent young seminarist would have employed; but the tone in which he uttered them, the ill concealed fire that smouldered in his eyes alarmed M. Chelan.

We need not augur ill for Julien's future; he hit upon the correct form of words of a cunning and prudent hypocrisy. That is not bad at his age.As for his tone and gestures, he lived among country folk; he had been debarred from seeing the great models. In the sequel, no sooner had he been permitted to mix with these gentlemen than he became admirable as well in gesture as in speech.

Madame de Renal was surprised that her maid's newly acquired for tune had not made the girl more happy; she saw her going incessantly to the cure's, and returning with tears in her eyes; finally Elisa spoke to her mistress of her marriage.

Madame de Renal believed herself to have fallen ill; a sort of fever prevented her enjoying any sleep; she was alive only when she had her maid or Julien before her eyes. She could think of nothing but them and the happiness they would find in their married life. The poverty of the small house in which people would be obliged to live, with an income of fifty louis, portrayed itself to her in enchanting colours. Julien might very well become a lawyer at Bray, the Sub-Prefecture two leagues from Verrieres; in that event she would see something of him.

Madame de Renal sincerely believed that she was going mad; she said so to her husband, and finally did fall ill. That evening, as her maid was waiting upon her, she noticed that the girl was crying. She loathed Elisa at that moment, and had spoken sharply to her; she begged the girl's pardon. Elisa's tears increased; she said that if her mistress would allow it,she would tell her the whole tale of her distress.

'Speak,' replied Madame de Renal.

'Well, the fact is, Ma'am, he won't have me; wicked people must have spoken evil of me to him, and he believes them.'

'Who won't have you?' said Madame de Renal, scarcely able to breathe.'And who could it be, Ma'am, but M. Julien?' the maid replied through her sobs. 'His Reverence has failed to overcome his resistance; for His Reverence considers that he ought not to refuse a decent girl, just be cause she has been a lady's maid. After all, M. Julien's own father is no better than a carpenter; and he himself, how was he earning his living before he came to Madame's?'

Madame de Renal had ceased to listen; surfeit of happiness had almost deprived her of the use of her reason. She made the girl repeat to her several times the assurance that Julien had refused in a positive manner,which would not permit of his coming to a more reasonable decision later on.

'I wish to make a final effort,' she said to her maid. 'I shall speak to M. Julien.'Next day after luncheon, Madame de Renal gave herself the exquisite sensation of pleading her rival's cause, and of seeing Elisa's hand and fortune persistently refused for an hour on end.

Little by little Julien abandoned his attitude of studied reserve, and ended by making spirited answers to the sound arguments advanced by Madame de Renal. She could not hold out against the torrent of happiness which now poured into her heart after all those days of despair. She found herself really ill. When she had come to herself, and was comfortably settled in her own room, she asked to be left alone. She was in a state of profound astonishment.

'Can I be in love with Julien?' she asked herself at length.

This discovery, which at any other time would have filled her with remorse and with a profound agitation, was no more to her than a singular spectacle, but one that left her indifferent. Her heart, exhausted by all that she had just undergone, had no sensibility left to place at the service of her passions.

Madame de Renal tried to work, and fell into a deep sleep; when she awoke, she was less alarmed than she should have been. She was too happy to be able to take anything amiss. Artless and innocent as she was,this honest provincial had never tormented her soul in an attempt to wring from it some little sensibility to some novel shade of sentiment or distress. Entirely absorbed, before Julien came, in that mass of work which, outside Paris, is the lot of a good wife and mother, Madame de Renal thought about the passions, as we think about the lottery: a certain disappointment and a happiness sought by fools alone.

The dinner bell rang; Madame de Renal blushed deeply when she heard Julien's voice as he brought in the children. Having acquired some adroitness since she had fallen in love, she accounted for her colour by complaining of a splitting headache.

'There you have women,' put in M. de Renal, with a coarse laugh.'There's always something out of order in their machinery.'

Accustomed as she was to this form of wit, the tone of his voice hurt Madame de Renal. She sought relief in studying Julien's features; had he been the ugliest man in the world, he would have charmed her at that moment.

Always zealous in imitating the habits of the Court, with the first fine days of spring M. de Renal removed his household to Vergy; it is the village rendered famous by the tragic adventure of Gabrielle. A few hundred yards from the picturesque ruins of the old gothic church, M.de Renal owned an old castle with its four towers, and a garden laid out like that of the Tuileries, with a number of box borders, and chestnut alleys trimmed twice in the year. An adjoining field, planted with apple trees, allowed the family to take the air. Nine or ten splendid walnuts grew at the end of the orchard; their massive foliage rose to a height of some eighty feet.

'Each of those damned walnuts,' M. de Renal would say when his wife admired them, 'costs me half an acre of crop; the corn will not grow in their shade.'

The rustic scene appeared to come as a novelty to Madame de Renal;her admiration knew no bounds. The feeling that animated her gave her a new spirit and determination. On the second day after their removal to Vergy, M. de Renal having returned to town upon some official business,his wife engaged labourers at her own expense. Julien had given her the idea of a little gravelled path, which should run round the orchard and beneath the big walnuts, and would allow the children to walk there in the early morning without wetting their shoes in the dew. This plan was put into execution within twenty-four hours of its conception. Madame de Renal spent a long and happy day with Julieu supervising the labourers.

When the Mayor of Verrieres returned from the town, he was greatly surprised to find the path finished. His coming surprised Madame de Renal also; she had forgotten that he existed. For the next two months, he continued to speak with annoyance of their presumption in having carried out, without consulting him, so important a repair, but Madame de Renal had done it at her own expense, and this to some extent consoled him.

She spent her days running about the orchard with her children, and chasing butterflies. They had made a number of large nets of light-coloured gauze, with which they caught the unfortunate lepidoptera. This was the outlandish name which Julien taught Madame de Renal. For she had sent to Besancon for the handsome work on the subject by M.Godart; and Julien read to her the strange habits of these insects.They fastened them, without compunction, with pins upon a large sheet of pasteboard, also prepared by Julien.

At last Madame de Renal and Julien had a subject for conversation; he was no longer exposed to the frightful torture inflicted on him by intervals of silence.

They conversed incessantly, and with extreme interest, although always of the most innocent things. This life, active, occupied and cheerful,suited everyone, except Miss Elisa, who found herself worked to death.'Even at carnival-time,' she said, 'when there is a ball at Verrieres, Madame has never taken so much trouble over her dress; she changes her clothes two or three times a day.'

As it is our intention to flatter no one, we shall not conceal the fact that Madame de Renal, who had a superb skin, had dresses made for her which exposed her arms and bosom freely. She was very well made, and this way of dressing suited her to perfection.

'You have never been so young, Ma'am,' her friends from Verrieres used to tell her when they came to dine at Vergy. (It is a local form of speech.) A curious point, which our readers will scarcely believe, was that Madame de Renal had no deliberate intention in taking such pains with her appearance. She enjoyed doing so; and, without giving the matter any particular thought, whenever she was not chasing butterflies with the children and Julien, she was engaged with Elisa making dresses. Her one expedition to Verrieres was due to a desire to purchase new summer clothes which had just arrived there from Mulhouse.

She brought back with her to Vergy a young woman, one of her cousins. Since her marriage, Madame de Renal had gradually formed an intimate friendship with Madame Derville, who in their younger days had been her school-fellow at the Sacre-Coeur.

Madame Derville laughed heartily at what she called her cousin's absurd ideas. 'If I were alone, they would never occur to me,' she used to say. These sudden ideas, which in Paris would have been called sallies,made Madame de Renal feel ashamed, as of something foolish, when she was with her husband; but Madame Derville's presence gave her courage. She began by telling her what she was thinking in a timid voice;when the ladies were by themselves for any length of time, Madame de Renal would become animated, and a long, undisturbed morning passed in a flash and left the friends quite merry. On this visit, the sensible Madame Derville found her cousin much less merry and much happier.

Julien, meanwhile, had been living the life of a child since he had come to the country, as happy to be running after butterflies as were his pupils. After so much constraint and skilful diplomacy, alone, unobserved by his fellowmen, and, instinctively, feeling not in the least afraid of Madame de Renal, he gave himself up to the pleasure of being alive, so keen at his age, and in the midst of the fairest mountains in the world.

As soon as Madame Derville arrived, Julien felt that she was his friend; he hastened to show her the view that was to be seen from the end of the new path; as a matter of fact it was equal, if not superior to the most admirable scenery which Switzerland and the Italian lakes have to offer. By climbing the steep slope which began a few yards farther on,one came presently to high precipices fringed with oakwoods, which projected almost over the bed of the river. It was to the summits of these sheer rocks that Julien, happy, free, and indeed something more, lord of the house, led the two friends, and relished their admiration of those sublime prospects.

'To me it is like Mozart's music,' said Madame Derville.His brothers' jealousy, the presence of a despotic and illtempered father had spoiled the country round Verrieres in Julien's eyes. At Vergy,he found no trace of these unpleasant memories; for the first time in his life, he could see no one that was his enemy. When M. de Renal was in town, as frequently happened, he ventured to read; soon, instead of reading at night, and then taking care, moreover, to shade his lamp with an inverted flowerpot, he could take his full measure of sleep; during the day, in the interval between the children's lessons, he climbed up among these rocks with the book that was his sole rule of conduct, and the sole object of his transports. He found in it at once happiness, ecstasy and consolation in moments of depression.

Certain things which Napoleon says of women, various discussions of the merits of the novels in vogue during his reign, furnished him now,for the first time, with several ideas which would long since have been familiar to any other young man of his age.

The hot weather came. They formed the habit of spending the evening under a huge lime a few yards from the house. There the darkness was intense. One evening, Julien was talking with emphasis, he was revelling in the pleasure of talking well and to young married women; as he gesticulated, he touched the hand of Madame de Renal, who was leaning on the back of one of those chairs of painted wood that are placed in gardens.

The hand was hurriedly withdrawn; but Julien decided that it was his duty to secure that the hand should not be withdrawn when he touched it. The idea of a duty to be performed, and of making himself ridiculous,or rather being left with a sense of inferiority if he did not succeed in performing it, at once took all the pleasure from his heart.

[chapter9](#a00)

An Evening in the Country

*M. Guerin's Dido, a charming sketch!*

STROMBECK

When he saw Madame de Renal again, the next morning, there was a strange look in his eyes; he watched her like an enemy with whom he would presently be engaged. This expression, so different from his expression overnight, made Madame de Renal lose her head; she had been kind to him, and he appeared vexed. She could not take her eyes from his.

Madame Derville's presence excused Julien from his share of the conversation, and enabled him to concentrate his attention upon what he had in mind. His sole occupation, throughout the day, was that of fortifying himself by reading the inspired text which refreshed his soul.He greatly curtailed the children's lessons, and when, later on, the presence of Madame de Renal recalled him to the service of his own vanity, decided that it was absolutely essential that this evening she should allow her hand to remain in his.

The sun as it set and so brought nearer the decisive moment made Julien's heart beat with a strange excitement. Night fell. He observed,with a joy that lifted a huge weight from his breast, that it was very dark.A sky packed with big clouds, kept in motion by a hot breeze, seemed to forebode a tempest. The two women continued strolling until a late hour.Everything that they did this evening seemed strange to Julien. They were enjoying this weather, which, in certain delicate natures, seems to enhance the pleasure of love.

At last they sat down, Madame de Renal next to Julien, and Madame Derville on the other side of her friend. Preoccupied with the attempt he must shortly make, Julien could think of nothing to say. The conversation languished.

'Shall I tremble like this and feel as uncomfortable the first time I have to fight a duel?' Julien wondered; for he had too little confidence either in himself or in others not to observe the state he was in.

In this agonising uncertainty, any danger would have seemed to him preferable. How often did he long to see Madame de Renal called by some duty which would oblige her to return to the house and so leave the garden! The violence of the effort which Julien had to make to control himself was such that his voice was entirely altered; presently Madame de Renal's voice became tremulous also, but Julien never noticed this.The ruthless warfare which his sense of duty was waging with his natural timidity was too exhausting for him to be in a condition to observe anything outside himself. The quarter before ten had sounded from the tower clock, without his having yet ventured on anything. Julien,ashamed of his cowardice, told himself: 'At the precise moment when ten o'clock strikes, I shall carry out the intention which, all day long, I have been promising myself that I would fulfil this evening, or I shall go up to my room and blow my brains out.'

After a final interval of tension and anxiety, during which the excess of his emotion carried Julien almost out of his senses, the strokes of ten sounded from the clock overhead. Each stroke of that fatal bell stirred an echo in his bosom, causing him almost a physical revulsion.

Finally, while the air was still throbbing with the last stroke of ten, he put out his hand and took that of Madame de Renal, who at once withdrew it. Julien, without exactly knowing what he was doing, grasped her hand again. Although greatly moved himself, he was struck by the icy coldness of the hand he was clasping; he pressed it with convulsive force; a last attempt was made to remove it from him, but finally the hand was left in his grasp.

His heart was flooded with joy, not because he loved Madame de Renal, but because a fearful torment was now at an end. So that Madame Derville should not notice anything, he felt himself obliged to speak; his voice, now, was loud and ringing. Madame de Renal's, on the other hand, betrayed such emotion that her friend thought she must be ill and suggested to her that they should go indoors. Julien saw the danger: 'If Madame de Renal returns to the drawing-room, I am going to fall back into the horrible position I have been in all day. I have not held this hand long enough to be able to reckon it as a definite conquest.'

When Madame Derville repeated her suggestion that they should go into the drawing-room, Julien pressed the hand that lay in his.Madame de Renal, who was preparing to rise, resumed her seat, saying in a faint tone:

'I do, as a matter of fact, feel a little unwell, but the fresh air is doing me good.'

These words confirmed Julien's happiness, which, at this moment, was extreme: he talked, forgot to dissimulate, appeared the most charming of men to his two hearers. And yet there was still a slight want of courage in this eloquence which had suddenly come to him. He was in a deadly fear lest Madame Derville, exhausted by the wind which was beginning to rise, and heralded the storm, might decide to go in by herself to the drawing-room. Then he would be left alone with Madame de Renal. He had found almost by accident the blind courage which was sufficient for action; but he felt that it lay beyond his power to utter the simplest of words to Madame de Renal. However mild her reproaches might be, he was going to be defeated, and the advantage which he had just gained wiped out.

Fortunately for him, this evening, his touching and emphatic speeches found favour with Madame Derville, who as a rule found him as awkward as a schoolboy, and by no means amusing. As for Madame de Renal, her hand lying clasped in Julien's, she had no thought of anything;she was allowing herself to live. The hours they spent beneath this huge lime, which, local tradition maintained, had been planted by Charles the Bold, were for her a time of happiness. She listened with rapture to the moaning of the wind in the thick foliage of the lime, and the sound of the first few drops that were beginning to fall upon its lowest leaves. Julien did not notice a detail which would have greatly reassured him; Madame de Renal, who had been obliged to remove her hand from his, on rising to help her cousin to pick up a pot of flowers which the wind had overturned at their feet, had no sooner sat down again than she gave him back her hand almost without difficulty, and as though it had been an understood thing between them.

Midnight had long since struck; at length it was time to leave the garden: the party broke up. Madame de Renal, transported by the joy of being in love, was so ignorant that she hardly reproached herself at all.Happiness robbed her of sleep. A sleep like lead carried off Julien, utterly worn out by the battle that had been raging all day in his heart between timidity and pride.

Next morning he was called at five o'clock; and (what would have been a cruel blow to Madame de Renal had she known of it) he barely gave her a thought. He had done his duty, and a heroic duty. Filled with joy by this sentiment, he turned the key in the door of his bedroom and gave himself up with an entirely new pleasure to reading about the exploits of his hero.

When the luncheon bell sounded, he had forgotten, in reading the reports of the Grand Army, all the advantages he had won overnight. He said to himself, in a careless tone, as he went down to the drawing-room:'I must tell this woman that I love her.'

Instead of that gaze charged with passion which he expected to meet,he found the stern face of M. de Renal, who, having arrived a couple of hours earlier from Verrieres, did not conceal his displeasure on finding that Julien was wasting the whole morning without attending to the children. No sight could have been so unprepossessing as that of this self-important man, conscious of a grievance and confident of his right to let it be seen.

Each of her husband's harsh words pierced Madame de Renal to the heart. As for Julien, he was so plunged in ecstasy, still so absorbed in the great events which for the last few hours had been happening before his eyes, that at first he could barely lower the pitch of his attention to listen to the stern voice of M. de Renal. At length he answered him, sharply enough:

'I was unwell.'

The tone of this reply would have stung a man far less susceptible than the Mayor of Verrieres; it occurred to him to reply to Julien with an immediate dismissal. He was restrained only by the maxim which he had laid down for himself, never to be too hasty in business matters.'This young fool,' he soon reminded himself, 'has made himself a sort of reputation in my house; Valenod may take him on, or else he will marry Elisa, and, in either case, he can afford to laugh at me in his heart.'Despite the wisdom of these reflections, M. de Renal's displeasure found an outlet nevertheless in a succession of coarse utterances which succeeded in irritating Julien. Madame de Renal was on the point of subsiding in tears. As soon as the meal was ended, she asked Julien to give her his arm for their walk; she leaned upon it in a friendly way. To all that Madame de Renal said to him, Julien could only murmur in reply:'This is what rich people are like!'

M. de Renal kept close beside them; his presence increased Julien's anger. He noticed suddenly that Madame de Renal was leaning upon his arm in a marked manner; this action horrified him, he repulsed her violently, freeing his arm from hers.

Fortunately M. de Renal saw nothing of this fresh impertinence; it was noticed only by Madame Derville; her friend burst into tears. At this moment M. de Renal began flinging stones at a little peasant girl who was trespassing by taking a short cut across a corner of the orchard.

'Monsieur Julien, kindly control yourself, remember that we are all of us liable to moments of ill temper,' Madame Derville said hastily.

Julien looked at her coldly with eyes in which the loftiest contempt was portrayed.

This look astonished Madame Derville, and would have surprised her far more could she have guessed its full meaning; she would have read in it a vague hope of the most terrible revenge. It is doubtless to such moments of humiliation that we owe men like Robespierre.

'Your Julien is very violent, he frightens me,' Madame Derville murmured to her friend.

'He has every reason to be angry,' the other replied. 'After the astonishing progress the children have made with him, what does it matter if he spends a morning without speaking to them? You must admit that gentlemen are very hard.'

For the first time in her life, Madame de Renal felt a sort of desire to be avenged on her husband. The intense hatred that animated Julien against rich people was about to break forth. Fortunately M. de Renal called for his gardener, with whom for the rest of the time he busied himself in stopping up with faggots of thorn the short cut that had been made across the orchard. Julien did not utter a single word in reply to the at tentions that were shown him throughout the remainder of the walk. As soon as M. de Renal had left them, the two ladies, on the plea that they were tired, had asked him each for an arm.

As he walked between these women whose cheeks were flushed with the embarrassment of an intense discomfort, Julien's sombre and decided air formed a striking contrast. He despised these women, and all tender feelings.

'What!' he said to himself, 'not even an allowance of five hundred francs to complete my studies! Ah! How I should send her packing!'Absorbed in these drastic thoughts, the little that he deigned to take in of the polite speeches of the two ladies displeased him as being devoid of meaning, silly, feeble, in a word feminine.

By dint of talking for talking's sake, and of trying to keep the conversation alive, Madame de Renal found herself saying that her husband had come from Verrieres because he had made a bargain, for the purchase of maize straw, with one of his farmers. (In this district maize straw is used to stuff the palliasses of the beds.)

'My husband will not be joining us again,' Madame de Renal went on:'he will be busy with the gardener and his valet changing the straw in all the palliasses in the house. This morning he put fresh straw on all the beds on the first floor, now he is at work on the second.'

Julien changed colour; he looked at Madame de Renal in an odd manner, and presently drew her apart, so to speak, by increasing his pace.Madame Derville allowed them to move away from her.

'Save my life,' said Julien to Madame de Renal, 'you alone can do it; for you know that the valet hates me like poison. I must confess to you,Ma'am, that I have a portrait; I have hidden it in the palliasse on my bed.'At these words, Madame de Renal in turn grew pale.

'You alone, Ma'am, can go into my room at this moment; feel, without letting yourself be observed, in the corner of the palliasse nearest to the window; you will find there a small box of shiny black pasteboard.''It contains a portrait?' said Madame de Renal, barely able to stand.Her air of disappointment was noticed by Julien, who at once took advantage of it.

'I have a second favour to ask of you, Ma'am; I beg you not to look at the portrait, it is my secret.'

'It is a secret!' repeated Madame de Renal, in faint accents.

But, albeit she had been reared among people proud of their wealth,and sensible of pecuniary interests alone, love had already instilled some generosity into her heart. Though cruelly wounded, it was with an air of the simplest devotion that Madame de Renal put to Julien the questions necessary to enable her to execute his commission properly.

'And so,' she said, as she left him, 'it is a little round box, of black pasteboard, and very shiny.'

'Yes, Ma'am,' replied Julien in that hard tone which danger gives a man.

She mounted to the second floor of the house, as pale as though she were going to her death. To complete her misery she felt that she was on the point of fainting, but the necessity of doing Julien a service restored her strength.

'I must have that box,' she said to herself as she quickened her pace.She could hear her husband talking to the valet, actually in Julien's room. Fortunately they moved into the room in which the children slept.She lifted the mattress and plunged her hand into the straw with such force as to scratch her fingers. But, although extremely sensitive to slight injuries of this sort, she was now quite unconscious of the pain, for almost immediately she felt the polished surface of the pasteboard box.She seized it and fled.

No sooner was she rid of the fear of being surprised by her husband,than the horror inspired in her by this box made her feel that in another minute she must unquestionably faint.

'So Julien is in love, and I have here the portrait of the woman he loves.'

Seated on a chair in the sitting-room of this apartment, Madame de Renal fell a prey to all the horrors of jealousy. Her extreme ignorance was of service to her again at this moment; astonishment tempered her grief. Julien appeared, snatched the box, without thanking her, without saying a word, and ran into his bedroom, where he struck a light and immediately destroyed it. He was pale, speechless; he exaggerated to himself the risk he had been running.

'The portrait of Napoleon,' he said to himself with a toss of the head,'found hidden in the room of a man who professes such hatred for the usurper! Found by M. de Renal, so ultra and so angry! and, to complete the imprudence, on the white card at the back of the portrait, lines in my writing! And lines that can leave no doubt as to the warmth of my admiration! And each of those transports of love is dated! There was one only two days ago!

'All my reputation brought down, destroyed in a moment!' Julien said to himself as he watched the box burn, 'and my reputation is all I have, I live by it alone … and what a life at that, great God!'

An hour later, his exhaustion and the pity he felt for himself disposed him to feel affection. He met Madame de Renal and took her hand which he kissed with more sincerity than he had ever yet shown. She coloured with delight, and almost simultaneously repulsed Julien with the anger of a jealous woman. Julien's pride, so recently wounded, made a fool of him at that moment. He saw in Madame de Renal only a rich woman, he let fall her hand with contempt, and strode away. He went out and walked pensively in the garden; presently a bitter smile appeared on his lips.

'Here I am walking about as calm as a man who is his own master! I am not looking after the children! I am exposing myself to the humiliating remarks of M. de Renal, and he will be justified.' He hastened to the children's room.

The caresses of the youngest boy, to whom he was greatly attached,did something to soothe his agonising pain.

'This one does not despise me yet,' thought Julien. But presently he blamed himself for this relief from pain, as for a fresh weakness. These children fondle me as they might fondle the puppy that was bought yesterday.'

[chapter10](#a0)

A Large Heart and a Small Fortune

But passion most dissembles, yet betrays, Even by its darkness; as

the blackest sky Foretells the heaviest tempest.

Don Juan, I. 73

M. de Renal, who was visiting every room in the house, reappeared in the children's room with the servants who brought back the palliasses refilled. The sudden entry of this man was the last straw to Julien.Paler, more sombre than usual, he advanced towards him. M. de Renal stood still and looked at his servants.

'Sir,' Julien began, 'do you suppose that with any other tutor your children would have made the same progress that they have made with me?If your answer is no,' he went on without giving M. de Renal time to speak, 'how dare you presume to reproach me with neglecting them?'M. de Renal, who had barely recovered from his alarm, concluded from the strange tone which he saw this young peasant adopt that he had in his pocket some more attractive offer and was going to leave him.Julien's anger increasing as he spoke:

'I can live without you, Sir,' he concluded.

'I am extremely sorry to see you so agitated,' replied M. de Renal,stammering a little. The servants were a few feet away, and were occupied in making the beds.

'That is not enough for me, Sir,' Julien went on, beside himself withrage; 'think of the abominable things you said to me, and in the presence of ladies, too!'

M. de Renal was only too well aware of what Julien was asking, and conflicting passions did battle in his heart. It so happened that Julien,now really mad with rage, exclaimed: 'I know where to go, Sir, when Ileave your house.'

On hearing these words, M. de Renal had a vision of Julien established in M. Valenod's household.

'Very well, Sir,' he said at length with a sigh, and the air of a man calling in a surgeon to perform the most painful operation, 'I agree to your request. From the day after tomorrow, which is the first of the month, I shall give you fifty francs monthly.'Julien wanted to laugh and remained speechless: his anger had completely vanished.

'I did not despise the animal enough,' he said to himself. 'This, no doubt, is the most ample apology so base a nature is capable of making.'The children, who had listened to this scene openmouthed, ran to the garden to tell their mother that M. Julien was in a great rage, but that he was to have fifty francs a month.

Julien went after them from force of habit, without so much as at M. de Renal, whom he left in a state of intense annoyance.

'That's a hundred and sixty-eight francs,' the Mayor said to himself,'that M. Valenod has cost me. I must really say a few firm words to him about his contract to supply the foundlings.'

A moment later, Julien again stood before him.

'I have a matter of conscience to discuss with M. Chelan. I have the honour to inform you that I shall be absent for some hours.'

'Ah, my dear Julien,' said M. de Renal, laughing in the most insincere manner, 'the whole day, if you wish, the whole of tomorrow, my worthy friend. Take the gardener's horse to go to Verrieres.'

'There,' M. de Renal said to himself, 'he's going with an answer to Valenod; he's given me no promise, but we must let the young hot head cool down.'

Julien made a speedy escape and climbed up among the big woods through which one can go from Vergy to Verrieres. He was in no hurry to reach M. Chelan's. So far from desiring to involve himself in a fresh display of hypocrisy, he needed time to see clearly into his own heart,and to give audience to the swarm of conflicting feelings that disturbed it.

'I have won a battle,' he said to himself as soon as he found himself in the shelter of the woods and out of sight of anyone, 'I have really won a battle!'

The last word painted his whole position for him in glowing colours,and restored some degree of tranquillity to his heart.

'Here I am with a salary of fifty francs a month; M. de Renal must be in a fine fright. But of what?'

His meditation as to what could have frightened the prosperous and powerful man against whom, an hour earlier, he had been seething with rage completely restored Julien's serenity. He was almost conscious, for a moment, of the exquisite beauty of the woods through which he was walking. Enormous fragments of bare rock had in times past fallen into the heart of the forest from the side of the mountain. Tall beeches rose almost as high as these rocks whose shadow provided a delicious coolness within a few yards of places where the heat of the sun's rays would have made it impossible to stop.

Julien paused for a breathing space in the shadow of these great rocks,then went on climbing. Presently, by following a narrow path, barely visible and used only by goat herds, he found himself standing upon an immense rock, where he could be certain of his complete isolation from his fellowmen. This natural position made him smile, it suggested to him the position to which he was burning to attain in the moral sphere. The pure air of these lofty mountains breathed serenity and even joy into his soul. The Mayor of Verrieres might still, in his eyes, be typical of all the rich and insolent denizens of the earth, but Julien felt that the hatred which had convulsed him that afternoon contained, notwithstanding its violence, no element of personal ill-feeling. Should he cease to see M. de Renal, within a week he would have forgotten him, the man himself, his house, his dogs, his children and all that was his. 'I have forced him, I do not know how, to make the greatest of sacrifices. What, more than fifty crowns a year? A moment earlier I had just escaped from the greatest danger. That makes two victories in one day; the second contains no merit, I must try to discover the reason. But we can leave such arduous research for tomorrow.'

Julien, erect upon his mighty rock, gazed at the sky, kindled to flame by an August sun. The grass-hoppers were chirping in the patch of meadow beneath the rock; when they ceased everything around him was silence. Twenty leagues of country lay at his feet. From time to time a hawk, risen from the bare cliffs above his head, caught his eye as it wheeled silently in its vast circles. Julien's eye followed mechanically the bird of prey. Its calm, powerful motion impressed him, he envied such strength, he envied such isolation.

It was the destiny of Napoleon, was it one day to be his own?

[chapter11](#a0)

Night Thoughts

Yet Julia's very coldness still was kind, And tremulously gentle her small hand Withdrew itself from his, but left behind A little pressure, thrilling, and so bland And slight, so very slight, that to the mind Twas but a doubt.

Don Juan, I. 71

He must, however, let himself be seen at Verrieres. As he left the Presbytery the first person he met was, by a happy chance, M. Valenod,whom he hastened to inform of the increase in his salary.

On his return to Vergy, Julien did not go down to the garden until night had set in. His heart was worn out by the multitude of powerful emotions that had assailed it in the course of the day. 'What shall I say to them?' he asked himself anxiously, thinking of the ladies. It never occurred to him that his spirits were precisely at the level of the trivial happenings that as a rule occupy the whole interest of women. Often Julien was unintelligible to Madame Derville, and even to her friend, while he in turn only half understood all that they were saying to him. Such was the effect of the force, and, if I may use the word, of the magnitude of the waves of passion on which the heart of this ambitious youth was being tossed. In this strange creature almost every day was one of storm.

When he went into the garden that evening, Julien was ready to listen with interest to the thoughts of the fair cousins. They awaited his coming with impatience. He took his accustomed seat, by Madame de Renal's side. The darkness soon became intense. He attempted to clasp a white hand which for some time he had seen close beside him, resting on the back of a chair. There was some hesitation shown, but finally the hand was withdrawn from him in a manner which betokened displeasure.

Julien was prepared to regard this as final, and to continue the conversation in a light tone, when he heard M. de Renal approach.

The rude words of the morning still rang in Julien's ears. 'Would it not,' he said to himself, 'be a good way of scoring off this creature, so lavishly endowed with every material advantage, to take possession of his wife's hand under his very eyes? Yes, I will do it, I, for whom he has shown such contempt.'

From that moment peace of mind, so ill assorted to Julien's character,speedily vanished; he desired most anxiously, and without being able to fix his mind on anything else, that Madame de Renal might consent to let him hold her hand.

M. de Renal talked politics in an angry tone: two or three manufacturers at Verrieres were becoming decidedly richer than himself, and wished to oppose him at the elections. Madame Derville listened to him.

Julien, irritated by this talk, moved his chair nearer to Madame de Renal's. The darkness hid every movement. He ventured to place his hand close to the pretty arm which her gown left bare. Troubled, no longer conscious of what he was doing, he moved his cheek in the direction of this pretty arm, and made bold to press his lips to it.

Madame de Renal shuddered. Her husband was a few feet away, she hastened to give Julien her hand, at the same time thrusting him slightly from her. While M. de Renal continued his abuse of the good-for-nothings and Jacobins who were making fortunes, Julien covered the hand which had been left in his with passionate kisses, or so at least they seemed to Madame de Renal. And yet the poor woman had been furnished with proof, on this fatal day, that the heart of the man whom she adored without confessing it was pledged elsewhere! Throughout the hours of Julien's absence, she had been a prey to the most abject misery,which had made her think.

'What,' she said to herself, 'am I to love, to have love offered to me?Am I, a married woman, to fall in love? But,' she reminded herself, 'I have never felt that dark passion for my husband, and so I cannot tear my mind from Julien. At heart he is only a boy filled with respect for me!This folly will pass. How can it concern my husband what feelings I may entertain for this young man? M. de Renal would be bored by the talks I have with Julien, about things of the imagination. He himself thinks only about his business. I am taking nothing from him to give to Julien.'

No trace of hypocrisy came to sully the purity of this simple soul, carried away by a passion such as she had never felt. She was deceived, but quite unawares, and at the same time a virtuous instinct had taken alarm. Such were the conflicts that were agitating her when Julien appeared in the garden. She heard his voice, almost at the same moment she saw him sit down by her side. Her heart was so to speak carried away by this charming happiness which for the last fortnight had astonished even more than it had bewitched her. Everything was unexpected to her. And yet after a few moments: 'So Julien's presence is enough,' she said to herself, 'to wipe out all memory of his misconduct?' She took fright; then it was that she withdrew her hand from his.

His kisses, filled with passion and such as she had never yet received,made her at once forget the possibility of his loving another woman.

Soon he was no longer guilty in her eyes. The cessation of her poignant grief, born of suspicion, the presence of a happiness of which she had never even dreamed, plunged her in transports of affection and wild gaiety. That evening was delightful for them all, except for the Mayor of Verrieres, who could not forget the growing wealth of his competitors.

Julien no longer thought of his dark ambition, nor of his plans that would be so difficult of execution. For the first time in his life, he was carrie d away by the power of beauty. Lost in a vague and pleasant dream, so foreign to his nature, gently pressing that hand which pleased him as an example of perfect beauty, he gave a divided attention to the rustle of the leaves of the lime, stirred by the gentle night breeze, and to the dogs at the mill by the Doubs, barking in the distance.

But this emotion was a pleasure and not a passion. On returning to his room he thought of one happiness only, that of going on with his favourite book; at twenty, the thought of the world and of the impression one is going to make on it, prevails over everything else.

Presently, however, he put down the book. By dint of dreaming of Napoleon's victories, he had discerned a new element in his own. 'Yes, I have won a battle,' he told himself, 'but I must follow it up, I must crush the arrogance of this proud gentleman while he is still retreating. That is Napoleon out and out. I must ask him for three days' holiday, to go and see my friend Fouque. If he refuses, I again offer to break the agreement;but he will give way.'

Madame de Renal could not close an eye. She felt that she had never lived until that moment. She could not tear her mind from the happiness of feeling Julien cover her hand with burning kisses.

Suddenly the horrid word adultery occurred to her. All the most disgusting implications that the vilest debauchery can impart to the idea of sensual love came crowding into her imagination. These ideas sought to tarnish the tender and godlike image that she had made for herself of Julien and of the pleasure of loving him. The future portrayed itself in terrible colours. She saw herself an object of scorn.

It was a frightful moment; her soul journeyed into strange lands. That evening she had tasted an unknown happiness; now she suddenly found herself plunged in appalling misery. She had no conception of such sufferings; they began to affect her reason. The thought occurred to her for a moment of confessing to her husband that she was afraid of falling in love with Julien. It would have allowed her to speak of him. Fortunately she recalled a piece of advice given her long ago by her aunt, on the eve of her marriage. It warned her of the danger of confiding in a husband,who is after all a master. In the intensity of her grief she wrung her hands.

She was carried away indiscriminately by conflicting and painful imaginings. At one moment she was afraid of not being loved in return, at another the fearful thought of the crime tortured her as though on the morrow she would have to be exposed in the pillory, on the public square of Verrieres, with a placard proclaiming her adultery to the populace.

Madame de Renal was without any experience of life; even when wide awake and in the full exercise of her reason, she would have seen no distinction between being guilty in the sight of God and finding herself publicly greeted with all the most flagrant marks of general opprobrium. When the frightful idea of adultery and of all the ignominy which (she supposed) that crime brings in its train gave her at length a respite, and she began to dream of the delight of living with Julien innocently, as in the past, she found herself swept away by the horrible thought that Julien was in love with another woman. She saw once again his pallor when he was afraid of losing her portrait, or of compromising her by letting it be seen. For the first time, she had surprised signs of fear on that calm and noble countenance. Never had he shown himself in such a state for her or for her children. This additional grief carried her to the utmost intensity of anguish which the human soul is able to endure. Unconsciously, Madame de Renal uttered cries which roused her maid. Suddenly she saw appear by her bedside the light of a lamp, and recognised Elisa.

'Is it you that he loves?' she cried in her frenzy.

The maid, amazed at the fearful distress in which she found her mistress, paid no attention fortunately to this singular utterance. Madame de Renal realised her own imprudence: 'I am feverish,' she told her, 'and I think, a little lightheaded; stay beside me.'

Thoroughly awakened by the necessity of controlling herself, she felt less wretched; reason resumed the sway of which her state of drowsiness had deprived it. To escape from the fixed stare of her maid, she ordered her to read the newspaper aloud, and it was to the monotonous sound of the girl's voice, reading a long article from the Quotidienne, that Madame de Renal formed the virtuous resolution to treat Julien with absolute coldness when next she saw him.

[chapter12](#a0)

A Journey

In Paris you find elegant people, there may be people with character in the provinces.

SIEYES

Next morning, at five o'clock, before Madame de Renal was visible,Julien had obtained from her husband three days' leave of absence. Con trary to his expectation, Julien found himself longing to see her again,and could think of nothing but that shapely hand. He went down to the garden, Madame de Renal was long in coming. But if Julien had been in love with her he would have seen her, behind her half-closed shutters on

the first floor, her face pressed to the glass. She was watching him. At length, in spite of her resolutions, she decided to show herself in the garden. Her customary pallor had given place to the most glowing colour. This simple-minded woman was evidently agitated: a feeling of constraint and even of resentment marred that expression of profound serenity, as though raised above all the common interests of life, which

gave such charm to that heavenly face.

Julien lost no time in joining her; he admired those fine arms which a shawl flung in haste across her shoulders left visible. The coolness of the morning air seemed to increase the brilliance of a complexion which the agitation of the past night made all the more sensible to every impression. This beauty, modest and touching, and yet full of thoughts which are nowhere to be found among the lower orders, seemed to reveal to Julien an aspect of her nature of which he had never yet been aware.

Wholly absorbed in admiration of the charms which his greedy eye surprised, Julien was not thinking of the friendly greeting which he might expect to receive. He was all the more astonished by the icy coldness that was shown him, beneath which he even thought he could make out a deliberate intention to put him in his place.

The smile of pleasure faded from his lips; he remembered the rank that he occupied in society, especially in the eyes of a noble and wealthy heiress. In a moment, his features showed nothing but pride and anger with himself. He felt a violent disgust at having been so foolish as to postpone his departure by more than an hour, only to receive so humiliating agreeting.

'Only a fool,' he told himself, 'loses his temper with other people: a stone falls because it is heavy. Am I always to remain a boy? When am I going to form the good habit of giving these people their exact money's worth and no more of my heart and soul? If I wish to be esteemed by them and by myself, I must show them that it is my poverty that deals with their wealth, but that my heart is a thousand leagues away from their insolence, and is placed in too exalted a sphere to be reached by

their petty marks of contempt or favour.'

While these sentiments came crowding into the young tutor's mind,his features assumed an expression of injured pride and ferocity. Madame de Renal was greatly distressed by this. The virtuous coldness which she had meant to impart to her greeting gave way to an expression of interest, and of an interest animated by the surprise of the sudden change which she had just beheld in him. The flow of idle words that

people exchange in the morning with regard to one another's health, to the beauty of the day, and so forth, dried up at once in them both. Julien,whose judgment was not disturbed by any passion, soon found a way of letting Madame de Renal see how little he regarded himself as being on terms of friendship with her; he said nothing to her of the little expedition on which he was starting, bowed to her, and set off.

As she watched him go, overwhelmed by the sombre pride which she read in that glance, so friendly the evening before, her eldest son, who came running up from the other end of the garden, said to her as he embraced her:

'We have a holiday, M. Julien is going on a journey.'

At these words Madame de Renal felt herself frozen by a deadly chill;she was unhappy in her virtue, and more unhappy still in her weakness.

This latest development now occupied the whole of her imagination;she was carried far beyond the wise resolutions which were the fruit of the terrible night she had passed. It was a question no longer of resisting this charming lover, but of losing him for ever.

She was obliged to take her place at table. To add to her misery, M. de Renal and Madame Derville spoke of nothing but Julien's departure. The Mayor of Verrieres had remarked something, unusual in the firm tone with which he had demanded a holiday.

'The young peasant has doubtless an offer from someone in his pocket.But that someone, even if it should be M. Valenod, must be a little discouraged by the sum of 600 francs, which he must now be prepared to spend annually. Yesterday, at Verrieres, he will have asked for three days in which to think things over; and this morning, so as not to be obliged to give me an answer, the young gentleman goes off to the mountains. To have to reckon with a wretched workman who puts on airs,that's what we've come to!'

'Since my husband, who does not know how deeply he has wounded Julien, thinks he is going to leave us, what am I to suppose?' Madame de Renal asked herself. 'Ah! It is all settled!'

So as to be able at least to weep in freedom, and without having to answer Madame Derville's questions, she pleaded a splitting headache, and retired to bed.

'There you have a woman all over,' M. de Renal repeated; 'there's always something wrong with those complicated machines.' And he went on his way jeering.

While Madame de Renal was at the mercy of the most cruel inflictions of the terrible passion into which accident had led her, Julien was making his way light-heartedly amid the loveliest views that mountain scenery has to offer. He was obliged to pass over the high range to the north of Vergy. The path which he followed, rising gradually amid great beechwoods, forms an endless series of zigzags on the side of the high mountain which bounds the valley of the Doubs on the north. Presently the traveller's gaze, passing over the lower ridges which confine the course of the Doubs on the south, was able to sweep the fertile plains of Burgundy and Beaujolais. Irresponsive as the heart of this ambitious youth might be to this kind of beauty, he could not refrain from stopping now and again to gaze at so vast and so imposing a prospect.

At length he came to the summit of the high mountain, beneath which he must pass in order to arrive, by this diagonal route, at the lonely valley in which his friend Fouque, the young timber merchant, lived. Julien was in no hurry to see him, or any other human being for that matter.

Concealed like a bird of prey, amid the bare rocks which crowned the high mountain, he could see a long way off anyone that might be coming his way. He discovered a small cave in the almost perpendicular face of one of the rocks. He set his course for it, and presently was ensconced in this retreat. 'Here,' he said, his eyes sparkling with joy, 'men can do me no harm.' It occurred to him to indulge in the pleasure of writing down

his thoughts, so dangerous to him in any other place. A smooth block of stone served as his table. His pen flew: he saw nothing of the scene round about him. At length he noticed that the sun was setting behind the distant mountains of Beaujolais.

'Why should I not spend the night here?' he asked himself; 'I have bread, and I am free!' At the sound of that great word his heart leaped, his hypocrisy meant that he was not free even with Fouque. His head supported on both his hands, Julien stayed in this cave happier than he had ever been in his life, engrossed in his dreams and in the joy of freedom.

Without heeding it he saw fade and die, one after another, the last rays of evening light. In the midst of that vast darkness, his soul wandered in contemplation of what he imagined that he would one day find in Paris.

This was first and foremost a woman far more beautiful and of a far higher intelligence than any it had been his lot to see in the country. He loved with passion, he was loved in return. If he tore himself from her for a few moments, it was to cover himself with glory and earn the right to be loved more warmly still.

Even if we allow him Julien's imagination, a young man brought up among the melancholy truths of Paris would have been aroused at this stage in his romance by the cold touch of irony; the mighty deeds would have vanished with the hope of performing them, to give place to the well-known maxim: 'When a man leaves his mistress, he runs the risk of being betrayed two or three times daily.' The young peasant saw no obstacle between himself and the most heroic actions, save want of

opportunity.

But black night had succeeded the day, and he had still two leagues to cover before coming down to the hamlet in which Fouque lived. Before leaving the little cave, Julien struck a light and carefully destroyed all that he had written.

He greatly astonished his friend by knocking at his door at one o'clock in the morning. He found Fouque engaged in making up his accounts.

He was a young man of tall stature, none too well made, with large, hard features, a huge nose, and plenty of good nature concealed beneath this repellent aspect.

'You've quarrelled with your M. de Renal, then, that you come here of a sudden like this?'

Julien related to him, with suitable omissions, the events of the previous evening.

'Stay with me,' Fouque said to him; 'I see that you know M. de Renal,M. Valenod, the Sub-Prefect Maugiron, the cure Chelan; you have grasped all the subtle points of their natures; you're ripe now to put yourself up for auction. You know arithmetic better than I do, you shall keep my books; I am making a big profit from my business. The impossibility of doing everything by myself and the fear of hitting upon a rogue in the man I might take as my partner prevent me every day from doing the most profitable deals. Not a month ago I put six thousand francs in the pocket of Michaud of Saint Amand, whom I had not seen for six years, and met quite by chance at the Pontarlier sale. Why should not you have made those six thousand francs yourself, or three thousand at least? For if I had had you with me that day, I should have gone on bidding for that lot of timber, and the other would soon have left me with it. Be my partner.'

This offer annoyed Julien; it unsettled his erratic mind; throughout supper, which the friends cooked for themselves, like Homeric heroes,for Fouque lived by himself, he showed Julien his books, and proved to him what advantages his trade in timber offered. Fouque had the highest opinion of Julien's intelligence and character.

When at length the latter found himself alone in his little room walled with planks of firwood, 'It is true,' he said to himself, 'I can make a few thousand francs here, then return with advantage to the calling of soldier or priest, according to the fashion prevailing in France at the time. The little hoard that I shall have amassed will remove all difficulties of detail.

Alone on this mountainside, I can do something to dispel my present appalling ignorance of so many of the things that occupy the minds of all these fashionable gentlemen. But Fouque is giving up the thought of marriage, he has told me again and again that solitude is making him melancholy. It is obvious that if he is taking a partner who has no money to put into his business, it is in the hope of providing himself with a companion who will never leave him.

'Shall I prove false to my friend?' exclaimed Julien angrily. This creature, for whom hypocrisy and the absence of all fellow feeling were the ordinary line of conduct, could not on this occasion bear the thought of the slightest want of delicacy towards a man who loved him.

But all at once Julien became happy, he had a reason for refusing.

'What, I should be idly wasting seven or eight years! I should thus arrive at eight and twenty; but, at that age, Napoleon had already done his greatest deeds! After I have obscurely scraped together a little money by going round all these timber sales, and winning the favour of various minor rascals, who can say whether I shall still preserve the sacred fire with which one makes oneself a name?'

The following morning, Julien replied with great coolness to the worthy Fouque, who looked upon the matter of their partnership as settled, that his vocation to the sacred ministry of the altar did not allow him to accept. Fouque could not believe his ears.

'But do you realise,' he kept on saying, 'that I make you my partner, or,if you prefer, give you four thousand francs a year? And you want to go back to your M. de Renal, who despises you like the mud on his shoes!

When you have two hundred louis in hand, what is to prevent you from entering the Seminary? I will say more, I undertake to procure for you the best parish in the district. For,' Fouque went on, lowering his voice, 'I supply firewood to the ——, and the ——, and M. ——. I give them the best quality of oak, for which they pay me the price of white wood, but never was money better invested.'

Nothing could prevail against Julien's vocation. In the end Fouque decided that he must be slightly mad. On the third day, at dawn, Julien left his friend to pass the day among the rocks of the big mountain. He found his little cave again, but he no longer enjoyed peace of mind, his friend's offers had destroyed it. Like Hercules he found himself called upon to choose not between vice and virtue, but between mediocrity ending in an assured comfort and all the heroic dreams of his youth. 'So I have no real firmness of character,' he told himself; and this was the doubt that pained him most.

'I am not of the stuff of which great men are made, since I am afraid that eight years spent in providing myself with bread may rob me of that sublime energy which makes men do extraordinary things.'

75[chapter13](#a0)

Openwork Stockings

A novel is a mirror taken along a road.

SAINTREAL

When Julien caught sight of the picturesque ruins of the old church of

Vergy, it occurred to him that for two whole days he had not once

thought of Madame de Renal. The other day, as I was leaving, that wo

man reminded me of the vast gulf that separates us, she treated me like a

workman's son. No doubt she wished to show me that she repented of

having let me hold her hand the night before… It is a lovely hand, all

the same! What charm, what nobility dwells in that woman's glance!'

The possibility of making a fortune with Fouque gave a certain facility

to the course of Julien's reasoning; it was less often interrupted by irrita

tion, and the keen sense of his own poverty and humble position in the

eyes of the world. As though perched on a lofty promontory, he was able

to judge, and, so to speak, overlooked extreme poverty on the one hand

and that life of comfort which he still called riches on the other. He was

far from considering his position like a philosopher, but he had sufficient

perception to feel that he was different after this little expedition among

the mountains.

He was struck by the extreme uneasiness with which Madame de Ren

al listened to the short account of his journey, for which she had asked

him.

Fouque had had thoughts of marriage, unhappy love affairs; the con

versation between the friends had been filled with long confidences of

this nature. After finding happiness too soon, Fouque had discovered

that he was not the sole possessor of his mistress's heart. These disclos

ures had astonished Julien; he had learned much that was new to him.

His solitary life, compounded of imagination and suspicion, had kept

him aloof from everything that could have enlightened him.

76During his absence, life had been for Madame de Renal nothing more

than a succession of torments, each different but all alike intolerable; she

was really ill.

'You must not, on any account,' Madame Derville told her when she

saw Julien return, 'feeling as you do, sit in the garden this evening, the

damp air would make you worse.'

Madame Derville was surprised to see that her friend, who was al

ways being scolded by M. de Renal for the undue simplicity of her attire,had put on openwork stockings and a pair of charming little shoes that

had arrived from Paris. For the last three days Madame de Renal's sole

distraction had been to cut out and make Elisa put together in all haste a

summer gown, of a charming little fabric greatly in fashion. It was just

possible to finish this gown a few minutes after Julien's arrival; Madame

de Renal at once put it on. Her friend had no longer any doubt.

'She is in love, poor woman!' Madame Derville said to herself. She un

derstood all the strange symptoms of her illness.

She saw her speak to Julien. Pallor took the place of the most vivid

blushes. Anxiety stood revealed in her eyes, fastened on those of the

young tutor. Madame de Renal expected every moment that he was go

ing to offer an explanation, and announce that he was leaving the house,or would remain. It never occurred to Julien to say anything about this

subject, which had not entered his thoughts. After a terrible struggle,Madame de Renal at last ventured to say to him, in a tremulous voice, in

which the whole extent of her passion lay revealed:

'Are you going to leave your pupils to take a post elsewhere?'

Julien was struck by her quavering voice and by the look in her eyes.

'This woman loves me,' he said to himself; 'but after this passing weak

ness for which her pride is reproaching her, and as soon as she is no

longer afraid of my going, she will return to her arrogance.' This glimpse

of their respective positions came to Julien like a flash of lightning; he

replied, hesitatingly:

'I should greatly regret leaving such attractive and wellborn children,but perhaps it will be inevitable. A man has duties towards himself also.'

As he uttered the words well born (this was one of the aristocratic ex

pressions which Julien had recently acquired), he burned with a strong

feeling of antipathy.

'To this woman,' he said to himself, 'I am not well born.'

77Madame de Renal, as she listened to him, was admiring his intelli

gence, his beauty, her heart was pierced by the possibility of departure

which he dangled before her. All her friends from Verrieres who, during

Julien's absence, had come out to dine at Vergy, had almost vied in com

plimenting her upon the astonishing young man that her husband had

had the good fortune to unearth. This was not to say that they under

stood anything of the progress that the children had made. The fact of

his knowing the Bible by heart, and in Latin, too, had provoked in the in

habitants of Verrieres an admiration that will endure for, it may be, a

century.

Julien, who spoke to no one, knew nothing of all this. If Madame de

Renal had had the slightest selfcontrol, she would have congratulated

him on the reputation he had won, and Julien, his pride set at rest, would

have been pleasant and affable to her, all the more as her new gown

seemed to him charming. Madame de Renal, also pleased with her pretty

gown, and with what Julien said to her about it, had proposed a turn in

the garden; soon she had confessed that she was not well enough to

walk. She had taken the returned traveller's arm, and, far from restoring

her strength, the contact of that arm deprived her of what little strength

remained to her.

It was dark; no sooner were they seated than Julien, relying on the

privilege he had already won, ventured to press his lips to the arm of his

pretty neighbour, and to take her hand. He was thinking of the boldness

which Fouque had used with his mistresses, and not of Madame de Ren

al; the phrase well born still weighed upon his heart. His own hand was

pressed, but this afforded him no pleasure. Far from his being proud, or

even grateful for the affection which Madame de Renal betrayed this

evening by unmistakable signs, beauty, elegance, freshness found him

almost unconscious of their appeal. Purity of heart, freedom from any

feeling of hatred, serve doubtless to prolong the duration of youth. It is

the face that ages first in the majority of beautiful women.

Julien was sullen all the evening; hitherto he had been angry only with

fortune and with society; now that Fouque had offered him an ignoble

way of arriving at comfort, he was angry with himself. Absorbed in his

own thoughts, although now and then he addressed a few words to the

ladies, Julien ended by unconsciously letting go Madame de Renal's

hand. This action completely nonplussed the poor woman; she saw in it

an indication of her fate.

78Had she been certain of Julien's affection, her virtue might perhaps

have found strength to resist him. Trembling at the thought of losing him

for ever, her passion carried her to the point of seizing Julien's hand,which, in his distraction, he had allowed to rest upon the back of a chair.

This action stirred the ambitious youth; he would have liked it to be wit

nessed by all those proud nobles who, at table, when he was at the lower

end with the children, used to look at him with so patronising a smile.

'This woman cannot despise me any longer: in that case,' he said to him

self, 'I ought to be stirred by her beauty; I owe it to myself to be her lov

er.' Such an idea would never have occurred to him before he received

the artless confidences of his friend.

The sudden resolution he had just made formed a pleasing distraction.

He said to himself: 'I must have one of these two women'; he realised

that he would greatly have preferred to pay his court to Madame

Derville; it was not that she was more attractive, but she had seen him al

ways as a tutor honoured for his learning, and not as a working car

penter, with a ratteen jacket folded under his arm, as he had first ap

peared to Madame de Renal.

It was precisely as a young workman, blushing to the whites of his

eyes, hesitating outside the door of the house and not venturing to ring

the bell, that Madame de Renal delighted most to picture him.

As he followed up this survey of his position, Julien saw that he must

not think of attempting the conquest of Madame Derville, who had prob

ably noticed the weakness that Madame de Renal showed for him.

Forced to return to the latter: 'What do I know of this woman's charac

ter?' Julien asked himself. 'Only this: before I went away, I took her hand,she withdrew it; today I withdraw my hand, she seizes it and presses it.

A good opportunity to repay her all the contempt she has shown for me.

God knows how many lovers she has had! Perhaps she is deciding in my

favour only because of the facilities for our meeting.'

Such is, alas, the drawback of an excessive civilisation. At the age of

twenty, the heart of a young man, if he has any education, is a thousand

leagues from that devilmaycare attitude without which love is often

only the most tedious duty.

'I owe it to myself all the more,' went on Julien's petty vanity, 'to suc

ceed with this woman, so that if I ever make my fortune, and someone

reproaches me with having filled the humble post of tutor, I may let it be

understood that it was love that brought me into that position.'

79Julien once more withdrew his hand from that of Madame de Renal,then took her hand again and pressed it. As they returned to the

drawing-room, towards midnight, Madame de Renal murmured in his

ear:

'Are you leaving us, are you going away?'

Julien answered with a sigh:

'I must indeed go away, for I love you passionately; it is a sin … and

what a sin for a young priest!'

Madame de Renal leaned upon his arm, bending towards him until

her cheek felt the warmth of his.

The night passed for these two people very differently. Madame de

Renal was exalted by transports of the most lofty moral pleasure. A

coquettish girl who falls in love early grows accustomed to the distress

of love; when she comes to the age of true passion, the charm of novelty

is lacking. As Madame de Renal had never read any novels, all the re

finements of her happiness were new to her. No melancholy truth came

to freeze her heart, not even the spectre of the future. She saw herself as

happy in ten years' time as she was at that moment. Even the thought of

virtue and of the fidelity she had vowed to M. de Renal, which had dis

tressed her some days before, presented itself in vain, she dismissed it

like an importunate stranger. 'Never will I allow Julien to take any

liberty,' Madame de Renal told herself, 'we shall live in future as we have

been living for the last month. He shall be a friend.'

[chapter14](#a0)

The English Scissors

A girl of sixteen had a rosy complexion, and put on rouge.

POLIDORI

As for Julien, Fouque's offer had indeed destroyed all his happiness;he could not decide upon any course.

'Alas! Perhaps I am wanting in character, I should have made Napo

leon a bad soldier. Anyhow,' he went on, 'my little intrigue with the lady

of the house is going to distract me for the moment.'

Fortunately for him, even in this minor incident, his inward feelings

bore no relation to his cavalier language. He was afraid of Madame de

Renal because of her pretty gown. This gown was in his eyes the ad

vance guard of Paris. His pride was determined to leave nothing to

chance and to the inspiration of the moment. Drawing upon Fouque's

confessions and the little he had read about love in the Bible, he pre

pared a plan of campaign in great detail. Since, though he did not admit

it to himself, he was extremely anxious, he committed this plan to

writing.

The following morning, in the drawing-room, Madame de Renal was

alone with him for a moment.

'Have you no other name besides Julien?' she asked him.

Our hero did not know what answer to give to so flattering a question.

No provision had been made in his plan for such an event. But for the

stupid mistake of making a plan, Julien's quick mind would soon have

come to his rescue, his surprise would only have added to the keenness

of his perceptions.

He was awkward and exaggerated his own awkwardness. Madame de

Renal soon forgave him that. She saw in it the effect of a charming cand

our. And the one thing lacking, to her mind, in this man, who was con

sidered so brilliant, was an air of candour.

81'I don't at all trust your little tutor,' Madame Derville said to her on

several occasions. 'He seems to me to be always thinking and to act only

from motives of policy. He's crafty.'

Julien remained deeply humiliated by the disaster of not having

known what answer to make to Madame de Renal.

'A man of my sort owes it to himself to make up for this check'; and,seizing the moment at which she passed from one room to another, he

did what he considered his duty by giving Madame de Renal a kiss.

Nothing could have been less appropriate, less agreeable either to him

self or to her, nor could anything have been more imprudent. They

barely escaped being caught. Madame de Renal thought him mad. She

was frightened and even more shocked. This stupidity reminded her of

M. Valenod.

'What would happen to me,' she asked herself, 'if I were left alone with

him?' All her virtue returned, for her love was in eclipse.

She arranged matters so that there should always be one of her chil

dren with her.

The day passed slowly for Julien, he spent the whole of it in clumsily

carrying out his plan of seduction. He never once looked at Madame de

Renal without embodying a question in his look; he was not, however,such a fool as not to see that he was failing completely to be agreeable,let alone seductive.

Madame de Renal could not get over her astonishment at finding him

so awkward and at the same time so bold. 'It is the timidity of love in a

man of parts!' she said to herself at length, with an inexpressible joy. 'Can

it be possible that he has never been loved by my rival!'

After luncheon, Madame de Renal returned to the drawing-room to

entertain M. Charcot de Maugiron, the Sub-Prefect of Bray. She was

working at a little tapestry frame on a tall stand. Madame Derville was

by her side. It was in this position, and in the full light of day, that our

hero thought fit to thrust forward his boot and press the pretty foot of

Madame de Renal, whose openwork stocking and smart Parisian shoe

were evidently attracting the gaze of the gallant Sub-Prefect.

Madame de Renal was extremely alarmed; she let fall her scissors, her

ball of wool, her needles, and Julien's movement could thus pass for a

clumsy attempt to prevent the fall of the scissors, which he had seen slip

ping down. Fortunately these little scissors of English steel broke, and

82Madame de Renal could not sufficiently express her regret that Julien

had not been nearer at hand.

'You saw them falling before I did, you might have caught them; your

zeal has only succeeded in giving me a violent kick.'

All this playacting took in the Sub-Prefect, but not Madame Derville.

'This pretty youth has very bad manners!' she thought; the worldlywis

dom of a provincial capital can never pardon mistakes of this sort. Ma

dame de Renal found an opportunity of saying to Julien:

'Be careful, I order you.'

Julien realised his own clumsiness, and was annoyed. For a long time

he debated within himself whether he ought to take offence at the words:

'I order you.' He was foolish enough to think: 'She might say to me "I or

der you" if it was something to do with the children's education; but in

responding to my love, she assumes equality. One cannot love without

equality'; and he lost himself in composing commonplaces on the subject

of equality. He repeated angrily to himself the verse of Corneille which

Madame Derville had taught him a few days earlier:

Love creates equalities, it does not seek them.

Julien, insisting upon playing the part of a Don Juan, he who had nev

er had a mistress in his life, was deadly dull for the rest of the day. He

had only one sensible idea; bored with himself and with Madame de

Renal, he saw with alarm the evening approach when he would be

seated in the garden, by her side and in the dark. He told M. de Renal

that he was going to Verrieres to see the cure; he set off after dinner, and

did not return until late at night.

At Verrieres, Julien found M. Chelan engaged in packing up; he had at

last been deprived of his benefice; the vicar Maslon was to succeed him.

Julien helped the good cure, and it occurred to him to write to Fouque

that the irresistible vocation which he felt for the sacred ministry had

prevented him at first from accepting his friend's obliging offer, but that

he had just witnessed such an example of injustice, that perhaps it would

be more advantageous to his welfare were he not to take holy orders.

Julien applauded his own deftness in making use of the deprivation of

the cure of Verrieres to leave a door open for himself and so return to

commerce, should the sad voice of prudence prevail, in his mind, over

heroism.

[chapter15](#a0)

Cockcrow

Amour en latin faict amor; Or done provient d'amour la mort, Et,par avant, soulcy qui mord, Deuil, plours, pieges, forfaitz,remord…

Blason d'amour

If Julien had had a little of that discernment which he so gratuitously

supposed himself to possess, he might have congratulated himself next

day on the effect produced by his visit to Verrieres. His absence had

caused his clumsiness to be forgotten. All that day too, he was inclined to

sulk; towards nightfall a preposterous idea occurred to him, and he im

parted it to Madame de Renal with a rare intrepidity.

No sooner had they sat down in the garden than, without waiting for a

sufficient cloak of darkness, Julien put his lips to Madame de Renal's ear,and, at the risk of compromising her horribly, said to her:

'Tonight, Ma'am, at two o'clock, I am coming to your room, I have

something to say to you.'

Julien was trembling lest his request should be granted; the part of a

seducer was so horrible a burden that if he had been free to follow his

own inclination, he would have retired to his room for some days, and

not set eyes on the ladies again. He realised that, by his clever tactics of

yesterday, he had squandered all the promise of the day before, and

really he did not know where to turn.

Madame de Renal replied with a genuine and by no means exagger

ated indignation to the impertinent announcement which Julien had had

the audacity to make. He thought he could read scorn in her brief an

swer. It was certain that in this answer, uttered in the lowest of tones, the

word 'Fie!' had figured. Making the excuse that he had something to say

to the children, Julien went up to their room, and on his return placed

himself by the side of Madame Derville and at a distance from Madame

84de Renal. He thus removed from himself all possibility of taking her

hand. The conversation took a serious turn, and Julien held his own ad

mirably, apart from a few intervals of silence during which he cudgelled

his brains. 'Why cannot I think of some fine plan,' he asked himself, 'to

force Madame de Renal to show me those unmistakable marks of affec

tion which made me imagine, three days ago, that she was mine!'

Julien was extremely disconcerted by the almost desperate situation

into which he had been led. And yet nothing could have embarrassed

him so much as success.

When the party broke up at midnight, his pessimism led him to be

lieve that Madame Derville looked upon him with contempt, and that

probably he stood no higher in the favour of Madame de Renal.

Being in an extremely bad temper and deeply humiliated, Julien could

not sleep. He was a thousand leagues from any thought of abandoning

all pretence, all his plans, and of living from day to day with Madame de

Renal, contenting himself like a child with the happiness that each day

would bring.

He wearied his brain in devising clever stratagems; a moment later, he

felt them to be absurd; he was in short extremely wretched, when two

struck from the clock tower.

This sound aroused him as the crow of the cock aroused Saint Peter.

He saw himself arrived at the moment of the most distressing event. He

had not thought once again of his impertinent suggestion, from the mo

ment in which he had made it. It had met with so hostile a reception!

'I told her that I should come to her at two o'clock,' he said to himself

as he rose; 'I may be inexperienced and coarse, as is natural in the son of

a peasant, Madame Derville has let me see that plainly enough; but at

any rate I will not be weak.'

Julien had every right to praise his own courage, never had he set him

self a more painful task. As he opened the door of his room, he trembled

so much that his knees gave way beneath him, and he was obliged to

lean against the wall.

He was in his stockinged feet. He went to listen at M. de Renal's door,through which he could hear him snoring. This dismayed him. He had

no longer any excuse for not going to her. But, great God! What should

he do when he got there? He had no plan, and even if he had had one, he

was in such distress of mind that he would not have been in a fit state to

put it into practice.

85Finally, with an anguish a thousand times keener than if he had been

going to the scaffold, he entered the little corridor that led to Madame de

Renal's room. He opened the door with a trembling hand, making a fear

ful noise as he did so.

There was a light in the room, a night light was burning in the fire

place; he had not expected this fresh calamity. Seeing him enter, Ma

dame de Renal sprang quickly out of bed. 'Wretch!' she cried. There was

some confusion. Julien forgot his futile plans and returned to his own

natural character. Not to please so charming a woman seemed to him the

greatest disaster possible. His only answer to her reproaches was to fling

himself at her feet, clasping her round the knees. As she spoke to him

with extreme harshness, he burst into tears.

Some hours later, when Julien emerged from Madame de Renal's

room, one might have said, in the language of romance, that there was

nothing more left for him to wish. And indeed, he was indebted to the

love he had inspired and to the unforeseen impression made on him by

her seductive charms for a victory to which not all his misplaced ingenu

ity would ever have led him.

But, in the most delicious moments, the victim of a freakish pride, he

still attempted to play the part of a man in the habit of captivating wo

men: he made incredible efforts to destroy his natural amiability. Instead

of his paying attention to the transports which he excited, and to the re

morse that increased their vivacity, the idea of duty was continually be

fore his eyes. He feared a terrible remorse, and undying ridicule, should

he depart from the ideal plan that he had set himself to follow. In a

word, what made Julien a superior being was precisely what prevented

him from enjoying the happiness that sprang up at his feet. He was like a

girl of sixteen who has a charming complexion and, before going to a

ball, is foolish enough to put on rouge.

In mortal terror at the apparition of Julien, Madame de Renal was soon

a prey to the cruellest alarms. Julien's tears and despair distressed her

greatly.

Indeed, when she had no longer anything to refuse him, she thrust

him from her, with genuine indignation, and then flung herself into his

arms. No purpose was apparent in all this behaviour. She thought her

self damned without remission, and sought to shut out the vision of hell

by showering the most passionate caresses on Julien. In a word, nothing

would have been wanting to complete our hero's happiness, not even a

burning sensibility in the woman he had just vanquished, had he been

86capable of enjoying it. Julien's departure brought no cessation of the

transports which were shaking her in spite of herself, nor of her struggle

with the remorse that was tearing her.

'Heavens! Is to be happy, to be loved, no more than that?' Such was

Julien's first thought on his return to his own room. He was in that state

of astonishment and uneasy misgivings into which a heart falls when it

has just obtained what it has long desired. It has grown used to desiring,finds nothing left to desire, and has not yet acquired any memories. Like

a soldier returning from a parade, Julien was busily engaged in review

ing all the details of his conduct. 'Have I failed in one of the duties I owe

to myself? Have I really played my part?'

And what a part! The part of a man accustomed to shine before

women.

87chapter16

The Day After

He turn'd his lips to hers, and with his hand Call'd back the

tangles of her wandering hair.

Don Juan, I. 170

Fortunately for Julien's pride, Madame de Renal had been too greatly

agitated and surprised to notice the fatuity of the man who in a moment

had become everything in the world to her.

As she was imploring him to withdraw, seeing the day begin to break:

'Oh, Heavens!' she said, 'if my husband has heard any sound, I am

lost.'

Julien, who had leisure for composing phrases, remembered one to the

point:

'Should you regret your life?'

'Ah! Very much at this moment, but I should not regret having known

you.'

Julien found that his dignity required him to return to his room in

broad daylight and with deliberate want of precaution.

The continuous attention with which he watched his own slightest ac

tions, in the insane idea of being taken for a man of experience, had this

one advantage; when he saw Madame de Renal again, at luncheon, his

behaviour was a miracle of prudence.

As for her, she could not look at him without blushing to the whites of

her eyes, and could not live for an instant without looking at him; she

noticed her own confusion, and her efforts to conceal it increased. Julien

raised his eyes to hers once only. At first, Madame de Renal admired his

prudence. Presently, seeing that this solitary glance was not repeated,she took alarm: 'Can it be that he does not love me any more,' she asked

herself; 'alas, I am far too old for him; I am ten years his senior.'

88On the way from the diningroom to the garden, she pressed Julien's

hand. In the surprise that he felt at so extraordinary a token of affection,he gazed at her with passion; for she had struck him as looking very

pretty at luncheon, and, without raising his eyes, he had spent his time

making a detailed catalogue of her charms. This look consoled Madame

de Renal; it did not remove all her uneasiness; but her uneasiness re

moved, almost entirely, the remorse she felt when she thought of her

husband.

At luncheon, the said husband had noticed nothing; not so with Ma

dame Derville; she feared Madame de Renal to be on the point of suc

cumbing. All through the day, her bold, incisive friendship did not spare

the other those hinted suggestions intended to portray in hideous col

ours the danger that she was running.

Madame de Renal was burning to be left alone with Julien; she wanted

to ask him whether he still loved her. Despite the unalterable gentleness

of her nature, she was more than once on the point of letting her friend

know what a nuisance she was making of herself.

That evening, in the garden, Madame Derville arranged things so skil

fully that she found herself placed between Madame de Renal and Juli

en. Madame de Renal, who had formed a delicious image of the pleasure

of pressing Julien's hand and carrying it to her lips, could not so much as

address a word to him.

This catastrophe increased her agitation. Remorse for one thing was

gnawing her. She had so scolded Julien for the imprudence he had

shown in coming to her room the night before, that she trembled lest he

might not come that night. She left the garden early, and went up to wait

in her room. But, beside herself with impatience, she rose and went to

glue her ear to Julien's door. Despite the uncertainty and passion that

were devouring her, she did not dare enter. This action seemed to her the

last word in lowness, for it serves as text to a country maxim.

The servants were not all in bed. Prudence obliged her finally to return

to her own room. Two hours of waiting were two centuries of torment.

But Julien was too loyal to what he called his duty, to fail in the execu

tion, detail by detail, of what he had laid down for himself.

As one o'clock struck, he slipped quietly from his room, made sure

that the master of the house was sound asleep, and appeared before Ma

dame de Renal. On this occasion he found greater happiness with his

mistress, for he was less continually thinking of the part he had to play.

89He had eyes to see and ears to hear. What Madame de Renal said to him

about his age contributed to give him some degree of selfassurance.

'Alas! I am ten years older than you! How can you love me?' she re

peated without any object, simply because the idea oppressed her.

Julien could not conceive such a thing, but he saw that her distress was

genuine, and almost entirely forgot his fear of being ridiculous.

The foolish idea of his being regarded as a servile lover, at his

mistress's beck and call, on account of his humble birth, vanished like

wise. In proportion as Julien's transports reassured his coy mistress, she

recovered some degree of happiness and the faculty of criticising her lov

er. Fortunately, he showed almost nothing, on this occasion, of that bor

rowed air which had made their meeting the night before a victory, but

not a pleasure. Had she noticed his intentness upon playing a part, the

painful discovery would have robbed her of all happiness for ever. She

could have seen in it nothing else than a painful consequence of their dis

parity of age.

Albeit Madame de Renal had never thought about theories of love, dif

ference of age is, next to difference of fortune, one of the great common

places of provincial humour, whenever there is any talk of love.

In a few days, Julien, all the ardour of his youth restored, was madly

in love.

'One must admit,' he said to himself, 'that her kindness of heart is an

gelic, and that no one could be prettier.'

He had almost entirely lost the idea of a part to be played. In a mo

ment of unrestrained impulse, he even confessed to her all his anxieties.

This confidence raised to its climax the passion that he inspired. 'So I

have not had any fortunate rival,' Madame de Renal said to herself with

ecstasy. She ventured to question him as to the portrait in which he took

such an interest; Julien swore to her that it was that of a man.

When Madame de Renal was calm enough to reflect, she could not get

over her astonishment that such happiness could exist and that she had

never had the slightest idea of it.

'Ah!' she said to herself, 'if I had known Julien ten years ago, when I

might still be considered pretty!'

Julien's thoughts were worlds apart from these. His love was still

founded in ambition: it was the joy of possessing—he, a poor creature so

unfortunate and so despised—so noble and beautiful a woman. His acts

of adoration, his transports at the sight of his mistress's charms, ended

90by reassuring her somewhat as to the difference in age. Had she pos

sessed a little of that worldly wisdom a woman of thirty has long en

joyed in more civilised lands, she would have shuddered for the continu

ance of a love which seemed to exist only upon surprise and the titilla

tion of self-esteem.

In the moments when he forgot his ambition, Julien went into trans

ports over everything that Madame de Renal possessed, including her

hats and gowns. He could not tire of the pleasure of inhaling their per

fume. He opened her wardrobe and stood for hours on end marvelling at

the beauty and neat arrangement of everything inside. His mistress,leaning upon his shoulder, gazed at him; he himself gazed at those orna

ments and fripperies which on a wedding day are displayed among the

presents.

'I might have married a man like this!' Madame de Renal sometimes

thought; 'What a fiery spirit! What a rapturous life with him!'

As for Julien, never had he found himself so close to those terrible

weapons of feminine artillery. 'It is impossible,' he told himself, 'that in

Paris there can be anything finer!' After which he could find no objection

to his happiness. Often his mistress's sincere admiration, and her trans

ports of passion made him forget the fatuous theory that had kept him so

restrained and almost ridiculous in the first moments of their intimacy.

There were moments when, despite his hypocritical habits, he found an

intense pleasure in confessing to this great lady who admired him his ig

norance of any number of little usages. His mistress's rank seemed to

raise him above himself. Madame de Renal, for her part, found the most

exquisite moral satisfaction in thus instructing in a heap of little things

this young man endowed with genius whom everyone regarded as

bound one day to go so far. Even the Sub-Prefect and M. Valenod could

not help admiring him: she thought the better of them accordingly. As

for Madame Derville, these were by no means her sentiments. In despair

at what she thought she could discern, and seeing that her wise counsel

was becoming hateful to a woman who had positively lost her head, she

left Vergy without offering an explanation for which she was not asked.

Madame de Renal shed a few tears at her departure, and soon it seemed

to her that her happiness was doubled. By the withdrawal of her guest

she found herself left alone with her lover almost all day long.

Julien gave himself all the more readily to the pleasant society of his

mistress inasmuch as, whenever he was left too long by himself,Fouque's fatal offer recurred to his mind to worry him. In the first days

91of this new life, there were moments when he, who had never loved,who had never been loved by anyone, found so exquisite a pleasure in

being sincere, that he was on the point of confessing to Madame de Ren

al the ambition which until then had been the very essence of his exist

ence. He would have liked to be able to consult her as to the strange

temptation which he felt in Fouque's offer, but a trifling occurrence put a

stop to all frankness.

92chapter17

The Principal Deputy

O! how this spring of love resembleth The uncertain glory of an

April day, Which now shows all the beauty of the sun, And by

and by a cloud takes all away!

The Two Gentlemen of Verona

One evening as the sun set, sitting by his mistress, at the end of the

orchard, safe from disturbance, he was deep in thought. 'Will such deli

cious moments,' he was wondering, 'last for ever?' His thoughts were ab

sorbed in the difficulty of adopting a profession, he was deploring this

great and distressing problem which puts an end to boyhood and spoils

the opening years of manhood when one has no money.

'Ah!' he cried, 'Napoleon was indeed the man sent by God to help the

youth of France! Who is to take his place? What will the poor wretches

do without him, even those who are richer than I, who have just the few

crowns needed to procure them a good education, and not enough

money to purchase a man at twenty and launch themselves in a career!

Whatever happens,' he added with deep sigh, 'that fatal memory will for

ever prevent us from being happy!'

He saw Madame de Renal frown suddenly; she assumed a cold, dis

dainful air; this line of thought seemed to her worthy of a servant.

Brought up in the idea that she was extremely rich, it seemed to her a

thing to be taken for granted that Julien was also. She loved him a thou

sand times more than life itself, and money to her meant nothing.

Julien was far from guessing what was in her mind. This frown

brought him back to earth. He had presence of mind enough to arrange

his sentence and to make it plain to the noble lady, seated so close beside

him on the bank of verdure, that the words he had just uttered were

some that he had heard during his expedition to his friend the timber

merchant. This was the reasoning of the impious.

93'Very well! Don't mix any more with such people,' said Madame de

Renal, still preserving a trace of that glacial air which had suddenly

taken the place of an expression of the tenderest affection.

This frown, or rather his remorse for his imprudence, was the first

check administered to the illusion that was bearing Julien away. He said

to himself: 'She is good and kind, her feeling for me is strong, but she has

been brought up in the enemy's camp. They are bound to be specially

afraid of that class of men of spirit who, after a good education, have not

enough money to enter upon a career. What would become of these

nobles, if it were granted us to fight them with equal weapons? Myself,for instance, as Mayor of Verrieres, well intentioned, honest as M. de

Renal is at heart, how I should deal with the vicar, M. Valenod and all

their rascalities! How justice should triumph in Verrieres. It is not their

talents that would prove an obstacle. They are endlessly feeling their

way.'

Julien's happiness was, that day, on the point of becoming permanent.

What our hero lacked was the courage to be sincere. He needed the cour

age to give battle, but on the spot; Madame de Renal had been surprised

by his speech, because the men whom she was in the habit of meeting

were always saying that the return of Robespierre was made possible es

pecially by these young men of the lower orders, who had been too well

educated. Madame de Renal's cold manner persisted for some time, and

seemed to Julien to be marked. This was because the fear of having said

to him indirectly something unpleasant followed her repugnance at his

unfortunate speech. This distress was clearly shown on her pure coun

tenance; so simple when she was happy and away from bores.

Julien no longer dared give himself up freely to his dreams. More calm

and less amorous, he decided that it was imprudent in him to go to Ma

dame de Renal in her room. It would be better if she came to him; if a

servant saw her moving about the house, there would be a score of pos

sible reasons to account for her action.

But this arrangement also had its drawbacks. Julien had received from

Fouque certain books for which he, as a student of divinity, could never

have asked a bookseller. He ventured to open them only at night. Often

he would have been just as well pleased not to be interrupted by an as

signation, the tension of waiting for which, even before the little scene in

the orchard, would have left him incapable of reading.

He was indebted to Madame de Renal for an entirely new understand

ing of the books he read. He had ventured to ply her with questions as to

94all sorts of little things ignorance of which seriously handicaps the intelli

gence of a young man born outside the ranks of society, whatever natur

al genius one may choose to attribute to him.

This education in love, given by an extremely ignorant woman, was a

blessing. Julien was at once enabled to see society as it is today. His mind

was not perplexed by accounts of what it was in the past, two thousand

years ago, or sixty years ago merely, in the days of Voltaire and Louis

XV. To his unspeakable joy a cloud passed from before his eyes; he un

derstood at last the things that were happening at Verrieres.

In the foreground appeared the highly complicated intrigues woven,for the last two years, round the Prefect at Besancon. They were suppor

ted by letters that came from Paris, and bore all the most illustrious sig

natures. It was a question of making M. de Moirod, the most bigoted

man in the place, the Principal instead of the Second Deputy to the May

or of Verrieres.

His rival was an extremely rich manufacturer, whom it was absolutely

essential to confine to the post of Second Deputy.

Julien at last understood the hints that he had overheard, when the

cream of local society came to dine with M. de Renal. This privileged

class was greatly taken up with this selection of a Principal Deputy, of

which the rest of the town and especially the Liberals did not even sus

pect the possibility. What gave it its importance was that, as everybody

knew, the eastern side of the main street of Verrieres must be moved

back more than nine feet, for this street was now a royal highway.

Well, if M. de Moirod, who owned three houses that would have to be

moved back, succeeded in becoming Principal Deputy, and so Mayor in

the event of M. de Renal's being returned to Parliament, he would shut

his eyes, and it would be possible to make little, imperceptible repairs to

the houses that encroached on the public thoroughfare, as a result of

which they would be good for a hundred years. Despite the great piety

and admitted probity of M. de Moirod, it was certain that he could be

managed, for he had a large family. Among the houses that would have to

be moved back, nine belonged to the very best people in Verrieres.

In Julien's eyes, this intrigue was far more important than the history

of the battle of Fontenoy, a name which he saw for the first time in one of

the books that Fouque had sent him. Many things had astonished Julien

during the five years since he had begun to spend his evenings with the

cure. But discretion and a humble spirit being the chief qualities required

95in a divinity student, it had always been impossible for him to ask any

questions.

One day, Madame de Renal had given an order to her husband's valet,Julien's enemy.

'But, Ma'am, today is the last Friday of the month,' the man answered

her with a curious expression.

'Go,' said Madame de Renal.

'Well,' said Julien, 'he is going to that hay store, which used to be a

church, and was recently restored to the faith; but why? That is one of

the mysteries which I have never been able to penetrate.'

'It is a most beneficial, but a very strange institution,' replied Madame

de Renal. 'Women are not admitted; all that I know of it is that they all

address one another as tu. For instance, this servant will find M. Valenod

there, and that conceited fool will not be in the least annoyed at hearing

himself called tu by SaintJean, and will answer him in the same tone. If

you really want to know what they do there, I can ask M. de Maugiron

and M. Valenod for details. We pay twenty francs for each servant so

that they do not cut our throats.'

The time flew. The memory of his mistress's charms distracted Julien

from his black ambition. The necessity to refrain from speaking to her of

serious, reasonable matters, since they were on opposite sides, added,without his suspecting it, to the happiness that he owed to her and to the

power which she was acquiring over him.

At those moments when the presence of quickeared children confined

them to the language of cold reason, it was with a perfect docility that

Julien, gazing at her with eyes that burned with love, listened to her ex

planations of the world as it really was. Often, in the middle of an ac

count of some clever piece of roguery, in connection with the laying out

of a road, or of some astounding contract, Madame de Renal's mind

would suddenly wander to the point of delirium; Julien was obliged to

scold her, she allowed herself to caress him in the same way as she

caressed her children. This was because there were days on which she

imagined that she loved him like a child of her own. Had she not to reply

incessantly to his artless questions about a thousand simple matters of

which a child of good family is not ignorant at fifteen? A moment later,she was admiring him as her master. His intelligence positively

frightened her; she thought she could perceive more clearly every day

the future great man in this young cleric. She saw him as Pope, she saw

him as First Minister, like Richelieu.

96'Shall I live long enough to see you in your glory?' she said to Julien;'there is a place waiting for a great man; the Monarchy, the Church need

one; these gentlemen say so every day. If some Richelieu does not stem

the torrent of private judgment, all is lost.'

97chapter18

A King at Verrieres

Are you fit only to be flung down like the corpse of a nation, its

soul gone and its veins emptied of blood?

(From the Bishop's address, delivered in the Chapel of Saint

Clement)

On the third of September, at ten o'clock in the evening, a mounted

constable aroused the whole of Verrieres by galloping up the main street;he brought the news that His Majesty the King of — was coming the fol

lowing Sunday, and it was now Tuesday. The Prefect authorised, that is

to say ordered, the formation of a Guard of Honour; he must be received

with all the pomp possible. A courier was sent to Vergy. M. de Renal ar

rived during the night and found the whole town in a ferment. Every

body was claiming a right to something; those who had no other duty

were engaging balconies to see the King enter the town.

Who was to command the Guard of Honour? M. de Renal saw at once

how important it was, in the interest of the houses that would have to be

moved back, that M. de Moirod should fill this post. It might be held to

constitute a claim to the place of Principal Deputy. There was nothing to

be said against M. de Moirod's devotion; it went beyond all comparison,but he had never ridden a horse in his life. He was a man of six and

thirty, timid in every way, and equally afraid of falls and of being

laughed at.

The Mayor sent for him at five o'clock in the morning.

'You see, Sir, that I am asking your advice, as though you already oc

cupied the post in which all rightminded people would gladly see you.

In this unfortunate town the manufacturers prosper, the Liberal Party

are becoming millionaires, they aspire to power, they will forge them

selves weapons out of everything. We must consider the King's interests,those of the Monarchy, and above all those of our holy religion. To

98whom do you think, Sir, that we ought to entrust the command of the

Guard of Honour?'

In spite of the horrible fear that a horse inspired in him, M. de Moirod

ended by accepting this honour like a martyr. 'I shall manage to adopt

the right manner,' he told the Mayor. There was barely time to overhaul

the uniforms which had been used seven years before on the passage of a

Prince of the Blood.

At seven, Madame de Renal arrived from Vergy with Julien and the

children. She found her drawing-room full of Liberal ladies who were

preaching the union of parties, and had come to implore her to make her

husband find room in the Guard of Honour for theirs. One of them asser

ted that if her husband were not chosen he would go bankrupt from

grief. Madame de Renal sent them all packing at once. She seemed

greatly occupied.

Julien was surprised and even more annoyed by her making a mystery

to him of what was disturbing her. 'I thought as much,' he told himself

bitterly, 'her love is eclipsed by the joy of receiving a King in her house.

All this excitement dazzles her. She will begin to love me again when her

brain is no longer troubled by ideas of caste.'

The surprising thing was that he loved her all the more for this.

The upholsterers began to invade the whole house, he long watched in

vain for an opportunity of saying a word to her. At length he found her

coming out of his own room, carrying one of his coats. They were alone.

He tried to speak to her. She made off, declining to listen to him. 'What a

fool I am to be in love with a woman like that, ambition makes her just as

stupid as her husband.'

She was even more so: one of her great wishes, which she had never

confessed to Julien, for fear of shocking him, was to see him discard, if

only for a day, his gloomy black coat. With an ingenuity truly admirable

in so natural a woman, she secured, first from M. de Moirod, and then

from the Sub-Prefect M. de Maugiron, that Julien should be appointed to

the Guard of Honour in preference to five or six young men, sons of

manufacturers in easy circumstances, at least two of whom were of an

exemplary piety. M. Valenod, who was reckoning on lending his car

riage to the prettiest women of the town, in order to have his fine Nor

man horses admired, agreed to let Julien, the person he hated most, have

one of them. But each of the members of the Guard of Honour possessed

or had borrowed one of those skyblue coats with a pair of colonel's

epaulettes in silver, which had shone in public seven years before.

99Madame de Renal wanted a new coat, and she had but four days in

which to send to Besancon, and to procure from there the uniform, the

weapons, the hat, and all the other requisites for a Guard of Honour.

What is rather amusing is that she thought it imprudent to have Julien's

coat made at Verrieres. She wished to take him by surprise, him and the

town.

The work of organising the Guard of Honour and popular feeling fin

ished, the Mayor had next to deal with a great religious ceremony; the

King of —— refused to pass through Verrieres without paying a visit to

the famous relic of Saint Clement which is preserved at BrayleHaut, a

short league from the town. The clergy must be present in full force, and

this was the most difficult thing to arrange; M. Maslon, the new cure,was determined, at any price, to keep M. Chelan out. In vain did M. de

Renal point out to him the imprudence of this action. The Marquis de La

Mole, whose ancestors for so long were Governors of the Province, had

been chosen to accompany the King of ——. He had known the abbe

Chelan for thirty years. He would be certain to inquire for him on arriv

ing at Verrieres, and, if he found that he was in disgrace, was quite cap

able of going in search of him, to the little house to which he had retired,accompanied by such of the procession as were under his orders. What a

rebuff that would be!

'I am dishonoured here and at Besancon,' replied the abbe Maslon, 'if

he appears among my clergy. A Jansenist, great heavens!'

'Whatever you may say, my dear abbe,' M. de Renal assured him, 'I

shall not expose the municipal government of Verrieres to the risk of an

insult from M. de La Mole. You don't know the man, he is sound enough

at court; but here, in the country, he has a satirical, mocking spirit, and

likes nothing so much as to embarrass people. He is capable, simply for

his own amusement, of covering us with ridicule in the eyes of the

Liberals.'

It was not until the night between Saturday and Sunday, after three

days of discussion, that the abbe Maslon's pride gave way before the

Mayor's fear, which had turned to courage. The next thing was to write a

honeyed note to the abbe Chelan, inviting him to be present at the vener

ation of the relic at BrayleHaut, his great age and infirmities permitting.

M. Chelan asked for and obtained a letter of invitation for Julien, who

was to accompany him in the capacity of subdeacon.

Early on Sunday morning, thousands of peasants, arriving from the

neighbouring mountains, flooded the streets of Verrieres. It was a day of

100brilliant sunshine. At length, about three o'clock, a tremor ran through

the crowd; they had caught sight of a beacon blazing on a rock two

leagues from Verrieres. This signal announced that the King had just

entered the territory of the Department. Immediately the sound of all the

bells and the repeated discharge of an old Spanish cannon belonging to

the town proclaimed its joy at this great event. Half the population

climbed up on the roofs. All the women were on the balconies. The

Guard of Honour began to move. The brilliant uniforms were greatly ad

mired, each of the onlookers recognised a relative or friend. There was

general laughter at the alarm of M. de Moirod, whose cautious hand lay

ready at any moment to clutch hold of his saddle. But one thing made

them forget all the others: the lefthand man in the ninth section was a

handsome lad, very slender, who at first was not identified. Presently a

cry of indignation from some, the astonished silence of others announced

a general sensation. The onlookers recognised in this young man, riding

one of M. Valenod's Norman horses, young Sorel, the carpenter's son.

There was one unanimous outcry against the Mayor, especially among

the Liberals. What, because this young labourer dressed up as a priest

was tutor to his brats, he had the audacity to appoint him to the Guard of

Honour, to the exclusion of M. This and M. That, wealthy manufactur

ers! 'Those gentlemen,' said a banker's wife, 'ought really to offer an af

front to the little upstart, born in the gutter.'

'He has a wicked temper and he is wearing a sabre,' replied her com

panion; 'he would be quite treacherous enough to slash them across the

face.'

The comments made by the aristocratic element were more dangerous.

The ladies asked themselves whether the Mayor alone was responsible

for this grave breach of etiquette. On the whole justice was done to his

contempt for humble birth.

While he was giving rise to so much comment, Julien was the happiest

man alive. Bold by nature, he had a better seat on a horse than most of

the young men of this mountain town. He saw in the eyes of the women

that they were talking about him.

His epaulettes were more brilliant because they were new. At every

moment his horse threatened to rear; he was in the seventh heaven of

joy.

His happiness knew no bounds when, as they passed near the old

rampart, the sound of the small cannon made his horse swerve out of the

ranks. By the greatest accident, he did not fall off; from that moment he

101felt himself a hero. He was Napoleon's orderly officer and was charging

a battery.

There was one person happier than he. First of all she had watched

him pass from one of the windows of the town hall; then, getting into her

carriage, and rapidly making a wide detour, she was in time to tremble

when his horse carried him out of the ranks. Finally, her carriage passing

out at a gallop through another of the gates of the town, she made her

way back to the road along which the King was to pass, and was able to

follow the Guard of Honour at a distance of twenty paces, in a noble

cloud of dust. Ten thousand peasants shouted: 'Long live the King' when

the Mayor had the honour of addressing His Majesty. An hour later,when, having listened to all the speeches, the King was about to enter the

town, the small cannon began to fire again with frenzied haste. But an

accident occurred, not to the gunners who had learned their trade at

Leipsic and Montmirail, but to the future Principal Deputy, M. de

Moirod. His horse dropped him gently into the one puddle to be found

along the whole road, which created a scandal, because he had to be

pulled out of the way to enable the King's carriage to pass.

His Majesty alighted at the fine new church, which was decked out for

the occasion with all its crimson hangings. The King was to halt for din

ner, immediately after which he would take the road again to go and

venerate the famous relic of Saint Clement. No sooner was the King in

side the church than Julien went off at a gallop to M. de Renal's. There he

discarded with a sigh his fine skyblue coat, his sabre, his epaulettes, to

resume the little threadbare black coat. He mounted his horse again, and

in a few minutes was at BrayleHaut, which stands on the summit of an

imposing hill. 'Enthusiasm is multiplying these peasants,' thought Julien.

'One cannot move at Verrieres, and here there are more than ten thou

sand of them round this old abbey.' Half ruined by the vandalism of the

Revolution, it had been magnificently restored since the Restoration, and

there was already some talk of miracles. Julien joined the abbe Chelan,who scolded him severely, and gave him a cassock and surplice. He ves

ted himself hurriedly in these and followed M. Chelan, who was going

in search of the youthful Bishop of Agde. This was a nephew of M. de La

Mole, recently appointed to the See, who had been selected to exhibit the

relic to the King. But the Bishop was not to be found.

The clergy were growing impatient. They awaited their leader in the

sombre, gothic cloister of the ancient abbey. Four and twenty parish

priests had been collected to represent the original chapterof Brayle

Haut which prior to 1789 had consisted of four and twenty canons.

102Having spent three quarters of an hour in deploring the youthfulness of

the Bishop, the priests decided that it would be a good thing if their

Dean were to go and inform His Lordship that the King was on his way,and that it was time they were in the choir. M. Chelan's great age had

made him Dean; despite the anger he showed with Julien, he made a

sign to him to follow him. Julien carried his surplice admirably. By some

secret process of the ecclesiastical toilettable, he had made his fine curly

hair lie quite flat; but, by an oversight which intensified the anger of M.

Chelan, beneath the long folds of his cassock one could see the spurs of

the Guard of Honour.

When they reached the Bishop's apartment, the tall lackeys smothered

in gold lace barely condescended to inform the old cure that His Lord

ship could not be seen. They laughed at him when he tried to explain

that in his capacity as Dean of the Noble chapterof BrayleHaut, it was

his privilege to be admitted at all times to the presence of the officiating

Bishop.

Julien's proud spirit was offended by the insolence of the lackeys. He

set off on a tour of the dormitories of the old abbey, trying every door

that he came to. One quite small door yielded to his efforts and he found

himself in a cell in the midst of His Lordship's bodyservants, dressed in

black with chains round their necks. Seeing his air of haste, these gentle

men supposed that the Bishop had sent for him and allowed him to pass.

He went a little way and found himself in an immense gothic chamber,very dark and panelled throughout in black oak; with a single exception,its pointed windows had been walled up with bricks. There was nothing

to conceal the coarse surface of this masonry, which formed a sorry con

trast to the venerable splendour of the woodwork. Both sides of this

room, famous among the antiquarians of Burgundy, which the Duke

Charles the Bold built about the year 1470 in expiation of some offence,were lined with wooden stalls, richly carved. These displayed, inlaid in

wood of different colours, all the mysteries of the Apocalypse.

This melancholy splendour, degraded by the intrusion of the bare

bricks and white plaster, impressed Julien. He stood there in silence. At

the other end of the room, near the only window through which any

light came, he saw a portable mirror framed in mahogany. A young man,robed in violet with a lace surplice, but bareheaded, was standing three

paces away from the mirror. This article appeared out of place in such a

room, and had doubtless been brought there from the town. Julien

thought that the young man seemed irritated; with his right hand he was

gravely giving benedictions in the direction of the mirror.

103'What can this mean?' he wondered. 'Is it a preliminary ceremony that

this young priest is performing? He is perhaps the Bishop's secretary…

he will be rude like the lackeys … but what of that, let us try him.'

He went forward and passed slowly down the length of the room,keeping his eyes fixed on that solitary window and watching the young

man who continued to give benedictions, with a slow motion but in end

less profusion, and without pausing for a moment.

As he drew nearer he was better able to see the other's look of annoy

ance. The costliness of his lacebordered surplice brought Julien to a

standstill some distance away from the magnificent mirror.

'It is my duty to speak,' he reminded himself at length; but the beauty

of the room had touched his feelings and he was chilled in anticipation

by the harsh words that would be addressed to him.

The young man caught sight of him in the glass, turned round, and

suddenly discarding his look of irritation said to him in the pleasantest

tone:

'Well, Sir, is it ready yet?'

Julien remained speechless. As this young man turned towards him,Julien saw the pectoral cross on his breast: it was the Bishop of Agde. 'So

young,' thought Julien; 'at the most, only six or eight years older than

myself!'

And he felt ashamed of his spurs.

'Monseigneur,' he replied timidly. 'I am sent by the Dean of the

[[[chapter]]], M. Chelan.'

'Ah! I have an excellent account of him,' said the bishop in a courteous

tone which left Julien more fascinated than ever. 'But I beg your pardon,Sir, I took you for the person who is to bring me back my mitre. It was

carelessly packed in Paris; the silver tissue has been dreadfully frayed at

the top. It will create a shocking effect,' the young Bishop went on with a

sorrowful air, 'and they are keeping me waiting too.'

'Monseigneur, I shall go and find the mitre, with Your Lordship's

permission.'

Julien's fine eyes had their effect.

'Go, Sir,' the Bishop answered with exquisite courtesy; 'I must have it

at once. I am sorry to keep the gentlemen of the chapterwaiting.'

When Julien was halfway down the room, he turned to look at the

Bishop and saw that he was once more engaged in giving benedictions.

104'What can that be?' Julien asked himself; 'no doubt, it is a religious pre

paration necessary to the ceremony that is to follow.' When he came to

the cell in which the servants were waiting, he saw the mitre in their

hands. These gentlemen, yielding in spite of themselves to Julien's im

perious glance, surrendered it to him.

He felt proud to be carrying it: as he crossed the room, he walked

slowly; he held it with respect. He found the Bishop seated before the

glass; but, from time to time, his right hand, tired as it was, still gave the

benediction. Julien helped him to put on the mitre. The Bishop shook his

head.

'Ah! It will keep on,' he said to Julien with a satisfied air. 'Will you go a

little way off?'

Whereupon the Bishop walked at a smart pace to the middle of the

room, then returning towards the mirror with a slow step, he resumed

his air of irritation and went on solemnly giving benedictions.

Julien was spellbound with astonishment; he was tempted to guess

what this meant, but did not dare. The Bishop stopped, and looking at

him with an air from which the solemnity rapidly vanished:

'What do you say to my mitre, Sir, does it look right?'

'Quite right, Monseigneur.'

'It is not too far back? That would look rather silly; but it does not do,either, to wear them pulled down over one's eyes like an officer's shako.'

'It seems to me to be quite right.'

'The King of —— is accustomed to venerable clergy who are doubtless

very solemn. I should not like, especially in view of my age, to appear

too frivolous.'

And the Bishop once more began to walk about the room scattering

benedictions.

'It is quite clear,' said Julien, at last venturing to understand, 'he is

practising the benediction.'

A few moments later:

'I am ready,' said the Bishop. 'Go, Sir, and inform the Dean and the

gentlemen of the [[[chapter]]].'

Presently M. Chelan, followed by the two oldest of the cures, entered

by an immense door, magnificently carved, which Julien had not no

ticed. But this time he remained in his place in the extreme rear, and

105could see the Bishop only over the shoulders of the ecclesiastics who

crowded towards this door.

The Bishop crossed the room slowly; when he came to the threshold

the cures formed in processional order. After a momentary confusion the

procession began to move, intoning a psalm. The Bishop came last,between M. Chelan and another cure of great age. Julien found a place

for himself quite close to His Lordship, as being attached to the abbe

Chelan. They moved down the long corridors of the abbey of Brayle

Haut; in spite of the brilliant sunshine, these were dark and damp. At

length they arrived at the door of the cloister. Julien was speechless with

admiration of so fine a ceremony. His heart was divided between the

ambition aroused by the Bishop's youthfulness, and the sensibility and

exquisite manners of this prelate. His courtesy was of a very different

kind from M. de Renal's, even on his good days. 'The more one rises to

wards the highest rank of society,' thought Julien, 'the more one finds

these charming manners.'

They entered the church by a side door; suddenly an appalling crash

made its ancient vaults resound; Julien thought that the walls were col

lapsing. It was again the small cannon; drawn by eight horses at a gallop,it had just arrived; and immediately on its arrival, brought into action by

the gunners of Leipsic, it was firing five rounds a minute, as though the

Prussians had been in front of it.

But this stirring sound no longer had any effect upon Julien, he

dreamed no more of Napoleon and martial glory. 'So young,' he was

thinking, 'to be Bishop of Agde! But where is Agde? And how much is it

worth? Two or three hundred thousand francs, perhaps.'

His Lordship's servants appeared, carrying a magnificent dais; M.

Chelan took one of the poles, but actually it was Julien that bore it. The

Bishop took his place beneath it. He had really succeeded in giving him

self the air of an old man; our hero's admiration knew no bounds. 'What

cannot one do if one is clever!' he thought.

The King made his entry. Julien was so fortunate as to see him at close

range. The Bishop addressed him with unction, and did not forget to in

clude a slight touch of confusion, extremely flattering to His Majesty. We

shall not repeat the account of the ceremonies at BrayleHaut; for a fort

night they filled the columns of all the newspapers of the Department.

Julien learned, from the Bishop's speech, that the King was descended

from Charles the Bold.

106Later on it was one of Julien's duties to check the accounts of what this

ceremony had cost. M. de La Mole, who had secured a bishopric for his

nephew, had chosen to pay him the compliment of bearing the whole of

the expense himself. The ceremony at BrayleHaut alone cost three thou

sand eight hundred francs.

After the Bishop's address and the King's reply, His Majesty took his

place beneath the dais; he then knelt down most devoutly upon a cush

ion close to the altar. The choir was enclosed with stalls, and these stalls

were raised two steps above the pavement. It was on the second of these

steps that Julien sat at the feet of M. Chelan, not unlike a trainbearer at

the feet of his Cardinal, in the Sistine Chapel, in Rome. There were a Te

Deum, clouds of incense, endless volleys of musketry and artillery; the

peasants were frantic with joy and piety. Such a day undoes the work of

a hundred numbers of the Jacobin papers.

Julien was within six paces of the King, who was praying with genu

ine fervour. He noticed for the first time a small man of intelligent ap

pearance, whose coat was almost bare of embroidery. But he wore a sky

blue riband over this extremely simple coat. He was nearer to the King

than many other gentlemen, whose coats were so covered with gold lace

that, to use Julien's expression, one could not see the cloth. He learned a

minute later that this was M. de La Mole. He decided that he wore a

haughty, indeed an insolent air.

'This Marquis would not be polite like my dear Bishop,' he thought.

'Ah! The career of a churchman makes one gentle and wise. But the King

has come to venerate the relic, and I see no relic. Where can Saint Cle

ment be?'

A little clerk, who was next to him, informed him that the venerable

relic was in the upper part of the building, in a chapelle ardente.

'What is a chapelle ardente?' Julien asked himself.

But he would not ask for an explanation of the words. He followed the

proceedings with even closer attention.

On the occasion of a visit from a sovereign prince, etiquette requires

that the canons shall not accompany the Bishop. But as he started for the

chapelle ardente His Lordship of Agde summoned the abbe Chelan; Juli

en ventured to follow him.

After climbing a long stair, they came to a very small door, the frame

of which was sumptuously gilded. This work had a look of having just

been completed.

107Outside the door were gathered on their knees four and twenty girls,belonging to the most distinguished families of Verrieres. Before opening

the door, the Bishop sank on his knees in the midst of these girls, who

were all pretty. While he was praying aloud, it seemed as though they

could not sufficiently admire his fine lace, his charm, his young and

pleasant face. This spectacle made our hero lose all that remained of his

reason. At that moment, he would have fought for the Inquisition, and in

earnest. Suddenly the door flew open. The little chapel seemed to be

ablaze with light. One saw upon the altar more than a thousand candles

arranged in eight rows, separated from one another by clusters of

flowers. The sweet odour of the purest incense rose in clouds from the

gate of the sanctuary. The newly gilded chapel was quite small, but very

lofty. Julien noticed that there were on the altar candles more than fifteen

feet long. The girls could not restrain a cry of admiration. No one had

been admitted to the tiny antechapel save the twentyfour girls, the two

priests and Julien.

Presently the King arrived, followed only by M. de La Mole and his

Great Chamberlain. The guards themselves remained outside, on their

knees, presenting their arms.

His Majesty flung himself rather than knelt down on the faldstool. It

was then only that Julien, pressed against the gilded door, caught sight,beneath a girl's bare arm, of the charming statue of Saint Clement. It was

hidden beneath the altar, in the garb of a young Roman soldier. He had

in his throat a large wound from which the blood seemed to be flowing.

The artist had surpassed himself; the eyes, dying but full of grace, were

half closed. A budding moustache adorned the charming mouth, which

being slightly open had the effect of being still engaged in prayer. At the

sight of this statue, the girl nearest to Julien wept hot tears; one of her

tears fell upon Julien's hand.

After an interval of prayer in the most profound silence, disturbed

only by the distant sound of the bells of all the villages within a radius of

ten leagues, the Bishop of Agde asked the King's permission to speak. He

concluded a brief but highly edifying discourse with these words, simple

in themselves, but thereby all the better assured of their effect.

'Never forget, young Christian women, that you have seen one of the

great Kings of the earth upon his knees before the servants of this all

powerful and terrible God. These servants, frail, persecuted, martyred

upon earth, as you can see from the still bleeding wound of Saint Cle

ment, are triumphant in heaven. All your lives, I think, young Christians,108you will remember this day. You will detest impiety. Always you will re

main faithful to this God who is so great, so terrible, but so good.'

At these words, the Bishop rose with authority.

'You promise me?' he said, extending his arm with an air of

inspiration.

'We promise,' said the girls, bursting into tears.

'I receive your promise, in the name of our terrible God!' the Bishop

concluded in a voice of thunder. And the ceremony was at an end.

The King himself was in tears. It was not until long afterwards that

Julien was calm enough to inquire where were the bones of the Saint,sent from Rome to Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy. He was told that

they were embodied in the charming wax figure.

His Majesty deigned to permit the girls who had accompanied him in

to the chapel to wear a red riband upon which were embroidered the

words: 'HATRED OF IMPIETY, PERPETUAL ADORATION.'

M. de La Mole ordered ten thousand bottles of wine to be distributed

among the peasants. That evening, at Verrieres, the Liberals found an ex

cuse for illuminating their houses a hundred times more brilliantly than

the Royalists. Before leaving the town, the King paid a visit to M. de

Moirod.

109chapter19

To Think Is To Be Full of Sorrow

The grotesque character of everyday occurrences conceals from

one the real misery of passions.

BARNAVE

While he was replacing its ordinary furniture in the room that M. de

La Mole had occupied, Julien found a piece of stout paper, folded twice

across. He read at the foot of the first page:

To H. E., M. le Marquis de La Mole, Peer of France, Knight of the Roy

al Orders, etc., etc.

It was a petition in the rude handwriting of a cook.

Monsieur le Marquis,All my life I have held religious principles. I was in Lyons, exposed to

the bombs, at the time of the siege, in '93, of execrable memory. I am a

communicant, I go every Sunday to mass in my parish church. I have

never failed in my Easter duty, not even in '93, of execrable memory. My

cook, for before the revolution I kept servants, my cook observes Friday.

I enjoy in Verrieres a general and I venture to say merited respect. I walk

beneath the dais in processions, beside the cure and the mayor. I carry,on solemn occasions, a big candle bought at my own cost. The certificates

of all of which are in Paris at the Ministry of Finance. I ask Monsieur le

Marquis for the Verrieres lottery office, which cannot fail to be vacant

soon in one way or another, the present holder being seriously ill, and

besides voting the wrong way at the elections; etc.

DE CHOLIN

On the margin of this petition was an endorsement signed de Moirod,which began with the words:

'I had the honour yesterday to mention the respectable person who

makes this request,' and so forth.

110'And so even that imbecile Cholin shows me the way that I must fol

low,' Julien said to himself.

A week after the visit of the King of —— to Verrieres, the chief thing

to emerge from the innumerable falsehoods, foolish interpretations, ab

surd discussions, etc., etc., to which the King, the Bishop of Agde, the

Marquis de La Mole, the ten thousand bottles of wine, the unseated

Moirod (who, in the hope of a Cross, did not set foot outside his own

door for a whole month after his fall) were in turn subjected, was the ut

ter indelicacy of having jockeyed into the Guard of Honour, Julien Sorel,the son of a carpenter. You ought to have heard, on this topic, the

wealthy calico printers, who, morning, noon and night, used to talk

themselves hoarse in preaching equality. That proud woman, Madame

de Renal, was the author of this abomination. Her reason? The flashing

eyes and pink cheeks of that young abbe Sorel were reason enough and

to spare.

Shortly after their return to Vergy, Stanislas Xavier, the youngest of

the children, took fever; at once Madame de Renal was seized by the

most fearful remorse. For the first time she blamed herself for falling in

love in a coherent fashion. She seemed to understand, as though by a

miracle, the appalling sin into which she had let herself be drawn. Al

though deeply religious by nature, until this moment she had never

thought of the magnitude of her crime in the eyes of God.

Long ago, at the convent of the Sacred Heart, she had loved God with

a passionate love; she feared Him in the same way in this predicament.

The struggles that rent her heart asunder were all the more terrible in

that there was nothing reasonable in her fear. Julien discovered that any

recourse to argument irritated instead of calming her; she saw in it the

language of hell. However, as Julien himself was greatly attached to little

Stanislas, he was more welcome to speak to her of the child's illness:

presently it assumed a grave character. Then her incessant remorse de

prived Madame de Renal even of the power to sleep; she never emerged

from a grim silence: had she opened her mouth, it would have been to

confess her crime to God and before men.

'I beg of you,' Julien said to her, as soon as they were alone, 'say noth

ing to anyone; let me be the sole confidant of your griefs. If you still love

me, do not speak! your words cannot cure our Stanislas of his fever.'

But his attempts at consolation produced no effect; he did not know

that Madame de Renal had taken it into her head that, to appease the an

ger of a jealous God, she must either hate Julien or see her son die. It was

111because she felt that she could not hate her lover that she was so

unhappy.

'Avoid my presence,' she said to Julien one day; 'in the name of God,leave this house: it is your presence here that is killing my son.

'God is punishing me,' she added in a whisper; 'He is just; I adore His

equity; my crime is shocking, and I was living without remorse! It was

the first sign of departure from God: I ought to be doubly punished.'

Julien was deeply touched. He was unable to see in this attitude either

hypocrisy or exaggeration. 'She believes that she is killing her son by lov

ing me, and yet the unhappy woman loves me more than her son. That,how can I doubt it, is the remorse that is killing her; there is true nobility

of feeling. But how can I have inspired such love, I, so poor, so illbred,so ignorant, often so rude in my manners?'

One night the child's condition was critical. About two o'clock in the

morning, M. de Renal came to see him. The boy, burning with fever, was

extremely flushed and did not recognise his father. Suddenly Madame

de Renal threw herself at her husband's feet: Julien saw that she was go

ing to reveal everything and to ruin herself for ever.

Fortunately, this strange exhibition annoyed M. de Renal.

'Good night! Good night!' he said and prepared to leave the room.

'No, listen to me,' cried his wife on her knees before him, seeking to

hold him back. 'Learn the whole truth. It is I that am killing my son. I

gave him his life, and I am taking it from him. Heaven is punishing me;in the eyes of God, I am guilty of murder. I must destroy and humble

myself; it may be that such a sacrifice will appease the Lord.'

If M. de Renal had been a man of imagination, he would have guessed

everything.

'Romantic stuff,' he exclaimed, thrusting away his wife who sought to

embrace his knees. 'Romantic stuff, all that! Julien, tell them to fetch the

doctor at daybreak.'

And he went back to bed. Madame de Renal sank on her knees, half

unconscious, with a convulsive movement thrusting away Julien, who

was coming to her assistance.

Julien stood watching her with amazement.

'So this is adultery!' he said to himself … 'Can it be possible that those

rascally priests are right after all? That they, who commit so many sins,have the privilege of knowing the true theory of sin? How very odd!'

112For twenty minutes since M. de Renal had left the room, Julien had

seen the woman he loved, her head sunk on the child's little bed, motion

less and almost unconscious. 'Here we have a woman of superior intelli

gence reduced to the last extremes of misery, because she has known

me,' he said to himself.

The hours passed rapidly. 'What can I do for her? I must make up my

mind. I have ceased to count here. What do I care for men, and their silly

affectations? What can I do for her? … Go from her? But I shall be leav

ing her alone, torn by the most frightful grief. That automaton of a hus

band does her more harm than good. He will say something offensive to

her, in his natural coarseness; she may go mad, throw herself from the

window.

'If I leave her, if I cease to watch over her, she will tell him everything.

And then, for all one knows, in spite of the fortune he is to inherit

through her, he will make a scandal. She may tell everything, great God,to that—abbe Maslon, who makes the illness of a child of six an excuse

for never stirring out of this house, and not without purpose. In her grief

and her fear of God, she forgets all that she knows of the man; she sees

only the priest.'

'Leave me,' came suddenly from Madame de Renal as she opened her

eyes.

'I would give my life a thousand times to know how I can be of most

use to you,' replied Julien; 'never have I so loved you, my dear angel, or

rather, from this instant only, I begin to adore you as you deserve to be

adored. What is to become of me apart from you, and with the know

ledge that you are wretched by my fault! But I must not speak of my

own sufferings. I shall go, yes, my love. But, if I leave you, if I cease to

watch over you, to be constantly interposing myself between you and

your husband, you will tell him everything, you will be ruined. Think of

the ignominy with which he will drive you from the house; all Verrieres,all Besancon will ring with the scandal. All the blame will be cast on you;you will never be able to lift up your head again.'

'That is all that I ask,' she cried, rising to her feet. 'I shall suffer, all the

better.'

'But, by this appalling scandal, you will be harming him as well!'

'But I humble myself, I throw myself down in the mud; and in that

way perhaps I save my son. This humiliation, in the sight of all, is per

haps a public penance. So far as my frailty can judge, is it not the greatest

sacrifice that I can make to God? Perhaps he will deign to accept my

113humiliation and to spare me my son! Show me a harder sacrifice and I

will hasten to perform it.'

'Let me punish myself. I too am guilty. Would you have me retire to La

Trappe? The austerity of the life there may appease your God … Oh,heaven! Why can I not take upon myself Stanislas's illness?'

'Ah! You love him,' said Madame de Renal, rising and flinging herself

into his arms.

Immediately she thrust him from her with horror.

'I believe you! I believe you!' she went on, having fallen once more on

her knees; 'O my only friend, why are not you Stanislas's father? Then it

would not be a horrible sin to love you more than your son.'

'Will you permit me to stay, and henceforward only to love you as a

brother? It is the only reasonable expiation; it may appease the wrath of

the Most High.'

'And I,' she exclaimed, rising, and taking Julien's head in her hands,and holding it at arm's length before her eyes, 'and I, shall I love you like

a brother? Is it in my power to love you like a brother?'

Julien burst into tears.

'I will obey you,' he said as he fell at her feet. 'I will obey you,whatever you may bid me do; it is the one thing left for me. My brain is

smitten with blindness; I can see no course to take. If I leave you, you tell

your husband all; you ruin yourself, and him at the same time. After

such a disgrace he will never be elected Deputy. If I stay, you regard me

as the cause of your son's death, and you yourself die of grief. Would

you like to test the effect of my going? If you like, I will punish myself

for our sin by leaving you for a week. I shall pass the time in retreat

wherever you choose. At the abbey of BrayleHaut, for instance; but

swear to me that during my absence you will reveal nothing to your hus

band. Remember that I can never return if you speak.'

She promised; he departed, but was recalled after two days.

'It is impossible for me to keep my oath without you. I shall speak to

my husband, if you are not constantly there to order me with your eyes

to be silent. Each hour of this abominable life seems to me to last a day.'

In the end, heaven took pity on this unhappy mother. Gradually Stan

islas passed out of danger. But the ice was broken, her reason had

learned the magnitude of her sin, she could no more recover her equilib

rium. Remorse still remained, and took the form that it was bound to

114take in so sincere a heart. Her life was heaven and hell; hell when she did

not see Julien, heaven when she was at his feet.

'I am no longer under any illusion,' she told him, even at the moments

when she ventured to give absolute rein to her love: 'I am damned, irre

mediably damned. You are young, you have yielded to my seduction,heaven may pardon you; but as for me, I am damned. I know it by an in

fallible sign. I am afraid: who would not be afraid at the sight of hell? But

at heart, I am not in the least repentant. I would commit my sin again,were it to be committed. Let heaven only refrain from punishing me in

this world and in my children, and I shall have more than I deserve. But

you, at least, my Julien,' she cried at other moments, 'are you happy? Do

you feel that I love you enough?'

Julien's distrust and suffering pride, which needed above all a love

that made sacrifices, could not stand out against the sight of so great, so

indubitable a sacrifice, and one that was made afresh every moment. He

adored Madame de Renal. 'She may well be noble, and I the son of a

working man; she loves me… I am not to her a footman employed in the

part of lover.' Once rid of this fear, Julien fell into all the follies of love,into its mortal uncertainties.

'At least.' she cried when she saw that he doubted her love, 'let me

make you happy during the few days we still have to spend together! Let

us make haste; tomorrow perhaps I shall be no longer yours. If heaven

strikes me through my children, in vain shall I seek to live only for love

of you, not to see that it is my crime that is killing them. I shall not be

able to survive that blow. Even if I would, I could not; I should go mad.'

'Ah! If I could take your sin upon my conscience, as you so generously

wished that you might take Stanislas's fever!'

This great moral crisis changed the nature of the sentiment that united

Julien to his mistress. His love was no longer merely admiration of her

beauty, pride in the possession of her.

Their joy was thenceforward of a far higher nature, the flame that de

voured them was more intense. They underwent transports of utter

madness. Their happiness would have seemed great in the eyes of other

people. But they never recaptured the delicious serenity, the unclouded

happiness, the spontaneous joy of the first days of their love, when Ma

dame de Renal's one fear was that of not being loved enough by Julien.

Their happiness assumed at times the aspect of crime.

In what were their happiest, and apparently their calmest moments:

'Oh! Great God! I see hell before me,' Madame de Renal would suddenly

115exclaim, gripping Julien's hand with a convulsive movement. 'What fear

ful torments! I have well deserved them.' She clutched him, clinging to

him like the ivy to the wall.

Julien tried in vain to calm this agitated soul. She took his hand, which

she covered with kisses. Then, relapsing into a sombre meditation; 'Hell,'

she said, 'hell would be a blessing to me; I should still have some days in

this world to spend with him, but hell here on earth, the death of my

children … Yet, at that price, perhaps my crime would be forgiven me…

Oh! Great God! Grant me not my pardon at that price. These poor chil

dren have done nothing to offend thee; 'tis I, I, the guilt is mine alone! I

love a man who is not my husband.'

Julien next saw Madame de Renal reach a state that was outwardly

tranquil. She sought to take the burden upon herself, she wished not to

poison the existence of him whom she loved.

In the midst of these alternations of love, remorse and pleasure, the

days passed for them with lightning rapidity. Julien lost the habit of

reflection.

Miss Elisa went to conduct a little lawsuit which she had at Verrieres.

She found M. Valenod greatly annoyed with Julien. She hated the tutor

and often spoke about him to M. Valenod.

'You would ruin me, Sir, if I told you the truth!' she said to him one

day. 'Employers all hang together in important things. They never for

give us poor servants for certain revelations … '

After these conventional phrases, which the impatient curiosity of M.

Valenod found a way of cutting short, he learned the most mortifying

things in the world for his own self-esteem.

This woman, the most distinguished in the place, whom for six years

he had surrounded with every attention, and, unluckily, before the eyes

of all the world; this proudest of women, whose disdain had so often

made him blush, had taken as her lover a little journeyman dressed up as

a tutor. And that nothing might be wanting to the discomfiture of the

governor of the poorhouse, Madame de Renal adored this lover.

'And,' the maid added with a sigh, 'M. Julien went to no pains to make

this conquest, he has never departed from his habitual coldness with

Madame.'

It was only in the country that Elisa had become certain of her facts,but she thought that this intrigue dated from far earlier.

116'That, no doubt, is why,' she continued bitterly, 'he refused at the time

to marry me. And I, like a fool, going to consult Madame de Renal, beg

ging her to speak to the tutor!'

That same evening M. de Renal received from the town, with his

newspaper, a long anonymous letter which informed him in the fullest

detail of all that was going on under his roof. Julien saw him turn pale as

he read this letter, which was written on blue paper, and cast angry

glances at himself. For the rest of the evening the Mayor never recovered

his peace of mind; it was in vain that Julien tried to flatter him by asking

him to explain obscure points in the pedigrees of the best families of

Burgundy.

117chapter20

The Anonymous Letters

Do not give dalliance Too much the rein; the strongest oaths are

straw To the fire i'the blood.

The Tempest

As they left the drawing-room about midnight, Julien found time to

say to his mistress: 'Do not let us meet tonight, your husband has suspi

cions; I would swear that that long letter he was reading with such dis

pleasure is an anonymous one.'

Fortunately, Julien locked himself into his room. Madame de Renal

conceived the mad idea that this warning was simply a pretext for not

coming to see her. She lost her head absolutely, and at the usual hour

came to his door. Julien, hearing a sound in the corridor, instantly blew

out his lamp. Someone was attempting to open his door; was it Madame

de Renal, was it a jealous husband?

Early the next morning, the cook, who took an interest in Julien,brought him a book on the cover of which he read these words written in

Italian: Guardate alia pagina 130.

Julien shuddered at the imprudence, turned to page one hundred and

thirty and found fastened to it with a pin the following letter written in

haste, bedewed with tears, and without the least attempt at spelling.

Ordinarily Madame de Renal spelt quite well; he was moved by this de

tail and began to forget the frightful imprudence.

'So you would not let me in tonight? There are moments when I feel

that I have never seen into the depths of your heart. Your look frightens

me. I am afraid of you. Great God! Can it be, you have never loved me?

In that case, my husband can discover our love, and shut me up in

lifelong imprisonment, in the country, apart from my children. Perhaps

God wills it so. I shall soon die; but you will be a monster.

118'Do you not love me? Are you tired of my follies, of my remorse, impi

ous one? Do you wish to ruin me? I give you an easy method. Go, show

this letter to all Verrieres, or rather show it to M. Valenod alone. Tell him

that I love you; but no, utter no such blasphemy; tell him that I adore

you, that life only began for me on the day when I first saw you; that in

the wildest moments of my girlhood, I had never even dreamed of the

happiness that I owe to you; that I have sacrificed my life to you, that I

am sacrificing my soul to you. You know that I am sacrificing far more.

'But what does he know of sacrifices, that man? Tell him, tell him, to

make him angry, that I defy all evilspeakers, and that there is but one

misfortune in the world for me, that of beholding a change in the one

man who holds me to life. What a blessing for me to lose it, to offer it in

sacrifice, and to fear no longer for my children!

'Doubt not, dear friend, if there be an anonymous letter, it comes from

that odious being who, for the last six years, has pursued me with his

loud voice, with a list of the jumps his horse has taken, with his fatuity

and with the endless enumeration of all his advantages.

'Is there an anonymous letter? Wicked one, that is what I wished to

discuss with you; but no, you were right. Clasping you in my arms, for

the last time perhaps, I could never have discussed the matter calmly, as

I do when I am alone. From this moment our happiness will not be so

easily secured. Will that be an annoyance to you? Yes, on the days when

you have not received some amusing book from M. Fouque. The sacrifice

is made; tomorrow, whether there be an anonymous letter or not, I shall

tell my husband that I have received an anonymous letter, that he must

instantly offer you a large sum to accept another post, find some decent

pretext, and send you back without delay to your family.

'Alas, dear friend, we are going to be parted for a fortnight, perhaps a

month! But there, I do you justice, you will suffer as much as I. Still, this

is the only way to counteract the effect of this anonymous letter; it is not

the first that my husband has received, and on my account too. Alas!

How I have laughed at them!

'The whole purpose of my scheme is to make my husband think that

the letter comes from M. Valenod; I have no doubt that he is its author. If

you leave the house, do not fail to go and establish yourself at Verrieres.

I shall contrive that my husband conceives the idea of spending a fort

night there, to prove to the fools that there is no coolness between him

and myself. Once you are at Verrieres, make friends with everyone, even

the Liberals. I know that all the ladies will run after you.

119'Do not go and quarrel with M. Valenod, nor crop his ears, as you once

threatened; on the contrary, show him every politeness. The essential

thing is that it should be known throughout Verrieres that you are going

to Valenod's, or to some other house, for the children's education.

'That is what my husband will never stand. Should he resign himself

to it, well, at least you will be living in Verrieres, and I shall see you

sometimes. My children, who are so fond of you, will go to see you.

Great God! I feel that I love my children more, because they love you.

What remorse! How is all this going to end? I am wandering… Well,you understand what you must do; be gentle, polite, never contemptu

ous with these vulgar personages, I implore you on my knees: they are to

be the arbiters of our destiny. Doubt not for a moment that my husband

in dealing with you will conform to whatever public opinion may

prescribe.

'It is you that are going to provide me with this anonymous letter; arm

yourself with patience and a pair of scissors. Cut out of a book the words

you will see below; paste them together, with waterglue, on the sheet of

blue paper that I send you; it came to me from M. Valenod. Be prepared

for a search of your room; burn the pages of the book you mutilate. If

you do not find the words ready made, have the patience to compose

them letter by letter. To spare you trouble, I have cut the anonymous let

ter short. Alas! If you no longer love me, as I fear, how long mine must

seem to you!

ANONYMOUS LETTER

"MADAME,All your little goings on are known; but the persons to whose interest

it is to check them have been warned. From a lingering affection for

yourself, I beg you to detach yourself entirely from the little peasant. If

you have the wisdom to do this, your husband will believe that the

warning he has received was misleading, and he will be left in his error.

Bear in mind that I know your secret; tremble, unhappy woman; hence

forward you must tread a straight path, driven by me."

'As soon as you have finished pasting together the words that make up

this letter (do you recognise the Governor's style in it?) come out of your

room, I shall meet you about the house.

'I shall go to the village, and return with a troubled countenance; I

shall indeed be greatly troubled. Great God! What a risk I am running,and all because you thought you detected an anonymous letter. Finally,with a woebegone face, I shall give my husband this letter, which will

120have been handed to me by a stranger. As for you, go for a walk in the

direction of the woods with the children, and do not return until dinner

time.

'From the rocks above, you can see the tower of the dovecote. If all

goes well, I shall place a white handkerchief there; if not, you will see

nothing.

'Ungrateful wretch, will not your heart find out some way of telling

me that you love me, before starting on this walk? Whatever may befall

me, be certain of one thing: I should not survive for a day a final parting.

Ah! bad mother! These are two idle words that I have written, dear Juli

en. I do not feel them; I can think only of you at this moment, I have

written them only so as not to be blamed by you. Now that I find myself

brought to the point of losing you, what use is there in pretence? Yes, let

my heart seem black as night to you, but let me not lie to the man whom

I adore! I have been all too deceitful already in my life. Go to, I forgive

you if you love me no longer. I have not time to read my letter through.

It is a small thing in my eyes to pay with my life for the happy days

which I have spent in your arms. You know that they will cost me more

than life.'

121chapter21

Conversation with a Lord and Master

Alas! our frailty is the cause, not we! For such as we are made of,such we be.

Twelfth Night

It was with a childish pleasure that Julien spent an hour in pasting

words together. As he left his room he came upon his pupils and their

mother; she took the letter with a simplicity and courage, the calmness of

which terrified him.

'Is the gum quite dry?' she asked him.

'Can this be the woman who was being driven mad by remorse?' he

thought. 'What are her plans at this moment?' He was too proud to ask

her; but never, perhaps, had she appealed to him more strongly.

'If things go amiss,' she went on with the same coolness, 'I shall be

stripped of everything. Bury this store somewhere in the mountains; it

may some day be my last resource.'

She handed him a glasstopped case, in red morocco, filled with gold

and a few diamonds.

'Go now,' she said to him.

She embraced her children, the youngest of them twice over. Julien

stood spellbound. She left him at a rapid pace and without looking at

him again.

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From the moment of his opening the anonymous letter, M. de Renal's

life had been a burden to him. He had not been so agitated since a duel

that he had nearly had to fight in 1816, and, to do him justice, the pro

spect of receiving a bullet in his person would now have distressed him

less. He examined the letter from every angle. 'Is not this a woman's

hand?' he asked himself. 'In that case, what woman can have written it?'

122He considered in turn all the women he knew at Verrieres, without find

ing a definite object for his suspicions. Could a man have dictated the let

ter? If so, what man? Here again, a similar uncertainty; he had earned the

jealousy and no doubt the hatred of the majority of the men he knew. 'I

must consult my wife,' he said to himself, from force of habit, as he rose

from the armchair in which he had collapsed.

No sooner had he risen than 'Good God!' he exclaimed, clapping his

hand to his head, 'she is the one person whom I cannot trust; from this

moment she is my enemy.' And tears of anger welled into his eyes.

It was a fitting reward for that barrenness of heart in which practical

wisdom in the provinces is rooted, that the two men whom, at that mo

ment, M. de Renal most dreaded were his two most intimate friends.

'Apart from them, I have ten friends perhaps,' and he turned them

over in his mind, calculating the exact amount of comfort that he would

be able to derive from each. 'To all of them, to all of them,' he cried in his

rage, 'my appalling misfortune will give the most intense pleasure.' Hap

pily for him, he supposed himself to be greatly envied, and not without

reason. Apart from his superb house in town on which the King of ——

had just conferred everlasting honour by sleeping beneath its roof, he

had made an admirable piece of work of his country house at Vergy. The

front was painted white, and the windows adorned with handsome

green shutters. He was comforted for a moment by the thought of this

magnificence. The fact of the matter was that this mansion was visible

from a distance of three or four leagues, to the great detriment of all the

country houses or socalled chateaux of the neighbourhood, which had

been allowed to retain the humble grey tones imparted to them by time.

M. de Renal could reckon upon the tears and pity of one of his friends,the churchwarden of the parish; but he was an imbecile who shed tears

at everything. This man was nevertheless his sole resource.

'What misfortune is comparable to mine?' he exclaimed angrily. 'What

isolation!

'Is it possible,' this truly pitiable man asked himself, 'is it possible that,in my distress, I have not a single friend of whom to ask advice? For my

mind is becoming unhinged, I can feel it! Ah, Falcoz! Ah, Ducros!' he

cried bitterly. These were the names of two of his boyhood's friends

whom he had alienated by his arrogance in 1814. They were not noble,and he had tried to alter the terms of equality on which they had been

living all their lives.

123One of them, Falcoz, a man of spirit and heart, a paper merchant at

Verrieres, had purchased a printing press in the chief town of the De

partment and had started a newspaper. The Congregation had determ

ined to ruin him: his paper had been condemned, his printer's licence

had been taken from him. In these unfortunate circumstances he ven

tured to write to M. de Renal for the first time in ten years. The Mayor of

Verrieres felt it incumbent on him to reply in the Ancient Roman style: 'If

the King's Minister did me the honour to consult me, I should say to him:

"Ruin without compunction all provincial printers, and make printing a

monopoly like the sale of tobacco."' This letter to an intimate friend

which had set the whole of Verrieres marvelling at the time, M. de Renal

now recalled, word for word, with horror. 'Who would have said that

with my rank, my fortune, my Crosses, I should one day regret it?' It was

in such transports of anger, now against himself, now against all around

him, that he passed a night of anguish; but, fortunately, it did not occur

to him to spy upon his wife.

'I am used to Louise,' he said to himself, 'she knows all my affairs;were I free to marry again tomorrow I could find no one fit to take her

place.' Next, he sought relief in the idea that his wife was innocent; this

point of view made it unnecessary for him to show his strength of char

acter, and was far more convenient; how many slandered wives have we

not all seen!

'But what!' he suddenly exclaimed, pacing the floor with a convulsive

step, 'am I to allow her, as though I were a man of straw, a mere

ragamuffin, to make a mock of me with her lover? Is the whole of Verri

eres to be allowed to sneer at my complacency? What have they not said

about Charmier?' (a notorious local cuckold). 'When he is mentioned, is

there not a smile on every face? He is a good pleader, who is there that

ever mentions his talent for public speaking? "Ah! Charmier!" is what

they say; "Bernard's Charmier." They actually give him the name of the

man that has disgraced him.

'Thank heaven,' said M. de Renal at other moments, 'I have no daugh

ter, and the manner in which I am going to punish their mother will not

damage the careers of my children; I can surprise that young peasant

with my wife, and kill the pair of them; in that event, the tragic outcome

of my misfortune may perhaps make it less absurd.' This idea appealed

to him: he worked it out in the fullest detail. 'The Penal Code is on my

side, and, whatever happens, our Congregation and my friends on the

jury will save me.' He examined his hunting knife, which had a keen

blade; but the thought of bloodshed frightened him.

124'I might thrash this insolent tutor black and blue and turn him from

the house; but what a stir in Verrieres and, indeed, throughout the De

partment! After the suppression of Falcoz's paper, when his editor came

out of prison, I was instrumental in making him lose a place worth six

hundred francs. They say that the scribbler has dared to show his face

again in Besancon, he may easily attack me, and so cunningly that it will

be impossible to bring him to justice! That insolent fellow will insinuate

in a thousand ways that he has been speaking the truth. A man of family,who respects his rank as I do, is always hated by plebeians. I shall see

myself in those frightful Paris papers; my God! what degradation! To see

the ancient name of Renal plunged in the mire of ridicule… If I ever

travel, I shall have to change my name; what! give up this name which is

my pride and my strength. What a crowning infamy!

'If I do not kill my wife, if I drive her from the house with ignominy,she has her aunt at Besancon, who will hand over the whole of her for

tune to her on the quiet. My wife will go and live in Paris with Julien;Verrieres will hear of it, and I shall again be regarded as a dupe.' This

unhappy man then perceived, from the failing light of his lamp, that day

was beginning to break. He went to seek a breath of air in the garden. At

that moment, he had almost made up his mind to create no scene, chiefly

because a scene of that sort would fill his good friends at Verrieres with

joy.

His stroll in the garden calmed him somewhat. 'No,' he cried, 'I shall

certainly not part with my wife, she is too useful to me.' He pictured to

himself with horror what his house would be like without his wife; his

sole female relative was the Marquise de R—— who was old, idiotic and

evilminded.

An idea of the greatest good sense occurred to him, but to put it into

practice required a strength of character far exceeding the little that the

poor man possessed. 'If I keep my wife,' he said to himself; 'I know my

own nature; one day, when she taxes my patience, I shall reproach her

with her offence. She is proud, we are bound to quarrel, and all this will

happen before she has inherited her aunt's estate. And then, how they

will all laugh at me! My wife loves her children, it will all come to them

in the end. But I, I shall be the talk of Verrieres. What, they will say, he

couldn't even punish his wife! Would it not be better to stick to my sus

picions and to verify nothing? Then I tie my own hands, I cannot after

wards reproach her with anything.'

125A moment later M. de Renal, his wounded vanity once more gaining

the mastery, was laboriously recalling all the stories told in the billiard

room of the Casino or Noble Club of Verrieres, when some fluent talker

interrupted the pool to make merry at the expense of some cuckolded

husband. How cruel, at that moment, those pleasantries seemed.

'God! Why is not my wife dead! Then I should be immune from ri

dicule. Why am I not a widower! I should go and spend six months in

Paris in the best society.' After this momentary happiness caused by the

idea of widowhood, his imagination returned to the methods of ascer

taining the truth. Should he at midnight, after the whole household had

gone to bed, sprinkle a few handfuls of bran outside the door of Julien's

room? Next morning, at daybreak, he would see the footprints on it.

'But that would be no good,' he broke out angrily, 'that wretched Elisa

would notice it, and it would be all over the house at once that I am

jealous.'

In another story that circulated at the Casino, a husband had made cer

tain of his plight by fastening a hair with a little wax so as to seal up the

doors of his wife's room and her lover's.

After so many hours of vacillation, this method of obtaining enlighten

ment seemed to him decidedly the best, and he was thinking of adopting

it, when at a bend in the path he came upon that wife whom he would

have liked to see dead.

She was returning from the village. She had gone to hear mass in the

church of Vergy. A tradition of extremely doubtful value in the eyes of

the cold philosopher, but one in which she believed, made out that the

little church now in use had been the chapel of the castle of the Lord of

Vergy. This thought obsessed Madame de Renal throughout the time

which she had meant to pass in prayer in this church. She kept on pictur

ing to herself her husband killing Julien during the chase, as though by

accident, and afterwards, that evening, making her eat his heart.

'My fate,' she said to herself, 'depends on what he will think when he

hears me. After these terrible moments, perhaps I shall not find another

opportunity to speak to him. He is not a wise creature, swayed by reas

on. I might, if he were, with the aid of my own feeble wits, forecast what

he would do or say. But my fate lies in my cunning, in the art of direct

ing the thoughts of this whimsical creature, who becomes blind with an

ger and incapable of seeing things. Great God! I require talent, coolness,where am I to find them?'

126She recovered her calm as though by magic on entering the garden

and seeing her husband in the distance. The disorder of his hair and

clothes showed that he had not slept. She handed him a letter which,though the seal was broken, was still folded. He, without opening it,gazed at his wife with madness in his eyes.

'Here is an abomination,' she said to him, 'which an evillooking man

who claims to know you and that you owe him a debt of gratitude,handed to me as I came past the back of the lawyer's garden. One thing I

must ask of you, and that is that you send back to his own people, and

without delay, that Monsieur Julien.' Madame de Renal made haste to

utter this name, even beginning a little too soon perhaps, in order to rid

herself of the fearful prospect of having to utter it.

She was filled with joy on beholding the joy that it gave her husband.

>From the fixed stare which he directed at her she realised that Julien

had guessed aright. Instead of worrying about a very present trouble,'what intelligence,' she thought to herself. 'What perfect tact! And in a

young man still quite devoid of experience! To what heights will he not

rise in time? Alas! Then his success will make him forget me.'

This little act of admiration of the man she adored completely restored

her composure.

She congratulated herself on the step she had taken. 'I have proved

myself not unworthy of Julien,' she said to herself, with a sweet and

secret relish.

Without saying a word, for fear of committing himself, M. de Renal ex

amined this second anonymous letter composed, as the reader may re

member, of printed words gummed upon a sheet of paper of a bluish

tinge. 'They are making a fool of me in every way,' M. de Renal said to

himself, utterly worn out.

'Fresh insults to be looked into, and all owing to my wife!' He was on

the point of deluging her with a stream of the coarsest invective; the

thought of the fortune awaiting her at Besancon just stopped him. Over

powered by the necessity of venting his anger on something, he tore up

the sheet on which this second anonymous letter was gummed, and

strode rapidly away, feeling that he could not endure his wife's com

pany. A minute later, he returned to her, already more calm.

'We must take action at once and dismiss Julien,' she immediately

began; 'after all he is only the son of a working man. You can compensate

him with a few crowns, besides, he is clever and can easily find another

127place, with M. Valenod, for instance, or the Sub-Prefect Maugiron; they

both have families. And so you will not be doing him any harm… '

'You speak like the fool that you are,' cried M. de Renal in a voice of

thunder. 'How can one expect common sense of a woman? You never

pay attention to what is reasonable; how should you have any know

ledge? Your carelessness, your laziness leave you just enough activity to

chase butterflies, feeble creatures which we are so unfortunate as to have

in our households … '

Madame de Renal let him speak, and he spoke at length; he passed his

anger, as they say in those parts.

'Sir,' she answered him finally, 'I speak as a woman whose honour,that is to say her most priceless possession, has been outraged.'

Madame de Renal preserved an unalterable calm throughout the

whole of this trying conversation, upon which depended the possibility

of her continuing to live beneath the same roof as Julien. She sought out

the ideas that seemed to her best fitted to guide her husband's blind an

ger. She had remained unmoved by all the insulting remarks that he had

addressed to her, she did not hear them, she was thinking all the time of

Julien. 'Will he be pleased with me?'

'This little peasant upon whom we have lavished every attention, in

cluding presents, may be innocent,' she said at length, 'but he is none the

less the occasion of the first insult I have ever received … Sir, when I

read that abominable document, I vowed that either he or I should leave

your roof.'

'Do you wish to create a scandal that will dishonour me and yourself

as well? You'll be giving a fine treat to many people in Verrieres.'

'That is true; they are all jealous of the state of prosperity to which

your wise management has brought you, your family and the town…

Very well, I shall go and bid Julien ask you for leave to spend a month

with that timber merchant in the mountain, a fit companion for that little

workman.'

'Take care what you do,' put in M. de Renal, calmly enough. 'The one

thing I must insist on is that you do not speak to him. You would show

temper and make him cross with me; you know how touchy the little

gentleman is.'

'That young man has no tact,' went on Madame de Renal; 'he may be

learned, you know about that, but at bottom he is nothing but a peasant.

For my own part, I have never had any opinion of him since he refused

128to marry Elisa, it was a fortune ready made; and all because now and

again she pays a secret visit to M. Valenod.'

'Ah!' said M. de Renal, raising his eyebrows as far as they would go,'what, did Julien tell you that?'

'No, not exactly; he has always spoken to me of the vocation that is

calling him to the sacred ministry; but believe me, the first vocation for

the lower orders is to find their daily bread. He made it fairly clear to me

that he was not unaware of these secret visits.'

'And I, I, knew nothing about them!' cried M. de Renal, all his fury re

turning, emphasising every word. 'There are things going on in my

house of which I know nothing… What! There has been something

between Elisa and Valenod?'

'Oh, that's an old story, my dear friend,' Madame de Renal said laugh

ing, 'and I daresay no harm was done. It was in the days when your

good friend Valenod would not have been sorry to have it thought in

Verrieres that there was a little love—of a purely platonic

sort—exchanged between him and me.'

'I had that idea at one time,' cried M. de Renal striking his head in his

fury as he advanced from one discovery to another, 'and you never said

a word to me about it?'

'Was I to make trouble between two friends all for a little outburst of

vanity on the part of our dear Governor? What woman is there in society

to whom he has not addressed one or more letters, extremely witty and

even a trifle gallant?'

'Has he written to you?'

'He writes frequently.'

'Show me his letters this instant, I order you'; and M. de Renal added

six feet to his stature.

'I shall do nothing of the sort,' the answer came in a tone so gentle as to

be almost indifferent, 'I shall let you see them some other day, when you

are more yourself.'

'This very instant, damn it!' cried M. de Renal, blind with rage, and yet

happier than he had been at any time in the last twelve hours.

'Will you swear to me,' said Madame de Renal solemnly, 'never to

quarrel with the Governor of the Poorhouse over these letters?'

'Quarrel or no quarrel, I can take the foundlings away from him; but,'

he continued, furiously, 'I want those letters this instant; where are they?'

129'In a drawer in my desk; but you may be certain, I shall not give you

the key of it.'

'I shall be able to force it,' he cried as he made off in the direction of his

wife's room.

He did indeed break open with an iron bar a valuable mahogany writ

ing desk, imported from Paris, which he used often to polish with the tail

of his coat when he thought he detected a spot on its surface.

Madame de Renal meanwhile had run up the hundred and twenty

steps of the dovecote; she knotted the corner of a white handkerchief to

one of the iron bars of the little window. She was the happiest of women.

With tears in her eyes she gazed out at the wooded slopes of the moun

tain. 'Doubtless,' she said to herself, 'beneath one of those spreading

beeches, Julien is watching for this glad signal.' For long she strained her

ears, then cursed the monotonous drone of the grasshoppers and the

twitter of the birds. But for those tiresome sounds, a cry of joy, issuing

from among the rocks, might have reached her in her tower. Her raven

ing gaze devoured that immense slope of dusky verdure, unbroken as

the surface of a meadow, that was formed by the treetops. 'How is it he

has not the sense,' she asked herself with deep emotion, 'to think of some

signal to tell me that his happiness is no less than mine?' She came down

from the dovecote only when she began to be afraid that her husband

might come up in search of her.

She found him foaming with rage. He was running through M.

Valenod's anodyne sentences, that were little used to being read with

such emotion.

Seizing a moment in which a lull in her husband's exclamations gave

her a chance to make herself heard:

'I cannot get away from my original idea,' said Madame de Renal,'Julien ought to go for a holiday. Whatever talent he may have for Latin,he is nothing more, after all, than a peasant who is often coarse and

wanting in tact; every day, thinking he is being polite, he plies me with

extravagant compliments in the worst of taste, which he learns by heart

from some novel … '

'He never reads any,' cried M. de Renal; 'I am positive as to that. Do

you suppose that I am a blind master who knows nothing of what goes

on under his roof?'

'Very well, if he doesn't read those absurd compliments anywhere, he

invents them, which is even worse. He will have spoken of me in that

130tone in Verrieres; and, without going so far,' said Madame de Renal, with

the air of one making a discovery, 'he will have spoken like that before

Elisa, which is just as though he had spoken to M. Valenod.'

'Ah!' cried M. de Renal, making the table and the whole room shake

with one of the stoutest blows that human fist ever gave, 'the anonymous

letter in print and Valenod's letters were all on the same paper.'

'At last!' thought Madame de Renal; she appeared thunderstruck by

this discovery, and without having the courage to add a single word

went and sat down on the divan, at the farther end of the room.

The battle was now won; she had her work cut out to prevent M. de

Renal from going and talking to the supposed author of the anonymous

letter.

'How is it you do not feel that to make a scene, without sufficient

proof, with M. Valenod would be the most deplorable error? If you are

envied, Sir, who is to blame? Your own talents: your wise administra

tion, the buildings you have erected with such good taste, the dowry I

brought you, and above all the considerable fortune we may expect to in

herit from my worthy aunt, a fortune the extent of which is vastly exag

gerated, have made you the principal person in Verrieres.'

'You forget my birth,' said M. de Renal, with a faint smile.

'You are one of the most distinguished gentlemen in the province,' Ma

dame de Renal hastily added; 'if the King were free and could do justice

to birth, you would doubtless be figuring in the House of Peers,' and so

forth. 'And in this magnificent position do you seek to provide jealousy

with food for comment?

'To speak to M. Valenod of his anonymous letter is to proclaim

throughout Verrieres, or rather in Besancon, throughout the Province,that this petty cit, admitted perhaps imprudently to the friendship of a

Renal, has found out a way to insult him. Did these letters which you

have just discovered prove that I had responded to M. Valenod's over

tures, then it would be for you to kill me, I should have deserved it a

hundred times, but not to show anger with him. Think that all your

neighbours only await a pretext to be avenged for your superiority; think

that in 1816 you were instrumental in securing certain arrests. That man

who took refuge on your roof … '

'What I think is that you have neither respect nor affection for me,'

shouted M. de Renal with all the bitterness that such a memory aroused,'and I have not been made a Peer!'

131'I think, my friend,' put in Madame de Renal with a smile, 'that I shall

one day be richer than you, that I have been your companion for twelve

years, and that on all these counts I ought to have a voice in your coun

cils, especially in this business today. If you prefer Monsieur Julien to

me,' she added with illconcealed scorn, 'I am prepared to go and spend

the winter with my aunt.'

This threat was uttered with gladness. It contained the firmness which

seeks to cloak itself in courtesy; it determined M. de Renal. But, obeying

the provincial custom, he continued to speak for a long time, harked

back to every argument in turn; his wife allowed him to speak, there was

still anger in his tone. At length, two hours of futile discourse wore out

the strength of a man who had been helpless with rage all night. He de

termined upon the line of conduct which he was going to adopt towards

M. Valenod, Julien, and even Elisa.

Once or twice, during this great scene, Madame de Renal came within

an ace of feeling a certain sympathy for the very real distress of this man

who for ten years had been her friend. But our true passions are selfish.

Moreover she was expecting every moment an avowal of the anonymous

letter which he had received overnight, and this avowal never came. To

gain complete confidence, Madame de Renal required to know what

ideas might have been suggested to the man upon whom her fate de

pended. For, in the country, husbands control public opinion. A husband

who denounces his wife covers himself with ridicule, a thing that every

day is becoming less dangerous in France; but his wife, if he does not

supply her with money, declines to the position of a working woman at

fifteen sous daily, and even then the virtuous souls have scruples about

employing her.

An odalisque in the seraglio may love the Sultan with all her heart; he

is all powerful, she has no hope of evading his authority by a succession

of clever little tricks. The master's vengeance is terrible, bloody, but mar

tial and noble: a dagger blow ends everything. It is with blows dealt by

public contempt that a husband kills his wife in the nineteenth century; it

is by shutting the doors of all the drawing-rooms in her face.

The sense of danger was keenly aroused in Madame de Renal on her

return to her own room; she was horrified by the disorder in which she

found it. The locks of all her pretty little boxes had been broken; several

planks in the floor had been torn up. 'He would have been without pity

for me!' she told herself. 'To spoil so this floor of coloured parquet, of

which he is so proud; when one of his children comes in with muddy

132shoes, he flushes with rage. And now it is ruined for ever!' The sight of

this violence rapidly silenced the last reproaches with which she had

been blaming herself for her too rapid victory.

Shortly before the dinner bell sounded, Julien returned with the chil

dren. At dessert, when the servants had left the room, Madame de Renal

said to him very drily:

'You expressed the desire to me to go and spend a fortnight at Verri

eres; M. de Renal is kind enough to grant you leave. You can go as soon

as you please. But, so that the children shall not waste any time, their les

sons will be sent to you every day, for you to correct.'

'Certainly,' M. de Renal added in a most bitter tone, 'I shall not allow

you more than a week.'

Julien read in his features the uneasiness of a man in cruel torment.

'He has not yet come to a decision,' he said to his mistress, during a

moment of solitude in the drawing-room.

Madame de Renal informed him rapidly of all that she had done since

the morning.

'The details tonight,' she added laughing.

'The perversity of woman!' thought Julien. 'What pleasure, what in

stinct leads them to betray us?

'I find you at once enlightened and blinded by your love,' he said to

her with a certain coldness; 'your behaviour today has been admirable;but is there any prudence in our attempting to see each other tonight?

This house is paved with enemies; think of the passionate hatred that El

isa has for me.'

'That hatred greatly resembles the passionate indifference that you

must have for me.'

'Indifferent or not, I am bound to save you from a peril into which I

have plunged you. If chance decrees that M. de Renal speaks to Elisa, by

a single word she may disclose everything to him. What is to prevent

him from hiding outside my room, well armed … '

'What! Lacking in courage even!' said Madame de Renal, with all the

pride of a woman of noble birth.

'I shall never sink so low as to speak of my courage,' said Julien coldly,'that is mean. Let the world judge by my actions. But,' he went on, taking

her hand, 'you cannot conceive how attached I am to you, and what a joy

it is to me to be able to take leave of you before this cruel parting.'

133chapter22

Manners and Customs in 1830

Speech was given to man to enable him to conceal his thoughts.

MALAGRIDA, S.J.

The first thing that Julien did on arriving in Verrieres was to reproach

himself for his unfairness to Madame de Renal. 'I should have despised

her as a foolish woman if from weakness she had failed to bring off the

scene with M. de Renal! She carried it through like a diplomat, and my

sympathies are with the loser, who is my enemy. There is a streak of

middleclass pettiness in my nature; my vanity is hurt, because M. de

Renal is a man! That vast and illustrous corporation to which I have the

honour to belong; I am a perfect fool.'

M. Chelan had refused the offers of hospitality which the most respec

ted Liberals of the place had vied with one another in making him, when

his deprivation drove him from the presbytery. The pair of rooms which

he had taken were littered with his books. Julien, wishing to show Verri

eres what it meant to be a priest, went and fetched from his father's store

a dozen planks of firwood, which he carried on his back the whole

length of the main street. He borrowed some tools from an old friend

and had soon constructed a sort of bookcase in which he arranged M.

Chelan's library.

'I supposed you to have been corrupted by the vanity of the world,'

said the old man, shedding tears of joy; 'this quite redeems the childish

ness of that dazzling guard of honour uniform which made you so many

enemies.'

M. de Renal had told Julien to put up in his house. No one had any

suspicion of what had happened. On the third day after his arrival, there

came up to his room no less a personage than the Sub-Prefect, M. de

Maugiron. It was only after two solid hours of insipid tittletattle, and

long jeremiads on the wickedness of men, on the lack of honesty in the

people entrusted with the administration of public funds, on the dangers

134besetting poor France, etc., etc., that Julien saw him come at length to the

purpose of his visit. They were already on the landing, and the poor tu

tor, on the verge of disgrace, was ushering out with all due respect the

future Prefect of some fortunate Department, when it pleased the latter

gentleman to occupy himself with Julien's career, to praise his modera

tion where his own interests were concerned, etc., etc. Finally M. de

Maugiron, taking him in his arms in the most fatherly manner, suggested

to him that he should leave M. de Renal and enter the household of an

official who had children to educate, and who, like King Philip, would

thank heaven, not so much for having given him them as for having

caused them to be born in the neighbourhood of M. Julien. Their tutor

would receive a salary of eight hundred francs, payable not month by

month, 'which is not noble,' said M. de Maugiron, but quarterly, and in

advance to boot.

It was now the turn of Julien who, for an hour and a half, had been

waiting impatiently for an opportunity to speak. His reply was perfect,and as long as a pastoral charge; it let everything be understood, and at

the same time said nothing definite. A listener would have found in it at

once respect for M. de Renal, veneration for the people of Verrieres and

gratitude towards the illustrious Sub-Prefect. The said Sub-Prefect, as

tonished at finding a bigger Jesuit than himself, tried in vain to obtain

something positive. Julien, overjoyed, seized the opportunity to try his

skill and began his answer over again in different terms. Never did the

most eloquent Minister, seeking to monopolise the last hours of a sitting

when the Chamber seems inclined to wake up, say less in more words.

As soon as M. de Maugiron had left him, Julien broke out in helpless

laughter. To make the most of his Jesuitical bent, he wrote a letter of nine

pages to M. de Renal, in which he informed him of everything that had

been said to him, and humbly asked his advice. 'Why, that rascal never

even told me the name of the person who is making the offer! It will be

M. Valenod, who sees in my banishment to Verrieres the effect of his an

onymous letter.'

His missive dispatched, Julien, as happy as a hunter who at six in the

morning on a fine autumn day emerges upon a plain teeming with

game, went out to seek the advice of M. Chelan. But before he arrived at

the good cure's house, heaven, which was anxious to shower its bless

ings on him, threw him into the arms of M. Valenod, from whom he did

not conceal the fact that his heart was torn; a penniless youth like himself

was bound to devote himself entirely to the vocation which heaven had

placed in his heart, but a vocation was not everything in this vile world.

135To be a worthy labourer in the Lord's vineyard, and not to be altogether

unworthy of all one's learned fellowlabourers, one required education;one required to spend in the seminary at Besancon two very expensive

years; it became indispensable, therefore, to save money, which was con

siderably easier with a salary of eight hundred francs paid quarterly,than with six hundred francs which melted away month by month. On

the other hand, did not heaven, by placing him with the Renal boys, and

above all by inspiring in him a particular attachment to them, seem to in

dicate to him that it would be a mistake to abandon this form of educa

tion for another? …

Julien arrived at such a pitch of perfection in this kind of eloquence,which has taken the place of the swiftness of action of the Empire, that

he ended by growing tired of the sound of his own voice.

Returning to the house he found one of M. Valenod's servants in full

livery, who had been looking for him all over the town, with a note invit

ing him to dinner that very day.

Never had Julien set foot in the man's house; only a few days earlier,his chief thought was how he might give him a thorough good thrashing

without subsequent action by the police. Although dinner was not to be

until one o'clock, Julien thought it more respectful to present himself at

half past twelve in the study of the Governor of the Poorhouse. He found

him displaying his importance amid a mass of papers. His huge black

whiskers, his enormous quantity of hair, his nightcap poised askew on

the top of his head, his immense pipe, his embroidered slippers, the

heavy gold chains slung across his chest in every direction, and all the

equipment of a provincial financier, who imagines himself to be a ladies'

man, made not the slightest impression upon Julien; he only thought all

the more of the thrashing that he owed him.

He craved the honour of being presented to Madame Valenod; she

was making her toilet and could not see him. To make up for this, he had

the privilege of witnessing that of the Governor of the Poorhouse. They

then proceeded to join Madame Valenod, who presented her children to

him with tears in her eyes. This woman, one of the most important

people in Verrieres, had a huge masculine face, which she had plastered

with rouge for this great ceremony. She displayed all the pathos of ma

ternal feelings.

Julien thought of Madame de Renal. His distrustful nature made him

scarcely susceptible to any memories save those that are evoked by con

trast, but such memories moved him to tears. This tendency was

136increased by the sight of the Governor's house. He was taken through it.

Everything in it was sumptuous and new, and he was told the price of

each article. But Julien felt that there was something mean about it, a

taint of stolen money. Everyone, even the servants, wore a bold air that

seemed to be fortifying them against contempt.

The collector of taxes, the receiver of customs, the chief constable and

two or three other public officials arrived with their wives. They were

followed by several wealthy Liberals. Dinner was announced. Julien,already in the worst of humours, suddenly reflected that on the other

side of the diningroom wall there were wretched prisoners, whose ra

tions of meat had perhaps been squeezed to purchase all this tasteless

splendour with which his hosts sought to dazzle him.

'They are hungry perhaps at this moment,' he said to himself; his

throat contracted, he found it impossible to eat and almost to speak. It

was much worse a quarter of an hour later; they could hear in the dis

tance a few snatches of a popular and, it must be admitted, not too re

fined song which one of the inmates was singing. M. Valenod glanced at

one of his men in full livery, who left the room, and presently the sound

of singing ceased. At that moment, a footman offered Julien some Rhine

wine in a green glass, and Madame Valenod took care to inform him that

this wine cost nine francs the bottle, direct from the grower. Julien, the

green glass in his hand, said to M. Valenod:

'I don't hear that horrid song any more.'

'Gad! I should think not, indeed,' replied the Governor triumphantly.

'I've made the rascal shut up.'

This was too much for Julien; he had acquired the manners but had

not yet the heart appropriate to his station. Despite all his hypocrisy,which he kept in such constant practice, he felt a large tear trickle down

his cheek.

He tried to hide it with the green glass, but it was simply impossible

for him to do honour to the Rhine wine. 'Stop the man singing!' he mur

mured to himself, 'O my God, and Thou permittest it!'

Fortunately for him, no one noticed his illbred emotion. The collector

of taxes had struck up a royalist ditty. During the clamour of the refrain,sung in chorus: 'There,' Julien's conscience warned him, 'you have the

sordid fortune which you will achieve, and you will enjoy it only in these

conditions and in such company as this! You will have a place worth

perhaps twenty thousand francs, but it must be that while you gorge to

repletion you stop the poor prisoner from singing; you will give dinner

137parties with the money you have filched from his miserable pittance, and

during your dinner he will be more wretched still! O Napoleon! How

pleasant it was in your time to climb to fortune through the dangers of a

battle; but meanly to intensify the sufferings of the wretched!'

I admit that the weakness which Julien displays in this monologue

gives me a poor opinion of him. He would be a worthy colleague for

those conspirators in yellow gloves, who profess to reform all the condi

tions of life in a great country, and would be horrified at having to un

dergo the slightest inconvenience themselves.

Julien was sharply recalled to his proper part. It was not that he might

dream and say nothing that he had been invited to dine in such good

company.

A retired calico printer, a corresponding member of the Academy of

Besancon and of that of Uzes, was speaking to him, down the whole

length of the table, inquiring whether all that was commonly reported as

to his astonishing prowess in the study of the New Testament was true.

A profound silence fell instantly; a New Testament appeared as

though by magic in the hands of the learned member of the two

academies. Julien having answered in the affirmative, a few words in

Latin were read out to him at random. He began to recite: his memory

did not betray him, and this prodigy was admired with all the noisy en

ergy of the end of a dinner. Julien studied the glowing faces of the wo

men. Several of them were not illlooking. He had made out the wife of

the collector who sang so well.

'Really, I am ashamed to go on speaking Latin so long before these

ladies,' he said, looking at her. 'If M. Rubigneau' (this was the member of

the two academies) 'will be so good as to read out any sentence in Latin,instead of going on with the Latin text, I shall endeavour to improvise a

translation.'

This second test set the crown of glory on his achievement.

There were in the room a number of Liberals, men of means, but the

happy fathers of children who were capable of winning bursaries, and in

this capacity suddenly converted after the last Mission. Despite this bril

liant stroke of policy, M. de Renal had never consented to have them in

his house. These worthy folk, who knew Julien only by reputation and

from having seen him on horseback on the day of the King of ——'s visit,were his most vociferous admirers. 'When will these fools tire of listen

ing to this Biblical language, of which they understand nothing?' he

138thought. On the contrary, this language amused them by its unfamiliar

ity; they laughed at it. But Julien had grown tired.

He rose gravely as six o'clock struck and mentioned a chapterof the

new theology of Liguori, which he had to learn by heart in order to re

peat it next day to M. Chelan. 'For my business,' he added pleasantly, 'is

to make other people repeat lessons, and to repeat them myself.'

His audience laughed heartily and applauded; this is the kind of wit

that goes down at Verrieres. Julien was by this time on his feet, everyone

else rose, regardless of decorum; such is the power of genius. Madame

Valenod kept him for a quarter of an hour longer; he really must hear the

children repeat their catechism; they made the most absurd mistakes

which he alone noticed. He made no attempt to correct them. 'What ig

norance of the first principles of religion,' he thought. At length he said

goodbye and thought that he might escape; but the children must next

attempt one of La Fontaine's Fables.

'That author is most immoral,' Julien said to Madame Valenod; 'in one

of his Fables on Messire Jean Chouart, he has ventured to heap ridicule

on all that is most venerable. He is strongly reproved by the best

commentators.'

Before leaving the house Julien received four or five invitations to din

ner. 'This young man does honour to the Department,' his fellowguests,in great hilarity, were all exclaiming at once. They went so far as to speak

of a pension voted out of the municipal funds, to enable him to continue

his studies in Paris.

While this rash idea was making the diningroom ring, Julien had

stolen away to the porch. 'Oh, what scum! What scum!' he murmured

three or four times, as he treated himself to the pleasure of drinking in

the fresh air.

He felt himself a thorough aristocrat for the moment, he who for long

had been so shocked by the disdainful smile and the haughty superiority

which he found lurking behind all the compliments that were paid him

at M. de Renal's. He could not help feeling the extreme difference. 'Even

if we forget,' he said to himself as he walked away, 'that the money has

been stolen from the poor prisoners, and that they are forbidden to sing

as well, would it ever occur to M. de Renal to tell his guests the price of

each bottle of wine that he offers them? And this M. Valenod, in going

over the list of his property, which he does incessantly, cannot refer to

his house, his land and all the rest of it, if his wife is present, without

saying your house, your land.'

139This lady, apparently so conscious of the joy of ownership, had just

made an abominable scene, during dinner, with a servant who had

broken a wineglass and spoiled one of her sets; and the servant had

answered her with the most gross insolence.

'What a household!' thought Julien; 'if they were to give me half of all

the money they steal, I wouldn't live among them. One fine day I should

give myself away; I should be unable to keep back the contempt they in

spire in me.'

He was obliged, nevertheless, obeying Madame de Renal's orders, to

attend several dinners of this sort; Julien was the fashion; people forgave

him his uniform and the guard of honour, or rather that imprudent dis

play was the true cause of his success. Soon, the only question discussed

in Verrieres was who would be successful in the struggle to secure the

learned young man's services, M. de Renal or the Governor of the Poor

house. These two gentlemen formed with M. Maslon a triumvirate which

for some years past had tyrannised the town. People were jealous of the

Mayor, the Liberals had grounds for complaint against him; but after all

he was noble and created to fill a superior station, whereas M. Valenod's

father had not left him an income of six hundred livres. He had been ob

liged to pass from the stage of being pitied for the shabby applegreen

coat in which everybody remembered him in his younger days to that of

being envied for his Norman horses, his gold chains, the clothes he

ordered from Paris, in short, all his present prosperity.

In the welter of this world so new to Julien he thought he had dis

covered an honest man; this was a geometrician, was named Gros and

was reckoned a Jacobin. Julien, having made a vow never to say any

thing except what he himself believed to be false, was obliged to make a

show of being suspicious of M. Gros. He received from Vergy large

packets of exercises. He was advised to see much of his father, and com

plied with this painful necessity. In a word, he was quite redeeming his

reputation, when one morning he was greatly surprised to find himself

awakened by a pair of hands which were clapped over his eyes.

It was Madame de Renal who had come in to town and, running up

stairs four steps at a time and leaving her children occupied with a fa

vourite rabbit that they had brought with them, had reached Julien's

room a minute in advance of them. The moment was delicious but all too

brief: Madame de Renal had vanished when the children arrived with

the rabbit, which they wanted to show to their friend. Julien welcomed

them all, including the rabbit. He seemed to be once more one of a family

140party; he felt that he loved these children, that it amused him to join in

their chatter. He was amazed by the sweetness of their voices, the simpli

city and nobility of their manners; he required to wash his imagination

clean of all the vulgar behaviour, all the unpleasant thoughts the atmo

sphere of which he had to breathe at Verrieres. There was always the

dread of bankruptcy, wealth and poverty were always fighting for the

upper hand. The people with whom he dined, in speaking of the joint on

their table, made confidences humiliating to themselves, and nauseating

to their hearers.

'You aristocrats, you have every reason to be proud,' he said to Ma

dame de Renal. And he told her of all the dinners he had endured.

'Why, so you are in the fashion!' And she laughed heartily at the

thought of the rouge which Madame Valenod felt herself obliged to put

on whenever she expected Julien. 'I believe she has designs on your

heart,' she added.

Luncheon was a joy. The presence of the children, albeit apparently a

nuisance, increased as a matter of fact the general enjoyment. These poor

children did not know how to express their delight at seeing Julien

again. The servants had not failed to inform them that he was being

offered two hundred francs more to educate the little Valenods.

In the middle of luncheon, Stanislas Xavier, still pale after his serious

illness, suddenly asked his mother what was the value of his silver

spoon and fork and of the mug out of which he was drinking.

'Why do you want to know?'

'I want to sell them to give the money to M. Julien, so that he shan't be

a dupe to stay with us.'

Julien embraced him, the tears standing in his eyes. The mother wept

outright, while Julien, who had taken Stanislas on his knees, explained to

him that he must not use the word dupe, which, employed in that sense,was a servant's expression. Seeing the pleasure he was giving Madame

de Renal, he tried to explain, by picturesque examples, which amused

the children, what was meant by a dupe.

'I understand,' said Stanislas, 'it's the crow who is silly and drops his

cheese, which is picked up by the fox, who is a flatterer.'

Madame de Renal, wild with joy, smothered her children in kisses,which she could hardly do without leaning slightly upon Julien.

Suddenly the door opened; it was M. de Renal. His stern, angry face

formed a strange contrast with the innocent gaiety which his presence

141banished. Madame de Renal turned pale; she felt herself incapable of

denying anything. Julien seized the opportunity and, speaking very

loud, began to tell the Mayor the incident of the silver mug which Stan

islas wanted to sell. He was sure that this story would be ill received. At

the first word M. de Renal frowned, from force of habit at the mere name

of silver. 'The mention of that metal,' he would say, 'is always a prelimin

ary to some call upon my purse.'

But here there was more than money at stake; there was an increase of

his suspicions. The air of happiness which animated his family in his ab

sence was not calculated to improve matters with a man dominated by

so sensitive a vanity. When his wife praised the graceful and witty man

ner in which Julien imparted fresh ideas to his pupils:

'Yes, yes, I know, he is making me odious to my children; it is very

easy for him to be a hundred times pleasanter to them than I, who am,after all, the master. Everything tends in these days to bring lawful au

thority into contempt. Unhappy France!'

Madame de Renal did not stop to examine the implications of her

husband's manner. She had just seen the possibility of spending twelve

hours in Julien's company. She had any number of purchases to make in

the town, and declared that she absolutely must dine in a tavern; in spite

of anything her husband might say or do, she clung to her idea. The chil

dren were in ecstasies at the mere word tavern, which modern prudery

finds such pleasure in pronouncing.

M. de Renal left his wife in the first linendraper's shop that she

entered, to go and pay some calls. He returned more gloomy than in the

morning; he was convinced that the whole town was thinking about

nothing but himself and Julien. As a matter of fact, no one had as yet al

lowed him to form any suspicion of the offensive element in the popular

comments. Those that had been repeated to the Mayor had dealt exclus

ively with the question whether Julien would remain with him at six

hundred francs or would accept the eight hundred francs offered by the

Governor of the Poorhouse.

The said Governor, when he met M. de Renal in society, gave him the

cold shoulder. His behaviour was not without a certain subtlety; there is

not much thoughtless action in the provinces: sensations are so infre

quent there that people suppress them.

M. Valenod was what is called, a hundred leagues from Paris, a faraud;this is a species marked by coarseness and natural effrontery. His tri

umphant existence, since 1815, had confirmed him in his habits. He

142reigned, so to speak, at Verrieres, under the orders of M. de Renal; but

being far more active, blushing at nothing, interfering in everything,everlastingly going about, writing, speaking, forgetting humiliations,having no personal pretensions, he had succeeded in equalling the credit

of his Mayor in the eyes of ecclesiastical authority. M. Valenod had as

good as told the grocers of the place: 'Give me the two biggest fools

among you'; the lawyers: 'Point me out the two most ignorant'; the of

ficers of health: 'Let me have your two biggest rascals.' When he had col

lected the most shameless representatives of each profession, he had said

to them: 'Let us reign together.'

The manners of these men annoyed M. de Renal. Valenod's coarse

nature was offended by nothing, not even when the young abbe Maslon

gave him the lie direct in public.

But, in the midst of this prosperity, M. Valenod was obliged to fortify

himself by little insolences in points of detail against the harsh truths

which he was well aware that everyone was entitled to address to him.

His activity had multiplied since the alarms which M. Appert's visit had

left in its wake. He had made three journeys to Besancon; he wrote sever

al letters for each mail; he sent others by unknown messengers who

came to his house at nightfall. He had been wrong perhaps in securing

the deprivation of the old cure Chelan; for this vindictive action had

made him be regarded, by several pious ladies of good birth, as a pro

foundly wicked man. Moreover this service rendered had placed him in

the absolute power of the VicarGeneral de Frilair, from whom he re

ceived strange orders. He had reached this stage in his career when he

yielded to the pleasure of writing an anonymous letter. To add to his em

barrassment, his wife informed him that she wished to have Julien in the

house; the idea appealed to her vanity.

In this situation, M. Valenod foresaw a final rupture with his former

confederate M. de Renal. The Mayor would address him in harsh lan

guage, which mattered little enough to him; but he might write to Bes

ancon, or even to Paris. A cousin of some Minister or other might sud

denly descend upon Verrieres and take over the Governorship of the

Poorhouse. M. Valenod thought of making friends with the Liberals; it

was for this reason that several of them were invited to the dinner at

which Julien recited. He would find powerful support there against the

Mayor. But an election might come, and it went without saying that the

Poorhouse and a vote for the wrong party were incompatible. The his

tory of these tactics, admirably divined by Madame de Renal, had been

imparted to Julien while he gave her his arm to escort her from one shop

143to another, and little by little had carried them to the Cours de la Fidelite,where they spent some hours, almost as peaceful as the hours at Vergy.

At this period, M. Valenod was seeking to avoid a final rupture with

his former chief, by himself adopting a bold air towards him. On the day

of which we treat, this system proved successful, but increased the

Mayor's ill humour.

Never can vanity, at grips with all the nastiest and shabbiest elements

of a petty love of money, have plunged a man in a more wretched state

than that in which M. de Renal found himself, at the moment of his en

tering the tavern. Never, on the contrary, had his children been gayer or

more joyful. The contrast goaded him to fury.

'I am not wanted in my own family, so far as I can see!' he said as he

entered, in a tone which he sought to make imposing.

By way of reply, his wife drew him aside and explained to him the ne

cessity of getting rid of Julien. The hours of happiness she had just en

joyed had given her back the ease and resolution necessary for carrying

out the plan of conduct which she had been meditating for the last fort

night. What really and completely dismayed the poor Mayor of Verrieres

was that he knew that people joked publicly in the town at the expense

of his attachment to hard cash: M. Valenod was as generous as a robber,whereas he had shown himself in a prudent rather than a brilliant light

in the last five or six subscription lists for the Confraternity of Saint

Joseph, the Congregation of Our Lady, the Congregation of the Blessed

Sacrament, and so forth.

Among the country gentlemen of Verrieres and the neighbourhood,skilfully classified in the lists compiled by the collecting Brethren, ac

cording to the amount of their offerings, the name of M. de Renal had

more than once been seen figuring upon the lowest line. In vain might he

protest that he earned nothing. The clergy allow no joking on that subject.

144chapter23

The Sorrows of an Official

Il piacere di alzar la testa tutto l'anno e ben pagato da certi quarti

d'ora che bisogna passar. CASTI

But let us leave this little man to his little fears; why has he taken into

his house a man of feeling, when what he required was the soul of a

flunkey? Why does he not know how to select his servants? The ordinary

procedure of the nineteenth century is that when a powerful and noble

personage encounters a man of feeling, he kills, exiles, imprisons or so

humiliates him that the other, like a fool, dies of grief. In this instance it

so happens that it is not yet the man of feeling who suffers. The great

misfortune of the small towns of France and of elected governments, like

that of New York, is an inability to forget that there exist in the world

persons like M. de Renal. In a town of twenty thousand inhabitants,these men form public opinion, and public opinion is a terrible force in a

country that has the Charter. A man endowed with a noble soul, of gen

erous instincts, who would have been your friend did he not live a hun

dred leagues away, judges you by the public opinion of your town,which is formed by the fools whom chance has made noble, rich and

moderate. Woe to him who distinguishes himself!

Immediately after dinner, they set off again for Vergy; but, two days

later, Julien saw the whole family return to Verrieres.

An hour had not gone by before, greatly to his surprise, he discovered

that Madame de Renal was making a mystery of something. She broke

off her conversations with her husband as soon as he appeared, and

seemed almost to wish him to go away. Julien did not wait to be told

twice. He became cold and reserved; Madame de Renal noticed this, and

did not seek an explanation. 'Is she going to provide me with a suc

cessor?' thought Julien. 'Only the day before yesterday, she was so intim

ate with me! But they say that this is how great ladies behave. They are

145like kings, no one receives so much attention as the minister who, on go

ing home, finds the letter announcing his dismissal.'

Julien remarked that in these conversations, which ceased abruptly on

his approach, there was frequent mention of a big house belonging to the

municipality of Verrieres, old, but large and commodious, and situated

opposite the church, in the most valuable quarter of the town. 'What con

nection can there be between that house and a new lover?' Julien asked

himself. In his distress of mind, he repeated to himself those charming

lines of Francois I, which seemed to him new, because it was not a month

since Madame de Renal had taught them to him. At that time, by how

many vows, by how many caresses had not each line been proved false!

Souvent femme varie Bien fol est qui s'y fie.

M. de Renal set off by post for Besancon. This journey was decided

upon at two hours' notice, he seemed greatly troubled. On his return, he

flung a large bundle wrapped in grey paper on the table.

'So much for that stupid business,' he said to his wife.

An hour later, Julien saw the billsticker carrying off this large bundle;he followed him hastily. 'I shall learn the secret at the first street corner.'

He waited impatiently behind the billsticker, who with his fat brush

was slapping paste on the back of the bill. No sooner was it in its place

than Julien's curiosity read on it the announcement in full detail of the

sale by public auction of the lease of that large and old house which re

curred so frequently in M. de Renal's conversations with his wife. The as

signation was announced for the following day at two o'clock, in the

town hall, on the extinction of the third light. Julien was greatly disap

pointed; he considered the interval to be rather short: how could all the

possible bidders come to know of the sale in time? But apart from this,the bill, which was dated a fortnight earlier and which he read from be

ginning to end in three different places, told him nothing.

He went to inspect the vacant house. The porter, who did not see him

approach, was saying mysteriously to a friend:

'Bah! It's a waste of time. M. Maslon promised him he should have it

for three hundred francs; and as the Mayor kicked, he was sent to the

Bishop's Palace, by the VicarGeneral de Frilair.'

Julien's appearance on the scene seemed greatly to embarrass the two

cronies, who did not say another word.

Julien did not fail to attend the auction. There was a crowd of people

in an illlighted room; but everyone eyed his neighbours in a singular

146fashion. Every eye was fixed on a table, where Julien saw, on a pewter

plate, three lighted candleends. The crier was shouting: 'Three hundred

francs, gentlemen!'

'Three hundred francs! It is too bad!' one man murmured to another.

Julien was standing between them. 'It is worth more than eight hundred;I am going to cover the bid.'

'It's cutting off your nose to spite your face. What are you going to gain

by bringing M. Maslon, M. Valenod, the Bishop, his terrible VicarGener

al de Frilair and the whole of their gang down upon you?'

'Three hundred and twenty,' the other shouted.

'Stupid idiot!' retorted his neighbour. 'And here's one of the Mayor's

spies,' he added pointing at Julien.

Julien turned sharply to rebuke him for this speech; but the two Franc

Comtois paid no attention to him. Their coolness restored his own. At

this moment the last candleend went out, and the drawling voice of the

crier assigned the house for a lease of nine years to M. de SaintGiraud,chief secretary at the Prefecture of ——, and for three hundred and thirty

francs.

As soon as the Mayor had left the room, the discussion began.

'That's thirty francs Grogeot's imprudence has earned for the town,'

said one.

'But M. de SaintGiraud,' came the answer, 'will have his revenge on

Grogeot, he will pass it on.'

'What a scandal,' said a stout man on Julien's left: 'a house for which

I'ld have given, myself, eight hundred francs as a factory, and then it

would have been a bargain.'

'Bah!' replied a young Liberal manufacturer, 'isn't M. de SaintGiraud

one of the Congregation? Haven't his four children all got bursaries? Poor

man! The town of Verrieres is simply bound to increase his income with

an allowance of five hundred francs; that is all.'

'And to think that the Mayor hasn't been able to stop it!' remarked a

third. 'For he may be an Ultra, if you like, but he's not a thief.'

'He's not a thief?' put in another; 'it's a regular thieves' kitchen.

Everything goes into a common fund, and is divided up at the end of the

year. But there's young Sorel; let us get away.'

Julien went home in the worst of tempers; he found Madame de Renal

greatly depressed.

147'Have you come from the sale?' she said to him.

'Yes, Ma'am, where I had the honour to be taken for the Mayor's spy.'

'If he had taken my advice, he would have gone away somewhere.'

At that moment, M. de Renal appeared; he was very sombre. Dinner

was eaten in silence. M. de Renal told Julien to accompany the children

to Vergy; they travelled in unbroken gloom. Madame de Renal tried to

comfort her husband.

'Surely you are accustomed to it, my dear.'

That evening, they were seated in silence round the domestic hearth;the crackle of the blazing beech logs was their sole distraction. It was one

of those moments of depression which are to be found in the most united

families. One of the children uttered a joyful cry.

'There's the bell! The bell!'

'Egad, if it's M. de SaintGiraud come to get hold of me, on the excuse

of thanking me, I shall give him a piece of my mind; it's too bad. It's

Valenod that he has to thank, and it is I who am compromised. What am

I going to say if those pestilent Jacobin papers get hold of the story, and

make me out a M. NonanteCinq?'

3

A good-looking man, with bushy black whiskers, entered the room at

this moment in the wake of the servant.

'M. le Maire, I am Signor Geronimo. Here is a letter which M. le

Chevalier de Beauvaisis, attache at the Embassy at Naples, gave me for

you when I came away; it is only nine days ago,' Signor Geronimo ad

ded, with a sprightly air, looking at Madame de Renal. 'Signor de

Beauvaisis, your cousin, and my good friend, Madame, tells me that you

know Italian.'

The good humour of the Neapolitan changed this dull evening into

one that was extremely gay. Madame de Renal insisted upon his taking

supper. She turned the whole house upside down; she wished at all costs

to distract Julien's thoughts from the description of him as a spy which

twice in that day he had heard ringing in his ear. Signer Geronimo was a

famous singer, a man used to good company, and at the same time the

best of company himself, qualities which, in France, have almost ceased

to be compatible. He sang after supper a little duet with Madame de

3.M. Marsan explains this allusion to a satire by Barthelemy at the expense of the

Marseilles magistrate Merindol, who in sentencing him to a fine had made use of the

Common Southern expression 'Nonantecinq' for 'Quatrevingtquinze.

148Renal. He told charming stories. At one o'clock in the morning the chil

dren protested when Julien proposed that they should go to bed.

'Just this story,' said the eldest.

'It is my own, Signorino,' replied Signer Geronimo. 'Eight years ago I

was, like you, a young scholar in the Conservatorio of Naples, by which I

mean that I was your age; for I had not the honour to be the son of the

eminent Mayor of the beautiful town of Verrieres.'

This allusion drew a sigh from M. de Renal, who looked at his wife.

'Signer Zingarelli,' went on the young singer, speaking with a slightly

exaggerated accent which made the children burst out laughing, 'Signor

Zingarelli is an exceedingly severe master. He is not loved at the Conser

vatorio; but he makes them act always as though they loved him. I es

caped whenever I could; I used to go to the little theatre of San Carlino,where I used to hear music fit for the gods: but, O heavens, how was I to

scrape together the eight soldi which were the price of admission to the

pit? An enormous sum,' he said, looking at the children, and the children

laughed again. 'Signer Giovannone, the Director of San Carlino, heard

me sing. I was sixteen years old. "This boy is a treasure," he said.

'"Would you like me to engage you, my friend?" he said to me one day.

'"How much will you give me?"

'"Forty ducats a month." That, gentlemen, is one hundred and sixty

francs. I seemed to see the heavens open.

'"But how," I said to Giovannone, "am I to persuade the strict

Zingarelli to let me go?"

'"Lascia fare a me."'

'Leave it to me!' cried the eldest of the children.

'Precisely, young Sir. Signor Giovannone said to me: "First of all, caro, a

little agreement." I signed the paper: he gave me three ducats. I had nev

er seen so much money. Then he told me what I must do.

'Next day, I demanded an interview with the terrible Signer Zingarelli.

His old servant showed me into the room.

'"What do you want with me, you scapegrace?" said Zingarelli.

'"Maestro" I told him, "I repent of my misdeeds; never again will I

break out of the Conservatorio by climbing over the iron railings. I am

going to study twice as hard."

'"If I were not afraid of spoiling the finest bass voice I have ever heard,I should lock you up on bread and water for a fortnight, you scoundrel."

149'"Maestro" I went on, "I am going to be a model to the whole school,credete a me. But I ask one favour of you, if anyone comes to ask for me to

sing outside, refuse him. Please say that you cannot allow it."

'"And who do you suppose is going to ask for a good for nothing like

you? Do you think I shall ever allow you to leave the Conservatorio? Do

you wish to make a fool of me? Off with you, off with you!" he said, aim

ing a kick at my hindquarters, "or it will be bread and water in a cell."

'An hour later, Signer Giovannone came to call on the Director.

'"I have come to ask you to make my fortune," he began, "let me have

Geronimo. If he sings in my theatre this winter I give my daughter in

marriage."

'"What do you propose to do with the rascal?" Zingarelli asked him. "I

won't allow it. You shan't have him; besides, even if I consented, he

would never be willing to leave the Conservatorio; he's just told me so

himself."

'"If his willingness is all that matters," said Giovannone gravely, pro

ducing my agreement from his pocket, "carta canta! Here is his

signature."

'Immediately Zingarelli, furious, flew to the bellrope: "Turn Geronimo

out of the Conservatorio," he shouted, seething with rage. So out they

turned me, I splitting my sides with laughter. That same evening, I sang

the aria del Moltiplico. Polichinelle intends to marry, and counts up on his

fingers the different things he will need for the house, and loses count

afresh at every moment.'

'Oh, won't you, Sir, please sing us that air?' said Madame de Renal.

Geronimo sang, and his audience all cried with laughter.

Signor Geronimo did not go to bed until two in the morning, leaving

the family enchanted with his good manners, his obliging nature and his

gay spirits.

Next day M. and Madame de Renal gave him the letters which he re

quired for the French Court.

'And so, falsehood everywhere,' said Julien. 'There is Signor Geronimo

on his way to London with a salary of sixty thousand francs. But for the

cleverness of the Director of San Carlino, his divine voice might not have

been known and admired for another ten years, perhaps… Upon my

soul, I would rather be a Geronimo than a Renal. He is not so highly hon

oured in society, but he has not the humiliation of having to grant leases

like that one today, and his is a merry life.'

150One thing astonished Julien: the weeks of solitude spent at Verrieres,in M. de Renal's house, had been for him a time of happiness. He had en

countered disgust and gloomy thoughts only at the dinners to which he

had been invited; in that empty house, was he not free to read, write,meditate, undisturbed? He had not been aroused at every moment from

his radiant dreams by the cruel necessity of studying the motions of a

base soul, and that in order to deceive it by hypocritical words or actions.

'Could happiness be thus within my reach? … The cost of such a life is

nothing; I can, as I choose, marry Miss Elisa, or become Fouque's part

ner … But the traveller who has just climbed a steep mountain, sits down

on the summit, and finds a perfect pleasure in resting. Would he be

happy if he were forced to rest always?'

Madame de Renal's mind was a prey to carking thoughts. In spite of

her resolve to the contrary, she had revealed to Julien the whole business

of the lease. 'So he will make me forget all my vows!' she thought.

She would have given her life without hesitation to save that of her

husband, had she seen him in peril. Hers was one of those noble and ro

mantic natures, for which to see the possibility of a generous action, and

not to perform it gives rise to a remorse almost equal to that which one

feels for a past crime. Nevertheless, there were dreadful days on which

she could not banish the thought of the absolute happiness which she

would enjoy, if, suddenly left a widow, she were free to marry Julien.

He loved her children far more than their father; in spite of his strict

discipline, he was adored by them. She was well aware that, if she mar

ried Julien, she would have to leave this Vergy whose leafy shade was so

dear to her. She pictured herself living in Paris, continuing to provide

her sons with that education at which everyone marvelled. Her children,she herself, Julien, all perfectly happy.

A strange effect of marriage, such as the nineteenth century has made

it! The boredom of married life inevitably destroys love, when love has

preceded marriage. And yet, as a philosopher has observed, it speedily

brings about, among people who are rich enough not to have to work, an

intense boredom with all quiet forms of enjoyment. And it is only dried

up hearts, among women, that it does not predispose to love.

The philosopher's observation makes me excuse Madame de Renal,but there was no excuse for her at Verrieres, and the whole town,without her suspecting it, was exclusively occupied with the scandal of

her love. Thanks to this great scandal, people that autumn were less

bored than usual.

151The autumn, the first weeks of winter had soon come and gone. It was

time to leave the woods of Vergy. The high society of Verrieres began to

grow indignant that its anathemas were making so little impression

upon M. de Renal. In less than a week, certain grave personages who

made up for their habitual solemnity by giving themselves the pleasure

of fulfilling missions of this sort, implanted in him the most cruel suspi

cions, but without going beyond the most measured terms.

M. Valenod, who was playing a close game, had placed Elisa with a

noble and highly respected family, which included five women. Elisa

fearing, she said, that she might not find a place during the winter, had

asked this family for only about two thirds of what she was receiving at

the Mayor's. Of her own accord, the girl had the excellent idea of going

to confess to the retired cure Chelan as well as to the new cure, so as to

be able to give them both a detailed account of Julien's amours.

On the morning after his return, at six o'clock, the abbe Chelan sent for

Julien:

'I ask you nothing,' he said to him; 'I beg you, and if need be order you

to tell me nothing, I insist that within three days you leave either for the

Seminary at Besancon or for the house of your friend Fouque, who is still

willing to provide a splendid career for you. I have foreseen and settled

everything, but you must go, and not return to Verrieres for a year.'

Julien made no answer; he was considering whether his honour ought

to take offence at the arrangements which M. Chelan, who after all was

not his father, had made for him.

'Tomorrow at this hour I shall have the honour of seeing you again,' he

said at length to the cure.

M. Chelan, who reckoned upon overcoming the young man by main

force, spoke volubly. His attitude, his features composed in the utmost

humility, Julien did not open his mouth.

At length he made his escape, and hastened to inform Madame de

Renal, whom he found in despair. Her husband had just been speaking

to her with a certain frankness. The natural weakness of his character,seeking encouragement in the prospect of the inheritance from Besancon,had made him decide to regard her as entirely innocent. He had just con

fessed to her the strange condition in which he found public opinion at

Verrieres. The public were wrong, had been led astray by envious ill

wishers, but what was to be done?

152Madame de Renal had the momentary illusion that Julien might be

able to accept M. Valenod's offer, and remain at Verrieres. But she was

no longer the simple, timid woman of the previous year; her fatal pas

sion, her spells of remorse had enlightened her. Soon she had to bear the

misery of proving to herself, while she listened to her husband, that a

separation, at any rate for the time being, was now indispensable. 'Away

from me, Julien will drift back into those ambitious projects that are so

natural when one has nothing. And I, great God! I am so rich, and so

powerless to secure my own happiness! He will forget me. Charming as

he is, he will be loved, he will love. Ah, unhappy woman! Of what can I

complain? Heaven is just, I have not acquired merit by putting a stop to

my crime; it blinds my judgment. It rested with me alone to win over El

isa with a bribe, nothing would have been easier. I did not take the

trouble to reflect for a moment, the wild imaginings of love absorbed all

my time. And now I perish.'

One thing struck Julien; as he conveyed to Madame de Renal the ter

rible news of his departure, he was met with no selfish objection.

Evidently she was making an effort not to cry.

'We require firmness, my friend.'

She cut off a lock of her hair.

'I do not know what is to become of me,' she said to him, 'but if I die,promise me that you will never forget my children. Far or near, try to

make them grow up honourable men. If there is another revolution, all

the nobles will be murdered, their father may emigrate, perhaps, because

of that peasant who was killed upon a roof. Watch over the family…

Give me your hand. Farewell, my friend! These are our last moments to

gether. This great sacrifice made, I hope that in public I shall have the

courage to think of my reputation.'

Julien had been expecting despair. The simplicity of this farewell

touched him.

'No, I do not accept your farewell thus. I shall go; they wish it; you

wish it yourself. But, three days after my departure, I shall return to visit

you by night.'

Madame de Renal's existence was changed. So Julien really did love

her since he had had the idea, of his own accord, of seeing her again. Her

bitter grief changed into one of the keenest bursts of joy that she had ever

felt in her life. Everything became easy to her. The certainty of seeing her

lover again took from these last moments all their lacerating force. From

153that instant the conduct, like the features of Madame de Renal was noble,firm, and perfectly conventional.

M. de Renal presently returned; he was beside himself. For the first

time he mentioned to his wife the anonymous letter which he had re

ceived two months earlier.

'I intend to take it to the Casino, to show them all that it comes from

that wretch Valenod, whom I picked up out of the gutter and made into

one of the richest citizens of Verrieres. I shall disgrace him publicly, and

then fight him. It is going too far.'

'I might be left a widow, great God!' thought Madame de Renal. But al

most at the same instant she said to herself: 'If I do not prevent this duel,as I certainly can, I shall be my husband's murderess.'

Never before had she handled his vanity with so much skill. In less

than two hours she made him see, always by the use of arguments that

had occurred first to him, that he must show himself friendlier than ever

towards M. Valenod, and even take Elisa into the house again. Madame

de Renal required courage to make up her mind to set eyes on this girl,the cause of all her troubles. But the idea had come to her from Julien.

Finally, after having been set three or four times in the right direction,M. de Renal arrived of his own accord at the idea (highly distressing,from the financial point of view) that the most unpleasant thing that

could happen for himself was that Julien, amid the seething excitement

and gossip of the whole of Verrieres, should remain there as tutor to M.

Valenod's children. It was obviously in Julien's interest to accept the offer

made him by the Governor of the Poorhouse. It was essential however to

M. de Renal's fair fame that Julien should leave Verrieres to enter the

seminary at Besancon or at Dijon. But how was he to be made to agree,and after that how was he to maintain himself there?

M. de Renal, seeing the imminence of a pecuniary sacrifice, was in

greater despair than his wife. For her part, after this conversation, she

was in the position of a man of feeling who, weary of life, has taken a

dose of stramonium; he ceases to act, save, so to speak, automatically, and

no longer takes an interest in anything. Thus Louis XIV on his deathbed

was led to say: 'When I was king.' An admirable speech!

On the morrow, at break of day, M. de Renal received an anonymous

letter. It was couched in the most insulting style. The coarsest words ap

plicable to his position stared from every line. It was the work of some

envious subordinate. This letter brought him back to the thought of

fighting a duel with M. Valenod. Soon his courage had risen to the idea

154of an immediate execution of his design. He left the house unaccompan

ied, and went to the gunsmith's to procure a brace of pistols, which he

told the man to load.

'After all,' he said to himself, 'should the drastic rule of the Emperor

Napoleon be restored, I myself could not be charged with the misappro

priation of a halfpenny. At the most I have shut my eyes; but I have

plenty of letters in my desk authorising me to do so.'

Madame de Renal was frightened by her husband's cold anger, it

brought back to her mind the fatal thought of widowhood, which she

found it so hard to banish. She shut herself up with him. For hours on

end she pleaded with him in vain, the latest anonymous letter had de

termined him. At length she succeeded in transforming the courage re

quired to strike M. Valenod into that required to offer Julien six hundred

francs for his maintenance for one year in a Seminary. M. de Renal, heap

ing a thousand curses on the day on which he had conceived the fatal

idea of taking a tutor into his household, forgot the anonymous letter.

He found a grain of comfort in an idea which he did not communicate

to his wife: by skilful handling, and by taking advantage of the young

man's romantic ideas, he hoped to bind him, for a smaller sum, to refuse

M. Valenod's offers.

Madame de Renal found it far harder to prove to Julien that, if he sac

rificed to her husband's convenience a post worth eight hundred francs,publicly offered him by the Governor of the Poorhouse, he might

without blushing accept some compensation.

'But,' Julien continued to object, 'I have never had, even for a moment,the slightest thought of accepting that offer. You have made me too fa

miliar with a life of refinement, the vulgarity of those people would kill

me.'

Cruel necessity, with its hand of iron, bent Julien's will. His pride

offered him the selfdeception of accepting only as a loan the sum

offered by the Mayor of Verrieres, and giving him a note of hand prom

ising repayment with interest after five years.

Madame de Renal had still some thousands of francs hidden in the

little cave in the mountains.

She offered him these, trembling, and feeling only too sure that they

would be rejected with fury.

'Do you wish,' Julien asked her, 'to make the memory of our love

abominable?'

155At length Julien left Verrieres. M. de Renal was overjoyed; at the decis

ive moment of accepting money from him, this sacrifice proved to be too

great for Julien. He refused pointblank. M. de Renal fell upon his neck,with tears in his eyes. Julien having asked him for a testimonial to his

character, he could not in his enthusiasm find terms laudatory enough to

extol the young man's conduct. Our hero had saved up five louis and in

tended to ask Fouque for a similar amount.

He was greatly moved. But when he had gone a league from Verrieres,where he was leaving such a treasure of love behind him, he thought

only of the pleasure of seeing a capital, a great military centre like

Besancon.

During this short parting of three days, Madame de Renal was duped

by one of love's most cruel illusions. Her life was tolerable enough, there

was between her and the last extremes of misery this final meeting that

she was still to have with Julien.

She counted the hours, the minutes that divided her from it. Finally,during the night that followed the third day, she heard in the distance

the signal arranged between them. Having surmounted a thousand per

ils, Julien appeared before her.

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From that moment, she had but a single thought: 'I am looking at you

now for the last time.' Far from responding to her lover's eagerness, she

was like a barely animated corpse. If she forced herself to tell him that

she loved him, it was with an awkward air that was almost a proof to the

contrary. Nothing could take her mind from the cruel thought of eternal

separation. The suspicious Julien fancied for a moment that she had

already forgotten him. His hints at such a possibility were received only

with huge tears that flowed in silence, and with a convulsive pressure of

his hand.

'But, Great God! How do you expect me to believe you?' was Julien's

reply to his mistress's chill protestations. 'You would show a hundred

times more of sincere affection to Madame Derville, to a mere

acquaintance.'

Madame de Renal, petrified, did not know how to answer.

'It would be impossible for a woman to be more wretched … I hope I

am going to die … I feel my heart freezing… '

Such were the longest answers he was able to extract from her.

156When the approach of day made his departure necessary, Madame de

Renal's tears ceased all at once. She saw him fasten a knotted cord to the

window without saying a word, without returning his kisses. In vain

might Julien say to her:

'At last we have reached the state for which you so longed. Hencefor

ward you will live without remorse. At the slightest indisposition of one

of your children, you will no longer see them already in the grave.'

'I am sorry you could not say goodbye to Stanislas,' she said to him

coldly.

In the end, Julien was deeply impressed by the embraces, in which

there was no warmth, of this living corpse; he could think of nothing else

for some leagues. His spirit was crushed, and before crossing the pass, so

long as he was able to see the steeple of Verrieres church, he turned

round often.

157chapter24

A Capital

So much noise, so many busy people! So many ideas in the head

of a man of twenty! So many distractions for love!

BARNAVE

At length he made out, on a distant mountain, a line of dark walls; it

was the citadel of Besancon. 'How different for me,' he said with a sigh,'if I were arriving in this noble fortress to be a sublieutenant in one of the

regiments entrusted with its defence!'

Besancon is not merely one of the most charming towns in France, it

abounds in men and women of feeling and spirit. But Julien was only a

young peasant and had no way of approaching the distinguished people.

He had borrowed from Fouque a layman's coat, and it was in this at

tire that he crossed the drawbridges. His mind full of the history of the

siege of 1674, he was determined to visit, before shutting himself up in

the Seminary, the ramparts and the citadel. More than once, he was on

the point of being arrested by the sentries for making his way into places

from which the engineers of the garrison excluded the public, in order to

make a profit of twelve or fifteen francs every year by the sale of the hay

grown there.

The height of the walls, the depth of the moats, the aweinspiring ap

pearance of the guns had occupied him for some hours, when he

happened to pass by the principal cafe, on the boulevard. He stood

speechless with admiration; albeit he could read the word Cafe inscribed

in huge letters over the two vast doors, he could not believe his eyes. He

made an effort to master his timidity; he ventured to enter, and found

himself in a hall thirty or forty feet long, the ceiling of which rose to a

height of at least twenty feet. On this day of days everything wore an air

of enchantment for him.

158Two games of billiards were in progress. The waiters were calling out

the scores; the players hurried round the tables through a crowd of on

lookers. Streams of tobacco smoke, pouring from every mouth, envel

oped them in a blue haze. The tall stature of these men, their rounded

shoulders, their heavy gait, their bushy whiskers, the long frock coats

that coveted their bodies, all attracted Julien's attention. These noble sons

of ancient Bisontium conversed only in shouts; they gave themselves the

air of tremendous warriors. Julien stood spellbound in admiration; he

was thinking of the vastness and splendour of a great capital like Bes

ancon. He felt that he could not possibly summon up courage to ask for a

cup of coffee from one of those gentlemen with the proud gaze who

were marking the score at billiards.

But the young lady behind the counter had remarked the charming ap

pearance of this young country cousin, who, brought to a standstill three

paces from the stove, hugging his little bundle under his arm, was study

ing the bust of the King, in gleaming white plaster. This young lady, a

strapping FrancComtoise, extremely well made, and dressed in the style

calculated to give tone to a cafe, had already said twice, in a low voice so

modulated that only Julien should hear her: 'Sir! Sir!' Julien's gaze met

that of a pair of the most tender blue eyes, and saw that it was himself

who was being addressed.

He stepped briskly up to the counter and the pretty girl, as he might

have advanced in the face of the enemy. As he executed this great move

ment, his bundle fell to the ground.

What pity will not our provincial inspire in the young scholars of Par

is, who at fifteen, have already learned how to enter a cafe with so distin

guished an air! But these children, so stylish at fifteen, at eighteen begin

to turn common. The passionate shyness which one meets in the

provinces now and then overcomes itself, and then teaches its victim to

desire. As he approached this beautiful girl who had deigned to speak to

him, 'I must tell her the truth,' thought Julien, who was growing cour

ageous by dint of his conquered shyness.

'Madame, I have come for the first time in my life to Besancon; I

should like to have, and to pay for, a roll of bread and a cup of coffee.'

The girl smiled a little and then blushed; she feared, for this good

looking young man, the satirical attention and witticisms of the billiard

players. He would be frightened and would never show his face there

again.

159'Sit down here, near me,' she said, and pointed to a marble table, al

most entirely hidden by the enormous mahogany counter which pro

truded into the room.

The young woman leaned over this counter, which gave her an oppor

tunity to display a superb figure. Julien observed this; all his ideas

altered. The pretty girl had just set before him a cup, some sugar and a

roll of bread. She hesitated before calling to a waiter for coffee, realising

that on the arrival of the said waiter her private conversation with Julien

would be at an end.

Julien, lost in thought, was comparing this fair and sprightly beauty

with certain memories which often stirred him. The thought of the pas

sion of which he had been the object took from him almost all his timid

ity. The pretty girl had only a moment; she read the expression in Julien's

eyes.

'This pipe smoke makes you cough, come to breakfast tomorrow be

fore eight o'clock; at that time, I am almost alone.'

'What is your name?' said Julien, with the caressing smile of happy

timidity.

'Amanda Binet.'

'Will you permit me to send you, in an hour's time, a little parcel no

bigger than this?'

The fair Amanda reflected for a while.

'I am watched: what you ask may compromise me; however, I am now

going to write down my address upon a card, which you can attach to

your parcel. Send it to me without fear.'

'My name is Julien Sorel,' said the young man. 'I have neither family

nor friends in Besancon.'

'Ah! Now I understand,' she exclaimed joyfully, 'you have come for

the law school?'

'Alas, no!' replied Julien; 'they are sending me to the Seminary.'

The most complete discouragement extinguished the light in

Amanda's features; she called a waiter: she had the necessary courage

now. The waiter poured out Julien's coffee, without looking at him.

Amanda was taking money at the counter; Julien prided himself on

having ventured to speak to her: there was a dispute in progress at one

of the billiard tables. The shouts and contradictions of the players,160echoing through that vast hall, made a din which astonished Julien.

Amanda was pensive and did not raise her eyes.

'If you like, Mademoiselle,' he said to her suddenly with assurance, 'I

can say that I am your cousin.'

This little air of authority delighted Amanda. This is no goodfornoth

ing young fellow,' she thought. She said to him very quickly, without

looking at him, for her eye was occupied in watching whether anyone

were approaching the counter:

'I come from Genlis, near Dijon; say that you are from Genlis too, and

my mother's cousin.'

'I shall not forget.'

'On Thursdays, at five o'clock, in summer, the young gentlemen from

the Seminary come past the cafe here.'

'If you are thinking of me, when I pass, have a bunch of violets in your

hand.'

Amanda gazed at him with an air of astonishment; this gaze changed

Julien's courage into temerity; he blushed deeply, however, as he said to

her:

'I feel that I love you with the most violent love.'

'Don't speak so loud, then,' she warned him with an air of alarm.

Julien thought of trying to recollect the language of an odd volume of

the Nouvelle Heloise, which he had found at Vergy. His memory served

him well; he had been for ten minutes reciting the Nouvelle Heloise to

Miss Amanda, who was in ecstasies; he was delighted with his own

courage, when suddenly the fair FrancComtoise assumed a glacial air.

One of her admirers stood in the doorway of the cafe.

He came up to the counter, whistling and swaying his shoulders; he

stared at Julien. For the moment, the latter's imagination, always flying

to extremes, was filled entirely with thoughts of a duel. He turned

deadly pale, thrust away his cup, assumed an air of assurance and stud

ied his rival most attentively. While this rival's head was lowered as he

familiarly poured himself out a glass of brandy upon the counter, with a

glance Amanda ordered Julien to lower his gaze. He obeyed, and for a

minute or two sat motionless in his place, pale, determined, and thinking

only of what was going to happen; he was really fine at that moment.

The rival had been astonished by Julien's eyes; his glass of brandy

drained at a gulp, he said a few words to Amanda, thrust his hands into

the side pockets of his ample coat, and made his way to one of the

161billiard tables, breathing loudly and staring at Julien. The latter sprang to

his feet in a transport of rage; but did not know what action to take to be

insulting. He laid down his little bundle and, with the most swaggering

gait that he could assume, strode towards the billiard table.

In vain did prudence warn him: 'With a duel on the day of your arrival

at Besancon, your career in the church is gone for ever.'

'What does that matter, it shall never be said that I quailed before an

insult.'

Amanda observed his courage; it formed a charming contrast with the

simplicity of his manners; in an instant, she preferred him to the big

young man in the long coat. She rose, and, while appearing to be follow

ing with her eyes the movements of someone going by in the street, took

her place swiftly between him and the billiard table.

'You are not to look askance at that gentleman; he is my brotherin

law.'

'What do I care? He looked at me.'

'Do you wish to get me into trouble? No doubt, he looked at you, per

haps he will even come up and speak to you. I have told him that you

are one of my mother's family and that you have just come from Genlis.

He is a FrancComtois and has never been farther than Dole, on the road

into Burgundy; so tell him whatever you like, don't be afraid.'

Julien continued to hesitate; she added rapidly, her barmaid's imagina

tion supplying her with falsehoods in abundance:

'I dare say he did look at you, but it was when he was asking me who

you were; he is a man who is rude with everyone, he didn't mean to in

sult you.'

Julien's eye followed the alleged brotherinlaw; he saw him buy a

number for the game of pool which was beginning at the farther of the

two billiard tables. Julien heard his loud voice exclaim: 'I volunteer!' He

passed nimbly behind Miss Amanda's back and took a step towards the

billiard table. Amanda seized him by the arm.

'Come and pay me first,' she said to him.

'Quite right,' thought Julien; 'she is afraid I may leave without paying.'

Amanda was as greatly agitated as himself, and had turned very red; she

counted out his change as slowly as she could, repeating to him in a

whisper as she did so:

162'Leave the cafe this instant, or I shan't like you any more; I do like you,though, very much.'

Julien did indeed leave, but slowly. 'Is it not incumbent upon me,' he

repeated to himself, 'to go and stare at that rude person in my turn, and

breathe in his face?' This uncertainty detained him for an hour on the

boulevard, outside the cafe; he watched to see if his man came out. He

did not however appear, and Julien withdrew.

He had been but a few hours in Besancon, and already he had

something to regret. The old Surgeon-Major had long ago, notwithstand

ing his gout, taught him a few lessons in fencing; this was all the science

that Julien could place at the service of his anger. But this embarrassment

would have been nothing if he had known how to pick a quarrel other

wise than by striking a blow; and, if they had come to fisticuffs, his rival,a giant of a man, would have beaten him and left him discomfited.

'For a poor devil like me,' thought Julien, 'without protectors and

without money, there will be no great difference between a Seminary

and a prison; I must leave my lay clothes in some inn, where I can put on

my black coat. If I ever succeed in escaping from the Seminary for an

hour or two, I can easily, in my lay clothes, see Miss Amanda again.' This

was sound reasoning; but Julien, as he passed by all the inns in turn, had

not the courage to enter any of them.

Finally, as he came again to the Hotel des Ambassadeurs, his roving

gaze met that of a stout woman, still reasonably young, with a high com

plexion, a happy and gay expression. He went up to her and told her his

story.

'Certainly, my fine young priest,' the landlady of the Ambassadeurs

said to him, 'I shall keep your lay clothes for you, indeed I will have

them brushed regularly. In this weather, it is a mistake to leave a broad

cloth coat lying.' She took a key and led him herself to a bedroom, ad

vising him to write down a list of what he was leaving behind.

'Lord, how nice you look like that, M. l'abbe Sorel,' said the stout wo

man, when he came down to the kitchen. 'I am going to order you a good

dinner; and,' she added in an undertone, 'it will only cost you twenty

sous, instead of the fifty people generally pay; for you must be careful

with your little purse.'

'I have ten louis,' retorted Julien with a certain note of pride.

'Oh, good Lord!' replied the good landlady in alarm, 'do not speak so

loud; there are plenty of bad folk in Besancon. They will have that out of

163you in less than no time. Whatever you do, never go into the cafes, they

are full of rogues.'

'Indeed!' said Julien, to whom this last statement gave food for

thought.

'Never go anywhere except to me, I will give you your coffee. Bear in

mind that you will always find a friend here and a good dinner for

twenty sous; that's good enough for you, I hope. Go and sit down at the

table, I am going to serve you myself.'

'I should not be able to eat,' Julien told her. 'I am too much excited, I

am going to enter the Seminary as soon as I leave here.'

The good woman would not allow him to leave until she had stuffed

his pockets with provisions. Finally Julien set out for the dread spot, the

landlady from her doorstep pointing out the way.

164chapter25

The Seminary

Three hundred and thirtysix dinners at 83 centimes, three hun

dred and thirtysix suppers at 38 centimes, chocolate to such as

are entitled to it; how much is there to be made on the contract?

THE VALENOD OF BESANCON

He saw from a distance the cross of gilded iron over the door; he went

towards it slowly; his legs seemed to be giving way under him. 'So there

is that hell upon earth, from which I can never escape!' Finally he de

cided to ring. The sound of the bell echoed as though in a deserted place.

After ten minutes, a pale man dressed in black came and opened the

door to him. Julien looked at him and at once lowered his gaze. This

porter had a singular physiognomy. The prominent green pupils of his

eyes were convex as those of a cat's; the unwinking contours of his eye

lids proclaimed the impossibility of any human feeling; his thin lips were

stretched and curved over his protruding teeth. And yet this

physiognomy did not suggest a criminal nature, so much as that entire

insensibility which inspires far greater terror in the young. The sole feel

ing that Julien's rapid glance could discern in that long, smug face was a

profound contempt for every subject that might be mentioned to him,which did not refer to another and a better world.

Julien raised his eyes with an effort, and in a voice which the palpita

tion of his heart made tremulous explained that he wished to speak to M.

Pirard, the Director of the Seminary. Without a word, the man in black

made a sign to him to follow. They climbed two flights of a wide stair

case with a wooden baluster, the warped steps of which sloped at a

downward angle from the wall, and seemed on the point of collapse. A

small door, surmounted by a large graveyard cross of white wood

painted black, yielded to pressure and the porter showed him into a low

and gloomy room, the whitewashed walls of which were adorned with

two large pictures dark with age. There, Julien was left to himself; he

165was terrified, his heart throbbed violently; he would have liked to find

the courage to weep. A deathly silence reigned throughout the building.

After a quarter of an hour, which seemed to him a day, the sinister

porter reappeared on the threshold of a door at the other end of the

room, and, without condescending to utter a word, beckoned to him to

advance. He entered a room even larger than the first and very badly

lighted. The walls of this room were whitewashed also; but they were

bare of ornament. Only in a corner by the door, Julien noticed in passing

a bed of white wood, two straw chairs and a little armchair made of

planks of firwood without a cushion. At the other end of the room, near

a small window with dingy panes, decked with neglected flowerpots, he

saw a man seated at a table and dressed in a shabby cassock; he ap

peared to be in a rage, and was taking one after another from a pile of

little sheets of paper which he spread out on his table after writing a few

words on each. He did not observe Julien's presence. The latter remained

motionless, standing in the middle of the room, where he had been left

by the porter, who had gone out again shutting the door behind him.

Ten minutes passed in this fashion; the shabbily dressed man writing

all the time. Julien's emotion and terror were such that he felt himself to

be on the point of collapsing. A philosopher would have said, perhaps

wrongly: 'It is the violent impression made by ugliness on a soul created

to love what is beautiful.'

The man who was writing raised his head; Julien did not observe this

for a moment, and indeed, after he had noticed it, still remained motion

less, as though turned to stone by the terrible gaze that was fixed on him.

Julien's swimming eyes could barely make out a long face covered all

over with red spots, except on the forehead, which displayed a deathly

pallor. Between the red cheeks and white forehead shone a pair of little

black eyes calculated to inspire terror in the bravest heart. The vast ex

panse of his forehead was outlined by a mass of straight hair, as black as

jet.

'Are you coming nearer, or not?' the man said at length impatiently.

Julien advanced with an uncertain step, and at length, ready to fall to

the ground and paler than he had ever been in his life, came to a halt a

few feet away from the little table of white wood covered with scraps of

paper.

'Nearer,' said the man.

Julien advanced farther, stretching out his hand as though in search of

something to lean upon.

166'Your name?'

'Julien Sorel.'

'You are very late,' said the other, once more fastening upon him a ter

rible eye.

Julien could not endure this gaze; putting out his hand as though to

support himself, he fell full length upon the floor.

The man rang a bell. Julien had lost only his sense of vision and the

strength to move; he could hear footsteps approaching.

He was picked up and placed in the little armchair of white wood. He

heard the terrible man say to the porter:

'An epileptic, evidently; I might have known it.'

When Julien was able to open his eyes, the man with the red face was

again writing; the porter had vanished. 'I must have courage,' our hero

told himself, 'and above all hide my feelings.' He felt a sharp pain at his

heart. 'If I am taken ill, heaven knows what they will think of me.' At

length the man stopped writing, and with a sidelong glance at Julien

asked:

'Are you in a fit state to answer my questions?'

'Yes, Sir,' said Julien in a feeble voice.

'Ah! That is fortunate.'

The man in black had half risen and was impatiently seeking for a let

ter in the drawer of his table of firwood which opened with a creak. He

found it, slowly resumed his seat, and once more gazing at Julien, with

an air which seemed to wrest from him the little life that remained to

him:

'You are recommended to me by M. Chelan, who was the best cure in

the diocese, a good man if ever there was one, and my friend for the last

thirty years.'

'Ah! It is M. Pirard that I have the honour to address,' said Julien in a

feeble voice.

'So it seems,' said the Director of the Seminary, looking sourly at him.

The gleam in his little eyes brightened, followed by an involuntary jerk

of the muscles round his mouth. It was the physiognomy of a tiger rel

ishing in anticipation the pleasure of devouring its prey.

167'Chelan's letter is short,' he said, as though speaking to himself.

'Intelligenti pauca; in these days, one cannot write too little.' He read

aloud:

'"I send you Julien Sorel, of this parish, whom I baptised nearly twenty

years ago; his father is a wealthy carpenter but allows him nothing. Juli

en will be a noteworthy labourer in the Lord's vineyard. Memory, intelli

gence are not wanting, he has the power of reflection. Will his vocation

last? Is it sincere?"'

'Sincere!' repeated the abbe Pirard with an air of surprise, gazing at

Julien; but this time the abbe's gaze was less devoid of all trace of hu

manity. 'Sincere!' he repeated, lowering his voice and returning to the

letter:

'"I ask you for a bursary for Julien; he will qualify for it by undergoing

the necessary examinations. I have taught him a little divinity, that old

and sound divinity of Bossuet, Arnault, Fleury. If the young man is not

to your liking, send him back to me; the Governor of our Poorhouse,whom you know well, offers him eight hundred francs to come as tutor

to his children. Inwardly I am calm, thank God. I am growing accus

tomed to the terrible blow. Vale et me ama."'

The abbe Pirard, relaxing the speed of his utterance as he came to the

signature, breathed with a sigh the word 'Chelan.'

'He is calm,' he said; 'indeed, his virtue deserved that reward; God

grant it to me, when my time comes!'

He looked upwards and made the sign of the Cross. At the sight of

this holy symbol Julien felt a slackening of the profound horror which,from his entering the building, had frozen him.

'I have here three hundred and twentyone aspirants for the holiest of

callings,' the abbe Pirard said at length, in a severe but not hostile tone;'only seven or eight have been recommended to me by men like the abbe

Chelan; thus among the three hundred and twentyone you will be the

ninth. But my protection is neither favour nor weakness, it is an increase

of precaution and severity against vice. Go and lock that door.'

Julien made an effort to walk and managed not to fall. He noticed that

a little window, near the door by which he had entered, commanded a

view of the country. He looked at the trees; the sight of them did him

good, as though he had caught sight of old friends.

'Loquerisne linguam latinam? (Do you speak Latin?)' the abbe Pirard

asked him as he returned.

168'Ita, pater optime (Yes, excellent Father),' replied Julien, who was begin

ning to come to himself. Certainly nobody in the world had appeared to

him less excellent than M. Pirard, during the last halfhour.

The conversation continued in Latin. The expression in the abbe's eyes

grew gentler; Julien recovered a certain coolness. 'How weak I am,' he

thought, 'to let myself be imposed upon by this show of virtue! This man

will be simply a rascal like M. Maslon'; and Julien congratulated himself

on having hidden almost all his money in his boots.

The abbe Pirard examined Julien in theology, and was surprised by

the extent of his knowledge. His astonishment increased when he ques

tioned him more particularly on the Holy Scriptures. But when he came

to questions touching the doctrine of the Fathers, he discovered that Juli

en barely knew the names of Saint Jerome, Saint Augustine, Saint

Bonaventure, Saint Basil, etc., etc.

'In fact,' thought the abbe Pirard, 'here is another instance of that fatal

tendency towards Protestantism which I have always had to rebuke in

Chelan. A thorough, a too thorough acquaintance with the Holy

Scriptures.'

(Julien had just spoken to him, without having been questioned on the

subject, of the true date of authorship of Genesis, the Pentateuch, etc.)

'To what does all this endless discussion of the Holy Scriptures lead,'

thought the abbe Pirard, 'if not to private judgment, that is to say to the

most fearful Protestantism? And, in conjunction with this rash learning,nothing about the Fathers that can compensate for this tendency.'

But the astonishment of the Director of the Seminary knew no bounds

when, questioning Julien as to the authority of the Pope, and expecting

the maxims of the ancient Gallican church, he heard the young man re

peat the whole of M. de Maistre's book.

'A strange man, Chelan,' thought the abbe Pirard; 'has he given him

this book to teach him to laugh at it?'

In vain did he question Julien, trying to discover whether he seriously

believed the doctrine of M. de Maistre. The young man could answer

him only by rote. From this moment, Julien was really admirable, he felt

that he was master of himself. After a prolonged examination it seemed

to him that M. Pirard's severity towards him was no more than an affect

ation. Indeed, but for the rule of austere gravity which, for the last fifteen

years, he had imposed on himself in dealing with his pupils in theology,the Director of the Seminary would have embraced Julien in the name of

169logic, such clarity, precision, and point did he find in the young man's

answers.

'This is a bold and healthy mind,' he said to himself, 'but corpus debile

(a frail body).

'Do you often fall like that?' he asked Julien in French, pointing with

his finger to the floor.

'It was the first time in my life; the sight of the porter's face paralysed

me,' Julien explained, colouring like a child.

The abbe Pirard almost smiled.

'Such is the effect of the vain pomps of this world; you are evidently

accustomed to smiling faces, positive theatres of falsehood. The truth is

austere, Sir. But is not our task here below austere also? You will have to

see that your conscience is on its guard against this weakness: Undue

sensibility to vain outward charms.

'Had you not been recommended to me,' said the abbe Pirard, return

ing with marked pleasure to the Latin tongue, 'had you not been recom

mended to me by a man such as the abbe Chelan, I should address you

in the vain language of this world to which it appears that you are too

well accustomed. The entire bursary for which you apply is, I may tell

you, the hardest thing in the world to obtain. But the abbe Chelan has

earned little, by fiftysix years of apostolic labours, if he cannot dispose

of a bursary at the Seminary.'

After saying these words, the abbe Pirard advised Julien not to join

any secret society or congregation without his consent.

'I give you my word of honour,' said Julien with the heartfelt warmth

of an honest man.

The Director of the Seminary smiled for the first time.

'That expression is not in keeping here,' he told him; 'it is too suggest

ive of the vain honour of men of the world, which leads them into so

many errors and often into crime. You owe me obedience in virtue of the

seventeenth paragraph of the Bull Unam Ecclesiam of Saint Pius V. I am

your ecclesiastical superior. In this house to hear, my dearly beloved son,is to obey. How much money have you?'

('Now we come to the point,' thought Julien, 'this is the reason of the

"dearly beloved son".')

'Thirtyfive francs, Father.'

170'Keep a careful note of how you spend your money; you will have to

account for it to me.'

This exhausting interview had lasted three hours. Julien was told to

summon the porter.

'Put Julien Sorel in cell number 103,' the abbe Pirard told the man.

As a special favour, he was giving Julien a room to himself.

'Take up his trunk,' he added.

Julien lowered his eyes and saw his trunk staring him in the face; he

had been looking at it for three hours and had never seen it.

On arriving at No. 103, which was a tiny room eight feet square on the

highest floor of the building, Julien observed that it looked out towards

the ramparts, beyond which one saw the smiling plain which the Doubs

divides from the city.

'What a charming view!' exclaimed Julien; in speaking thus to himself

he was not conscious of the feeling implied by his words. The violent

sensations he had experienced in the short time that he had spent in Bes

ancon had completely drained his strength. He sat down by the window

on the solitary wooden chair that was in his cell, and at once fell into a

profound slumber. He did not hear the supper bell, nor that for Benedic

tion; he had been forgotten.

When the first rays of the sun awakened him next morning, he found

himself lying upon the floor.

171chapter26

The World, or What the Rich Lack

I am alone on earth, no one deigns to think of me. All the people I

see making their fortunes have a brazenness and a hardhearted

ness which I do not sense in myself. Ah! I shall soon be dead,either of hunger, or from the sorrow of finding men so hard.

YOUNG

He made haste to brush his coat and to go downstairs; he was late. An

undermaster rebuked him severely; instead of seeking to excuse him

self, Julien crossed his arms on his breast:

'Peccavi, pater optime (I have sinned, I confess my fault, O Father),' he

said with a contrite air.

This was a most successful beginning. The sharp wits among the sem

inarists saw that they had to deal with a man who was not new to the

game. The recreation hour came, Julien saw himself the object of general

curiosity. But they found in him merely reserve and silence. Following

the maxims that he had laid down for himself, he regarded his three

hundred and twentyone comrades as so many enemies; the most dan

gerous of all in his eyes was the abbe Pirard.

A few days later, Julien had to choose a confessor, he was furnished

with a list.

'Eh; Great God, for what do they take me?' he said to himself. 'Do they

suppose I can't take a hint?' And he chose the abbe Pirard.

Though he did not suspect it, this step was decisive. A little seminarist,still quite a boy, and a native of Verrieres, who, from the first day, had

declared himself his friend, informed him that if he had chosen M.

Castanede, the viceprincipal of the Seminary, he would perhaps have

shown greater prudence.

172'The abbe Castanede is the enemy of M. Pirard, who is suspected of

Jansenism'; the little seminarist added, whispering this information in his

ear.

All the first steps taken by our hero who fancied himself so prudent

were, like his choice of a confessor, foolish in the extreme. Led astray by

all the presumption of an imaginative man, he mistook his intentions for

facts, and thought himself a consummate hypocrite. His folly went the

length of his reproaching himself for his successes in this art of the weak.

'Alas! It is my sole weapon! In another epoch, it would have been by

speaking actions in the face of the enemy that I should have earned my

bread.'

Julien, satisfied with his own conduct, looked around him; he found

everywhere an appearance of the purest virtue.

Nine or ten of the seminarists lived in the odour of sanctity, and had

visions like Saint Teresa and Saint Francis, when he received the Stig

mata upon Monte Verna, in the Apennines. But this was a great secret

which their friends kept to themselves. These poor young visionaries

were almost always in the infirmary. Some hundred others combined

with a robust faith an unwearying application. They worked until they

made themselves ill, but without learning much. Two or three distin

guished themselves by real talent, and, among these, one named Chazel;but Julien felt himself repelled by them, and they by him.

The rest of the three hundred and twentyone seminarists were com

posed entirely of coarse creatures who were by no means certain that

they understood the Latin words which they repeated all day long. Al

most all of them were the sons of peasants, and preferred to earn their

bread by reciting a few Latin words rather than by tilling the soil. It was

after making this discovery, in the first few days, that Julien promised

himself a rapid success. 'In every service, there is need of intelligent

people, for after all there is work to be done,' he told himself. 'Under Na

poleon, I should have been a serjeant; among these future cures, I shall

be a VicarGeneral.

'All these poor devils,' he added, 'labourers from the cradle, have

lived, until they came here, upon skim milk and black bread. In their cot

tages, they tasted meat only five or six times in a year. Like the Roman

soldiers who found active service a holiday, these boorish peasants are

enchanted by the luxuries of the Seminary.'

Julien never read anything in their lacklustre eyes beyond the satisfac

tion of a bodily need after dinner, and the expectation of a bodily

173pleasure before the meal. Such were the people among whom he must

distinguish himself; but what Julien did not know, what they refrained

from telling him, was that to be at the top of the various classes of

dogma, church history, etc., etc., which were studied in the Seminary,was nothing more in their eyes than a sin of vainglory. Since Voltaire,since Two Chamber government, which is at bottom only distrust and

private judgment, and instils in the hearts of the people that fatal habit of

want of confidence, the Church of France seems to have realised that books

are its true enemies. It is heartfelt submission that is everything in its

eyes. Success in studies, even in sacred studies, is suspect, and with good

reason. What is to prevent the superior man from going over to the other

side, like Sieyes or Gregoire? The trembling Church clings to the Pope as

to her sole chance of salvation. The Pope alone can attempt to paralyse

private judgment, and, by the pious pomps of the ceremonies of his

court, make an impression upon the sick and listless minds of men and

women of the world.

Having half mastered these several truths, which however all the

words uttered in a Seminary tend to deny, Julien fell into a deep melan

choly. He worked hard, and rapidly succeeded in learning things of

great value to a priest, entirely false in his eyes, and in which he took no

interest. He imagined that there was nothing else for him to do.

'Am I then forgotten by all the world?' he wondered. He little knew

that M. Pirard had received and had flung in the fire several letters bear

ing the Dijon postmark, letters in which, despite the most conventional

style and language, the most intense passion was apparent. Keen re

morse seemed to be doing battle with this love. 'So much the better,'

thought the abbe Pirard, 'at least it is not an irreligious woman that this

young man has loved.'

One day, the abbe Pirard opened a letter which seemed to be half ob

literated by tears, it was an eternal farewell. 'At last,' the writer informed

Julien, 'heaven has granted me the grace of hating not the author of my

fault, he will always be dearer to me than anything in the world, but my

fault itself. The sacrifice is made, my friend. It is not without tears, as you

see. The salvation of the beings to whom I am bound, and whom you

have loved so dearly, has prevailed. A just but terrible God can no longer

wreak vengeance upon them for their mother's crimes. Farewell, Julien,be just towards men.'

This ending to the letter was almost entirely illegible. The writer gave

an address at Dijon, and at the same time hoped that Julien would never

174reply, or that at least he would confine himself to language which a wo

man restored to the ways of virtue could read without blushing.

Julien's melancholy, assisted by the indifferent food supplied to the

Seminary by the contractor for dinners at 83 centimes a head, was begin

ning to have an effect on his health, when one morning Fouque suddenly

appeared in his room.

'At last I have found my way in. I have come five times to Besancon,honour bound, to see you. Always a barred door. I posted someone at

the gate of the Seminary; why the devil do you never come out?'

'It is a test which I have set myself.'

'I find you greatly altered. At last I see you again. Two good five franc

pieces have just taught me that I was no better than a fool not to have

offered them on my first visit.'

The conversation between the friends was endless. Julien changed col

our when Fouque said to him:

'Have you heard, by the way? The mother of your pupils has become

most devoutly religious.'

And he spoke with that detached air which makes so singular an im

pression on the passionate soul whose dearest interests the speaker un

consciously destroys.

'Yes, my friend, the most exalted strain of piety. They say that she

makes pilgrimages. But, to the eternal shame of the abbe Maslon, who

has been spying so long upon that poor M. Chelan, Madame de Renal

will have nothing to do with him. She goes to confession at Dijon or

Besancon.'

'She comes to Besancon!' said Julien, his brow flushing.

'Quite often,' replied Fouque with a questioning air.

'Have you any Constitutionnels on you?'

'What's that you say?' replied Fouque.

'I ask you if you have any Constitutionnels?' Julien repeated, in a calmer

tone. 'They are sold here for thirty sous a copy.'

'What! Liberals even in the Seminary!' cried Fouque. 'Unhappy

France!' he went on, copying the hypocritical tone and meek accents of

the abbe Maslon.

This visit would have made a profound impression upon our hero,had not, the very next day, a remark addressed to him by that little sem

inarist from Verrieres who seemed such a boy, led him to make an

175important discovery. Ever since he had been in the Seminary, Julien's

conduct had been nothing but a succession of false steps. He laughed bit

terly at himself.

As a matter of fact, the important actions of his life were wisely

ordered; but he paid no attention to details, and the clever people in a

Seminary look only at details. And so he passed already among his fel

low students as a free thinker. He had been betrayed by any number of

trifling actions.

In their eyes he was convicted of this appalling vice, he thought, he

judged for himself, instead of blindly following authority and example. The

abbe Pirard had been of no assistance to him; he had not once uttered a

word to him apart from the tribunal of penitence, and even there he

listened rather than spoke. It would have been very different had Julien

chosen the abbe Castanede.

The moment that Julien became aware of his own folly, his interest re

vived. He wished to know the whole extent of the harm, and, with this

object, emerged a little from that haughty and obstinate silence with

which he repulsed his fellows. It was then that they took their revenge

on him. His advances were received with a contempt which went the

length of derision. He realised that since his entering the Seminary, not

an hour had passed, especially during recreation, that had not borne

some consequence for or against him, had not increased the number of

his enemies, or won him the good will of some seminarist who was

genuinely virtuous or a trifle less boorish than the rest. The damage to be

repaired was immense, the task one of great difficulty. Thenceforward

Julien's attention was constantly on the alert; it was a case of portraying

himself in an entirely new character.

The control of his eyes, for instance, gave him a great deal of trouble. It

is not without reason that in such places they are kept lowered. 'What

was not my presumption at Verrieres!' Julien said to himself, 'I imagined

I was alive; I was only preparing myself for life; here I am at last in the

world, as I shall find it until I have played out my part, surrounded by

real enemies. What an immense difficulty,' he went on, 'is this incessant

hypocrisy! It would put the labours of Hercules to shame. The Hercules

of modern times is Sixtus V, who for fifteen years on end, by his mod

esty, deceived forty Cardinals, who had seen him proud and vigorous in

his youth.

'So learning is really nothing here!' he told himself with scorn;'progress in dogma, in sacred history, and the rest of it, count only in

176appearance. All that is said on that topic is intended to make fools like

myself fall into the trap. Alas, my sole merit consisted in my rapid pro

gress, in my faculty for grasping all that nonsense. Can it be that in their

hearts they esteem it at its true value; judge of it as I do? And I was fool

enough to be proud of myself! Those first places in class which I always

obtain have served only to give me bitter enemies. Chazel, who knows

far more than I, always puts into his compositions some piece of stupid

ity which sends him down to the fiftieth place; if he obtains the first, it is

when he is not thinking. Ah! one word, a single word from M. Pirard,how useful it would have been to me!'

>

From the moment in which Julien's eyes were opened, the long exer

cises of ascetic piety, such as the Rosary five times weekly, the hymns to

the Sacred Heart, etc., etc., which had seemed to him of such deadly dull

ness, became the most interesting actions of his life. Sternly criticising his

own conduct, and seeking above all not to exaggerate his methods, Julien

did not aspire from the first, like the seminarists who served as models

to the rest, to perform at every moment some significant action, that is to

say one which gave proof of some form of Christian perfection. In Sem

inaries, there is a way of eating a boiled egg which reveals the progress

one has made in the godly life.

The reader, who is perhaps smiling, will please to remember all the

mistakes made, in eating an egg, by the abbe Delille when invited to

luncheon by a great lady of the Court of Louis XVI.

Julien sought at first to arrive at the non culpa, to wit, the state of the

young seminarist whose gait, his way of moving his arms, eyes, etc., do

not, it is true, indicate anything worldly, but do not yet show the

creature absorbed by the idea of the next life and the absolute nullity of

this.

Everywhere Julien found inscribed in charcoal, on the walls of the pas

sages, sentences like the following: 'What are sixty years of trial, set in

the balance with an eternity of bliss or an eternity of boiling oil in hell!'

He no longer despised them; he realised that he must have them always

before his eyes. 'What shall I be doing all my life?' he said to himself; 'I

shall be selling the faithful a place in heaven. How is that place to be

made visible to them? By the difference between my exterior and that of

a layman.'

After several months of application kept up at every moment, Julien

still had the air of a thinker. His way of moving his eyes and opening his

177lips did not reveal an implicit faith ready to believe everything and to

uphold everything, even by martyrdom. It was with anger that Julien

saw himself surpassed in this respect by the most boorish peasants. They

had good reasons for not having the air of thinkers.

What pains did he not take to arrive at that expression of blind and

fervent faith, which is so frequently to be found in the convents of Italy,and such perfect examples of which Guercino has bequeathed to us lay

men in his paintings in churches.

4

On the greatest festivals the seminarists were given sausages with

pickled cabbage. Julien's neighbours at table observed that he remained

unmoved by this good fortune; it was one of his first crimes. His com

rades saw in it an odious mark of the most stupid hypocrisy; nothing

made him so many enemies. 'Look at that gentleman, look at that proud

fellow,' they would say, 'pretending to despise our best ration, sausages

with cabbage! The wretched conceit of the damned fellow!' He should

have refrained as an act of penance from eating the whole of his portion,and should have made the sacrifice of saying to some friend, with refer

ence to the pickled cabbage: 'What is there that man can offer to an All

Powerful Being, if it be not voluntary suffering?'

Julien lacked the experience which makes it so easy for us to see things

of this sort.

'Alas! The ignorance of these young peasants, my comrades, is a great

advantage to them,' Julien would exclaim in moments of discourage

ment. 'When they arrive in the Seminary, the teacher has not to rid them

of the appalling number of worldly thoughts which I brought with me,and which they read on my face, do what I will.'

Julien studied with an attention that bordered upon envy the more

boorish of the young peasants who arrived at the Seminary. At the mo

ment when they were stripped of their ratteen jackets to be garbed in the

black cassock, their education was limited to an immense and unboun

ded respect for dry and liquid money, as the saying goes in the Franche

Comte.

It is the sacramental and heroic fashion of expressing the sublime idea

of ready cash.

Happiness, for these seminarists, as for the heroes of Voltaire's tales,consists first and foremost in dining well. Julien discovered in almost all

4.For instance, in the Louvre, no. 1130: 'Francis Duke of Aquitaine laying aside the

crown and putting on a monastic habit.'

178of them an innate respect for the man who wears a coat of fine cloth. This

sentiment estimates distributive justice, as it is dealt out to us by our

courts, at its true worth, indeed below its true worth. 'What is to be

gained,' they would often say among themselves, 'by going to law with

the big?'

'Big' is the word used in the valleys of the Jura to denote a rich man.

One may imagine their respect for the richest party of all: the

Government!

Not to smile respectfully at the mere name of the Prefect is reckoned,among the peasants of the Franche-Comte, an imprudence; and im

prudence, among the poor, is promptly punished with want of bread.

After having been almost suffocated at first by his sense of scorn, Juli

en ended by feeling pity: it had often been the lot of the fathers of the

majority of his comrades to come home on a winter evening to their cot

tages, and to find there no bread, no chestnuts, and no potatoes. 'Is it sur

prising then,' Julien asked himself, 'if the happy man, in their eyes, is first

of all the man who has just eaten a good dinner, and after that he who

possesses a good coat! My comrades have a definite vocation; that is to

say, they see in the ecclesiastical calling a long continuation of this hap

piness: dining well and having a warm coat in winter.'

Julien happened to hear a young seminarist, endowed with imagina

tion, say to his companion:

'Why should not I become Pope like Sixtus v, who was a swineherd?'

'They make none but Italians Popes,' replied the friend; 'but they'll

draw lots among us, for sure, to fill places as VicarsGeneral and Canons,and perhaps Bishops. M. P—— the Bishop of Chalons, is the son of a

cooper; that is my father's trade.'

One day, in the middle of a lesson in dogma, the abbe Pirard sent for

Julien. The poor young fellow was delighted to escape from the physical

and moral atmosphere in which he was plunged.

Julien found himself greeted by the Director in the manner which had

so frightened him on the day of his joining the Seminary.

'Explain to me what I see written upon this playing card,' he said to

him, looking at him in such a way as to make him wish that the earth

would open and swallow him.

Julien read:

'Amanda Binet, at the Giraffe cafe, before eight o'clock. Say you are

from Genlis, and a cousin of my mother.'

179Julien perceived the immensity of the danger; the abbe Castanede's po

lice had stolen the address from him.

'The day on which I came here,' he replied, gazing at the abbe Pirard's

forehead, for he could not face his terrible eye, 'I was trembling with fear:

M. Chelan had told me that this was a place full of talebearing and spite

of all sorts; spying and the accusation of one's comrades are encouraged

here. Such is the will of heaven, to show life as it is to young priests, and

to inspire in them a disgust with the world and its pomps.'

'And it is to me that you make these fine speeches'—the abbe Pirard

was furious. 'You young rascal!'

'At Verrieres,' Julien went on calmly, 'my brothers used to beat me

when they had any reason to be jealous of me … '

'To the point! Get to the point!' cried M. Pirard, almost beside himself.

Without being the least bit in the world intimidated, Julien resumed

his narrative.

'On the day of my coming to Besancon, about noon, I felt hungry, I

went into a cafe. My heart was filled with repugnance for so profane a

spot; but I thought that my luncheon would cost me less there than at an

inn. A lady, who seemed to be the mistress of the place, took pity on my

raw looks. "Besancon is full of wicked people," she told me, "I am afraid

for you, Sir. If you find yourself in any trouble, come to me, send a mes

sage to me before eight o'clock. If the porters at the Seminary refuse to

take your message, say that you are my cousin, and come from Genlis…

"'

'All this farrago will have to be investigated,' exclaimed the abbe Pir

ard who, unable to remain in one place, was striding up and down the

room.

'You will go back to your cell!'

The abbe accompanied Julien and locked him in. He himself at once

proceeded to examine his trunk, in the bottom of which the fatal card

had been carefully concealed. Nothing was missing from the trunk, but

several things had been disarranged; and yet the key never left his pos

session. 'How fortunate,' Julien said to himself, 'that during the time of

my blindness I never made use of the permission to leave the building,which M. Castanede so frequently offered me with a generosity which I

now understand. Perhaps I might have been so foolish as to change my

clothes and pay the fair Amanda a visit, I should have been ruined.

180When they despaired of making any use of their information in that way,so as not to waste it they have used it to denounce me.

A couple of hours later, the Director sent for him.

'You have not lied,' he said to him, looking at him less severely; 'but to

keep such an address is an imprudence the serious nature of which you

cannot conceive. Unhappy boy! In ten years, perhaps, it will redound to

your hurt.'

181chapter27

First Experience of Life

The present moment, by God! is the ark of the Lord. Woe betide

the man who lays his hand upon it.

DIDEROT

The reader will kindly excuse our giving but few clear and precise de

tails of this epoch in Julien's life. Not that we lack them, far from it; but

perhaps the life he led in the Seminary is too black for the modest colour

ing which we have sought to preserve in these pages. People who have

been made to suffer by certain things cannot be reminded of them

without a horror which paralyses every other pleasure, even that to be

found in reading a story.

Julien met with little success in his attempts at hypocrisy in action; he

passed through moments of disgust and even of complete discourage

ment. He was utterly unsuccessful, and that moreover in a vile career.

The slightest help from without would have sufficed to restore his mor

ale, the difficulty to be overcome was not great; but he was alone, as

lonely as a vessel abandoned in midocean. 'And if I should succeed,' he

said to himself; 'to have to spend my whole life in such evil company!

Gluttons who think of nothing but the ham omelette they are going to

devour at dinner, or men like the abbe Castanede, to whom no crime is

too black! They will rise to power; but at what a price, great God!

'Man's will is powerful, I see it written everywhere; but is it suffi

ciently so to overcome such repulsion? The task of great men has always

been easy; however terrible was their danger, it was beautiful in their

eyes; and who but myself can realise the ugliness of all that surrounds

me?'

This was the most trying moment in his life. It was so easy for him to

enlist in one of the fine regiments that were stationed at Besancon! He

might become a teacher of Latin; he wanted so little to keep himself

alive! But then, no career, no future for his imagination: it was a living

death. Here is a detailed account of one of his wretched days.

'My presumption has so often flattered itself upon my being different

from the other young peasants! Well, I have lived long enough to see

that difference breeds hatred,' he said to himself one morning. This great

truth had just been revealed to him by one of his most annoying failures.

He had laboured for a week to make himself agreeable to a student who

lived in the odour of sanctity. He was walking with him in the courtyard,listening submissively to idiocies that sent him to sleep as he walked.

Suddenly a storm broke, the thunder growled, and the saintly student

exclaimed, thrusting him rudely away:

'Listen, each for himself in this world, I have no wish to be struck by

lightning: God may blast you as an infidel, another Voltaire.'

His teeth clenched with rage and his eyes opened towards the sky fur

rowed by streaks of lightning: 'I should deserve to be submerged, were I

to let myself sleep during the storm!' cried Julien. 'Let us attempt the con

quest of some other drudge.'

The bell rang for the abbe Castanede's class of sacred history.

These young peasants who lived in such fear of the hard toil and

poverty of their fathers, were taught that day by the abbe Castanede that

that being so terrible in their eyes, the Government, had no real or legit

imate power save what was delegated to it by God's Vicar on Earth.

'Render yourselves worthy of the Pope's bounties by the sanctity of

your lives, by your obedience, be like a rod in his hands,' he went on,'and you will attain to a superb position where you will be in supreme

command, under no man's control; a permanent position, of which the

Government pays one third of the emoluments, and the faithful, roused

by your preaching, the other two thirds.'

On leaving his classroom, M. Castanede stopped in the courtyard.

'You may well say of a cure, each man gets what he deserves,' he said

to the students who gathered round him. 'I myself have known moun

tain parishes where the fees came to more than those of many town

cures. There was as much in money, not to speak of the fat capons, eggs,fresh butter, and endless little delicacies; and there the cure takes the first

place without challenge: no good meal to which he is not invited, made

much of,' etc.

No sooner had M. Castanede gone up to his own room, than the stu

dents divided into groups. Julien belonged to none of these; they drew

183away from him as from a tainted wether. In each of the groups, he saw a

student toss a copper in the air, and if he guessed head or tail aright, his

companions concluded that he would soon have one of these livings

with fat fees.

Stories followed. One young priest, barely a year in orders, having

presented a domestic rabbit to an old cure's servant, had got the cure to

ask for him as his assistant, and a few months afterwards, for the cure

had died almost immediately, had succeeded him in a good living.

Another had managed to have his name put forward for the eventual

succession to the curacy of a prosperous country town, by attending all

the meals of the paralytic old cure and carving his chickens for him

gracefully.

The seminarists, like young men in every profession, exaggerated the

effect of these little stratagems when they were out of the ordinary and

struck the imagination.

'I must,' thought Julien, 'take part in these conversations.' When they

were not discussing sausages and rich livings, their talk ran on the

worldly side of ecclesiastical teaching; the differences between Bishops

and Prefects, mayors and cures. Julien saw lurking in their minds the

idea of a second God, but of a God far more to be feared and far more

powerful than the first; this second God was the Pope. It was said, but

with lowered voice, and when the speaker was quite certain of not being

overheard by M. Pirard, that if the Pope did not take the trouble to ap

point all the Prefects and all the mayors in France, it was because he had

delegated the King of France for that duty, by naming him the Eldest Son

of the Church.

It was about this time that Julien thought he might derive some benefit

from his admiration for M. de Maistre's book on the Pope. He did, as a

matter of fact, astonish his fellowstudents; but this was a fresh misfor

tune. He annoyed them by expressing their opinions better than they

could themselves. M. Chelan had been a rash counsellor for Julien as he

had been for himself. After training him to the habit of reasoning accur

ately and not letting himself be taken in by vain words, he had omitted

to tell him that in a person of little repute this habit is a crime; for sound

reasoning always gives offence.

Julien's fine speech was therefore only another crime against him. His

companions, being compelled to think about him, succeeded in finding

two words to express all the horror with which he filled them: they

184nicknamed him Martin Luther; 'chiefly,' they said, 'because of that in

fernal logic of which he is so proud.'

Several young seminarists had fresher complexions and might be

reckoned better looking than Julien; but he had white hands, and could

not hide certain habits of personal cleanliness. This distinction was none

at all in the grim dwelling into which destiny had cast him. The unclean

peasants among whom he lived declared that he had extremely lax mor

als. We are afraid to tire the reader by an account of our hero's endless

mishaps. To take one instance, the more vigorous among his companions

tried to make a practice of thrashing him; he was obliged to arm himself

with a metal compass and to inform them, but only by signs, that he

would use it. Signs cannot be represented, in a spy's report, so

damningly as words.

chapter28

A Procession

All hearts were moved. God's presence seemed to have come down into these narrow, gothic streets, decked on every side, and strewn with sand through the good offices of the faithful. YOUNG 5

In vain might Julien make himself small and foolish, he could not give satisfaction, he was too different. 'And yet,' he said to himself, 'all these Professors are men of great discernment, and picked men, each of them one in a thousand; how is it they do not like my humility?' One alone seemed to him to be taking advantage of his readiness to believe anything and to appear taken in by everything. This was the abbe ChasBernard, Master of Ceremonies at the Cathedral, where, for the last fifteen years, he had been kept in hopes of a Canonry; in the meantime, he taught sacred eloquence at the Seminary. In the period of his blindness,this class was one of those in which Julien most regularly came out at the top. The abbe Chas had been led by this to show a partiality for him,and, at the end of his class, would gladly take his arm for a turn in thegarden.

'What can his object be?' Julien asked himself. He found with amazement that, for hours on end, the abbe talked to him of the ornaments which the Cathedral possessed. It had seventeen apparelled chasubles, apart from the vestments worn at requiems. They had great hopes of President de Rubempre's widow; this lady, who was ninety years old,had preserved for at least seventy of those years her wedding garmentsof superb Lyons stuffs, figured in gold. 'Just imagine, my friend,' said the abbe Chas coming to a standstill and opening his eyes wide, 'these stuffs stand by themselves, there is so much gold in them. It is common opinion in Besancon that, under the Presidente's will, the treasury of the Cathedral will be enriched with more than ten chasubles, not to mention ~~5.As in chapter 26 I have left this motto in French. It seems, however, to be taken from Arthur Young rather and Edward. C. K. S. M.186~~ four or five copes for the greater feasts. I will go farther,' the abbe Chas added, lowering his voice. 'I have good reason to think that the Presidente will bequeath to us eight magnificent silvergilt candlesticks, which are supposed to have been bought in Italy, by the Duke of Burgundy,Charles the Bold, whose favourite minister was an ancestor of hers.''But what is this man really aiming at behind all this frippery?' Julien wondered. 'This careful preparation has been going on for an age, and nothing comes of it. He must have singularly little faith in me! He is cleverer than any of the others, whose secret purposes one can see so plainly after a fortnight. I understand, this man's ambition has been in torment for fifteen years.'

One evening, in the middle of the armed drill, Julien was sent for by the abbe Pirard, who said to him:

'Tomorrow is the feast of Corpus Christi. M. l'abbe ChasBernard requires you to help him to decorate the Cathedral; go and obey.'

The abbe Pirard called him back, and added, in a tone of compassion:

'It is for you to decide whether you wish to seize the opportunity of taking a stroll through the town.'

'Incedo per ignes,' replied Julien: which is to say, I am treading on dangerous ground.

Next morning at daybreak, Julien made his way to the Cathedral,walking with lowered eyes. The sight of the streets and the activity which was beginning to pervade the town did him good. On every side people were draping the fronts of their houses for the procession. All the time that he had spent in the Seminary seemed to him no more than an instant. His thoughts were at Vergy, and with that charming Amanda Binet, whom he might meet, for her cafe was but little out of his way. He saw in the distance the abbe ChasBernard, standing by the door of his beloved Cathedral; he was a large man with a joyful countenance and an open air. This morning he was triumphant: 'I have been waiting for you,my dear son,' he called out, as soon as he caught sight of Julien, 'you arewelcome. Our labours this day will be long and hard, let us fortify ourselves with an early breakfast; the other we shall take at ten o'clock during high mass.'

'I desire, Sir,' Julien said to him with an air of gravity, 'not to be left alone for a moment; kindly observe,' he added, pointing to the clock above their heads, 'that I have arrived at one minute before five.'

'Ah! So you are afraid of those young rascals at the Seminary! It is too kind of you to give them a thought,' said the abbe Chas; 'is a road any the worse, because there are thorns in the hedges on either side of it? The traveller goes his way and leaves the wicked thorns to wither where they are. However, we must to work, my dear friend, to work.'

The abbe Chas had been right in saying that their labours would be hard. There had been a great funeral service in the Cathedral the day beore; it had been impossible to make any preparations; they were obliged, therefore, in the course of the morning, to drape each of the gothic pillars which separate the nave from the aisles in a sort of jacket of red damask which rose to a height of thirty feet. The Bishop had ordered four decorators from Paris by mail coach, but these gentlemen could not do everything themselves, and so far from encouraging the awkward efforts of their Bisontine colleagues they increased their awkwardness by laughing at it.

Julien saw that he would have to go up the ladders himself, his agility stood him in good stead. He undertook to direct the local decorators in person.

The abbe Chas was in ecstasies as he watched him spring from one ladder to another. When all the pillars were hung with damask, the next thing was to go and place five enormous bunches of plumes on top

of the great baldachino, over the high altar. A richly gilded wooden crown was supported on eight great twisted columns of Italian marble.

But, in order to reach the centre of the baldachino, over the tabernacle,one had to step across an old wooden cornice, possibly wormeaten, and forty feet from the ground.The sight of this perilous ascent had extinguished the gaiety, so brilliant until then, of the Parisian decorators; they looked at it from beneath,discussed it volubly, and did not go up. Julien took possession of the bunches of plumes, and ran up the ladder. He arranged them admirably upon the ornament in the form of a crown in the centre of the baldachino.

As he stepped down from the ladder, the abbe ChasBernard took him in his arms.

'Optime!' exclaimed the worthy priest, 'I shall tell Monseigneur of this.'

Their ten o'clock breakfast was a merry feast. Never had the abbe Chas seen his church looking so well.

'My dear disciple,' he said to Julien, 'my mother used to hire out chairs in this venerable fane, so that I was brought up in this great edifice.Robespierre's Terror ruined us; but, at eight years old, as I then was, I was already serving masses in private houses, and their owners gave me my dinner on mass days. No one could fold a chasuble better than I, the gold braid was never broken. Since the restoration of the Faith by Napoleon, it has been my happy lot to take charge of everything in this venerable mother church. On five days in the year, my eyes behold it decked out with these beautiful ornaments. But never has it been so resplendent,never have the damask strips been so well hung as they are today, have they clung so to the pillars.'

At last, he is going to tell me his secret,' thought Julien, 'here he is talking to me of himself; he is beginning to expand.' But nothing imprudent was said by this man, evidently in an excited state. 'And yet he has worked hard, he is happy,' Julien said to himself, 'the good wine has not been spared. What a man! What an example for me! He takes the prize.'(This was a low expression which he had picked up from the old surgeon.)

When the Sanctus bell rang during high mass, Julien wished to put on a surplice so as to follow the Bishop in the superb procession.'And the robbers, my friend, the robbers!' cried the abbe Chas, 'you forget them. The procession is going out; the church will be left empty;we must keep watch, you and I. We shall be fortunate if we lose only a couple of ells of that fine braid which goes round the base of the pillars.

That is another gift from Madame de Rubempre; it comes from the famous Count, her greatgrandfather; it is pure gold, my friend,' the abbe went on, whispering in his ear, and with an air of evident exaltation,'nothing false about it! I entrust to you the inspection of the north aisle,do not stir from it. I keep for myself the south aisle and nave. Keep an eye on the confessionals; it is there that the robbers' women spies watch for the moment when our backs are turned.'

As he finished speaking, the quarter before twelve struck, at once the big bell began to toll. It was being pulled with all the ringers' might; the rich and solemn sound stirred Julien deeply. His imagination rose from the ground.

The odour of the incense and of the rose leaves strewn before the Blessed Sacrament by children dressed as little Saint Johns, intensified his excitement.

The sober note of the bell ought to have suggested to Julien only the thought of the work of a score of men earning fifty centimes, and assisted perhaps by fifteen or twenty of the faithful. He ought to have thought of the wear and tear of the ropes, of the timber, of the danger from the bell itself which fell every two hundred years, and to have planned some way of diminishing the wage of the ringers, or of paying them with some indulgence or other favour drawn from the spiritual treasury of the Church, with no strain upon her purse.

In place of these sage reflections, Julien's soul, excited by these rich and virile sounds, was straying through imaginary space. Never will he make either a good priest or a great administrator. Souls that are moved thus are capable at most of producing an artist. Here Julien's presumption breaks out in the full light of day. Fifty, perhaps, of his fellow seminarists, made attentive to the realities of life by the public hatred and Jacobinism which, they are told, is lurking behind every hedge, on hearing the big bell of the Cathedral, would have thought only of the wages paid to the ringers. They would have applied the genius of a Bareme to determine the question whether the degree of emotion aroused in the public was worth the money given to the ringers. Had Julien chosen to give his mind to the material interests of the Cathedral, his imagination flying beyond its goal would have thought of saving forty francs for the chapter, and would have let slip the opportunity of avoiding an outlay of twentyfive centimes.

While, in the most perfect weather ever seen, the procession wound its way slowly through Besancon, and halted at the glittering stations which all the local authorities had vied with one another in erecting, the church remained wrapped in a profound silence. A suffused light, an agreeable coolness reigned in it; it was still balmy with the fragrance of flowers and incense.

The silence, the profound solitude, the coolness of the long aisles,made Julien's musings all the sweeter. He had no fear of being disturbed by the abbe Chas, who was occupied in another part of the building. His soul had almost quitted its mortal envelope, which was strolling at a slow pace along the north aisle committed to his charge. He was all the more at rest, since he was certain that there was nobody in the confessionals save a few devout women; he saw without observing.His distraction was nevertheless half conquered by the sight of two women extremely well dressed who were kneeling, one of them in a confessional, the other, close beside her, upon a chair. He saw without observing them; at the same time, whether from a vague sense of his duty,or from admiration of the plain but noble attire of these ladies, he remarked that there was no priest in that confessional. 'It is strange,' he thought, 'that these beautiful ladies are not kneeling before some station,if they are religious; or placed in good seats in the front of some balcony,if they are fashionable. How well cut that gown is! What grace!' He slackened his pace in order to see their faces.The one who was kneeling in the confessional turned her head slightly on hearing the sound of Julien's step amid the prevailing silence. All at once she gave a little cry, and fainted.

As her strength left her, this kneeling lady fell back; her friend, who was close at hand, hastened to the rescue. At the same time Julien caught sight of the shoulders of the lady who had fallen back. A rope of large seed pearls, well known to him, caught his eye. What was his state when he recognised the hair of Madame de Renal! It was she. The lady who was trying to hold up her head, and to arrest her fall, was Madame

Derville. Julien, beside himself with emotion, sprang forward; Madame de Renal's fall would perhaps have brought down her friend if he had not supported them. He saw Madame de Renal's head, pale, absolutely devoid of consciousness, drooping upon her shoulder. He helped Madame Derville to prop that charming head against the back of a straw chair; he was on his knees.Madame Derville turned and recognised him.

'Fly, Sir, fly!' she said to him in accents of the most burning anger. 'On no account must she see you again. The sight of you must indeed fill her with horror, she was so happy before you came! Your behaviour is atrocious. Fly; be off with you, if you have any shame left.'

This speech was uttered with such authority, and Julien felt so weak at the moment, that he withdrew. '

She always hated me,' he said to himself,thinking of Madame Derville.

At that moment, the nasal chant of the leading priests in the procession rang through the church; the procession was returning. The abbe ChasBernard called repeatedly to Julien, who at first did not hear him:finally he came and led him by the arm from behind a pillar where Julien had taken refuge more dead than alive. He wished to present him to the Bishop.

'You are feeling unwell, my child,' said the abbe, seeing him so pale and almost unable to walk; 'you have been working too hard.' The abbe gave him his arm. 'Come, sit down here, on the sacristan's little stool, behind me; I shall screen you.' They were now by the side of the main door.'Calm yourself, we have still a good twenty minutes before Monseigneur appears. Try to recover yourself; when he passes, I shall hold you up, for I am strong and vigorous, in spite of my age.'

But when the Bishop passed, Julien was so tremulous that the abbe Chas abandoned the idea of presenting him.

'Do not worry yourself about it,' he told him, 'I shall find another opportunity.' That evening, he sent down to the chapel of the Seminary ten pounds of candles, saved, he said, by Julien's efforts and the rapidity with which he extinguished them. Nothing could have been farther from the truth.The poor boy was himself extinguished; he had not had a thought in his head after seeing Madame de Renal.

chapter29

**The First Step**

He knew his times, he knew his departement, and he is rich.

Le Precurseur

Julien had not yet recovered from the profound abstraction in which the incident in the Cathedral had plunged him, when one morning the grim abbe Pirard sent for him.

'Here is M. l'abbe ChasBernard writing to me to commend you. I am quite satisfied with your conduct as a whole. You are extremely imprudent and indeed stupid, without showing it; however, up to the present your heart is sound and even generous; your intellect is above the average. Taking you all in all, I see a spark in you which must not be neglected.

'After fifteen years of labour, I am on the eve of leaving this establishment: my crime is that of having allowed the seminarists to use their own judgment, and of having neither protected nor unmasked that secret society of which you have spoken to me at the stool of penitence.

Before I go, I wish to do something for you; I should have acted two months ago, for you deserve it, but for the accusation based upon the address of Amanda Binet, which was found in your possession. I appoint you tutor in the New and Old Testaments.'

Julien, in a transport of gratitude, quite thought of falling on his knees and thanking God; but he yielded to a more genuine impulse. He went up to the abbe Pirard and took his hand, which he raised to his lips.'What is this?' cried the Director in a tone of annoyance; but Julien's eyes were even more eloquent than his action.

The abbe Pirard gazed at him in astonishment, like a man who, in the course of long years, has fallen out of the way of meeting with delicate emotions. This attention pierced the Director's armour; his voice changed.

'Ah, well! Yes, my child, I am attached to you. Heaven knows that it is entirely against my will. I ought to be just, and to feel neither hatred nor love for anyone. Your career will be difficult. I see in you something that offends the common herd. Jealousy and calumny will pursue you. In whatever place Providence may set you, your companions will never set eyes on you without hating you; and if they pretend to love you, it will be in order to betray you the more surely. For this there is but one remedy: have recourse only to God, who has given you, to punish you for your presumption, this necessity of being hated; let your conduct be pure; that is the sole resource that I can see for you. If you hold fast to the truth with an invincible embrace, sooner or later your enemies will be put to confusion."

It was so long since Julien had heard a friendly voice, that we must forgive him a weakness: he burst into tears. The abbe Pirard opened his arms to embrace him; the moment was very precious to them both.Julien was wild with joy; this promotion was the first that he had obtained; the advantages were immense. In order to realise them, one must have been condemned to pass whole months without a moment's solitude, and in immediate contact with companions at best tiresome,and mostly intolerable. Their shouts alone would have been enough to create disorder in a sensitive organism. The boisterous joy of these peasants well fed and well dressed, could find expression, thought itself complete only when they were shouting with the full force of their lungs.

Now Julien dined by himself, or almost so, an hour later than the rest of the seminarists. He had a key to the garden, and might walk there at the hours when it was empty.

Greatly to his surprise, Julien noticed that they hated him less; he had been expecting, on the contrary, an intensification of their hatred. That secret desire that no one should speak to him, which was all too apparent and had made him so many enemies, was no longer a sign of absurd pride. In the eyes of the coarse beings among whom he lived, it was a proper sense of his own dignity. Their hatred diminished perceptibly, especially among the youngest of his companions, now become his pupils,whom he treated with great courtesy. In course of time he had even supporters; it became bad form to call him Martin Luther.

But why speak of his friends, his enemies? It is all so ugly, and all the more ugly, the more accurately it is drawn from life. These are however the only teachers of ethics that the people have, and without them where should we be? Will the newspaper ever manage to take the place of the parish priest?

Since Julien's promotion, the Director of the Seminary made a point of never speaking to him except in the presence of witnesses. This was only prudent, in the master's interest as well as the pupil's; but more than anything else it was a test. The stern Jansenist Pirard's invariable principle was: 'Has a man any merit in your eyes? Place an obstacle in the way of everything that he desires, everything that he undertakes. If his merit be genuine, he will certainly be able to surmount or thrust aside your obstacles.'

It was the hunting season. Fouque took it into his head to send to the Seminary a stag and a boar in the name of Julien's family. The dead animals were left lying in the passage, between kitchen and refectory.

There all the seminarists saw them on their way to dinner. They aroused much interest. The boar, although stone dead, frightened the younger boys; they fingered his tusks. Nothing else was spoken of for a week.

This present, which classified Julien's family in the section of society that one must respect, dealt a mortal blow to jealousy. It was a form of superiority consecrated by fortune. Chazel and the most distinguished of the seminarists made overtures to him, and almost complained to him that he had not warned them of his parents' wealth, and had thus betrayed them into showing a want of respect for money.

There was a conscription from which Julien was exempt in his capacity as a seminarist.

This incident moved him deeply. 'And so there has passed now for ever the moment at which, twenty years ago, a heroic life would have begun for me!'

Walking by himself in the Seminary garden, he overheard a conversation between two masons who were at work upon the enclosing wall.

'Ah, well! One will have to go, here's another conscription.'

In the other man's days, well and good! A stone mason became an officer, and became a general, that has been known.'

'Look what it's like now! Only the beggars go. A man with the wherewithal stays at home.'

'The man who is born poor stays poor, and that's all there is to it.'

'Tell me, now, is it true what people say, that the other is dead?' put in

a third mason.

'It's the big ones who say that, don't you see? They were afraid of the

other.'

'What a difference, how well everything went in his time! And to think

that he was betrayed by his Marshals! There must always be a traitor somewhere!'

This conversation comforted Julien a little. As he walked away he repeated to himself with a sigh:

'The only King whose memory the people cherish still!'

The examinations came round. Julien answered the questions in a brilliant manner; he saw that Chazel himself was seeking to display the whole extent of his knowledge.

On the first day, the examiners appointed by the famous VicarGeneral de Frilair greatly resented having always to place first, or at the very most second on their list this Julien Sorel who had been pointed out to them as the favourite of the abbe Pirard.

Wagers were made in the Seminary that in the aggregate list of the examinations, Julien would occupy the first place, a distinction that carried with it the honour of dining with the Bishop. But at the end of one session, in which the subject had been

the Fathers of the Church, a skilful examiner, after questioning Julien

upon Saint Jerome, and his passion for Cicero, began to speak of Horace,Virgil and other profane authors. Unknown to his companions, Julien

had learned by heart a great number of passages from these authors.

Carried away by his earlier successes, he forgot where he was and, at the

repeated request of the examiner, recited and paraphrased with enthusi

asm several odes of Horace. Having let him sink deeper and deeper for

twenty minutes, suddenly the examiner's face changed, and he delivered

a stinging rebuke to Julien for having wasted his time in these profane

studies, and stuffed his head with useless if not criminal thoughts.

'I am a fool, Sir, and you are right,' said Julien with a modest air, as he

saw the clever stratagem by which he had been taken in.

This ruse on the examiner's part was considered a dirty trick, even in

the Seminary, though this did not prevent M. l'abbe de Frilair, that clever

man, who had so ably organised the framework of the Bisontine Congreg

ation, and whose reports to Paris made judges, prefect, and even the gen

eral officers of the garrison tremble, from setting, with his powerful

hand, the number 198 against Julien's name. He was delighted thus to

mortify his enemy, the Jansenist Pirard.

For the last ten years his great ambition had been to remove Pirard

from control of the Seminary. That cleric, following in his own conduct

the principles which he had outlined to Julien, was sincere, devout, inno

cent of intrigue, devoted to his duty. But heaven, in its wrath, had given

196him that splenetic temperament, bound to feel deeply insults and hatred.

Not one of the affronts that were put upon him was lost upon his ardent

spirit. He would have offered his resignation a hundred times, but he be

lieved that he was of use in the post in which Providence had placed

him. 'I prevent the spread of Jesuitry and idolatry,' he used to say to

himself.

At the time of the examinations, it was perhaps two months since he

had spoken to Julien, and yet he was ill for a week, when, on receiving

the official letter announcing the result of the competition, he saw the

number 198 set against the name of that pupil whom he regarded as the

glory of his establishment. The only consolation for this stern character

was to concentrate upon Julien all the vigilance at his command. He was

delighted to find in him neither anger nor thoughts of revenge, nor

discouragement.

Some weeks later, Julien shuddered on receiving a letter; it bore the

Paris postmark. 'At last,' he thought, 'Madame de Renal has remembered

her promises.' A gentleman who signed himself Paul Sorel, and pro

fessed to be related to him, sent him a bill of exchange for five hundred

francs. The writer added that if Julien continued to study with success

the best Latin authors, a similar sum would be sent to him every year.

'It is she, it is her bounty!' Julien said to himself with emotion, 'she

wishes to comfort me; but why is there not one word of affection?'

He was mistaken with regard to the letter; Madame de Renal, under

the influence of her friend Madame Derville, was entirely absorbed in

her own profound remorse. In spite of herself, she often thought of the

strange creature whose coming into her life had so upset it, but she

would never have dreamed of writing to him.

If we spoke the language of the Seminary, we might see a miracle in

this windfall of five hundred francs, and say that it was M. de Frilair

himself that heaven had employed to make this gift to Julien.

Twelve years earlier, M. l'abbe de Frilair had arrived at Besancon with

the lightest of portmanteaux, which, the story went, contained his entire

fortune. He now found himself one of the wealthiest landowners in the

Department. In the course of his growing prosperity he had purchased

one half of an estate of which the other half passed by inheritance to M.

de La Mole. Hence a great lawsuit between these worthies.

Despite his brilliant existence in Paris, and the posts which he held at

court, the Marquis de La Mole felt that it was dangerous to fight down at

Besancon against a VicarGeneral who was reputed to make and unmake

197Prefects. Instead of asking for a gratuity of fifty thousand francs, dis

guised under some head or other that would pass in the budget, and al

lowing M. de Frilair to win this pettifogging action for fifty thousand

francs, the Marquis took offence. He believed that he had a case: a fine

reason!

For, if we may be so bold as to say it: what judge is there who has not a

son, or at least a cousin to help on in the world?

To enlighten the less clearsighted, a week after the first judgment that

he obtained, M. l'abbe de Frilair took the Bishop's carriage, and went in

person to convey the Cross of the Legion of Honour to his counsel. M. de

La Mole, somewhat dismayed by the bold front assumed by the other

side, and feeling that his own counsel were weakening, asked the advice

of the abbe Chelan, who put him in touch with M. Pirard.

At the date of our story they had been corresponding thus for some

years. The abbe Pirard dashed into the business with all the force of his

passionate nature. In constant communication with the Marquis's coun

sel, he studied his case, and finding him to be in the right, openly de

clared himself a partisan of the Marquis de La Mole against the all

powerful VicarGeneral. The latter was furious at such insolence, and

coming from a little Jansenist to boot!

'You see what these court nobles are worth who claim to have such

power!' the abbe de Frilair would say to his intimates; 'M. de La Mole has

not sent so much as a wretched Cross to his agent at Besancon, and is go

ing to allow him to be deprived of his post without a murmur. And yet,my friends write to me, this noble peer never allows a week to pass

without going to show off his blue riband in the drawing-room of the

Keeper of the Seals, for what that is worth.'

In spite of all M. Pirard's activity, and albeit M. de La Mole was always

on the best of terms with the Minister of Justice and still more with his

officials, all that he had been able to achieve, after six years of constant

effort, was to avoid actually losing his case.

In ceaseless correspondence with the abbe Pirard, over an affair which

they both pursued with passion, the Marquis came in time to appreciate

the abbe's type of mind. Gradually, despite the immense gulf between

their social positions, their correspondence took on a tone of friendship.

The abbe Pirard told the Marquis that his enemies were seeking to oblige

him, by their insults, to offer his resignation. In the anger which he felt at

the infamous stratagem (according to him) employed against Julien, he

related the latter's story to the Marquis.

198Although extremely rich, this great nobleman was not in the least a

miser. He had never once been able to make the abbe Pirard accept so

much as the cost of postage occasioned by the lawsuit. He took the op

portunity to send five hundred francs to the abbe's favourite pupil.

M. de La Mole took the trouble to write the covering letter with his

own hand. This set him thinking of the abbe.

One day the latter received a short note in which he was requested to

call at once, upon urgent business, at an inn on the outskirts of Besancon.

There he found M. de La Mole's steward.

'M. le Marquis has instructed me to bring you his carriage,' he was in

formed. 'He hopes that after you have read this letter, you will find it

convenient to start for Paris, in four or five days from now. I am going to

employ the time which you will be so kind as to indicate to me in visit

ing the estates of M. le Marquis in the Franche-Comte. After which, on

whatever day suits you, we shall start for Paris.'

The letter was brief:

'Rid yourself, my dear Sir, of all these provincial bickerings, come and

breathe a calmer air in Paris. I am sending you my carriage, which has

orders to await your decision for four days. I shall wait for you myself, in

Paris, until Tuesday. It requires only the word yes, from you, Sir, to

make me accept in your name one of the best livings in the neighbour

hood of Paris. The wealthiest of your future parishioners has never set

eyes on you, but is devoted to you more warmly than you can suppose;he is the Marquis de La Mole.'

Without knowing it, the stern abbe Pirard loved this Seminary,peopled with his enemies, to which, for fifteen years, he had devoted all

his thoughts. M. de La Mole's letter was to him like the sudden appear

ance of a surgeon with the duty of performing a painful but necessary

operation. His dismissal was certain. He gave the steward an appoint

ment, in three days' time.

For the next fortyeight hours, he was in a fever of uncertainty. Finally,he wrote to M. de La Mole and composed, for the Bishop's benefit, a let

ter, a masterpiece of ecclesiastical diction, though a trifle long. It would

have been difficult to find language more irreproachable, or breathing a

more sincere respect. And yet this letter, intended to give M. de Frilair a

trying hour with his patron, enumerated all the serious grounds for com

plaint and descended to the sordid little pinpricks which, after he had

borne them, with resignation, for six years, were forcing the abbe Pirard

to leave the diocese.

199They stole the wood from his shed, they poisoned his dog, etc., etc.

This letter written, he sent to awaken Julien who, at eight o'clock in the

evening, was already asleep, as were all the seminarists.

'You know where the Bishop's Palace is?' he said to him in the best

Latin; 'take this letter to Monseigneur. I shall not attempt to conceal from

you that I am sending you amongst wolves. Be all eyes and ears. No pre

varication in your answers; but remember that the man who is question

ing you would perhaps take a real delight in trying to harm you. I am

glad, my child, to give you this experience before I leave you, for I do not

conceal from you that the letter which you are taking contains my

resignation.'

Julien did not move; he was fond of the abbe Pirard. In vain might

prudence warn him:

'After this worthy man's departure, the Sacred Heart party will de

grade and perhaps even expel me.'

He could not think about himself. What embarrassed him was a sen

tence which he wished to cast in a polite form, but really he was incap

able of using his mind.

'Well, my friend, aren't you going?'

'You see, Sir, they say,' Julien began timidly, 'that during your long ad

ministration here, you have never put anything aside. I have six hundred

francs.'

Tears prevented him from continuing.

'That too will be noticed,' said the exDirector of the Seminary coldly.

'Go to the Palace, it is getting late.'

As luck would have it, that evening M. l'abbe de Frilair was in attend

ance in the Bishop's parlour; Monseigneur was dining at the Prefecture.

So that it was to M. de Frilair himself that Julien gave the letter, but he

did not know who he was.

Julien saw with astonishment that this priest boldly opened the letter

addressed to the Bishop. The fine features of the VicarGeneral soon re

vealed a surprise mingled with keen pleasure, and his gravity increased.

While he was reading, Julien, struck by his good looks, had time to ex

amine him. It was a face that would have had more gravity but for the

extreme subtlety that appeared in certain of its features, and would actu

ally have suggested dishonesty, if the owner of that handsome face had

ceased for a moment to control it. The nose, which was extremely prom

inent, formed an unbroken and perfectly straight line, and gave

200unfortunately to a profile that otherwise was most distinguished, an irre

mediable resemblance to the mask of a fox. In addition, this abbe who

seemed so greatly interested in M. Pirard's resignation, was dressed with

an elegance that greatly pleased Julien, who had never seen its like on

any other priest.

It was only afterwards that Julien learned what was the abbe de

Frilair's special talent. He knew how to amuse his Bishop, a pleasant old

man, made to live in Paris, who regarded Besancon as a place of exile.

This Bishop was extremely shortsighted, and passionately fond of fish.

The abbe de Frilair used to remove the bones from the fish that was set

before Monseigneur.

Julien was silently watching the abbe as he read over again the letter of

resignation, when suddenly the door burst open. A lackey, richly attired,passed rapidly through the room. Julien had barely time to turn towards

the door; he saw a little old man, wearing a pectoral cross. He fell on his

knees: the Bishop bestowed a kind smile upon him as he passed through

the room. The handsome abbe followed him, and Julien was left alone in

this parlour, the pious magnificence of which he could now admire at his

leisure.

The Bishop of Besancon, a man of character, tried, but not crushed by

the long hardships of the Emigration, was more than seventyfive, and

cared infinitely little about what might happen in the next ten years.

'Who is that cleverlooking seminarist, whom I seemed to see as I

passed?' said the Bishop. 'Ought they not, by my orders, to be in their

beds at this hour?'

'This one is quite wide awake, I assure you, Monseigneur, and he

brings great news: the resignation of the only Jansenist left in your dio

cese. That terrible abbe Pirard understands at last the meaning of a hint.'

'Well,' said the Bishop with a laugh, 'I defy you to fill his place with a

man of his quality. And to show you the value of the man, I invite him to

dine with me tomorrow.'

The VicarGeneral wished to insinuate a few words as to the choice of

a successor. The prelate, little disposed to discuss business, said to him:

'Before we put in the next man, let us try to discover why this one is

going. Fetch me in that seminarist, the truth is to be found in the mouths

of babes.'

Julien was summoned: 'I shall find myself trapped between two in

quisitors,' he thought. Never had he felt more courageous.

201At the moment of his entering the room, two tall valets, better dressed

than M. Valenod himself, were disrobing Monseigneur. The prelate, be

fore coming to the subject of M. Pirard, thought fit to question Julien

about his studies. He touched upon dogma, and was amazed. Presently

he turned to the Humanities, Virgil, Horace, Cicero. 'Those names,'

thought Julien, 'earned me my number 198. I have nothing more to lose,let us try to shine.' He was successful; the prelate, an excellent humanist

himself, was enchanted.

At dinner at the Prefecture, a girl, deservedly famous, had recited the

poem of La Madeleine.

6 He was in the mood for literary conversation,and at once forgot the abbe Pirard and everything else, in discussing

with the seminarist the important question, whether Horace had been

rich or poor. The prelate quoted a number of odes, but at times his

memory began to fail him, and immediately Julien would recite the en

tire ode, with a modest air; what struck the Bishop was that Julien never

departed from the tone of the conversation; he said his twenty or thirty

Latin verses as he would have spoken of what was going on in his Sem

inary. A long discussion followed of Virgil and Cicero. At length the pre

late could not refrain from paying the young seminarist a compliment.

'It would be impossible to have studied to better advantage.'

'Monseigneur,' said Julien, 'your Seminary can furnish you with one

hundred and ninetyseven subjects far less unworthy of your esteemed

approval.'

'How so?' said the prelate, astonished at this figure.

'I can support with official proof what I have the honour to say before

Monseigneur.

'At the annual examination of the Seminary, answering questions

upon these very subjects which have earned me, at this moment,Monseigneur's approval, I received the number 198.'

'Ah! This is the abbe Pirard's favourite,' exclaimed the Bishop, with a

laugh, and with a glance at M. de Frilair; 'we ought to have expected this;but it is all in fair play. Is it not the case, my friend,' he went on, turning

to Julien, 'that they waked you from your sleep to send you here?'

'Yes, Monseigneur. I have never left the Seminary alone in my life but

once, to go and help M. l'abbe ChasBernard to decorate the Cathedral,on the feast of Corpus Christi.'

6.A poem by Delphine Gay

202'Optime,' said the Bishop; 'what, it was you that showed such great

courage, by placing the bunches of plumes on the baldachino? They

make me shudder every year; I am always afraid of their costing me a

man's life. My friend, you will go far; but I do not wish to cut short your

career, which will be brilliant, by letting you die of hunger.'

And, on an order from the Bishop, the servants brought in biscuits and

Malaga wine, to which Julien did honour, and even more so than abbe

Frilair, who knew that his Bishop liked to see him eat cheerfully and

with a good appetite.

The prelate, growing more and more pleased with the close of his

evening, spoke for a moment of ecclesiastical history. He saw that Julien

did not understand. He then passed to the moral conditions of the Ro

man Empire, under the Emperors of the Age of Constantine. The last

days of paganism were accompanied by that state of uneasiness and

doubt which, in the nineteenth century, is disturbing sad and weary

minds. Monseigneur remarked that Julien seemed hardly to know even

the name of Tacitus.

Julien replied with candour, to the astonishment of the prelate, that

this author was not to be found in the library of the Seminary.

'I am really delighted to hear it,' said the Bishop merrily. 'You relieve

me of a difficulty; for the last ten minutes, I have been trying to think of a

way of thanking you for the pleasant evening which you have given me,and certainly in a most unexpected manner. Although the gift is scarcely

canonical, I should like to give you a set of Tacitus.'

The prelate sent for eight volumes handsomely bound, and insisted

upon writing with his own hand, on the titlepage of the first, a Latin in

scription to Julien Sorel. The Bishop prided himself on his fine Latinity;he ended by saying to him, in a serious tone, completely at variance with

his tone throughout the rest of the conversation:

'Young man, if you are wise, you shall one day have the best living in

my diocese, and not a hundred leagues from my episcopal Palace; but

you must be wise.'

Julien, burdened with his volumes, left the Palace, in great bewilder

ment, as midnight was striking.

Monseigneur had not said a word to him about the abbe Pirard. Julien

was astonished most of all by the extreme politeness shown him by the

Bishop. He had never imagined such an urbanity of form, combined

with so natural an air of dignity. He was greatly struck by the contrast

203when he set eyes once more on the sombre abbe Pirard, who awaited

him with growing impatience.

'Quid tibi dixerunt? (What did they say to you?)' he shouted at the top

of his voice, the moment Julien came within sight.

Then, as Julien found some difficulty in translating the Bishop's con

versation into Latin:

'Speak French, and repeat to me Monseigneur's own words, without

adding or omitting anything,' said the exDirector of the Seminary, in his

harsh tone and profoundly inelegant manner.

'What a strange present for a Bishop to make to a young seminarist,' he

said as he turned the pages of the sumptuous Tacitus, the gilded edges of

which seemed to fill him with horror.

Two o'clock was striking when, after a detailed report of everything,he allowed his favourite pupil to retire to his own room.

'Leave me the first volume of your Tacitus, which contains the

Bishop's inscription,' he said to him. 'That line of Latin will be your light

ning conductor in this place, when I have gone.

'Erit tibi, fili mi, successor meus tanquam leo quaerens quern devoret. (My

successor will be to you, my son, as a lion seeking whom he may

devour.)'

On the following morning, Julien detected something strange in the

manner in which his companions addressed him. This made him all the

more reserved. 'Here,' he thought, 'we have the effect of M. Pirard's

resignation. It is known throughout the place, and I am supposed to be

his favourite. There must be an insult behind this attitude'; but he could

not discover it. There was, on the contrary, an absence of hatred in the

eyes of all whom he encountered in the dormitories. 'What can this

mean? It is doubtless a trap, we are playing a close game.' At length the

young seminarist from Verrieres said to him with a laugh: 'Cornelii Taciti

opera omnia (Complete Works of Tacitus).'

At this speech, which was overheard, all the rest seemed to vie with

one another in congratulating Julien, not only upon the magnificent

present which he had received from Monseigneur, but also upon the two

hours of conversation with which he had been honoured. It was common

knowledge, down to the most trifling details. From this moment, there

was no more jealousy; everyone paid court to him most humbly; the

abbe Castanede who, only yesterday, had treated him with the utmost

insolence, came to take him by the arm and invited him to luncheon.

204Owing to a weakness in Julien's character, the insolence of these coarse

creatures had greatly distressed him; their servility caused him disgust

and no pleasure.

Towards midday, the abbe Pirard took leave of his pupils, not without

first delivering a severe allocution. 'Do you seek the honours of this

world,' he said to them, 'all social advantages, the pleasure of command

ing men, that of defying the laws and of being insolent to all men with

impunity? Or indeed do you seek your eternal salvation? The most ig

norant among you have only to open their eyes to distinguish between

the two paths.'

No sooner had he left than the devotees of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

went to chant a Te Deum in the chapel. Nobody in the Seminary took the

late Director's allocution seriously. 'He is very cross at being dismissed,'

was what might be heard on all sides. Not one seminarist was simple

enough to believe in the voluntary resignation of a post which provided

so many opportunities for dealing with the big contractors.

The abbe Pirard took up his abode in the best inn in Besancon; and on

the pretext of some imaginary private affairs, proposed to spend a

couple of days there.

The Bishop invited him to dinner, and, to tease his VicarGeneral, de

Frilair, endeavoured to make him shine. They had reached the dessert

when there arrived from Paris the strange tidings that the abbe Pirard

was appointed to the splendid living of N ——, within four leagues of

the capital. The worthy prelate congratulated him sincerely. He saw in

the whole affair a well played game which put him in a good humour

and gave him the highest opinion of the abbe's talents. He bestowed

upon him a magnificent certificate in Latin, and silenced the abbe de Fri

lair, who ventured to make remonstrances.

That evening, Monseigneur carried his admiration to the drawing

room of the Marquise de Rubempre. It was a great piece of news for the

select society of Besancon; people were lost in conjectures as to the mean

ing of this extraordinary favour. They saw the abbe Pirard a Bishop

already. The sharper wits supposed M. de La Mole to have become a

Minister, and allowed themselves that evening to smile at the imperious

airs which M. l'abbe de Frilair assumed in society.

Next morning, the abbe Pirard was almost followed through the

streets, and the tradesmen came out to their shopdoors when he went to

beg an audience of the Marquis's judges. For the first time, he was re

ceived by them with civility. The stern Jansenist, indignant at everything

205that he saw around him, spent a long time at work with the counsel

whom he had chosen for the Marquis de La Mole, and then left for Paris.

He was so foolish as to say to two or three lifelong friends who escorted

him to the carriage and stood admiring its heraldic blason, that after gov

erning the Seminary for fifteen years he was leaving Besancon with five

hundred and twenty francs in savings. These friends embraced him with

tears in their eyes, and then said to one another: The good abbe might

have spared himself that lie, it is really too absurd.'

The common herd, blinded by love of money, were not fitted to under

stand that it was in his sincerity that the abbe Pirard had found the

strength to fight singlehanded for six years against Marie Alacoque, the

Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Jesuits and his Bishop.

206chapter30

Ambition

There is only one true nobility left; namely, the title of Duke; Mar

quis is absurd, at the word Duke one turns one's head.

The Edinburgh Review7

The Marquis de La Mole received the abbe Pirard without any of those

little mannerisms of a great gentleman, outwardly so polite, but so im

pertinent to him who understands them. It would have been a waste of

time, and the Marquis was so far immersed in public business as to have

no time to waste.

For six months he had been intriguing to make both King and nation

accept a certain Ministry, which, as a mark of gratitude, would make him

a Duke.

The Marquis had appealed in vain, year after year, to his lawyer at

Besancon for a clear and definite report on his lawsuits in the Franche

Comte. How was the eminent lawyer to explain them to him, if he did

not understand them himself?

The little slip of paper which the abbe gave him explained everything.

'My dear abbe,' said the Marquis, after polishing off in less than five

minutes all the polite formulas and personal inquiries, 'my dear abbe, in

the midst of my supposed prosperity, I lack the time to occupy myself

seriously with two little matters which nevertheless are of considerable

importance: my family and my affairs. I take the greatest interest in the

fortunes of my house, I may carry it far; I look after my pleasures, and

that is what must come before everything else, at least in my eyes,' he

went on, noticing the astonishment in the eyes of the abbe Pirard. Al

though a man of sense, the abbe was amazed to see an old man talking

so openly of his pleasures.

7.I have translated this motto, which is quoted in French by Stendahl, but have not

been able to find the original passage in the Edinburgh Review. C. K. S. M.

207'Work does no doubt exist in Paris,' the great nobleman continued, 'but

perched in the attics; and as soon as I come in contact with a man, he

takes an apartment on the second floor, and his wife starts a day; con

sequently, no more work, no effort except to be or to appear to be a man

of fashion. That is their sole interest once they are provided with bread.

'For my lawsuits, to be strictly accurate, and also for each lawsuit sep

arately, I have lawyers who work themselves to death; one of them died

of consumption, the day before yesterday. But, for my affairs in general,would you believe, Sir, that for the last three years I have given up hope

of finding a man who, while he is writing for me, will deign to think a

little seriously of what he is doing. However, all this is only a preamble.

'I respect you, and, I would venture to add, although we meet for the

first time, I like you. Will you be my secretary, with a salary of eight

thousand francs, or indeed twice that sum? I shall gain even more, I as

sure you; and I shall make it my business to keep your fine living for

you, for the day on which we cease to agree.'

The abbe declined, but towards the end of the conversation, the sight

of the Marquis's genuine embarrassment suggested an idea to him.

'I have left down in my Seminary a poor young man who, if I be not

mistaken, is going to be brutally persecuted. If he were only a simple

monk he would be already in pace.

'At present this young man knows only Latin and the Holy Scriptures;but it is by no means impossible that one day he may display great tal

ent, either for preaching or for the guidance of souls. I do not know what

he will do; but he has the sacred fire, he may go far. I intended to give

him to our Bishop, should one ever be sent to us who had something of

your way of looking at men and affairs.'

'What is your young man's origin?' said the Marquis.

'He is said to be the son of a carpenter in our mountains, but I am in

clined to believe that he is the natural son of some rich man. I have seen

him receive an anonymous or pseudonymous letter containing a bill of

exchange for five hundred francs.'

'Ah! It is Julien Sorel,' said the Marquis.

'How do you know his name?' asked the astonished abbe; and, as he

was blushing at his own question:

'That is what I am not going to tell you,' replied the Marquis.

208'Very well!' the abbe went on, 'you might try making him your secret

ary, he has energy, and judgment; in short, it is an experiment worth

trying.'

'Why not?' said the Marquis; 'but would he be the sort of man to let his

palm be greased by the Prefect of Police or by anyone else, to play the

spy on me? That is my only objection.'

Receiving favourable assurances from the abbe Pirard, the Marquis

produced a note for one thousand francs:

'Send this to Julien Sorel for his journey; tell him to come to me.'

'One can see,' said the abbe Pirard, 'that you live in Paris! You are un

aware of the tyranny that weighs upon us poor provincials, and espe

cially upon priests who are not on good terms with the Jesuits. They will

never allow Julien Sorel to leave, they will manage to cover themselves

with the cleverest excuses, they will reply that he is ill, letters will have

gone astray in the post,' etc., etc.

'One of these days I shall procure a letter from the Minister to the Bish

op,' said the Marquis.

'I was forgetting one thing,' said the abbe: 'this young man, although

of quite humble birth, has a proud heart, he will be of no use to you if his

pride is offended; you will only make him stupid.'

'I like that,' said the Marquis, 'I shall make him my son's companion,will that do?'

Some time after this, Julien received a letter in an unknown hand and

bearing the postmark of Chalons, and found a draft upon a merchant in

Besancon and instructions to proceed to Paris without delay. The letter

was signed with an assumed name, but as he opened it Julien trembled:

a leaf from a tree had fallen out at his feet; it was the signal arranged

between him and the abbe Pirard.

Within an hour, Julien was summoned to the Bishop's Palace, where

he found himself greeted with a wholly fatherly welcome. Interspersed

with quotations from Horace, Monseigneur paid him, with regard to the

exalted destiny that awaited him in Paris, a number of very neat compli

ments, which required an explanation if he were to express his thanks.

Julien could say nothing, chiefly because he knew nothing, and Monsei

gneur showed a high regard for him. One of the minor clergy of the

Palace wrote to the Mayor who made haste to appear in person bringing

a passport already signed, but with a blank space for the name of the

traveller.

209Before midnight, Julien was with Fouque, whose sober mind was more

astonished than delighted by the future which seemed to be in store for

his friend.

'The end of it will be,' said this Liberal elector, 'a post under Govern

ment, which will oblige you to take some action that will be pilloried in

the newspapers. It will be through your disgrace that I shall have news

of you. Remember that, even financially speaking, it is better to earn one

hundred louis in an honest trade in timber, where you are your own

master, than to receive four thousand francs from a Government, were it

that of King Solomon himself.'

Julien saw no more in this than the pettiness of a rustic mind. He was

at last going to appear on the stage of great events. The good fortune of

going to Paris, which he peopled in his imagination with men of intelli

gence, great intriguers, great hypocrites, but as courteous as the Bishop

of Besancon and the Bishop of Agde, eclipsed everything else in his eyes.

He represented himself to his friend as deprived of his free will by the

abbe Pirard's letter.

Towards noon on the following day he arrived in Verrieres the happi

est of men, he reckoned upon seeing Madame de Renal again. He went

first of all to his original protector, the good abbe Chelan. He met with a

stern reception.

'Do you consider that you are under any obligation to me?' said M.

Chelan, without acknowledging his greeting. 'You will take luncheon

with me, meanwhile another horse will be hired for you, and you will

leave Verrieres, without seeing anyone.'

'To hear is to obey,' replied Julien, with the prim face of a seminarist;and there was no further discussion save of theology and Latin

scholarship.

He mounted his horse, rode a league, after which, coming upon a

wood, with no one to see him enter it, he hid himself there. At sunset he

sent the horse back. Later on, he entered the house of a peasant, who

agreed to sell him a ladder, and to go with him, carrying the ladder, to

the little wood that overhung the Cours de la Fidelite, in Verrieres.

'We are a poor conscript deserting—or a smuggler,' said the peasant,as he took leave of him, 'but what do I care? My ladder is well paid for,and I myself have had to pass some awkward moments in my life.'

The night was very dark. About one o'clock in the morning, Julien, car

rying his ladder, made his way into Verrieres. He climbed down as soon

210as he could into the bed of the torrent, which ran through M. de Renal's

magnificent gardens at a depth of ten feet, and confined between walls.

Julien climbed up easily by his ladder. 'What sort of greeting will the

watchdogs give me?' he wondered. 'That is the whole question.' The

dogs barked, and rushed towards him; but he whistled softly, and they

came and fawned upon him.

Then climbing from terrace to terrace, although all the gates were shut,he had no difficulty in arriving immediately beneath the window of Ma

dame de Renal's bedroom, which, on the garden side, was no more than

nine or ten feet above the ground.

There was in the shutters a small opening in the shape of a heart,which Julien knew well. To his great dismay, this little opening was not

lighted by the glimmer of a nightlight within.

'Great God!' he said to himself; 'tonight, of all nights, this room is not

occupied by Madame de Renal! Where can she be sleeping? The family

are at Verrieres, since I found the dogs here; but I may in this room,without a light, come upon M. de Renal himself or a stranger, and then

what a scandal!'

The most prudent course was to retire; but the idea filled Julien with

horror. 'If it is a stranger, I shall make off as fast as my legs will carry me,leaving my ladder behind; but if it is she, what sort of welcome awaits

me? She is steeped in repentance and the most extreme piety, I may be

sure of that; but after all, she has still some memory of me, since she has

just written to me.' With this argument he made up his mind.

His heart trembling, but determined nevertheless to see her or to per

ish, he flung a handful of gravel against the shutter; no reply. He placed

his ladder against the wall by the side of the window and tapped himself

on the shutter, softly at first then more loudly. 'Dark as it is, they may

fire a gun at me,' thought Julien. This thought reduced his mad under

taking to a question of physical courage.

'This room is unoccupied tonight,' he thought, 'or else whoever it is

that is sleeping here is awake by this time. So there is no need for any

further precaution here; all I need think of is not making myself heard by

the people who are sleeping in the other rooms.'

He stepped down, placed his ladder against one of the shutters,climbed up again and passing his hand through the heartshaped open

ing, was fortunate in finding almost at once the wire fastened to the latch

that closed the shutter. He pulled this wire; it was with an unspeakable

joy that he felt that the shutter was no longer closed and was yielding to

211his efforts. 'I must open it little by little and let her recognise my voice.'

He opened the shutter sufficiently to pass his head through the gap, re

peating in a whisper: 'It is a friend.'

He made certain, by applying his ear, that nothing broke the profound

silence in the room. But decidedly, there was no nightlight, even half ex

tinguished, on the hearth; this was indeed a bad sign.

'Beware of a gunshot!' He thought for a moment; then, with one finger,ventured to tap the pane: no response; he tapped more loudly. 'Even if I

break the glass, I must settle this business.' As he was knocking hard, he

thought he could just make out, in the pitch darkness, something like a

white phantom coming across the room. In a moment, there was no

doubt about it, he did see a phantom which seemed to be advancing

with extreme slowness. Suddenly he saw a cheek pressed to the pane to

which his eye was applied.

He shuddered, and recoiled slightly. But the night was so dark that,even at this close range, he could not make out whether it was Madame

de Renal. He feared an instinctive cry of alarm; he could hear the dogs

prowling with muttered growls round the foot of his ladder. 'It is I,' he

repeated, quite loudly, 'a friend.' No answer; the white phantom had

vanished. 'For pity's sake, open the window. I must speak to you, I am

too wretched!' and he knocked until the window nearly broke.

A little sharp sound was heard; the catch of the window gave way; he

pushed it open and sprang lightly into the room.

The white phantom moved away; he seized it by the arms; it was a

woman. All his ideas of courage melted. 'If it is she, what will she say to

me?' What was his state when he realised from a faint cry that it was Ma

dame de Renal.

He gathered her in his arms; she trembled, and had barely the strength

to repulse him.

'Wretch! What are you doing?'

Scarcely could her tremulous voice articulate the words. Julien saw

that she was genuinely angry.

'I have come to see you after fourteen months of a cruel parting.'

'Go, leave me this instant. Ah! M. Chelan, why did you forbid me to

write to him? I should have prevented this horror.' She thrust him from

her with a force that was indeed extraordinary. 'I repent of my crime;heaven has deigned to enlighten me,' she repeated in a stifled voice. 'Go!

Fly!'

212'After fourteen months of misery, I shall certainly not leave you until I

have spoken to you. I wish to know all that you have been doing. Ah! I

have loved you well enough to deserve this confidence … I wish to know

all.'

In spite of herself Madame de Renal felt this tone of authority exert its

influence over her heart.

Julien, who was holding her in a passionate embrace, and resisting her

efforts to liberate herself, ceased to press her in his arms. This relaxation

helped to reassure Madame de Renal.

'I am going to draw up the ladder,' he said, 'so that it may not com

promise us if one of the servants, awakened by the noise, goes the

rounds.'

'Ah! Leave me, leave me rather,' the answer came with unfeigned an

ger. 'What do men matter to me? It is God that sees the terrible wrong

you are doing me, and will punish me for it. You are taking a cowardly

advantage of the regard that I once felt for you, but no longer feel. Do

you hear, Master Julien?'

He drew up the ladder very slowly, so as not to make any noise.

'Is your husband in town?' he asked, not to defy her, but from force of

habit.

'Do not speak to me so, for pity's sake, or I shall call my husband. I am

all too guilty already of not having sent you away, at any cost. I pity

you,' she told him, seeking to wound his pride which she knew to be so

irritable.

Her refusal to use the tu form, that abrupt method of breaking so

tender a bond, and one upon which he still reckoned, roused Julien's

amorous transport to a frenzy.

'What! Is it possible that you no longer love me!' he said to her, in

those accents of the heart to which it is so difficult to listen unmoved.

She made no reply; as for him, he was weeping bitter tears.

Really, he had no longer the strength to speak.

'And so I am completely forgotten by the one person who has ever

loved me! What use to live any longer?' All his courage had left him as

soon as he no longer had to fear the danger of encountering a man;everything had vanished from his heart, save love.

He wept for a long time in silence. He took her hand, she tried to with

draw it; and yet, after a few almost convulsive movements, she let him

213keep it. The darkness was intense; they found themselves both seated

upon Madame de Renal's bed.

'What a difference from the state of things fourteen months ago!'

thought Julien, and his flow of tears increased. 'So absence unfailingly

destroys all human feelings!

'Be so kind as to tell me what has happened to you,' Julien said at

length, embarrassed by his silence and in a voice almost stifled by tears.

'There can be no doubt,' replied Madame de Renal in a harsh voice, the

tone of which offered a cutting reproach to Julien, 'my misdeeds were

known in the town, at the time of your departure. You were so im

prudent in your behaviour. Some time later, when I was in despair, the

respectable M. Chelan came to see me. It was in vain that, for a long

time, he sought to obtain a confession. One day, the idea occurred to him

to take me into that church at Dijon in which I made my first Commu

nion. There, he ventured to broach the subject… ' Madame de Renal's

speech was interrupted by her tears. 'What a shameful moment! I con

fessed all. That worthy man was kind enough not to heap on me the

weight of his indignation: he shared my distress. At that time I was writ

ing you day after day letters which I dared not send you; I concealed

them carefully, and when I was too wretched used to shut myself up in

my room and read over my own letters.

'At length, M. Chelan persuaded me to hand them over to him…

Some of them, written with a little more prudence than the rest, had been

sent to you; never once did you answer me.'

'Never, I swear to you, did I receive any letter from you at the

Seminary.'

'Great God! who can have intercepted them?'

'Imagine my grief; until the day when I saw you in the Cathedral, I did

not know whether you were still alive.'

'God in His mercy made me understand how greatly I was sinning

against Him, against my children, against my husband,' replied Madame

de Renal. 'He has never loved me as I believed then that you loved me…

'

Julien flung himself into her arms, without any definite intention but

with entire lack of selfcontrol. But Madame de Renal thrust him from

her, and continued quite firmly:

'My respectable friend M. Chelan made me realise that, in marrying M.

de Renal, I had pledged all my affections to him, even those of which I

214was still ignorant, which I had never felt before a certain fatal intim

acy… Since the great sacrifice of those letters, which were so precious to

me, my life has flowed on, if not happily, at any rate quietly enough. Do

not disturb it any more; be a friend to me… the best of friends.' Julien

covered her hands with kisses; she could feel that he was still crying. 'Do

not cry, you distress me so … Tell me, it is your turn now, all that you

have been doing.' Julien was unable to speak. 'I wish to know what sort

of life you led at the Seminary,' she repeated, 'then you shall go.'

Without a thought of what he was telling her, Julien spoke of the end

less intrigues and jealousies which he had encountered at first, then of

his more peaceful life after he was appointed tutor.

'It was then,' he added, 'that after a long silence, which was doubtless

intended to make me understand what I see only too clearly now, that

you no longer love me, and that I had become as nothing to you… '

Madame de Renal gripped his hands. 'It was then that you sent me a

sum of five hundred francs.'

'Never,' said Madame de Renal.

'It was a letter postmarked Paris and signed Paul Sorel, to avoid all

suspicion.'

A short discussion followed as to the possible source of this letter. The

atmosphere began to change. Unconsciously, Madame de Renal and Juli

en had departed from their solemn tone; they had returned to that of a

tender intimacy. They could not see each other, so intense was the dark

ness, but the sound of their voices told all. Julien slipped his arm round

the waist of his mistress; this movement was highly dangerous. She tried

to remove Julien's arm, whereupon he, with a certain adroitness, distrac

ted her attention by an interesting point in his narrative.

The arm was then forgotten, and remained in the position that it had

occupied.

After abundant conjectures as to the source of the letter with the five

hundred francs, Julien had resumed his narrative; he became rather more

his own master in speaking of his past life which, in comparison with

what was happening to him at that moment, interested him so little. His

attention was wholly concentrated on the manner in which his visit was

to end. 'You must leave me,' she kept on telling him, in a curt tone.

'What a disgrace for me if I am shown the door! The remorse will be

enough to poison my whole life,' he said to himself, 'she will never write

to me. God knows when I shall return to this place!' From that moment,215all the element of heavenly bliss in Julien's situation vanished rapidly

from his heart. Seated by the side of a woman whom he adored, clasping

her almost in his arms, in this room in which he had been so happy,plunged in a black darkness, perfectly well aware that for the last minute

she had been crying, feeling, from the movement of her bosom, that she

was convulsed with sobs, he unfortunately became a frigid politician, al

most as calculating and as frigid as when, in the courtyard of the Semin

ary, he saw himself made the butt of some malicious joke by one of his

companions stronger than himself. Julien spun out his story, and spoke

of the wretched life he had led since leaving Verrieres. 'And so,' Madame

de Renal said to herself, 'after a year's absence, almost without a single

token of remembrance, while I was forgetting him, his mind was entirely

taken up with the happy days he had enjoyed at Vergy.' Her sobs in

creased in violence. Julien saw that his story had been successful. He

realised that he must now try his last weapon: he came abruptly to the

letter that he had just received from Paris.

'I have taken leave of Monseigneur, the Bishop.'

'What! You are not returning to Besancon! You are leaving us for ever?'

'Yes,' replied Julien, in a resolute tone; 'yes, I am abandoning the place

where I am forgotten even by her whom I have most dearly loved in all

my life, and I am leaving it never to set eyes on it again. I am going to

Paris … '

'You are going to Paris!' Madame de Renal exclaimed quite aloud.

Her voice was almost stifled by her tears, and showed the intensity of

her grief. Julien had need of this encouragement; he was going to at

tempt a course which might decide everything against him; and before

this exclamation, seeing no light, he was absolutely ignorant of the effect

that he was producing. He hesitated no longer; the fear of remorse gave

him complete command of himself; he added coldly as he rose to his feet:

'Yes, Madame, I leave you for ever, may you be happy; farewell.'

He took a few steps towards the window; he was already opening it.

Madame de Renal sprang after him and flung herself into his arms.

Thus, after three hours of conversation, Julien obtained what he had so

passionately desired during the first two. Had they come a little earlier,this return to tender sentiments, the eclipse of remorse in Madame de

Renal would have been a divine happiness; obtained thus by artifice,they were no more than mere pleasure. Julien positively insisted, against

the entreaties of his mistress, upon lighting the nightlight.

216'Do you then wish me,' he asked her, 'to retain no memory of having

seen you? The love that is doubtless glowing in those charming eyes,shall it then be lost to me? Shall the whiteness of that lovely hand be in

visible to me? Think that I am leaving you for a very long time perhaps!'

Madame de Renal could refuse nothing in the face of this idea which

made her dissolve in tears. Dawn was beginning to paint in clear hues

the outline of the fir trees on the mountain to the least of Verrieres. In

stead of going away, Julien, intoxicated with pleasure, asked Madame de

Renal to let him spend the whole day hidden in her room, and not to

leave until the following night.

'And why not?' was her answer. 'This fatal relapse destroys all my self

esteem, and dooms me to lifelong misery,' and she pressed him to her

heart. 'My husband is no longer the same, he has suspicions; he believes

that I have been fooling him throughout this affair, and is in the worst of

tempers with me. If he hears the least sound I am lost, he will drive me

from the house like the wretch that I am.'

'Ah! There I can hear the voice of M. Chelan,' said Julien; you would

not have spoken to me like that before my cruel departure for the Semin

ary; you loved me then!'

Julien was rewarded for the coolness with which he had uttered this

speech; he saw his mistress at once forget the danger in which the prox

imity of her husband involved her, to think of the far greater danger of

seeing Julien doubtful of her love for him. The daylight was rapidly in

creasing and now flooded the room; Julien recovered all the exquisite

sensations of pride when he was once more able to see in his arms and

almost at his feet this charming woman, the only woman that he had

ever loved, who, a few hours earlier, had been entirely wrapped up in

the fear of a terrible God and in devotion to duty. Resolutions fortified

by a year of constancy had not been able to hold out against his

boldness.

Presently they heard a sound in the house; a consideration to which

she had not given a thought now disturbed Madame de Renal.

'That wicked Elisa will be coming into the room, what are we to do

with that enormous ladder?' she said to her lover; 'where are we to hide

it? I am going to take it up to the loft,' she suddenly exclaimed, with a

sort of playfulness.

'But you will have to go through the servant's room,' said Julien with

astonishment.

217'I shall leave the ladder in the corridor, call the man and send him on

an errand.'

'Remember to have some excuse ready in case the man notices the lad

der when he passes it in the passage.'

'Yes, my angel,' said Madame de Renal as she gave him a kiss. 'And

you, remember to hide yourself quickly under the bed if Elisa comes into

the room while I am away.'

Julien was amazed at this sudden gaiety. 'And so,' he thought, 'the ap

proach of physical danger, so far from disturbing her, restores her gaiety

because she forgets her remorse! Indeed a superior woman! Ah! There is

a heart in which it is glorious to reign!' Julien was in ecstasies.

Madame de Renal took the ladder; plainly it was too heavy for her.

Julien went to her assistance; he was admiring that elegant figure, which

suggested anything rather than strength, when suddenly, without help,she grasped the ladder and picked it up as she might have picked up a

chair. She carried it swiftly to the corridor on the third storey, where she

laid it down by the wall. She called the manservant, and, to give him

time to put on his clothes, went up to the dovecote. Five minutes later,when she returned to the corridor, the ladder was no more to be seen.

What had become of it? Had Julien been out of the house, the danger

would have been nothing. But, at that moment, if her husband saw the

ladder! The consequences might be appalling. Madame de Renal ran up

and down the house. At last she discovered the ladder under the roof,where the man had taken it and in fact hidden it himself. This in itself

was strange, and at another time would have alarmed her.

'What does it matter to me,' she thought, 'what may happen in twenty

four hours from now, when Julien will have gone? Will not everything

then be to me horror and remorse?'

She had a sort of vague idea that she ought to take her life, but what

did that matter? After a parting which she had supposed to be for ever,he was restored to her, she saw him again, and what he had done in

making his way to her gave proof of such a wealth of love!

In telling Julien of the incident of the ladder:

'What shall I say to my husband,' she asked him, 'if the man tells him

how he found the ladder?' She meditated for a moment. 'It will take

them twentyfour hours to discover the peasant who sold it to you'; and

flinging herself into Julien's arms and clasping him in a convulsive

218embrace: 'Ah! to die, to die like this!' she cried as she covered him with

kisses; 'but I must not let you die of hunger,' she added with a laugh.

'Come; first of all, I am going to hide you in Madame Derville's room,which is always kept locked.' She kept watch at the end of the corridor

and Julien slipped from door to door. 'Remember not to answer, if any

one knocks,' she reminded him as she turned the key outside; 'anyhow, it

would only be the children playing.'

'Make them go into the garden, below the window,' said Julien, 'so that

I may have the pleasure of seeing them, make them speak.'

'Yes, yes,' cried Madame de Renal as she left him.

She returned presently with oranges, biscuits, a bottle of Malaga; she

had found it impossible to purloin any bread.

'What is your husband doing?' said Julien.

'He is writing down notes of the deals he proposes to do with some

peasants.'

But eight o'clock had struck, the house was full of noise. If Madame de

Renal were not to be seen, people would begin searching everywhere for

her; she was obliged to leave him. Presently she returned, in defiance of

all the rules of prudence, to bring him a cup of coffee; she was afraid of

his dying of hunger. After luncheon she managed to shepherd the chil

dren underneath the window of Madame Derville's room. He found that

they had grown considerably, but they had acquired a common air, or

else his ideas had changed. Madame de Renal spoke to them of Julien.

The eldest replied with affection and regret for his former tutor, but it

appeared that the two younger had almost forgotten him.

M. de Renal did not leave the house that morning; he was incessantly

going up and downstairs, engaged in striking bargains with certain peas

ants, to whom he was selling his potato crop. Until dinner time, Madame

de Renal had not a moment to spare for her prisoner. When dinner was

on the table, it occurred to her to steal a plateful of hot soup for him. As

she silently approached the door of the room in which he was, carrying

the plate carefully, she found herself face to face with the servant who

had hidden the ladder that morning. At that moment, he too was coming

silently along the corridor, as though listening. Probably Julien had for

gotten to tread softly. The servant made off in some confusion. Madame

de Renal went boldly into Julien's room; her account of the incident

made him shudder.

219'You are afraid'; she said to him; 'and I, I would brave all the dangers

in the world without a tremor. I fear one thing only, that is the moment

when I shall be left alone after you have gone,' and she ran from the

room.

'Ah!' thought Julien, greatly excited, 'remorse is the only danger that

sublime soul dreads!'

Night came at last. M. de Renal went to the Casino.

His wife had announced a severe headache, she retired to her room,made haste to dismiss Elisa, and speedily rose from her bed to open the

door to Julien.

It so happened that he really was faint with hunger. Madame de Renal

went to the pantry to look for bread. Julien heard a loud cry. She re

turned and told him that on entering the dark pantry, making her way to

a cupboard in which the bread was kept, and stretching out her hand,she had touched a woman's arm. It was Elisa who had uttered the cry

which Julien had heard.

'What was she doing there?'

'She was stealing a few sweetmeats, or possibly spying on us,' said

Madame de Renal with complete indifference. 'But fortunately I have

found a pate and a big loaf.'

'And what have you got there?' said Julien, pointing to the pockets of

her apron.

Madame de Renal had forgotten that, ever since dinner, they had been

filled with bread.

Julien clasped her in his arms with the keenest passion; never had she

seemed to him so beautiful. 'Even in Paris,' he told himself vaguely, 'I

shall not be able to find a nobler character.' She had all the awkwardness

of a woman little accustomed to attentions of this sort, and at the same

time the true courage of a person who fears only dangers of another kind

and far more terrible.

While Julien was devouring his supper with a keen appetite, and his

mistress was playfully apologising for the simplicity of the repast, for

she had a horror of serious speech, the door of the room was all at once

shaken violently. It was M. de Renal.

'Why have you locked yourself in?' he shouted to her.

Julien had just time to slip beneath the sofa.

220'What! You are fully dressed,' said M. de Renal, as he entered; 'you are

having supper, and you have locked your door?'

On any ordinary day, this question, put with all the brutality of a hus

band, would have troubled Madame de Renal, but she felt that her hus

band had only to lower his eyes a little to catch sight of Julien; for M. de

Renal had flung himself upon the chair on which Julien had been sitting

a moment earlier, facing the sofa.

Her headache served as an excuse for everything. While in his turn her

husband was giving her a long and detailed account of the pool he had

won in the billiard room of the Casino, 'a pool of nineteen francs, begad!'

he added, she saw lying on a chair before their eyes, and within a few

feet of them, Julien's hat. Cooler than ever, she began to undress, and,choosing her moment, passed swiftly behind her husband and flung a

garment over the chair with the hat on it.

At length M. de Renal left her. She begged Julien to begin over again

the story of his life in the Seminary: 'Yesterday I was not listening to you,I was thinking, while you were speaking, only of how I was to bring my

self to send you away.'

She was the embodiment of imprudence. They spoke very loud; and it

might have been two o'clock in the morning when they were interrupted

by a violent blow on the door. It was M. de Renal again:

'Let me in at once, there are burglars in the house!' he said, 'SaintJean

found their ladder this morning.'

'This is the end of everything,' cried Madame de Renal, throwing her

self into Julien's arms. 'He is going to kill us both, he does not believe in

the burglars; I am going to die in your arms, more fortunate in my death

than I have been in my life.' She made no answer to her husband, who

was waiting angrily outside, she was holding Julien in a passionate

embrace.

'Save Stanislas's mother,' he said to her with an air of command. 'I am

going to jump down into the courtyard from the window of the closet,and escape through the garden, the dogs know me. Make a bundle of my

clothes and throw it down into the garden as soon as you can. Mean

while, let him break the door in. And whatever you do, no confession, I

forbid it, suspicion is better than certainty.'

'You will kill yourself, jumping down,' was her sole reply and her sole

anxiety.

221She went with him to the window of the closet; she then took such

time as she required to conceal his garments. Finally she opened the door

to her husband, who was boiling with rage. He searched the bedroom,the closet, without uttering a word, and then vanished. Julien's clothes

were thrown down to him, he caught them and ran quickly down the

garden towards the Doubs.

As he ran, he heard a bullet whistle past him, and simultaneously the

sound of a gun being fired.

'That is not M. de Renal,' he decided, 'he is not a good enough shot.'

The dogs were running by his side in silence, a second shot apparently

shattered the paw of one dog, for it began to emit lamentable howls. Juli

en jumped the wall of a terrace, proceeded fifty yards under cover, then

continued his flight in a different direction. He heard voices calling, and

could distinctly see the servant, his enemy, fire a gun; a farmer also came

and shot at him from the other side of the garden, but by this time Julien

had reached the bank of the Doubs, where he put on his clothes.

An hour later, he was a league from Verrieres, on the road to Geneva.

'If there is any suspicion,' thought Julien, 'it is on the Paris road that they

will look for me.'

222Part 2

223She is not pretty, she is not wearing rouge.

SAINTBEUVE

224chapter1

Country Pleasures

O rus, quando ego te aspiciam!

VIRGIL [HORACE in earlier edition]

'The gentleman is waiting, surely, for the mailcoach for Paris?' he was

asked by the landlord of an inn at which he stopped to break his fast.

'Today or tomorrow, it is all the same to me,' said Julien.

The coach arrived while he was feigning indifference. There were two

places vacant.

'What! It is you, my poor Falcoz,' said the traveller, who had come

from the direction of Geneva to him who now entered the coach with

Julien.

'I thought you had settled in the neighbourhood of Lyons,' said Falcoz,'in a charming valley by the Rhone.'

'Settled, indeed! I am running away.'

'What! Running away? You, SaintGiraud! With that honest face of

yours, have you committed a crime?' said Falcoz, with a laugh.

'Upon my soul, not far off it. I am running away from the abominable

life one leads in the country. I love the shade of the woods and the quiet

of the fields, as you know; you have often accused me of being romantic.

The one thing I never wished to hear mentioned was politics, and polit

ics pursue me everywhere.'

'But to what party do you belong?'

'To none, and that is what has been fatal to me. These are all my polit

ics: I enjoy music, and painting; a good book is an event in my life; I shall

soon be four and forty. How many years have I to live? Fifteen, twenty,thirty, perhaps, at the most. Very well; I hold that in thirty years from

now, our Ministers will be a little more able, but otherwise just as good

fellows as we have today. The history of England serves as a mirror to

225show me our future. There will always be a King who seeks to extend his

prerogative; the ambition to enter Parliament, the glory and the hun

dreds of thousands of francs amassed by Mirabeau will always keep our

wealthy provincials awake at night: they will call that being Liberal and

loving the people. The desire to become a Peer or a Gentleman in Wait

ing will always possess the Ultras. On board the Ship of State, everyone

will wish to be at the helm, for the post is well paid. Will there never be a

little corner anywhere for the mere passenger?'

'Why, of course, and a very pleasant one, too, for a man of your peace

ful nature. Is it the last election that is driving you from your district?'

'My trouble dates from farther back. I was, four years ago, forty years

old, and had five hundred thousand francs, I am four years older now,and have probably fifty thousand less, which I shall lose by the sale of

my place, Monfleury, by the Rhone, a superb position.

'In Paris, I was tired of that perpetual playacting, to which one is driv

en by what you call nineteenthcentury civilisation. I felt a longing for

human fellowship and simplicity. I bought a piece of land in the moun

tains by the Rhone, the most beautiful spot in the world.

'The vicar of the village and the neighbouring squires made much of

me for the first six months; I had them to dine; I had left Paris, I told

them, so as never to mention or to hear of politics again. You see, I sub

scribe to no newspaper. The fewer letters the postman brings me, the

happier I am.

'This was not what the vicar wanted; presently I was besieged with

endless indiscreet requests, intrigues, and so forth. I wished to give two

or three hundred francs every year to the poor, they pestered me for

them on behalf of pious associations; Saint Joseph, Our Lady, and so

forth. I refused: then I came in for endless insults. I was foolish enough

to show annoyance. I could no longer leave the house in the morning to

go and enjoy the beauty of our mountain scenery, without meeting some

bore who would interrupt my thoughts with an unpleasant reminder of

my fellow men and their evil ways. In the Rogationtide processions, for

instance, the chanting in which I like (it is probably a Greek melody),they no longer bless my fields, because, the vicar says, they belong to an

unbeliever. A pious old peasant woman's cow dies, she says that it is be

cause there is a pond close by which belongs to me, the unbeliever, a

philosopher from Paris, and a week later I find all my fish floating on the

water, poisoned with lime. I am surrounded by trickery in every form.

The justice of the peace, an honest man, but afraid of losing his place,226always decides against me. The peace of the fields is hell to me. As soon

as they saw me abandoned by the vicar, head of the village Congregation,and not supported by the retired captain, head of the Liberals, they all

fell upon me, even the mason who had been living upon me for a year,even the wheelwright, who tried to get away with cheating me when he

mended my ploughs.

'In order to have some footing and to win a few at least of my lawsuits,I turned Liberal; but, as you were saying, those damned elections came,they asked me for my vote… '

'For a stranger?'

'Not a bit of it, for a man I know only too well. I refused, a fearful im

prudence! From that moment, I had the Liberals on top of me as well, my

position became intolerable. I believe that if it had ever entered the

vicar's head to accuse me of having murdered my servant, there would

have been a score of witnesses from both parties, ready to swear that

they had seen me commit the crime.'

'You wish to live in the country without ministering to your neigh

bours' passions, without even listening to their gossip. What a mistake!'

'I have made amends for it now. Monfleury is for sale. I shall lose fifty

thousand francs, if I must, but I am overjoyed, I am leaving that hell of

hypocrisy and malice. I am going to seek solitude and rustic peace in the

one place in France where they exist, in a fourthfloor apartment, over

looking the ChampsElysees. And yet I am just thinking whether I shall

not begin my political career, in the Roule quarter, by presenting the

blessed bread in the parish church.'

'None of that would have happened to you under Bonaparte,' said Fal

coz, his eyes shining with anger and regret.

'That's all very well, but why couldn't he keep going, your Bonaparte?

Everything that I suffer from today is his doing.'

Here Julien began to listen with increased attention. He had realised

from the first that the Bonapartist Falcoz was the early playmate of M. de

Renal, repudiated by him in 1816, while the philosopher Saint-Giraud

must be a brother of that chief clerk in the Prefecture of ——, who knew

how to have municipal property knocked down to him on easy terms.

'And all that has been your Bonaparte's doing,' SaintGiraud contin

ued: 'An honest man, harmless if ever there was one, forty years old and

with five hundred thousand francs, can't settle down in the country and

find peace there. Bonaparte's priests and nobles drive him out again.'

227'Ah! You must not speak evil of him,' cried Falcoz, 'never has France

stood so high in the esteem of foreign nations as during the thirteen

years of his reign. In those days, everything that was done had greatness

in it.'

'Your Emperor, may the devil fly away with him,' went on the man of

four and forty, 'was great only upon his battlefields, and when he re

stored our financial balance in 1801. What was the meaning of all his

conduct after that? With his chamberlains and his pomp and his recep

tions at the Tuileries, he simply furnished a new edition of all the stuff

and nonsense of the monarchy. It was a corrected edition, it might have

served for a century or two. The nobles and priests preferred to return to

the old edition, but they have not the iron hand that they need to bring it

before the public.'

'Listen to the old printer talking!'

'Who is it that is turning me off my land?' went on the printer with

heat. 'The priests, whom Napoleon brought back with his Concordat, in

stead of treating them as the State treats doctors, lawyers, astronomers,of regarding them merely as citizens, without inquiring into the trade by

which they earn their living. Would there be these insolent gentlemen

today if your Bonaparte had not created barons and counts? No, the

fashion had passed. Next to the priests, it is the minor country nobles

that have annoyed me most, and forced me to turn Liberal.'

The discussion was endless, this theme will occupy the minds and

tongues of France for the next halfcentury. As SaintGiraud kept on re

peating that it was impossible to live in the provinces, Julien timidly

cited the example of M. de Renal.

'Egad, young man, you're a good one!' cried Falcoz, 'he has turned

himself into a hammer so as not to be made the anvil, and a terrible ham

mer at that. But I can see him cut out by Valenod. Do you know that ras

cal? He's the real article. What will your M. de Renal say when he finds

himself turned out of office one of these fine days, and Valenod filling

his place?'

'He will be left to meditate on his crimes,' said SaintGiraud. 'So you

know Verrieres, young man, do you? Very good! Bonaparte, whom

heaven confound, made possible the reign of the Renals and Chelans,which has paved the way for the reign of the Valenods and Maslons.'

This talk of shady politics astonished Julien, and took his thoughts

from his dreams of sensual bliss.

228He was little impressed by the first view of Paris seen in the distance.

His fantastic imaginings of the future in store for him had to do battle

with the still vivid memory of the twentyfour hours which he had just

spent at Verrieres. He made a vow that he would never abandon his

mistress's children, but would give up everything to protect them,should the impertinences of the priests give us a Republic and lead to

persecutions of the nobility.

What would have happened to him on the night of his arrival at Verri

eres if, at the moment when he placed his ladder against Madame de

Renal's bedroom window, he had found that room occupied by a

stranger, or by M. de Renal?

But also what bliss in those first few hours, when his mistress really

wished to send him away, and he pleaded his cause, seated by her side

in the darkness! A mind like Julien's is pursued by such memories for a

lifetime. The rest of their meeting had already merged into the first

phases of their love, fourteen months earlier.

Julien was awakened from his profound abstraction by the stopping of

the carriage. They had driven into the courtyard of the posthouse in the

rue JeanJacques Rousseau. 'I wish to go to La Malmaison,' he told the

driver of a passing cabriolet. 'At this time of night, Sir? What to do?'

'What business is it of yours? Drive on.'

True passion thinks only of itself. That, it seems to me, is why the pas

sions are so absurd in Paris, where one's neighbour always insists upon

one's thinking largely of him. I shall not describe Julien's transports at La

Malmaison. He wept. What! In spite of the ugly white walls set up this

year, which divide the park in pieces? Yes, sir; for Julien, as for posterity,there was no distinction between Arcole, Saint Helena and La

Malmaison.

That evening, Julien hesitated for long before entering the playhouse;he had strange ideas as to that sink of iniquity.

An intense distrust prevented him from admiring the Paris of today,he was moved only by the monuments bequeathed by his hero.

'So here I am in the centre of intrigue and hypocrisy! This is where the

abbe de Frilair's protectors reign.'

On the evening of the third day, curiosity prevailed over his plan of

seeing everything before calling upon the abbe Pirard.

The said abbe explained to him, in a frigid tone, the sort of life that

awaited him at M. de La Mole's.

229'If after a few months you are of no use to him, you will return to the

Seminary, but by the front door. You are going to lodge with the Mar

quis, one of the greatest noblemen in France. You will dress in black, but

like a layman in mourning, not like a churchman. I require that, thrice

weekly, you pursue your theological studies in a Seminary, where I shall

introduce you. Each day, at noon, you will take your place in the library

of the Marquis, who intends to employ you in writing letters with refer

ence to lawsuits and other business. The Marquis notes down, in a word

or two, upon the margin of each letter that he receives, the type of an

swer that it requires. I have undertaken that, by the end of three months,you will have learned to compose these answers to such effect that, of

every twelve which you present to the Marquis for his signature, he will

be able to sign eight or nine. In the evening, at eight o'clock, you will put

his papers in order, and at ten you will be free.

'It may happen,' the abbe Pirard continued, 'that some old lady or

some man of persuasive speech will hint to you the prospect of immense

advantages, or quite plainly offer you money to let him see the letters re

ceived by the Marquis… '

'Oh, Sir!' cried Julien, blushing.

'It is strange,' said the abbe with a bitter smile, 'that, poor as you are,and after a year of Seminary, you still retain these virtuous indignations.

You must indeed have been blind!

'Can it be his blood coming out?' murmured the abbe, as though put

ting the question to himself. 'The strange thing is,' he added, looking at

Julien, 'that the Marquis knows you … How, I cannot say. He is giving

you, to begin with, a salary of one hundred louis. He is a man who acts

only from caprice, that is his weakness; he will outdo you in puerilities.

If he is pleased with you, your salary may rise in time to eight thousand

francs.

'But you must be well aware,' the abbe went on in a harsh tone, 'that he

is not giving you all this money for your handsome face. You will have

to be of use to him. If I were in your position, I should speak as little as

possible, and above all, never speak of matters of which I know nothing.

'Ah!' said the abbe, 'I have been making inquiries on your behalf; I was

forgetting M. de La Mole's family. He has two children, a daughter, and

a son of nineteen, the last word in elegance, a mad fellow, who never

knows at one minute what he will be doing the next. He has spirit, and

courage; he has fought in Spain. The Marquis hopes, I cannot say why,that you will become friends with the young Comte Norbert. I have said

230that you are a great Latin scholar, perhaps he reckons upon your teach

ing his son a few readymade phrases about Cicero and Virgil.

'In your place, I should never allow this fine young man to make free

with me; and, before yielding to his overtures, which will be perfectly

civil, but slightly marred by irony, I should make him repeat them at

least twice.

'I shall not conceal from you that the young Comte de La Mole is

bound to look down upon you at first, because of your humble birth. He

is the direct descendant of a courtier, who had the honour to have his

head cut off on the Place de Greve, on the 26th of April, 1574, for a polit

ical intrigue. As for you, you are the son of a carpenter at Verrieres, and

moreover, you are in his father's pay. Weigh these differences carefully,and study the history of this family in Moreri, all the flatterers who dine

at their table make from time to time what they call delicate allusions to

it.

'Take care how you respond to the pleasantries of M. le Comte Norbert

de La Mole, Squadron Commander of Hussars and a future Peer of

France, and do not come and complain to me afterwards.'

'It seems to me,' said Julien, blushing deeply, 'that I ought not even to

answer a man who looks down upon me.'

'You have no idea of this form of contempt; it will reveal itself only in

exaggerated compliments. If you were a fool, you might let yourself be

taken in by them; if you wished to succeed, you ought to let yourself be

taken in.'

'On the day when all this ceases to agree with me,' said Julien, 'shall I

be considered ungrateful if I return to my little cell, number 103?'

'No doubt,' replied the abbe, 'all the sycophants of the house will

slander you, but then I shall appear. Adsum qui fed. I shall say that it was

from me that the decision came.'

Julien was dismayed by the bitter and almost malicious tone which he

remarked in M. Pirard; this tone completely spoiled his last utterance.

The fact was that the abbe felt a scruple of conscience about loving

Julien, and it was with a sort of religious terror that he was thus directly

interfering with the destiny of another man.

'You will also see,' he continued, with the same ill grace, and as though

in the performance of a painful duty, 'you will see Madame la Marquise

de La Mole. She is a tall, fair woman, pious, proud, perfectly civil and

even more insignificant. She is a daughter of the old Due de Chaulnes, so

231famous for his aristocratic prejudices. This great lady is a sort of compen

dium, in high relief, of all that makes up the character of the women of

her rank. She makes it no secret that to have had ancestors who went to

the Crusades is the sole advantage to which she attaches any importance.

Money comes only a long way after: does that surprise you? We are no

longer in the country, my friend.

'You will find in her drawing-room many great noblemen speaking of

our Princes in a tone of singular disrespect. As for Madame de La Mole,she lowers her voice in respect whenever she names a Prince, let alone a

Princess. I should not advise you to say in her hearing that Philip II or

Henry VIII was a monster. They were KINGS, and that gives them an in

alienable right to the respect of everyone, and above all to the respect of

creatures without birth, like you and me. However,' M. Pirard added,'we are priests, for she will take you for one; on that footing, she regards

us as lackeys necessary to her salvation.'

'Sir,' said Julien, 'it seems to me that I shall not remain long in Paris.'

'As you please; but observe that there is no hope of success, for a man

of our cloth, except through the great nobles. With that indefinable ele

ment (at least, I cannot define it), which there is in your character, if you

do not succeed you will be persecuted; there is no middle way for you.

Do not abuse your position. People see that you are not pleased when

they speak to you; in a social environment like this, you are doomed to

misfortune, if you do not succeed in winning respect.

'What would have become of you at Besancon, but for this caprice on

the part of the Marquis de La Mole? One day, you will appreciate all the

singularity of what he is doing for you, and, if you are not a monster,you will feel eternal gratitude to him and his family. How many poor

abbes, cleverer men than you, have lived for years in Paris, upon the fif

teen sous for their mass and the ten sous for their lectures in the Sor

bonne! … Remember what I told you, last winter, of the early years of

that wretch, Cardinal Dubois. Are you, by any chance, so proud as to

imagine that you have more talent than he?

'I, for example, a peaceable and insignificant man, expected to end my

days in my Seminary; I was childish enough to have grown attached to

it. Very well! I was going to be turned out when I offered my resignation.

Do you know what was the extent of my fortune? I had five hundred

and twenty francs of capital, neither more nor less; not a friend, at most

two or three acquaintances. M. de La Mole, whom I had never seen,saved me from disaster; he had only to say the word, and I was given a

232living in which all my parishioners are people in easy circumstances,above the common vices, and the stipend fills me with shame, so far out

of proportion is it to my work. I have spoken to you at this length only to

put a little ballast into that head of yours.

'One word more; it is my misfortune to have a hasty temper; it is pos

sible that you and I may cease to speak to one another.

'If the arrogance of the Marquise, or the mischievous pranks of her

son, make the house definitely insupportable to you, I advise you to fin

ish your studies in some Seminary thirty leagues from Paris, and in the

North, rather than in the South. You will find in the North more civilisa

tion and fewer injustices; and,' he added, lowering his voice, 'I must ad

mit it, the proximity of the Parisian newspapers makes the petty tyrants

afraid.

'If we continue to find pleasure in each other's company, and the

Marquis's household does not agree with you, I offer you a place as my

vicar, and shall divide the revenues of this living with you equally. I owe

you this and more,' he added, cutting short Julien's expressions of gratit

ude, 'for the singular offer which you made me at Besancon. If, instead of

five hundred and twenty francs, I had had nothing, you would have

saved me.'

The cruel tone had gone from the abbe's voice. To his great confusion,Julien felt the tears start to his eyes; he was longing to fling himself into

the arms of his friend: he could not resist saying to him, with the most

manly air that he was capable of affecting:

'I have been hated by my father from the cradle; it was one of my great

misfortunes; but I shall no longer complain of fortune. I have found an

other father in you, Sir.'

'Good, good,' said the abbe, with embarrassment; then remembering

most opportunely a phrase from the vocabulary of a Director of a Semin

ary: 'You must never say fortune, my child, always say Providence.'

The cab stopped; the drier lifted the bronze knocker on an immense

door: it was the HOTEL DE LA MOLE; and, so that the passerby might

be left in no doubt of this, the words were to be read on a slab of black

marble over the door.

This affectation was not to Julien's liking. 'They are so afraid of the Ja

cobins! They see a Robespierre and his tumbril behind every hedge; of

ten they make one die with laughing, and they advertise their house like

233this so that the mob shall know it in the event of a rising, and sack it.' He

communicated what was in his mind to the Abbe Pirard.

'Ah! Poor boy, you will soon be my vicar. What an appalling idea to

come into your head!'

'I can think of nothing more simple,' said Julien.

The gravity of the porter and above all the cleanness of the courtyard

had filled him with admiration. The sun was shining brightly.

'What magnificent architecture!' he said to his friend.

It was one of the typical town houses, with their lifeless fronts, of the

Faubourg SaintGermain, built about the date of Voltaire's death. Never

have the fashionable and the beautiful been such worlds apart.

234chapter2

First Appearance in Society

Absurd and touching memory: one's first appearance, at eighteen,alone and unsupported, in a drawing-room! A glance from a wo

man was enough to terrify me. The more I tried to shine, the more

awkward I became. I formed the most false ideas of everything;either I surrendered myself for no reason, or I saw an enemy in a

man because he had looked at me with a serious expression. But

then, amid all the fearful sufferings of my shyness, how fine was

a fine day!

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Julien stopped in confusion in the middle of the courtyard.

'Do assume a reasonable air,' said the Abbe Picard; 'you take hold of

horrible ideas, and you are only a boy! Where is the nil mirari of Horace?'

(That is: no enthusiasm.) 'Reflect that this tribe of flunkeys, seeing you

established here, will try to make a fool of you; they will regard you as

an equal, unjustly set over them. Beneath a show of good nature, of good

advice, of a wish to guide you, they will try to catch you out in some stu

pid blunder.'

'I defy them to do so,' said Julien, biting his lip; and he recovered all

his former distrust.

The drawing-rooms through which our friends passed on the first

floor, before coming to the Marquis's study, would have seemed to you,gentle reader, as depressing as they were magnificent. Had you been

made a present of them as they stood, you would have refused to live in

them; they are the native heath of boredom and dreary argument. They

redoubled Julien's enchantment. 'How can anyone be unhappy,' he

thought, 'who lives in so splendid a residence?'

Finally, our friends came to the ugliest of the rooms in this superb

suite: the daylight barely entered it; here, they found a wizened little

235man with a keen eye and a fair periwig. The abbe turned to Julien, whom

he presented. It was the Marquis. Julien had great difficulty in recog

nising him, so civil did he find him. This was no longer the great noble

man, so haughty in his mien, of the Abbey of BrayleHaut. It seemed to

Julien that there was far too much hair in his wig. Thanks to this impres

sion, he was not in the least intimidated. The descendant of Henri III's

friend struck him at first as cutting but a poor figure. He was very thin

and greatly agitated. But he soon remarked that the Marquis showed a

courtesy even more agreeable to the person he was addressing than that

of the Bishop of Besancon himself. The audience did not occupy three

minutes. As they left the room, the abbe said to Julien:

'You looked at the Marquis as you would have looked at a picture. I

am no expert in what these people call politeness, soon you will know

more about it than I; still, the boldness of your stare seemed to me to be

scarcely polite.'

They had returned to their vehicle; the driver stopped by the

boulevard; the abbe led Julien through a series of spacious rooms. Julien

remarked that they were unfurnished. He was looking at a magnificent

gilt clock, representing a subject that in his opinion was highly indecent,when a most elegant gentleman approached them with an affable ex

pression. Julien made him a slight bow.

The gentleman smiled and laid a hand on his shoulder. Julien

quivered and sprang back. He was flushed with anger. The abbe Pirard,for all his gravity, laughed till the tears ran down his cheeks. The gentle

man was a tailor.

'I leave you at liberty for two days,' the abbe told him as they emerged;'it is not until then that you can be presented to Madame de La Mole.

Most people would protect you like a young girl, in these first moments

of your sojourn in this modern Babylon. Ruin yourself at once, if you are

to be ruined, and I shall be rid of the weakness I show in caring for you.

The day after tomorrow, in the morning, this tailor will bring you two

coats; you will give five francs to the boy who tries them on you. Other

wise, do not let these Parisians hear the sound of your voice. If you utter

a word, they will find a way of making you look foolish. That is their tal

ent. The day after tomorrow, be at my house at midday… Run along, ru

in yourself … I was forgetting, go and order boots, shirts, a hat at these

addresses.'

Julien studied the handwriting of the addresses.

236'That is the Marquis's hand,' said the abbe, 'he is an active man who

provides for everything, and would rather do a thing himself than order

it to be done. He is taking you into his household so that you may save

him trouble of this sort. Will you have sufficient intelligence to carry out

all the orders that this quickwitted man will suggest to you in a few

words? The future will show: have a care!'

Julien, without uttering a word, made his way into the shops indicated

on the list of addresses; he observed that he was greeted there with re

spect, and the bootmaker, in entering his name in his books, wrote 'M.

Julien de Sorel'.

In the Cemetery of PereLachaise a gentleman who seemed highly ob

liging, and even more Liberal in his speech, offered to guide Julien to the

tomb of Marshal Ney, from which a wise administration has withheld

the honour of an epitaph. But, after parting from this Liberal, who, with

tears in his eyes, almost clasped him to his bosom, Julien no longer had a

watch. It was enriched by this experience that, two days later, at noon, he

presented himself before the abbe Pirard, who studied him attentively.

'You are perhaps going to become a fop,' the abbe said to him, with a

severe expression. Julien had the appearance of an extremely young

man, in deep mourning; he did, as a matter of fact, look quite well, but

the good abbe was himself too provincial to notice that Julien still had

that swing of the shoulders which in the provinces betokens at once eleg

ance and importance. On seeing Julien, the Marquis considered his

graces in a light so different from that of the good abbe that he said to

him:

'Should you have any objection to M. Sorel's taking dancinglessons?'

The abbe was rooted to the spot.

'No,' he replied, at length, 'Julien is not a priest.'

The Marquis, mounting two steps at a time by a little secret stair, con

ducted our hero personally to a neat attic which overlooked the huge

garden of the house. He asked him how many shirts he had ordered

from the hosier.

'Two,' replied Julien, dismayed at seeing so great a gentleman descend

to these details.

'Very good,' said the Marquis, with a serious air, and an imperative,curt note in his voice, which set Julien thinking: 'very good! Order your

self two and twenty more. Here is your first quarter's salary.'

237As they came down from the attic, the Marquis summoned an elderly

man: 'Arsene,' he said to him, 'you will look after M. Sorel.' A few

minutes later, Julien found himself alone in a magnificent library: it was

an exquisite moment. So as not to be taken by surprise in his emotion, he

went and hid himself in a little dark corner; from which he gazed with

rapture at the glittering backs of the books. 'I can read all of those,' he

told himself. 'And how should I fail to be happy here? M. de Renal

would have thought himself disgraced for ever by doing the hundredth

part of what the Marquis de La Mole has just done for me.

'But first of all, we must copy the letters.' This task ended, Julien ven

tured towards the shelves; he almost went mad with joy on finding an

edition of Voltaire. He ran and opened the door of the library so as not to

be caught. He then gave himself the pleasure of opening each of the

eighty volumes in turn. They were magnificently bound, a triumph of

the best craftsman in London. This was more than was needed to carry

Julien's admiration beyond all bounds.

An hour later, the Marquis entered the room, examined the copies,and was surprised to see that Julien wrote cela with a double l, cella 'So

all that the abbe has been telling me of his learning is simply a tale!' The

Marquis, greatly discouraged, said to him gently:

'You are not certain of your spelling?'

'That is true,' said Julien, without the least thought of the harm he was

doing himself; he was moved by the Marquis's kindness, which made

him think of M. de Renal's savage tone.

'It is all a waste of time, this experiment with a little Franccomtois

priest,' thought the Marquis; 'but I did so want a trustworthy man.

'Cela has only one l,' the Marquis told him; 'when you have finished

your copies, take the dictionary and look out all the words of which you

are not certain.'

At six o'clock the Marquis sent for him; he looked with evident dismay

at Julien's boots: 'I am to blame. I forgot to tell you that every evening at

halfpast five you must dress.'

Julien looked at him without understanding him.

'I mean put on stockings. Arsene will remind you; today I shall make

your apologies.'

So saying, M. de La Mole ushered Julien into a drawing-room resplen

dent with gilding. On similar occasions, M. de Renal never failed to

238increase his pace so that he might have the satisfaction of going first

through the door.

The effect of his old employer's petty vanity was that Julien now trod

upon the Marquis's heels, and caused him considerable pain, owing to

his gout. 'Ah! He is even more of a fool than I thought,' the Marquis said

to himself. He presented him to a woman of tall stature and imposing as

pect. It was the Marquise. Julien decided that she had an impertinent air,which reminded him a little of Madame de Maugiron, the Sub-Prefect's

wife of the Verrieres district, when she attended the Saint Charles's day

dinner. Being somewhat embarrassed by the extreme splendour of the

room, Julien did not hear what M. de La Mole was saying. The Marquise

barely deigned to glance at him. There were several men in the room,among whom Julien recognised with unspeakable delight the young

Bishop of Agde, who had condescended to say a few words to him once

at the ceremony at BrayleHaut. The young prelate was doubtless

alarmed by the tender gaze which Julien, in his timidity, fastened upon

him, and made no effort to recognise this provincial.

The men assembled in this drawing-room seemed to Julien to be some

how melancholy and constrained; people speak low in Paris, and do not

exaggerate trifling matters.

A handsome young man, wearing moustaches, very pale and slender,entered the room at about halfpast six; he had an extremely small head.

'You always keep us waiting,' said the Marquise, as he kissed her

hand.

Julien gathered that this was the Comte de La Mole. He found him

charming from the first.

'Is it possible,' he said to himself, 'that this is the man whose offensive

pleasantries are going to drive me from this house?'

By dint of a survey of Comte Norbert's person, Julien discovered that

he was wearing boots and spurs; 'and I ought to be wearing shoes, evid

ently as his inferior.' They sat down to table. Julien heard the Marquise

utter a word of rebuke, slightly raising her voice. Almost at the same mo

ment he noticed a young person extremely fair and very comely, who

was taking her place opposite to him. She did not attract him at all; on

studying her attentively, however, he thought that he had never seen

such fine eyes; but they hinted at great coldness of heart. Later, Julien de

cided that they expressed a boredom which studies other people but

keeps on reminding itself that it is one's duty to be imposing. 'Madame

de Renal, too, had the most beautiful eyes,' he said to himself; 'people

239used to compliment her on them; but they had nothing in common with

these.' Julien had not enough experience to discern that it was the fire of

wit that shone from time to time in the eyes of Mademoiselle Mathilde,for so he heard her named. When Madame de Renal's eyes became anim

ated, it was with the fire of her passions, or was due to a righteous indig

nation upon hearing of some wicked action. Towards the end of dinner,Julien found the right word to describe the type of beauty exemplified by

the eyes of Mademoiselle de La Mole: 'They are scintillating,' he said to

himself. Otherwise, she bore a painful resemblance to her mother, whom

he disliked more and more, and he ceased to look at her. Comte Norbert,on the other hand, struck him as admirable in every respect. Julien was

so captivated, that it never entered his head to be jealous of him and to

hate him, because he was richer and nobler than himself.

Julien thought that the Marquis appeared bored.

During the second course, he said to his son:

'Norbert, I must ask you to look after M. Julien Sorel, whom I have just

taken upon my staff, and intend to make a man of, if that (cela) can be

done.

'He is my secretary,' the Marquis added to his neighbour, 'and he

spells cela with a double l.'

Everyone looked at Julien, who gave Norbert a slightly exaggerated

bow; but on the whole, they were satisfied with his appearance.

The Marquis must have spoken of the kind of education that Julien

had received, for one of the guests tackled him upon Horace: 'It was pre

cisely in discussing Horace that I was successful with the Bishop of Bes

ancon,' Julien said to himself, 'evidently he is the only author they know.'

From that moment he was master of himself. This change was made easy

by his having just decided that Mademoiselle de La Mole would never

be a woman in his eyes. Since his Seminary days he defied men to do

their worst, and refused to be intimidated by them. He would have en

joyed perfect selfpossession, had the diningroom been furnished with

less magnificence. It was, as a matter of fact, a pair of mirrors, each of

them eight feet high, in which he caught sight now and then of his chal

lenger as he spoke of Horace, that still continued to overawe him. His

sentences were not unduly long for a provincial. He had fine eyes, the

sparkle in which was enhanced by his tremulous, or, when he had made

a good answer, his happy shyness. This sort of examination made a

serious dinnerparty quite interesting. The Marquis made a sign to the

240other speaker to press Julien hard. 'Can it be possible that he does know

something?' he thought.

Julien found fresh ideas as he answered, and lost enough of his shy

ness not, indeed, to display wit, a thing impossible to a person ignorant

of the language that is spoken in Paris, but he had original ideas, albeit

expressed without gracefulness or appropriateness, and it could be seen

that he had a thorough knowledge of Latin.

His adversary was a member of the Academy of Inscriptions, who

happened to know Latin; he found in Julien an excellent humanist, lost

all fear of making him blush, and really did seek to embarrass him. In the

heat of the duel, Julien at length forgot the magnificent decoration of the

diningroom, and began to express ideas with regard to the Latin poets,which the other had never read in any book. Being an honest man, he

gave the credit for them to the young secretary. Fortunately, the discus

sion turned to the question whether Horace had been poor or rich: an

amiable person, sensual and easygoing, making poetry for his own

amusement, like Chapelle, the friend of Moliere and La Fontaine; or a

poor devil of a Poet Laureate attached to the court and composing odes

for the King's Birthday, like Southey, the traducer of Lord Byron. They

spoke of the state of society under Augustus and under George IV; in

both epochs the aristocracy was allpowerful! but in Rome it saw its

power wrested from it by Maecenas, who was a mere knight; and in Eng

land it had reduced George IV more or less to the position of a Doge of

Venice. This discussion seemed to draw the Marquis out of the state of

torpor in which his boredom had kept him plunged at the beginning of

dinner.

Julien could make nothing of all these modern names, such as

Southey, Lord Byron, George IV, which he now heard for the first time.

But no one could fail to observe that whenever there was any question of

historical events at Rome, a knowledge of which might be derived from

the works of Horace, Martial, Tacitus, etc., he had an unchallengeable su

periority. Julien appropriated without a scruple a number of ideas which

he had acquired from the Bishop of Besancon, during the famous discus

sion he had had with that prelate; these proved to be not the least

acceptable.

When the party tired of discussing poets, the Marquise, who made it a

rule to admire anything that amused her husband, condescended to

glance at Julien. 'The awkward manners of this young cleric may per

haps be concealing a learned man,' the Academician, who was sitting

241near her, said to the Marquise; and Julien overheard something of what

he was saying. Readymade phrases were quite to the taste of his hostess;she adopted this description of Julien, and was glad that she had invited

the Academician to dine. 'He amuses M. de La Mole,' she thought.

242chapter3

First Steps

That immense valley filled with brilliant lights and with all those

thousands of people dazzles my sight. Not one of them knows

me, all are superior to me. My head reels.

Poemi dell' avvocato, REINA

Early in the morning of the following day, Julien was copying letters

in the library, when Mademoiselle Mathilde entered by a little private

door, cleverly concealed with shelves of dummy books. While Julien was

admiring this device, Mademoiselle Mathilde appeared greatly surprised

and distinctly annoyed to see him there. Julien decided that her curlpa

pers gave her a hard, haughty, almost masculine air. Mademoiselle de La

Mole had a secret habit of stealing books from her father's library, un

detected. Julien's presence frustrated her expedition that morning, which

annoyed her all the more as she had come to secure the second volume

of Voltaire's Princesse de Babylone, a fitting complement to an eminently

monarchical and religious education, a triumph on the part of the Sacre

Coeur! This poor girl, at nineteen, already required the spice of wit to

make her interested in a novel.

Comte Norbert appeared in the library about three o'clock; he had

come to study a newspaper, in order to be able to talk politics that even

ing, and was quite pleased to find Julien, whose existence he had forgot

ten. He was charming to him, and offered to lend him a horse.

'My father is letting us off until dinner.'

Julien appreciated this us, and thought it charming.

'Heavens, Monsieur le Comte,' said Julien, 'if it were a question of

felling an eightyfoot tree, trimming it and sawing it into planks, I ven

ture to say that I should manage it well enough; but riding a horse is a

thing I haven't done six times in my life.'

'Well, this will be the seventh,' said Norbert.

243Privately, Julien remembered the entry of the King of —— into Verri

eres and imagined himself a superior horseman. But, on their way back

from the Bois de Boulogne, in the very middle of the Rue du Bac, he fell

off, while trying to avoid a passing cab, and covered himself in mud. It

was fortunate for him that he had a change of clothes. At the dinner the

Marquis, wishing to include him in the conversation, asked him about

his ride; Norbert made haste to reply in generous language.

'Monsieur le Comte is too kind to me,' put in Julien. 'I thank him for it,and fully appreciate his kindness. He has been so good as to give me the

quietest and handsomest of horses; but after all he could not glue me on

to it, and, that being so, I fell off right in the middle of that very long

street near the bridge.'

Mademoiselle Mathilde tried in vain to stifle a peal of laughter; finally

indiscretion prevailed and she begged for details. Julien emerged from

the difficulty with great simplicity; he had an unconscious grace.

'I augur well of this little priest,' the Marquis said to the Academician;'a simple countryman in such a scrape! Such a thing was never yet seen

and never will be seen; in addition to which he relates his misadventure

before the ladies!'

Julien set his listeners so thoroughly at ease over his mishap that at the

end of dinner, when the general conversation had taken another turn,Mademoiselle Mathilde began to ply her brother with questions as to the

details of the distressing event. As her inquiry continued, and as Julien

more than once caught her eye, he ventured to reply directly, although

he had not been questioned, and all three ended in laughter, just like

three young peasants from a village in the heart of a forest.

On the following day Julien attended two lectures on theology, and

then returned to transcribe a score of letters. He found ensconced by his

own place in the library a young man dressed with great neatness, but

his general appearance was ignominious and his expression one of envy.

The Marquis entered.

'What are you doing here, Monsieur Tanbeau?' he asked the newcomer

in a severe tone.

'I thought,' the young man began with a servile smile.

'No, Sir, you did not think. This is an attempt, but it is an unfortunate

one.'

Young Tanbeau rose in a fury and left the room. He was a nephew of

the Academician, Madame de La Mole's friend, and was intended for a

244literary career. The Academician had persuaded the Marquis to take him

as a secretary. Tanbeau, who worked in a room apart, having heard of

the favour that was being bestowed upon Julien, was anxious to share it,and that morning had come and set up his desk in the library.

At four o'clock, Julien ventured, after some hesitation, to seek out

Comte Norbert. This young gentleman was going out riding, and was

somewhat embarrassed, for his manners were perfect.

'I think,' he said to Julien, 'that presently you might go to the riding

school; and after a few weeks I shall be delighted to ride with you.'

'I wished to have the honour of thanking you for all your kindness to

me; pray believe, Sir,' Julien added with a most serious air, 'that I am

fully conscious of all that I owe you. If your horse is not injured as a res

ult of my clumsiness yesterday, and if it is free, I should like to ride it

today.'

'Faith, my dear Sorel, on your own head be it! Assume that I have

raised all the objections that prudence demands; the fact is that it is four

o'clock, we have no time to lose.'

After he was in the saddle:

'What must one do, not to fall off?' Julien asked the young Comte.

'All sorts of things,' replied Norbert with a shout of laughter: 'for in

stance, sit well back.'

Julien began to trot. They were crossing the Place Louis XVI.

'Ah! Young hothead, there are too many carriages here, and with care

less drivers too. Once you are on the ground, their tilburys will go bowl

ing over you; they are not going to risk hurting their horses' mouths by

pulling up short.'

A score of times Norbert saw Julien on the point of falling; but at last

their ride ended without mishap. On their return, the young Comte said

to his sister:

'Let me introduce a regular daredevil.'

At dinner, speaking to his father, down the length of the table, he did

justice to Julien's courage; it was all that one could praise in his method

of riding. During the day the young Comte had heard the men who were

grooming the horses in the yard make Julien's fall an excuse for the most

outrageous mockery of him.

245In spite of all this kindness, Julien soon felt himself completely isolated

among this family. All their customs seemed strange to him, and he was

always making mistakes. His blunders were the delight of the footmen.

The abbe Pirard had gone off to his living. 'If Julien is a frail reed, let

him perish; if he is a man of courage, let him make his way by himself,'

he thought.

246chapter4

The Hotel de La Mole

What is he doing here? might it please him? might he think to

please?

RONSARD

If everything seemed strange to Julien, in the noble drawing-room of

the Hotel de La Mole, the young man himself, pale and dressed in black,seemed in turn highly singular to those who deigned to notice him. Ma

dame de La Mole suggested that her husband should send him away on

business upon days when certain personages were coming to dine.

'I should like to carry through the experiment,' replied the Marquis.

'The abbe Pirard maintains that we do wrong to crush the selfrespect of

the people we admit into our households. One can lean only upon what

resists, etc. There is nothing wrong with this fellow except his uncouth

appearance; he might be deaf and dumb.'

'If I am to keep my bearings, I must,' Julien said to himself, 'write

down the names and a few words as to the character of the people I see

appear in this drawing-room.'

At the head of his list he placed five or six friends of the family who

paid a desperate court to him, supposing him to be protected by some

caprice of the Marquis. These were poor devils, more or less spiritless;but, it must be said in praise of men of this class as they are to be found

today in the drawing-rooms of the nobility, they were not equally spirit

less to all comers. Some of them would have let themselves be abused by

the Marquis, and yet would have revolted against a harsh word ad

dressed to them by Madame de La Mole.

There was too much pride, there was too much boredom in the charac

ter of both host and hostess; they were too much in the habit of insulting

people for their own distraction, to be able to expect any true friends.

247But, except on wet days, and in their moments of furious boredom,which were rare, they were never to be found wanting in politeness.

If the five or six flatterers who treated Julien with such fatherly affec

tion had deserted the Hotel de La Mole, the Marquise would have been

left to long hours of solitude; and, in the eyes of women of her rank,solitude is a dreadful thing: it is the badge of disgrace.

The Marquis behaved admirably to his wife; he saw to it that her

drawing-room was adequately filled; not with peers, he found his new

colleagues scarcely noble enough to come to his house as friends, nor en

tertaining enough to be admitted as subordinates.

It was not until much later that Julien discovered these secrets. The

political questions which form the chief topic in middleclass houses are

never mentioned in houses like that of the Marquis, save in times of

trouble.

So powerful still, even in this age of boredom, are the dictates of the

need of amusement, that even on the evenings of dinnerparties, as soon

as the Marquis had left the drawing-room, everyone else fled. So long as

you did not speak lightly of God, or of the clergy, or of the King, or of

the men in power, or of the artists patronised by the court, or of anything

established; so long as you did not say anything good of Beranger, or of

the opposition press, or of Voltaire, or of Rousseau, or of anything that

allowed itself the liberty of a little freedom of speech; so long, above all,as you did not talk politics, you could discuss anything you pleased with

freedom.

There is no income of a hundred thousand crowns, no blue riband that

can prevail against a drawing-room so constituted. The smallest living

idea seemed an outrage. Despite good tone, perfect manners, the desire

to be agreeable, boredom was written upon every brow. The young men

who came to pay their respects, afraid to speak of anything that might

lead to their being suspected of thinking, afraid to reveal some forbidden

reading, became silent after a few elegantly phrased sentences on Rossini

and the weather.

Julien observed that the conversation was usually kept going by two

Viscounts and five Barons whom M. de La Mole had known during the

Emigration. These gentlemen enjoyed incomes of from six to eight thou

sand livres; four of them swore by the Quotidienne, and three by the Gaz

ette de France. One of them had some new story to tell every day of the

Chateau, in which the word 'admirable' was lavishly used. Julien

248remarked that this man wore five Crosses, whereas the others, as a rule,had no more than three.

On the other hand, you saw in the anteroom ten footmen in livery,and all through the evening you had ices or tea every quarter of an hour;and, at midnight, a sort of supper with champagne.

It was for this reason that Julien sometimes remained to the end; other

wise, he failed to understand how anyone could listen seriously to the

ordinary conversation of this drawing-room, so magnificently gilded.

Now and again he would watch the speakers, to see whether they them

selves were not laughing at what they were saying. 'My M. de Maistre,whom I know by heart, has said things a hundred times better,' he

thought; 'and even he is extremely boring.'

Julien was not the only one to be aware of the mental stagnation. Some

consoled themselves by taking quantities of ices; the others with the

pleasure of being able to say for the rest of the evening: 'I have just come

from the Hotel de La Mole, where I heard that Russia', etc., etc.

Julien learned, from one of the flatterers, that less than six months ago

Madame de La Mole had rewarded an assiduity that had lasted for more

than twenty years by securing a Prefecture for poor Baron Le Bour

guignon, who had been a Sub-Prefect ever since the Restoration.

This great event had rekindled the zeal of these gentlemen; the least

thing might have offended them before, now they were no longer offen

ded by anything. It was rare that the incivility was direct, but Julien had

already overheard at table two or three brief little passages between the

Marquis and his wife, wounding to those who were placed near them.

These noble personages did not conceal their sincere contempt for every

one that was not the offspring of people who rode in the King's car

riages. Julien observed that the word Crusade was the only one that

brought to their faces an expression of intense seriousness, blended with

respect. Their ordinary respect had always a shade of condescension.

In the midst of this magnificence and this boredom, Julien was inter

ested in nothing but M. de La Mole; he listened with pleasure one day to

his protestations that he was in no way responsible for the promotion of

that poor Le Bourguignon. This was a delicate attention to the Marquise:

Julien had learned the truth from the abbe Pirard.

One morning when the abbe was working with Julien, in the Marquis's

library, on the endless litigation with Frilair:

249'Sir,' said Julien suddenly, 'is dining every evening with Madame la

Marquise one of my duties, or is it a favour that they show me?'

'It is a signal honour!' replied the abbe, greatly shocked. 'M. N——, the

Academician, who has been paying assiduous court for the last fifteen

years, has never been able to obtain it for his nephew M. Tanbeau.'

'It is to me, Sir, the most tedious part of my employment. I was less

bored at the Seminary. I see even Mademoiselle de La Mole yawn at

times, although she must be accustomed to the pretty speeches of the

friends of the family. I am afraid of falling asleep. Please be so good as to

obtain leave for me to go and dine for forty sous in some obscure inn.'

The abbe, a regular parvenu, was highly sensible of the honour of din

ing with a great nobleman. While he was endeavouring to make Julien

understand what he felt, a slight sound made them turn their heads. Juli

en saw Mademoiselle de La Mole who was listening. He blushed. She

had come in search of a book and had heard everything; she felt a certain

respect for Julien. 'This fellow was not born on his knees,' she thought,'like that old abbe. Heavens! How ugly he is.'

At dinner, Julien dared not look at Mademoiselle de La Mole, but she

was so kind as to speak to him. That evening, they expected a large

party; she made him promise to remain. Girls in Paris do not care for

men of a certain age, especially when they are not well dressed. Julien

did not require much sagacity to perceive that M. Le Bourguignon's col

leagues, who remained in the drawing-room, had the honour to be the

customary butt of Mademoiselle de La Mole's wit. That evening, whether

with deliberate affectation or not, she was cruel in her treatment of the

bores.

Mademoiselle de La Mole was the centre of a little group that as

sembled almost every evening behind the Marquise's immense armchair.

There, you would find the Marquis de Croisenois, the Comte de Caylus,the Vicomte de Luz and two or three other young officers, friends of

Norbert or his sister. These gentlemen sat upon a large blue sofa. At the

end of the sofa, opposite to that occupied by the brilliant Mathilde, Julien

was silently installed upon a little canebottomed chair with a low seat.

This modest post was the envy of all the flatterers; Norbert kept his

father's young secretary in countenance by addressing him or uttering

his name once or twice in the course of the evening. On this occasion,Mademoiselle de La Mole asked him what might be the height of the

mountain on which the citadel of Besancon stood. Julien could not for

the life of him have said whether this mountain was higher or lower than

250Montmartre. Often he laughed heartily at what was being said in the

little group; but he felt himself incapable of thinking of anything similar

to say. It was like a foreign language which he could understand, but

was unable to speak.

Mathilde's friends were that evening in a state of constant hostility to

wards the people who kept arriving in this vast drawing-room. The

friends of the family had the preference at first, being better known. One

can imagine whether Julien was attentive; everything interested him,both the things themselves, and the way they were made to seem

ridiculous.

'Ah! Here comes M. Descoulis,' said Mathilde; 'he has left off his wig;can he be hoping to secure a Prefecture by his genius? He is exposing

that bald brow which he says is filled with lofty thoughts.'

'He is a man who knows the whole world,' said the Marquis de Crois

enois; 'he comes to my uncle, the Cardinal's, too. He is capable of cultiv

ating a lie with each of his friends, for years on end, and he has two or

three hundred friends. He knows how to foster friendship, that is his tal

ent. You ought to see him, covered in mud, at the door of a friend's

house, at seven o'clock on a winter morning.

'He hatches a quarrel, now and again, and writes seven or eight letters

to keep up the quarrel. Then he is reconciled, and produces seven or

eight letters for the transports of affection. But it is in the frank and sin

cere expansion of an honest man who can keep nothing on his conscience

that he shines most. This is his favourite device when he has some fa

vour to ask. One of my uncle's VicarsGeneral is perfect when he relates

the life of M. Descoulis since the Restoration. I shall bring him to see

you.'

'Bah! I shouldn't listen to that talk; it is the professional jealousy of

smallminded people,' said the Comte de Caylus.

'M. Descoulis will have a name in history,' the Marquis went on; 'he

made the Restoration with the Abbe de Pradt and M. Talleyrand and

Pozzo di Borgo.'

'That man has handled millions,' said Norbert, 'and I cannot conceive

why he comes here to swallow my father's epigrams, which are often ap

palling. "How many times have you betrayed your friends, my dear

Descoulis?" he shouted at him the other day, down the whole length of

the table.'

251'But is it true that he has betrayed people?' said Mademoiselle de La

Mole. 'Who is there that has not?'

'What!' said the Comte de Caylus to Norbert, 'you have M. Sainclair

here, the notorious Liberal; what the devil can he have come for? I must

go over to him, and talk to him, and make him talk; they say he is so

clever.'

'But how can your mother have him in the house?' said M de Crois

enois. 'His ideas are so extravagant, so enthusiastic, so independent… '

'Look,' said Mademoiselle de La Mole, 'there is your independent man,bowing to the ground before M. Descoulis, and seizing his hand. I almost

thought he was going to raise it to his lips.'

'Descoulis must stand better with the authorities than we thought,' put

in M. de Croisenois.

'Sainclair comes here to get into the Academy,' said Norbert; 'look how

he is bowing to Baron L ——, Croisenois.'

'He would be less servile if he went on his knees,' put in M. de Luz.

'My dear Sorel,' said Norbert, 'you who are a man of brains, but have

just come down from your mountains, see that you never bow to people

as that great poet does, not even to God Almighty.'

'Ah! Here comes a man of brains if you like, M. le Baron Baton,' said

Mademoiselle de La Mole, imitating the voice of the footman who had

just announced him.

'I think even your servants laugh at him. What a name, Baron Baton!'

said M. de Caylus.

'"What's in a name?" as he said to us the other day,' retorted Mathilde.

'"Imagine the Duc de Bouillon announced for the first time. All the public

needs, in my case, is to have grown accustomed to it."'

Julien quitted the circle round the sofa. Still but little sensible of the

charming subtleties of a lighthanded mockery, if he were to laugh at a

witticism, he required that it should be founded on reason. He could see

nothing in the talk of these young men, but the tone of general depreci

ation, and this shocked him. His provincial or English prudery went so

far as to detect envy in it, wherein he was certainly mistaken.

'Comte Norbert,' he said to himself, 'whom I have seen make three

rough copies of a letter of twenty lines to his Colonel, would be very

glad to have written a single page in his life like those of M. Sainclair.'

252Passing unperceived owing to his lack of importance, Julien ap

proached several groups in turn; he was following Baron Baton at a dis

tance, and wished to hear him talk. This man of such intelligence wore a

troubled air, and Julien saw him recover himself a little only when he

had hit upon three or four sparkling sentences. It seemed to Julien that

this kind of wit required ample room to develop itself.

The Baron could not produce epigrams; he required at least four sen

tences of six lines each to be brilliant.

'This man is holding forth, he is not talking,' said someone behind

Julien's back. He turned round and flushed with pleasure when he heard

the name of Comte Chalvet. This was the cleverest man of the day. Julien

had often come upon his name in the Memorial de SainteHelene and in the

fragments of history dictated by Napoleon. Comte Chalvet was curt in

his speech; his remarks were flashes of lightning, accurate, keen, pro

found. If he spoke of any public matter, immediately one saw the discus

sion reach a fresh stage. He brought facts to bear on it, it was a pleasure

to listen to him. In politics, however, he was a brazen cynic.

'I am independent, myself,' he was saying to a gentleman wearing

three decorations, whom he was apparently quizzing. 'Why should I be

expected to hold the same opinion today that I held six weeks ago? If I

did, I should be a slave to my opinion.'

Four grave young men who stood round him made grimaces at this;these gentlemen do not care for the flippant style. The Comte saw that he

had gone too far. Fortunately he caught sight of the honest M. Balland, a

tartuffe of honesty. The Comte began talking to him: people gathered

round them, guessing that poor Balland was going to be scarified. By

dint of morals and morality, although horribly ugly, and after early

struggles with the world which it would be hard to describe, M. Balland

had married an extremely rich wife, who died; then a second extremely

rich wife, who was never seen in society. He enjoyed in all humility an

income of sixty thousand livres, and had flatterers of his own. Comte

Chalvet spoke to him of all this, without pity. Presently they were sur

rounded by a circle of thirty people. Everyone smiled, even the grave

young men, the hope of the age.

'Why does he come to M. de La Mole's, where he is obviously made a

butt?' thought Julien. He went across to the abbe Pirard, to ask him.

M. Balland left the room.

'Good!' said Norbert, 'there's one of my father's spies gone; that leaves

only the little cripple Napier.'

253'Can that be the clue to the riddle?' thought Julien. 'But, in that case,why does the Marquis invite M. Balland?'

The stern abbe Pirard was making faces in a corner of the room, as he

heard fresh names announced.

'Why, it is a den,' he said, like Basilic, 'I see none but villains enter.'

The fact was that the stern abbe did not recognise the distinguishing

marks of good society. But, from his Jansenist friends, he had a very ac

curate notion of the men who make their way into drawing-rooms only

by their extreme cleverness in the service of all parties, or by a fortune of

notorious origin. For some minutes, that evening, he replied from the

abundance of his heart to Julien's eager questions, then cut himself short,distressed to find himself speaking ill of everyone, and imputing it to

himself as a sin. Being choleric and a Jansenist, and regarding Christian

charity as a duty, his life in society was a perpetual conflict.

'How frightful that abbe Pirard looks!' Mademoiselle de La Mole was

saying, as Julien returned to the sofa.

Julien felt a sting of irritation, and yet she was right. M. Pirard was

beyond question the most honest man in the room, but his blotched face,distorted by the pangs of conscience, made him hideous at the moment.

'Never judge by appearances after this,' thought Julien; 'it is at the mo

ment when the abbe's scruples are reproaching him with some peccadillo

that he looks terrible; whereas on the face of that Napier, whom every

one knows to be a spy, one sees a pure and tranquil happiness.' The abbe

Pirard had nevertheless made a great concession to his party; he had en

gaged a valet, and was quite well dressed.

Julien remarked a singular occurrence in the drawing-room: this was a

general movement of all eyes towards the door, with a lull in the conver

sation. A footman announced the famous Baron de Tolly, to whom the

recent elections had attracted universal attention. Julien moved forward

and had an excellent view of him. The Baron was returning officer in a

certain constituency: he had had the bright idea of making away with the

little slips of paper bearing the votes of one of the parties. But, to com

pensate for this, he duly replaced them with other little slips of paper

bearing a name of which he himself approved. This decisive manoeuvre

was observed by some of the electors, who lost no time in presenting

their compliments to Baron de Tolly. The worthy man was still pale after

his great excitement. Evil tongues had uttered the word galleys. M. de La

Mole received him coldly. The poor Baron hurriedly made his escape.

254'If he leaves us so soon, it must be to go to M. Comte's,'

8 said Comte

Chalvet; and the others laughed.

Amid a crowd of great noblemen who remained silent, and of in

triguers, mostly disreputable, but all of them clever fellows, who arrived

one after another that evening, in M. de La Mole's drawing-room (people

were speaking of him for a vacant Ministry), young Tanbeau was win

ning his spurs. If he had not yet acquired any fineness of perception, he

made up for the deficiency, as we shall see, by the vigour of his

language.

'Why not sentence the man to ten years' imprisonment?' he was saying

at the moment when Julien joined his group; 'it is in a dungeon under

ground that we ought to keep reptiles shut up; they must be made to die

in the dark, otherwise their venom spreads and becomes more danger

ous. What is the good of fining him a thousand crowns? He is poor, very

well, all the better; but his party will pay the fine for him. It should have

been a fine of five hundred francs and ten years in a dungeon.'

'Good God! Who can the monster be that they are discussing?' thought

Julien, marvelling at his colleague's vehement tone and stilted gestures.

The thin, drawn little face of the Academician's favourite nephew was

hideous as he spoke. Julien soon learned that the person in question was

the greatest poet of the day.

9

'Ah, monster!' exclaimed Julien, half aloud, and generous tears sprang

to his eyes. 'Ah, little wretch, I shall make you eat those words.

'And yet these,' he thought, 'are the waifs and strays of the party of

which the Marquis is one of the leaders! And that illustrious man whom

he is slandering, how many Crosses, how many sinecures might he not

have collected, if he had sold himself, I do not say to the lifeless Ministry

of M. de Nerval, but to one of those passably honest Ministers whom we

have seen succeed one another in office?'

The abbe Pirard beckoned to Julien; M. de La Mole had just been say

ing something to him. But when Julien, who at the moment was listen

ing, with lowered gaze, to the lamentations of a Bishop, was free to

move, and able to join his friend, he found him monopolised by that ab

ominable young Tanbeau. The little monster loathed him as the source of

the favour that Julien enjoyed, and had come to pay court to him.

8.A celebrated conjurer of the day.

9.Beranger, sentenced in December, 1828, to imprisonment and a fine of 10,000

francs. C. K. S. M.

255'When will death rid us of that old mass of corruption?' It was in these

terms, with Biblical emphasis, that the little man of letters was speaking

at that moment of the eminent Lord Holland. His chief merit was a thor

ough knowledge of the biography of living men, and he had just been

making a rapid survey of all those who might aspire to positions of influ

ence under the new King of England.

The abbe Pirard moved into an adjoining room; Julien followed him.

'The Marquis does not like scribblers, I warn you; it is his one anti

pathy. Know Latin, Greek if you can, the History of the Egyptians, of the

Persians, and so forth; he will honour you and protect you as a scholar.

But do not go and write a single page in French, especially upon grave

subjects, that are above your position in society; he would call you a

scribbler, and would take a dislike to you. What, living in a great

nobleman's mansion, don't you know the Duc de Castries's saying about

d'Alembert and Rousseau: "That sort of fellow wishes to argue about

everything, and has not a thousand crowns a year?"'

'Everything becomes known,' thought Julien, 'here as in the Seminary.'

He had written nine or ten pages with distinct emphasis: they were a sort

of historical eulogy of the old Surgeon-Major, who, he said, had made a

man of him. 'And that little copybook,' Julien said to himself, 'has al

ways been kept under lock and key.' He went upstairs, burned his

manuscript and returned to the drawing-room. The brilliant rogues had

departed, there remained only the stars and ribands.

Round the table, which the servants had just brought in already laid,were seated seven or eight ladies, extremely noble, extremely religious,extremely affected, between thirty and thirtyfive years of age. The bril

liant wife of Marshal de Fervaques entered the room, apologising for the

lateness of the hour. It was after midnight; she took her place next to the

Marquise. Julien was deeply stirred; her eyes and her expression re

minded him of Madame de Renal.

The group round Mademoiselle de La Mole was still numerous. She

and her friends were engaged in making fun of the unfortunate Comte

de Thaler. This was the only son of the famous Jew, celebrated for the

riches that he had acquired by lending money to Kings to make war on

the common people. The Jew had recently died leaving his son a

monthly income of one hundred thousand crowns, and a name that, alas,was only too well known! This singular position required either simpli

city of character or great determination.

256Unfortunately, the Comte was nothing but a good fellow, adorned

with all sorts of pretensions inspired in him by his flatterers.

M. de Caylus asserted that he had been credited with the determina

tion to propose for the hand of Mademoiselle de La Mole (to whom the

Marquis de Croisenois, who was heir to a Dukedom with an income of

one hundred thousand livres, was paying court).

'Ah! Don't accuse him of having any determination,' Norbert pleaded

compassionately.

What this poor Comte de Thaler most lacked was, perhaps, the power

to determine anything. In this respect, he would have made an excellent

King. Taking advice incessantly from everybody, he had not the courage

to follow out any suggestion to the end.

His features would have been enough by themselves, said Mademois

elle de La Mole, to fill her with everlasting joy. His face was a curious

blend of uneasiness and disappointment; but from time to time one

could make out quite plainly bursts of selfimportance, combined with

that cutting tone which the wealthiest man in France ought to adopt, es

pecially when he is by no means badlooking, and is not yet thirtysix.

'He is timidly insolent,' said M. de Croisenois. The Comte de Caylus,Norbert and two or three young men with moustaches made fun of him

to their hearts' content, without his guessing it, and finally sent him

away as one o'clock struck.

'Is it your famous pair of arabs that you are keeping waiting in this

weather?' Norbert asked him.

'No, I have a new pair that cost much less,' replied M. de Thaler. 'The

near horse cost me five thousand francs, and the off horse is only worth a

hundred louis; but I must have you understand that he is only brought

out at night. The fact is that he trots perfectly with the other.'

Norbert's remark made the Comte think that it befitted a man in his

position to have a passion for horses, and that he ought not to allow his

to stand in the rain. He left, and the other gentlemen took their leave im

mediately, laughing at him as they went.

'And so,' thought Julien, as he heard the sound of their laughter on the

staircase, 'I have been allowed to see the opposite extreme to my own po

sition! I have not an income of twenty louis, and I have found myself

rubbing shoulders with a man who has an income of twenty louis an

hour, and they laughed at him … A sight like that cures one of envy.'

257chapter5

Sensibility and a Pious Lady

The smallest living idea seems an outrage, so accustomed are

people there to words without colour. Woe to the man who in

novates while he speaks!

FAUBLAS

After many months of trial, this is the stage that Julien had reached on

the day when the steward of the household paid him his third quarter's

salary. M. de La Mole had set him to study the management of his es

tates in Brittany and Normandy. Julien made frequent journeys to those

parts. His principal duty was to take charge of the correspondence relat

ive to the famous lawsuit with the abbe de Frilair. M. Pirard had given

him the necessary instructions.

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From the brief notes which the Marquis used to scribble on the mar

gins of the papers of all kinds that came to him, Julien composed letters

almost all of which were signed.

At the school of theology, his teachers complained of his lack of in

dustry, but regarded him none the less as one of their most distinguished

pupils. These several labours, taken up with all the ardour of a chafed

ambition, had soon robbed Julien of the fresh complexion he had

brought with him from the country. His pallor was a merit in the eyes of

the young seminarists his companions; he found them much less irritat

ing, much less inclined to fall upon their knees before a coin of the realm

than those at Besancon; they, for their part, supposed him to be con

sumptive. The Marquis had given him a horse.

Afraid of their seeing him when he was out riding, Julien had told

them that this exercise had been ordered him by the doctors. The abbe

Pirard had taken him to a number of Jansenist societies. Julien was aston

ished; the idea of religion was inseparably linked in his mind with that of

258hypocrisy, and the hope of making money. He admired these devout

and stern men who took no interest in the budget. Several of the Jansen

ists had formed an affection for him and gave him advice. A new world

opened before him. He met among the Jansenists a certain Conte

Altamira, a man six feet in height, a Liberal under sentence of death in

his own country, and a devout Catholic. This strange incongruity, reli

gion wedded to a love of freedom, impressed him.

Julien was out of favour with the young Count. Norbert had found

that he replied with too much warmth to the pleasantries of certain of his

friends. Julien after being guilty once or twice of a breach of good man

ners, had pledged himself never to address another word to Mademois

elle Mathilde. They were always perfectly civil to him at the Hotel de La

Mole; but he felt that he had fallen in their esteem. His provincial com

mon sense explained this change in the words of the popular proverb:

'new is beautiful.'

Perhaps his perception was now a little clearer than at first, or else the

first fascination produced by the urbanity of Paris had ceased.

As soon as he stopped working, he fell into the clutches of a deadly

boredom; this was the withering effect of the politeness, admirable in it

self, but so measured, so perfectly graduated according to one's position,which is a mark of high society. A heart that is at all sensitive discerns

the artificiality.

No doubt, provincials may be accused of a trace of vulgarity, or of a

want of politeness; but they do show a little warmth in answering one.

Never, in the Hotel de La Mole, was Julien's self-esteem wounded; but

often, at the end of the day he felt inclined to weep. In the provinces, a

waiter in a cafe takes an interest in you if you meet with some accident

on entering his cafe; but if that accident involves anything capable of

wounding your vanity, then, in condoling with you, he will repeat again

and again the word that makes you wince. In Paris they are so consider

ate as to turn their backs to laugh at you, but you will always remain a

stranger.

We pass without comment over a multitude of minor adventures

which would have brought Julien into ridicule had he not been in a sense

beneath ridicule. An insane selfconsciousness made him commit thou

sands of blunders. All his pleasures were forms of precaution; he prac

tised with his pistol every day, and was numbered among the more

promising pupils of the most famous fencing masters. Whenever he had

a moment to spare, instead of spending it with a book as at one time, he

259would dash to the riding school and as ask for the most vicious horses.

In his outings with the riding master, he was almost invariably thrown.

The Marquis found him useful owing to his persistent hard work, his

reticence and his intelligence, and, by degrees, entrusted him with the

handling of all his business that was at all complicated. In those mo

ments in which his lofty ambition allowed him some relaxation, the Mar

quis did his business with sagacity; being in a position to hear all the

latest news, he speculated with success. He bought houses, timber; but

he took offence easily. He gave away hundreds of louis and went to law

over hundreds of francs. Rich men with big ideas seek amusement and

not results from their private undertakings. The Marquis needed a chief

of staff who would put all his financial affairs into an easily intelligible

order.

Madame de La Mole, albeit of so restrained a character, would some

times make fun of Julien. The unexpected, an outcome of sensibility, hor

rifies great ladies; it is a direct challenge to all the conventions. On two or

three occasions the Marquis took his part: 'If he is absurd in your

drawing-room, in his own office he reigns supreme.' Julien, for his part,thought he could divine the Marquise's secret. She deigned to take an in

terest in everything as soon as her servants announced the Baron de La

Joumate. This was a chilly creature, with expressionless features. He was

small, thin, ugly, very well dressed, he spent all his time at the Chateau

and, as a rule, had nothing to say about anything. His speech revealed

his mind. Madame de La Mole would have been passionately happy, for

the first time in her life, if she could have secured him as a husband for

her daughter.

260chapter6

Pronunciation

Their lofty mission is to pass calm judgment on the trivial events

in the daily life of nations. Their wisdom should preempt any

fury caused by little things, or by events which the voice of re

pute transfigures in bruiting them abroad.

GRATIUS

For a newcomer, who, out of pride, never asked any questions, Julien

managed to avoid any serious pitfall. One day, when he had been driven

into a cafe in the Rue SaintHonore by a sudden shower, a tall man in a

beaver coat, surprised at his gloomy stare, began to stare back at him ex

actly as Mademoiselle Amanda's lover had stared at him, long before, at

Besancon.

Julien had too often reproached himself for having allowed the former

insult to pass unpunished to tolerate this stare. He demanded an explan

ation, the man in the greatcoat at once began to abuse him in the foulest

terms: everyone in the cafe gathered round them; the passersby stopped

outside the door. With provincial caution, Julien always carried a brace

of pocket pistols; his hand gripped one of these in his pocket with a con

vulsive movement. Better counsels prevailed, however, and he confined

himself to repeating with clockwork regularity: 'Sir, your address? I

scorn you.'

The persistence with which he clung to these six words began to im

press the crowd.

'Gad, that other fellow who goes on talking by himself ought to give

him his address.' The man in the greatcoat, hearing this opinion freely

vented, flung a handful of visiting cards in Julien's face. Fortunately,none of them hit him, he had vowed that he would use his pistol only in

the event of his being touched. The man went away, not without turning

round from time to time to shake his fist at Julien and to shout abuse.

261Julien found himself bathed in sweat. 'So it lies within the power of the

lowest of mankind to work me up like this!' he said angrily to himself.

'How am I to destroy this humiliating sensibility?'

Where was he to find a second? He had made the acquaintance of a

number of men; but all of them, after six weeks or so, had drifted away

from him. 'I am unsociable, and here I am cruelly punished for it,' he

thought. Finally, it occurred to him to apply to a retired Lieutenant of the

96th named Lieven, a poor devil with whom he used often to fence. Juli

en was frank with him.

'I shall be glad to be your second,' said Lieven, 'but upon one condi

tion: if you do not hit your man, you shall fight with me, there and then.'

'Agreed,' said Julien, with delight; and they went to find M. C. de

Beauvoisis at the address indicated upon his cards, in the heart of the

Faubourg SaintGermain.

It was seven o'clock in the morning. It was only when he sent in his

name that it occurred to Julien that this might be Madame de Renal's

young relative, formerly attached to the Embassy at Rome or Naples,who had given the singer Geronimo a letter of introduction.

Julien had handed to a tall footman one of the cards flung at him the

day before, together with one of his own.

He was kept waiting, with his second, for fully three quarters of an

hour; finally they were shown into an admirably furnished apartment.

They found a tall young man, got up like a doll; his features exemplified

the perfection and the insignificance of Grecian beauty. His head, re

markably narrow, was crowned with a pyramid of the most beautiful

golden locks. These were curled with scrupulous care, not a hair stood

out from the rest. 'It is to have his hair curled like that,' thought the Lieu

tenant of the 96th, 'that this damned idiot has been keeping us waiting.'

His striped dressinggown, his morning trousers, everything, down to

his embroidered slippers, was correct and marvellously well cared for.

His features, noble and vacuous, betokened a propriety and paucity of

ideas, the ideal of the wellmeaning man, a horror of the unexpected and

of ridicule, an abundance of gravity.

Julien, to whom his Lieutenant of the 96th had explained that to keep

him waiting so long, after rudely flinging his card in his face, was an ad

ditional insult, strode boldly into M. de Beauvoisis's presence. It was his

intention to be insolent, but he wished at the same time to show his good

breeding.

262He was so much impressed by M. de Beauvoisis's gentle manners, by

his air at once formal, important and selfsatisfied, by the admirable eleg

ance of his surroundings, that in a twinkling all thought of being insolent

forsook him. This was not his man of the day before. So great was his as

tonishment at finding so distinguished a person in place of the vulgar

fellow he had met in the cafe, that he could not think of a single word to

say. He presented one of the cards that had been flung at him:

'This is my name,' said the man of fashion, in whom Julien's black coat,at seven o'clock in the morning, inspired but scant respect; 'but I do not

understand, the honour… '

His way of pronouncing these last words restored some of Julien's ill

humour.

'I have come to fight with you, Sir,' and he rapidly explained the

situation.

M. Charles de Beauvoisis, after giving it careful thought, was quite sat

isfied with the cut of Julien's black coat. 'From Staub's, clearly,' he said to

himself, listening to him in silence, 'that waistcoat is in good taste, the

boots are right; but, on the other hand, that black coat in the early morn

ing! … It will be to stop the bullet,' thought the Chevalier de Beauvoisis.

As soon as he had furnished himself with this explanation, he reverted

to a perfect politeness, and addressed Julien almost as an equal. The dis

cussion lasted for some time, it was a delicate matter; but in the end Juli

en could not reject the evidence of his own eyes. The wellbred young

man whom he saw before him bore no resemblance whatsoever to the

rude person who, the day before, had insulted him.

Julien felt an invincible reluctance to go away, he prolonged the ex

planation. He observed the selfsufficiency of the Chevalier de Beauvois

is, for such was the style that he had adopted in referring to himself,shocked at Julien's addressing him as Monsieur, pure and simple.

He admired the other's gravity, blended with a certain modest fatuity

but never discarded for a single instant. He was astonished by the curi

ous way in which his tongue moved as he enunciated his words… But

after all, in all this, there was not the slightest reason to pick a quarrel

with him.

The young diplomat offered to fight with great courtesy, but the ex

Lieutenant of the 96th, who had been sitting for an hour with his legs

apart, his hands on his hips and his arms akimbo, decided that his

friend, M. Sorel, was not the sort of person to pick a quarrel, in the

263German fashion, with another man, because that man's visiting cards

had been stolen.

Julien left the house in the worst of tempers. The Chevalier de

Beauvoisis's carriage was waiting for him in the courtyard, in front of the

steps; as it happened, Julien raised his eyes and recognised his man of

the previous day in the coachman.

Seeing him, grasping him by the skirts of his coat, pulling him down

from his box and belabouring him with his whip, were the work of a mo

ment. Two lackeys tried to defend their fellow; Julien received a pum

melling: immediately he drew one of his pocket pistols and fired at them;they took to their heels. It was all over in a minute.

The Chevalier de Beauvoisis came slowly downstairs with the most

charming gravity, repeating in the accents of a great nobleman: 'What's

this? What's this?' His curiosity was evidently aroused, but his diplomat

ic importance did not allow him to show any sign of interest. When he

learned what the matter was, a lofty pride still struggled in his features

against the slightly playful coolness which ought never to be absent from

the face of a diplomat.

The Lieutenant of the 96th realised that M. de Beauvoisis was anxious

to fight; he wished also, diplomatically enough, to preserve for his friend

the advantages of the initiative. 'This time,' he cried, 'there are grounds

for a duel!' 'I should think so,' replied the diplomat.

'I dismiss that rascal,' he said to his servants; 'someone else must

drive.' They opened the carriage door: the Chevalier insisted that Julien

and his second should get in before him. They went to find a friend of M.

de Beauvoisis, who suggested a quiet spot. The conversation as they

drove to it was perfect. The only odd thing was the diplomat in undress.

'These gentlemen, although of the highest nobility,' thought Julien, 'are

not in the least boring like the people who come to dine with M. de La

Mole; and I can see why,' he added a moment later, 'they are not

ashamed to be indecent.' They were speaking of the dancers whom the

public had applauded in a ballet of the previous evening. The gentlemen

made allusions to spicy anecdotes of which Julien and his second, the

Lieutenant of the 96th, were entirely ignorant. Julien did not make the

mistake of pretending to know them; he admitted his ignorance with

good grace. This frankness found favour with the Chevalier's friend; he

repeated the anecdotes to him in full detail, and extremely well.

One thing astonished Julien vastly. A station which was being erected

in the middle of the street for the Corpus Christi day procession, held up

264the carriage for a moment. The gentlemen indulged in a number of

pleasantries; the cure, according to them, was the son of an Archbishop.

Never, in the house of the Marquis de La Mole, who hoped to become a

Duke, would anyone have dared to say such a thing.

The duel was over in an instant: Julien received a bullet in his arm;they bound it up for him with handkerchiefs; these were soaked in

brandy, and the Chevalier de Beauvoisis asked Julien most politely to al

low him to take him home, in the carriage that had brought them. When

Julien gave his address as the Hotel de La Mole, the young diplomat and

his friend exchanged glances. Julien's cab was waiting, but he found

these gentlemen's conversation infinitely more amusing than that of the

worthy Lieutenant of the 96th.

'Good God! A duel, is that all?' thought Julien. 'How fortunate I was to

come across that coachman again! What a misfortune, if I had had to en

dure that insult a second time in a cafe!' The amusing conversation had

scarcely been interrupted. Julien now understood that the affectation of a

diplomat does serve some purpose.

'So dullness is by no means inherent,' he said to himself, 'in a conversa

tion between people of high birth! These men make fun of the Corpus

Christi day procession, they venture to repeat highly scabrous anecdotes,and with picturesque details. Positively the only thing lacking to them is

judgment in politics, and this deficiency is more than made up for by the

charm of their tone and the perfect aptness of their expressions.' Julien

felt himself keenly attracted to them. 'How glad I should be to see them

often!'

No sooner had they parted than the Chevalier de Beauvoisis hastened

in search of information: what he heard was by no means promising.

He was extremely curious to know his man better; could he with de

cency call upon him? The scanty information he managed to obtain was

not of an encouraging nature.

'This is frightful!' he said to his second. 'It is impossible for me to ad

mit that I have fought a duel with a mere secretary of M. de La Mole, and

that because I have been robbed of my visiting cards by a coachman.'

'Certainly the whole story leaves one exposed to ridicule.'

That evening, the Chevalier de Beauvoisis spread the report every

where that this M. Sorel, who incidentally was a perfectly charming

young man, was the natural son of an intimate friend of the Marquis de

La Mole. The rumour passed without difficulty. As soon as it was

265established, the young diplomat and his friend deigned to pay Julien

several visits, during the fortnight for which he was confined to his

room. Julien confessed to them that he had never in his life been to the

Opera.

'This is terrible,' they told him, 'where else does one go? Your first out

ing must be to the Comte Ory.'

At the Opera, the Chevalier de Beauvoisis presented him to the fam

ous singer Geronimo, who was enjoying an immense success that season.

Julien almost paid court to the Chevalier; his blend of selfrespect,mysterious importance and boyish fatuity enchanted him. For instance,the Chevalier stammered slightly because he had the honour to be fre

quently in the company of a great nobleman who suffered from that in

firmity. Never had Julien seen combined in a single person the absurdity

which keeps one amused and the perfection of manners which a poor

provincial must seek to copy.

He was seen at the Opera with the Chevalier de Beauvoisis; their asso

ciation caused his name to be mentioned.

'Well, Sir!' M. de La Mole said to him one day, 'and so you are the nat

ural son of a rich gentleman of the Franche-Comte, my intimate friend!'

The Marquis cut Julien short when he tried to protest that he had in no

way helped to give currency to this rumour.

'M. de Beauvoisis did not wish to have fought a duel with a carpenter's

son.'

'I know, I know,' said M. de La Mole; 'it rests with me now to give con

sistency to the story, which suits me. But I have one favour to ask you,which will cost you no more than half an hour of your time: every Opera

evening, at halfpast eleven, go and stand in the vestibule when the

people of fashion are coming out. I still notice provincial mannerisms in

you at times, you must get rid of them; besides, it can do you no harm to

know, at least by sight, important personages to whom I may one day

have occasion to send you. Call at the box office to have yourself identi

fied; they have placed your name on the list.'

266chapter7

An Attack of Gout

And I received promotion, not on my own merits, but because

my master had the gout.

BERTOLOTTI

The reader is perhaps surprised at this free and almost friendly tone;we have forgotten to say that for six weeks the Marquis had been con

fined to the house by an attack of gout.

Mademoiselle de La Mole and her mother were at Hyeres, with the

Marquise's mother. Comte Norbert saw his father only for brief mo

ments; they were on the best of terms, but had nothing to say to one an

other. M. de La Mole, reduced to Julien's company, was astonished to

find him endowed with ideas. He made him read the newspapers aloud.

Soon the young secretary was able to select the interesting passages.

There was a new paper which the Marquis abhorred; he had vowed that

he would never read it, and spoke of it every day. Julien laughed. The

Marquis, out of patience with the times, made Julien read him Livy; the

translation improvised from the Latin text amused him.

One day the Marquis said, with that tone of overelaborate politeness,which often tried Julien's patience:

'Allow me, my dear Sorel, to make you the present of a blue coat:

when it suits you to put it on and to pay me a visit, you will be, in my

eyes, the younger brother of the Comte de Chaulnes, that is to say, the

son of my old friend the Duke.'

Julien was somewhat in the dark as to what was happening; that even

ing he ventured to pay a visit in his blue coat. The Marquis treated him

as an equal. Julien had a heart capable of appreciating true politeness,but he had no idea of the finer shades. He would have sworn, before this

caprice of the Marquis, that it would be impossible to be received by him

with greater deference. 'What a marvellous talent!' Julien said to himself;267when he rose to go, the Marquis apologised for not being able to see him

to the door on account of his gout.

Julien was obsessed by this strange idea: 'Can he be laughing at me?'

he wondered. He went to seek the advice of the abbe Pirard, who, less

courteous than the Marquis, answered him only with a whistle and

changed the subject. The following morning Julien appeared before the

Marquis, in a black coat, with his portfolio and the letters to be signed.

He was received in the old manner. That evening, in his blue coat, it was

with an entirely different tone and one in every way as polite as the

evening before.

'Since you appear to find some interest in the visits which you are so

kind as to pay to a poor, suffering old man,' the Marquis said to him,'you must speak to him of all the little incidents in your life, but openly,and without thinking of anything but how to relate them clearly and in

an amusing fashion. For one must have amusement,' the Marquis went

on; 'that is the only real thing in life. A man cannot save my life on a

battlefield every day, nor can he make me every day the present of a

million; but if I had Rivarol here, by my couch, every day, he would re

lieve me of an hour of pain and boredom. I saw a great deal of him at

Hamburg, during the Emigration.'

And the Marquis told Julien stories of Rivarol among the Hamburgers,who would club together in fours to elucidate the point of a witty saying.

M. de La Mole, reduced to the society of this young cleric, sought to

enliven him. He stung Julien's pride. Since he was asked for the truth,Julien determined to tell his whole story; but with the suppression of two

things: his fanatical admiration for a name which made the Marquis furi

ous, and his entire unbelief, which hardly became a future cure. His little

affair with the Chevalier de Beauvoisis arrived most opportunely. The

Marquis laughed till he cried at the scene in the cafe in the Rue Saint

Honore, with the coachman who covered him with foul abuse. It was a

period of perfect frankness in the relations between employer and

protege.

M. de La Mole became interested in this singular character. At first, he

played with Julien's absurdities, for his own entertainment; soon he

found it more interesting to correct, in the gentlest manner, the young

man's mistaken view of life. 'Most provincials who come to Paris admire

everything,' thought the Marquis; 'this fellow hates everything. They

have too much sentiment, he has not enough, and fools take him for a

fool.'

268The attack of gout was prolonged by the wintry weather and lasted for

some months.

'One becomes attached to a fine spaniel,' the Marquis told himself;'why am I so ashamed of becoming attached to this young cleric? He is

original. I treat him like a son; well, what harm is there in that! This

fancy, if it lasts, will cost me a diamond worth five hundred louis in my

will.'

Once the Marquis had realised the firm character of his protege, he en

trusted him with some fresh piece of business every day.

Julien noticed with alarm that this great nobleman would occasionally

give him contradictory instructions with regard to the same matter.

This was liable to land him in serious trouble. Julien, when he came to

work with the Marquis, invariably brought a diary in which he wrote

down his instructions, and the Marquis initialled them. Julien had en

gaged a clerk who copied out the instructions relative to each piece of

business in a special book. In this book were kept also copies of all

letters.

This idea seemed at first the most ridiculous and tiresome thing ima

ginable. But, in less than two months, the Marquis realised its advant

ages. Julien suggested engaging a clerk from a bank, who should keep an

account by double entry of all the revenue from and expenditure on the

estates of which he himself had charge.

These measures so enlightened the Marquis as to his own financial po

sition that he was able to give himself the pleasure of embarking on two

or three fresh speculations without the assistance of his broker, who had

been robbing him.

'Take three thousand francs for yourself,' he said, one day to his young

minister.

'But, Sir, my conduct may be criticised.'

'What do you want, then?' replied the Marquis, with irritation.

'I want you to be so kind as to make a formal agreement, and to write

it down yourself in the book; the agreement will award me a sum of

three thousand francs. Besides, it was M. l'abbe Pirard who first thought

of all this bookkeeping.' The Marquis, with the bored expression of the

Marquis de Moncade, listening to M. Poisson, his steward, reading his

accounts, wrote out his instructions.

In the evening, when Julien appeared in his blue coat, there was never

any talk of business. The Marquis's kindness was so flattering to our

269hero's easily wounded vanity that presently, in spite of himself, he felt a

sort of attachment to this genial old man. Not that Julien was sensitive,as the word is understood in Paris; but he was not a monster, and no

one, since the death of the old Surgeon-Major, had spoken to him so

kindly. He remarked with astonishment that the Marquis showed a po

lite consideration for his self-esteem which he had never received from

the old surgeon. Finally he realised that the surgeon had been prouder of

his Cross than the Marquis was of his Blue Riband. The Marquis was the

son of a great nobleman.

One day, at the end of a morning interview, in his black coat, and for

the discussion of business, Julien amused the Marquis, who kept him for

a couple of hours, and positively insisted upon giving him a handful of

bank notes which his broker had just brought him from the Bourse.

'I hope, Monsieur le Marquis, not to be wanting in the profound re

spect which I owe you if I ask you to allow me to say something.'

'Speak, my friend.'

'Will Monsieur le Marquis be graciously pleased to let me decline this

gift. It is not to the man in black that it is offered, and it would at once

put an end to the liberties which he is so kind as to tolerate from the man

in blue.' He bowed most respectfully, and left the room without looking

round.

This attitude amused the Marquis, who reported it that evening to the

abbe Pirard.

'There is something that I must at last confess to you, my dear abbe. I

know the truth about Julien's birth, and I authorise you not to keep this

confidence secret.

'His behaviour this morning was noble,' thought the Marquis, 'and I

shall ennoble him.'

Some time after this, the Marquis was at length able to leave his room.

'Go and spend a couple of months in London,' he told Julien. 'The spe

cial couriers and other messengers will bring you the letters I receive,with my notes. You will write the replies and send them to me, enclosing

each letter with its reply. I have calculated that the delay will not amount

to more than five days.'

As he travelled post along the road to Calais, Julien thought with

amazement of the futility of the alleged business on which he was being

sent.

270We shall not describe the feeling of horror, almost of hatred, with

which he set foot on English soil. The reader is aware of his insane pas

sion for Bonaparte. He saw in every officer a Sir Hudson Lowe, in every

nobleman a Lord Bathurst, ordering the atrocities of Saint Helena, and

receiving his reward in ten years of office.

In London he at last made acquaintance with the extremes of fatuity.

He made friends with some young Russian gentlemen who initiated

him.

'You are predestined, my dear Sorel,' they told him, 'you are endowed

by nature with that cold expression a thousand leagues from the sensation of

the moment, which we try so hard to assume.'

'You have not understood our age,' Prince Korasoff said to him; 'always

do the opposite to what people expect of you. That, upon my honour, is the

only religion of the day. Do not be either foolish or affected, for then

people will expect foolishness and affectations, and you will not be obey

ing the rule.'

Julien covered himself with glory one day in the drawing-room of the

Duke of FitzFulke, who had invited him to dine, with Prince Korasoff.

The party were kept waiting for an hour. The way in which Julien com

ported himself amid the score of persons who stood waiting is still

quoted by the young Secretaries of Embassy in London. His expression

was inimitable.

He was anxious to meet, notwithstanding his friends the dandies, the

celebrated Philip Vane, the one philosopher that England has produced

since Locke. He found him completing his seventh year in prison. 'The

aristocracy does not take things lightly in this country,' thought Julien;'in addition to all this, Vane is disgraced, abused,' etc.

Julien found him good company; the fury of the aristocracy kept him

amused. 'There,' Julien said to himself, as he left the prison, 'is the one

cheerful man that I have met in England.'

'The idea of most use to tyrants is that of God,' Vane had said to him.

We suppress the rest of the philosopher's system as being cynical.

On his return: 'What amusing idea have you brought me from Eng

land?' M. de La Mole asked him. He remained silent. 'What idea have

you brought, amusing or not?' the Marquis went on, sharply.

'First of all,' said Julien, 'the wisest man in England is mad for an hour

daily; he is visited by the demon of suicide, who is the national deity.

271'Secondly, intelligence and genius forfeit twentyfive per cent of their

value on landing in England.

'Thirdly, nothing in the world is so beautiful, admirable, moving as the

English countryside.'

'Now, it is my turn,' said the Marquis.

'First of all, what made you say, at the ball at the Russian Embassy,that there are in France three hundred thousand young men of five and

twenty who are passionately anxious for war? Do you think that that is

quite polite to the Crowned Heads?'

'One never knows what to say in speaking to our great diplomats,' said

Julien. They have a mania for starting serious discussions. If one confines

oneself to the commonplaces of the newspapers, one is reckoned a fool.

If one allows oneself to say something true and novel, they are aston

ished, they do not know how to answer, and next morning, at seven

o'clock they send word to one by the First Secretary, that one has been

impolite.'

'Not bad,' said the Marquis, with a laugh. 'I wager, however, Master

Philosopher, that you have not discovered what you went to England to

do.'

'Pardon me,' replied Julien; 'I went there to dine once a week with His

Majesty's Ambassador, who is the most courteous of men.'

'You went to secure the Cross which is lying there' the Marquis told

him. 'I do not wish to make you lay aside your black coat, and I have

grown accustomed to the more amusing tone which I have adopted with

the man in blue. Until further orders, understand this: when I see this

Cross, you are the younger son of my friend the Duc de Chaulnes, who,without knowing it, has been for the last six months employed in dip

lomacy. Observe,' added the Marquis, with a highly serious air, cutting

short Julien's expressions of gratitude, 'that I do not on any account wish

you to rise above your station. That is always a mistake, and a misfor

tune both for patron and for protege. When my lawsuits bore you, or

when you no longer suit me I shall ask for a good living for you, like that

of our friend the abbe Pirard, and nothing more,' the Marquis added, in

the driest of tones.

This Cross set Julien's pride at rest; he began to talk far more freely. He

felt himself less frequently insulted and made a butt by those remarks,susceptible of some scarcely polite interpretation, which, in the course of

an animated conversation, may fall from the lips of anyone.

272His Cross was the cause of an unexpected visit; this was from M. le

Baron de Valenod, who came to Paris to thank the Minister for his

Barony and to come to an understanding with him. He was going to be

appointed Mayor of Verrieres in the place of M. de Renal.

Julien was consumed with silent laughter when M. de Valenod gave

him to understand that it had just been discovered that M de Renal was a

Jacobin. The fact was that, in a new election which was in preparation,the new Baron was the ministerial candidate, and in the combined con

stituency of the Department, which in reality was strongly Ultra, it was

M. de Renal who was being put forward by the Liberals.

It was in vain that Julien tried to learn something of Madame de Renal;the Baron appeared to remember their former rivalry, and was impenet

rable. He ended by asking Julien for his father's vote at the coming elec

tion. Julien promised to write.

'You ought, Monsieur le Chevalier, to introduce me to M. le Marquis

de La Mole.'

'Indeed, so I ought,' thought Julien; 'but a rascal like this!'

'To be frank,' he replied, 'I am too humble a person in the Hotel de La

Mole to take it upon me to introduce anyone.'

Julien told the Marquis everything: that evening he informed him of

Valenod's pretension, and gave an account of his life and actions since

1814.

'Not only,' M. de La Mole replied, with a serious air, 'will you intro

duce the new Baron to me tomorrow, but I shall invite him to dine the

day after. He will be one of our new Prefects.'

'In that case,' retorted Julien coldly, 'I request the post of Governor of

the Poorhouse for my father.'

'Excellent,' said the Marquis, recovering his gaiety; 'granted; I was ex

pecting a sermon. You are growing up.'

M. de Valenod informed Julien that the keeper of the lottery office at

Verrieres had just died; Julien thought it amusing to bestow this place

upon M. de Cholin, the old imbecile whose petition he had picked up in

the room occupied there by M. de La Mole. The Marquis laughed heart

ily at the petition which Julien recited as he made him sign the letter ap

plying for this post to the Minister of Finance.

No sooner had M. de Cholin been appointed than Julien learned that

this post had been requested by the Deputies of the Department for M.

Gros, the celebrated geometrician: this noblehearted man had an income

273of only fourteen hundred francs, and every year had been lending six

hundred francs to the late holder of the post, to help him to bring up his

family.

Julien was astonished at the effect of what he had done. 'It is nothing,'

he told himself; 'I must be prepared for many other acts of injustice, if I

am to succeed, and, what is more, must know how to conceal them, un

der a cloak of fine sentimental words: poor M, Gros! It is he that de

served the Cross, it is I that have it, and I must act according to the

wishes of the Government that has given it to me.'

274chapter8

What Is the Decoration that Confers Distinction?

Your water does not refresh me, said the thirsty genie. Yet it is the

coolest well in all the Diar Bekir.

PELLICO

One day Julien returned from the charming property of Villequier, on

the bank of the Seine, in which M. de La Mole took a special interest be

cause, of all his estates, it was the only one that had belonged to the cel

ebrated Boniface de La Mole. He found at the Hotel the Marquise and

her daughter, who had returned from Hyeres.

Julien was now a dandy and understood the art of life in Paris. He

greeted Mademoiselle de La Mole with perfect coolness. He appeared to

remember nothing of the time when she asked him so gaily to tell her all

about his way of falling from his horse.

Mademoiselle de La Mole found him taller and paler. There was no

longer anything provincial about his figure or his attire; not so with his

conversation: this was still perceptibly too serious, too positive. In spite

of these sober qualities, and thanks to his pride, it conveyed no sense of

inferiority; one felt merely that he still regarded too many things as im

portant. But one saw that he was a man who would stand by his word.

'He is wanting in lightness of touch, but not in intelligence,' Ma

demoiselle de La Mole said to her father, as she teased him over the

Cross he had given Julien. 'My brother has been asking you for it for the

last eighteen months, and he is a La Mole!'

'Yes; but Julien has novelty. That has never been the case with the La

Mole you mention.'

M. le Duc de Retz was announced.

Mathilde felt herself seized by an irresistible desire to yawn; she recog

nised the antique decorations and the old frequenters of the paternal

275drawing-room. She formed an entirely boring picture of the life she was

going to resume in Paris. And yet at Hyeres she had longed for Paris.

'To think that I am nineteen!' she reflected: 'it is the age of happiness,according to all those giltedged idiots.' She looked at nine or ten

volumes of recent poetry that had accumulated, during her absence in

Provence, on the drawing-room table. It was her misfortune to have

more intelligence than MM. de Croisenois, de Caylus, de Luz, and the

rest of her friends. She could imagine everything that they would say to

her about the beautiful sky in Provence, poetry, the south, etc., etc.

Those lovely eyes, in which was revealed the most profound boredom,and, what was worse still, a despair of finding any pleasure, came to rest

upon Julien. At any rate, he was not exactly like all the rest.

'Monsieur Sorel,' she said in that short, sharp voice, with nothing fem

inine about it, which is used by young women of the highest rank,'Monsieur Sorel, are you coming to M. de Retz's ball tonight?'

'Mademoiselle, I have not had the honour to be presented to M. le

Duc.' (One would have said that these words and the title burned the lips

of the proud provincial.)

'He has asked my brother to bring you; and, if you came, you could

tell me all about Villequier; there is some talk of our going there in the

spring. I should like to know whether the house is habitable, and if the

country round it is as pretty as people say. There are so many un

deserved reputations!'

Julien made no reply.

'Come to the ball with my brother,' she added, in the driest of tones.

Julien made a respectful bow. 'So, even in the middle of a ball, I must

render accounts to all the members of the family. Am I not paid to be

their man of business?' In his ill humour, he added: 'Heaven only knows

whether what I tell the daughter may not upset the plans of her father,and brother, and mother! It is just like the court of a Sovereign Prince.

One is expected to be a complete nonentity, and at the same time give no

one any grounds for complaint.

'How I dislike that great girl!' he thought, as he watched Mademoiselle

de La Mole cross the room, her mother having called her to introduce her

to a number of women visitors. 'She overdoes all the fashions, her gown

is falling off her shoulders… she is even paler than when she went

away … What colourless hair, if that is what they call golden! You would

276say the light shone through it. How arrogant her way of bowing, of look

ing at people! What regal gestures!'

Mademoiselle de La Mole had called her brother back, as he was leav

ing the room.

Comte Norbert came up to Julien:

'My dear Sorel,' he began, 'where would you like me to call for you at

midnight for M. de Retz's ball? He told me particularly to bring you.'

'I know to whom I am indebted for such kindness,' replied Julien,bowing to the ground.

His ill humour, having no fault to find with the tone of politeness, in

deed of personal interest, in which Norbert had addressed him, vented

itself upon the reply which he himself had made to this friendly speech.

He detected a trace of servility in it.

That night, on arriving at the ball, he was struck by the magnificence

of the Hotel de Retz. The courtyard was covered with an immense crim

son awning patterned with golden stars: nothing could have been more

elegant. Beneath this awning, the court was transformed into a grove of

orange trees and oleanders in blossom. As their tubs had been carefully

buried at a sufficient depth, these oleanders and orange trees seemed to

be springing from the ground. The carriage drive had been sprinkled

with sand.

The general effect seemed extraordinary to our provincial. He had no

idea that such magnificence could exist; in an instant his imagination had

taken wings and flown a thousand leagues away from ill humour. In the

carriage, on their way to the ball, Norbert had been happy, and he had

seen everything in dark colours; as soon as they entered the courtyard

their moods were reversed.

Norbert was conscious only of certain details, which, in the midst of all

this magnificence, had been overlooked. He reckoned up the cost of

everything, and as he arrived at a high total, Julien remarked that he ap

peared almost jealous of the outlay and began to sulk.

As for Julien, he arrived spellbound with admiration, and almost tim

id with excess of emotion in the first of the saloons in which the com

pany were dancing. Everyone was making for the door of the second

room, and the throng was so great that he found it impossible to move.

This great saloon was decorated to represent the Alhambra of Granada.

'She is the belle of the ball, no doubt about it,' said a young man with

moustaches, whose shoulder dug into Julien's chest.

277'Mademoiselle Fourmont, who has been the reigning beauty all

winter,' his companion rejoined, 'sees that she must now take the second

place: look how strangely she is frowning.'

'Indeed she is hoisting all her canvas to attract. Look, look at that gra

cious smile as soon as she steps into the middle in that country dance. It

is inimitable, upon my honour.'

'Mademoiselle de La Mole has the air of being in full control of the

pleasure she derives from her triumph, of which she is very well aware.

One would say that she was afraid of attracting whoever speaks to her.'

'Precisely! That is the art of seduction.'

Julien was making vain efforts to catch a glimpse of this seductive wo

man; seven or eight men taller than himself prevented him from seeing

her.

'There is a good deal of coquetry in that noble reserve,' went on the

young man with the moustaches.

'And those big blue eyes which droop so slowly just at the moment

when one would say they were going to give her away,' his companion

added. 'Faith, she's a past master.'

'Look how common the fair Fourmont appears beside her,' said a

third.

'That air of reserve is as much as to say: "How charming I should make

myself to you, if you were the man that was worthy of me."'

'And who could be worthy of the sublime Mathilde?' said the first:

'Some reigning Prince, handsome, clever, well made, a hero in battle, and

aged twenty at the most.'

'The natural son of the Emperor of Russia, for whom, on the occasion

of such a marriage, a Kingdom would be created; or simply the Comte

de Thaler, with his air of a peasant in his Sunday clothes … '

The passage was now cleared, Julien was free to enter.

'Since she appears so remarkable in the eyes of these puppets, it is

worth my while to study her,' he thought. 'I shall understand what per

fection means to these people.'

As he was trying to catch her eye, Mathilde looked at him. 'Duty calls

me,' Julien said to himself, but his resentment was now confined to his

expression. Curiosity made him step forward with a pleasure which the

low cut of the gown on Mathilda's shoulders rapidly enhanced, in a

manner, it must be admitted, by no means flattering to his self-esteem.

278'Her beauty has the charm of youth,' he thought. Five or six young men,among whom Julien recognised those whom he had heard talking in the

doorway, stood between her and him.

'You can tell me, Sir, as you have been here all the winter,' she said to

him, 'is it not true that this is the prettiest ball of the season?' He made no

answer.

'This Coulon quadrille seems to me admirable; and the ladies are dan

cing it quite perfectly.' The young men turned round to see who the for

tunate person was who was being thus pressed for an answer. It was not

encouraging.

'I should hardly be a good judge, Mademoiselle; I spend my time writ

ing: this is the first ball on such a scale that I have seen.'

The moustached young men were shocked.

'You are a sage, Monsieur Sorel,' she went on with a more marked in

terest; 'you look upon all these balls, all these parties, like a philosopher,like a JeanJacques Rousseau. These follies surprise you without tempt

ing you.'

A chance word had stifled Julien's imagination and banished every il

lusion from his heart. His lips assumed an expression of disdain that was

perhaps slightly exaggerated.

'JeanJacques Rousseau,' he replied, 'is nothing but a fool in my eyes

when he takes it upon himself to criticise society; he did not understand

it, and approached it with the heart of an upstart flunkey.'

'He wrote the Contrat Social,' said Mathilde in a tone of veneration.

'For all his preaching a Republic and the overthrow of monarchical

titles, the upstart is mad with joy if a Duke alters the course of his after

dinner stroll to accompany one of his friends.'

'Ah, yes! The Due de Luxembourg at Montmorency accompanies a M.

Coindet on the road to Paris,' replied Mademoiselle de La Mole with the

impetuous delight of a first enjoyment of pedantry. She was overjoyed at

her own learning, almost like the Academician who discovered the exist

ence of King Feretrius. Julien's eye remained penetrating and stern.

Mathilde had felt a momentary enthusiasm; her partner's coldness dis

concerted her profoundly. She was all the more astonished inasmuch as

it was she who was in the habit of producing this effect upon other

people.

At that moment, the Marquis de Croisenois advanced eagerly towards

Mademoiselle de La Mole. He stopped for a moment within a few feet of

279her, unable to approach her on account of the crowd. He looked at her,with a smile at the obstacle. The young Marquise de Rouvray was close

beside him; she was a cousin of Mathilde. She gave her arm to her hus

band, who had been married for only a fortnight. The Marquis de Rouv

ray, who was quite young also, showed all that fatuous love which seizes

a man, who having made a 'suitable' marriage entirely arranged by the

family lawyers, finds that he has a perfectly charming spouse. M. de

Rouvray would be a Duke on the death of an uncle of advanced years.

While the Marquis de Croisenois, unable to penetrate the throng,stood gazing at Mathilde with a smiling air, she allowed her large, sky

blue eyes to rest upon him and his neighbours. 'What could be duller,'

she said to herself, 'than all that group! Look at Croisenois who hopes to

marry me; he is nice and polite, he has perfect manners like M. de Rouv

ray. If they did not bore me, these gentlemen would be quite charming.

He, too, will come to balls with me with that smug, satisfied air. A year

after we are married, my carriage, my horses, my gowns, my country

house twenty leagues from Paris, everything will be as perfect as pos

sible, just what is needed to make an upstart burst with envy, a

Comtesse de Roiville for instance; and after that?

Mathilde let her mind drift into the future. The Marquis de Croisenois

succeeded in reaching her, and spoke to her, but she dreamed on

without listening. The sound of his voice was lost in the hubbub of the

ball. Her eye mechanically followed Julien, who had moved away with a

respectful, but proud and discontented air. She saw in a corner, aloof

from the moving crowd, Conte Altamira, who was under sentence of

death in his own country, as the reader already knows. Under Louis XIV,a lady of his family had married a Prince de Conti; this antecedent pro

tected him to some extent from the police of the Congregation.

'I can see nothing but a sentence of death that distinguishes a man,'

thought Mathilde: 'it is the only thing that is not to be bought.

'Ah! There is a witty saying that I have wasted on myself! What a pity

that it did not occur to me when I could have made the most of it!' Math

ilde had too much taste to lead up in conversation to a witticism pre

pared beforehand; but she had also too much vanity not to be delighted

with her own wit. An air of happiness succeeded the appearance of bore

dom in her face. The Marquis de Croisenois, who was still addressing

her, thought he saw a chance of success, and doubled his loquacity.

'What fault would anyone have to find with my remark?' Mathilde

asked herself. 'I should answer my critic: "A title of Baron, or Viscount,280that can be bought; a Cross, that is given; my brother has just had one,what has he ever done? A step in promotion, that is obtained. Ten years

of garrison duty, or a relative as Minister for War, and one becomes a

squadroncommander, like Norbert. A great fortune! That is still the

most difficult thing to secure, and therefore the most meritorious. Now is

not that odd? It is just the opposite to what all the books say… Well, to

secure a fortune, one marries M. Rothschild's daughter."

'My remark is really subtle. A death sentence is still the only thing for

which no one has ever thought of asking.

'Do you know Conte Altamira?' she asked M. de Croisenois.

She had the air of having come back to earth from so remote an ab

straction, and this question bore so little relation to all that the poor Mar

quis had been saying to her for the last five minutes, that his friendly

feelings were somewhat disconcerted. He was, however, a man of ready

wit, and highly esteemed in that capacity.

'Mathilde is certainly odd,' he thought; 'it is a drawback, but she gives

her husband such a splendid social position! I cannot think how the Mar

quis de La Mole manages it; he is on intimate terms with the best people

in every party, he is a man who cannot fall. Besides, this oddity in Math

ilde may pass for genius. Given noble birth and an ample fortune, genius

is not to be laughed at, and then, what distinction! She has such a com

mand, too, when she pleases, of that combination of wit, character and

aptness, which makes conversation perfect… ' As it is hard to do two

things well at the same time, the Marquis answered Mathilde with a va

cant air, and as though repeating a lesson:

'Who does not know poor Altamira?' and he told her the story of the

absurd, abortive conspiracy.

'Most absurd!' said Mathilde, as though speaking to herself, 'but he has

done something. I wish to see a man; bring him to me,' she said to the

Marquis, who was deeply shocked.

Conte Altamira was one of the most openly professed admirers of the

haughty and almost impertinent air of Mademoiselle de La Mole; she

was, according to him, one of the loveliest creatures in Paris.

'How beautiful she would be on a throne!' he said to M. de Croisenois,and made no difficulty about allowing himself to be led to her.

There are not wanting in society people who seek to establish the prin

ciple that nothing is in such bad tone as a conspiracy; it reeks of Jacobin

ism. And what can be more vile than an unsuccessful Jacobin?

281Mathilde's glance derided Altamira's Liberalism to M. de Croisenois,but she listened to him with pleasure.

'A conspirator at a ball, it is a charming contrast,' she thought. In this

conspirator, with his black moustaches, she detected a resemblance to a

lion in repose; but she soon found that his mind had but one attitude:

utility, admiration for utility.

Excepting only what might bring to his country Two Chamber govern

ment, the young Count felt that nothing was worthy of his attention. He

parted from Mathilde, the most attractive person at the ball, with pleas

ure because he had seen a Peruvian General enter the room.

Despairing of Europe, poor Altamira had been reduced to hoping that,when the States of South America became strong and powerful, they

might restore to Europe the freedom which Mirabeau had sent to them.

10

A swarm of young men with moustaches had gathered round Math

ilde. She had seen quite well that Altamira was not attracted, and felt

piqued by his desertion of her; she saw his dark eye gleam as he spoke to

the Peruvian General. Mademoiselle de La Mole studied the young

Frenchmen with that profound seriousness which none of her rivals was

able to imitate. 'Which of them,' she thought, 'could ever be sentenced to

death, even allowing him the most favourable conditions?'

This singular gaze flattered those who had little intelligence, but dis

turbed the rest. They feared the explosion of some pointed witticism

which it would be difficult to answer.

'Good birth gives a man a hundred qualities the absence of which

would offend me: I see that in Julien's case,' thought Mathilde; 'but it

destroys those qualities of the spirit which make people be sentenced to

death.'

At that moment someone remarked in her hearing: 'That Conte

Altamira is the second son of the Principe di San NazaroPimentel; it was

a Pimentel who attempted to save Conradin, beheaded in 1268. They are

one of the noblest families of Naples.'

'There,' Mathilde said to herself, 'is an excellent proof of my maxim:

Good birth destroys the strength of character without which people do

10.This page, written on July 25, 1830, was printed on August 4. (Publisher's note.)

—Le Rouge et le Noir was published in 1831. It was an order of July 25, 1830, dissolv

ing the Chamber, which provoked the Revolution of the following days, the abdica

tion of Charles X, and the accession of LouisPhillippe—C. K. S. M.

282not incur sentences of death. I seem fated to go wrong this evening. Since

I am only a woman like any other, well, I must dance.' She yielded to the

persistence of the Marquis de Croisenois, who for the last hour had been

pleading for a galop. To distract her thoughts from her philosophical

failure, Mathilde chose to be perfectly bewitching; M. de Croisenois was

in ecstasies.

But not the dance, nor the desire to please one of the handsomest men

at court, nothing could distract Mathilde. She could not possibly have

enjoyed a greater triumph. She was the queen of the ball, she knew it,but she remained cold.

'What a colourless life I shall lead with a creature like Croisenois,' she

said to herself, as he led her back to her place an hour later… 'What

pleasure can there be for me,' she went on sadly, 'if after an absence of

six months, I do not find any in a ball which is the envy of all the women

in Paris? And moreover I am surrounded by the homage of a society

which could not conceivably be more select. There is no plebeian ele

ment here except a few peers and a Julien or two perhaps. And yet,' she

added, with a growing melancholy, 'what advantages has not fate be

stowed on me! Birth, wealth, youth! Everything, alas, but happiness.

'The most dubious of my advantages are those of which they have

been telling me all evening. Wit, I know I have, for obviously I frighten

them all. If they venture to broach a serious subject, after five minutes of

conversation they all arrive out of breath, and as though making a great

discovery, at something which I have been repeating to them for the last

hour. I am beautiful, I have that advantage for which Madame de Stael

would have sacrificed everything, and yet the fact remains that I am dy

ing of boredom. Is there any reason why I should be less bored when I

have changed my name to that of the Marquis de Croisenois?

'But, Lord!' she added, almost in tears, 'is he not a perfect man? He is

the masterpiece of the education of the age; one cannot look at him

without his thinking of something pleasant, and even clever, to say to

one; he is brave… But that Sorel is a strange fellow,' she said to herself,and the look of gloom in her eye gave place to a look of anger. 'I told him

that I had something to say to him, and he does not condescend to

return!'

283chapter9

The Ball

The splendour of the dresses, the blaze of the candles, the per

fumes; all those rounded arms, and fine shoulders; bouquets, the

sound of Rossini's music, pictures by Ciceri! I am beside myself!

Travels of Uzeri

'You are feeling cross,' the Marquise de La Mole said to her; 'I warn

you, that is not good manners at a ball.'

'It is only a headache,' replied Mathilde contemptuously, 'it is too hot

in here.'

At that moment, as though to corroborate Mademoiselle de La Mole,the old Baron de Tolly fainted and fell to the ground; he had to be carried

out. There was talk of apoplexy, it was a disagreeable incident.

Mathilde did not give it a thought. It was one of her definite habits

never to look at an old man or at anyone known to be given to talking

about sad things.

She danced to escape the conversation about the apoplexy, which was nothing of the sort, for a day or two later the Baron reappeared.

'But M. Sorel does not appear,' she said to herself again after she had finished dancing. She was almost searching for him with her eyes when she caught sight of him in another room. Strange to say, he seemed to have shed the tone of impassive coldness which was so natural to him;he had no longer the air of an Englishman.

'He is talking to Conte Altamira, my condemned man!' Mathilde said to herself. 'His eye is ablaze with a sombre fire; he has the air of a Prince in disguise; the arrogance of his gaze has increased.'

Julien was coming towards the spot where she was, still talking to Altamira; she looked fixedly at him, studying his features in search of those lofty qualities which may entitle a man to the honour of being sentenced to death.

As he passed by her:

'Yes,' he was saying to Conte Altamira, 'Danton was a man!'

'Oh, heavens! Is he to be another Danton,' thought Mathilde; 'but he has such a noble face, and that Danton was so horribly ugly, a butcher, I fancy.' Julien was still quite near her, she had no hesitation in calling to him; she was conscious and proud of asking a question that was extraordinary, coming from a girl.

'Was not Danton a butcher?' she asked him.

'Yes, in the eyes of certain people,' Julien answered her with an expression of the most ill-concealed scorn, his eye still ablaze from his conversation with Altamira, 'but unfortunately for people of birth, he was a lawyer at MerysurSeine; that is to say, Mademoiselle,' he went on with an air of sarcasm, 'that he began life like several of the Peers whom I see here this evening. It is true that Danton had an enormous disadvantage in the eyes of beauty: he was extremely ugly.'

The last words were uttered rapidly, with an extraordinary and certainly far from courteous air.

Julien waited for a moment, bowing slightly from the waist and with an arrogantly humble air. He seemed to be saying: 'I am paid to answer you, and I live upon my pay.' He did not deign to raise his eyes to her face. She, with her fine eyes opened extraordinarily wide and fastened upon him, seemed like his slave. At length, as the silence continued, he looked at her as a servant looks at his master, when receiving orders. Although his eyes looked full into those of Mathilde, still fastened upon him with a strange gaze, he withdrew with marked alacrity.

'That he, who really is so handsome,' Mathilde said to herself at length,awakening from her dreams, 'should pay such a tribute to ugliness!

Never a thought of himself! He is not like Caylus or Croisenois. This Sorel has something of the air my father adopts when he is playing the Napoleon, at a ball.'

She had entirely forgotten Danton. 'No doubt about it, I am bored this evening.' She seized her brother by the arm, and,greatly to his disgust, forced him to take her for a tour of the rooms. The idea occurred to her of following the condemned man's conversation with Julien.

The crowd was immense. She succeeded, however, in overtaking them at the moment when, just in front of her, Altamira had stopped by a tray of ices to help himself. He was talking to Julien, half turning towards him. He saw an arm in a braided sleeve stretched out to take an ice from the same tray. The gold lace seemed to attract his attention; he turned round bodily to see whose this arm was. Immediately his eyes, so noble and unaffected, assumed a slight expression of scorn.

'You see that man,' he murmured to Julien; 'he is the Principe d'Araceli, the —— Ambassador. This morning he applied for my extradition to your French Foreign Minister, M. de Nerval. Look, there he is over there, playing whist. M. de Nerval is quite ready to give me up, for we gave you back two or three conspirators in 1816. If they surrender me to my King I shall be hanged within twenty-four hours. And it will be one of those pretty gentlemen with moustaches who will seize me.'

'The wretches!' exclaimed Julien, half aloud.

Mathilde did not lose a syllable of their conversation. Her boredom had vanished.

'Not such wretches as all that,' replied Conte Altamira. 'I have spoken to you of myself to impress you with a real instance. Look at Principe d'Araceli; every five minutes he casts a glance at his Golden Fleece; he cannot get over the pleasure of seeing that trinket on his breast. The poor man is really nothing worse than an anachronism. A hundred years ago,the Golden Fleece was a signal honour, but then it would have been far above his head. Today, among people of breeding, one must be an Araceli to be thrilled by it. He would have hanged a whole town to obtain it.'

'Was that the price he paid for it?' said Julien, with anxiety.

'Not exactly,' replied Altamira coldly; 'he perhaps had some thirty wealthy landowners of his country, who were supposed to be Liberals,flung into the river.'

'What a monster!' said Julien again.

Mademoiselle de La Mole, leaning forward with the keenest interest,was so close to him that her beautiful hair almost brushed his shoulder.'You are very young!' replied Altamira. 'I told you that I have a married sister in Provence; she is still pretty, good, gentle; she is an excellent mother, faithful to all her duties, pious without bigotry.'

'What is he leading up to?' thought Mademoiselle de La Mole.

'She is happy,' Conte Altamira continued; 'she was happy in 1815. At

that time I was in hiding there, on her property near Antibes; well, as

soon as she heard of the execution of Marshal Ney, she began to dance!'

'Is it possible?' said the horrified Julien.

286'It is the partisan spirit,' replied Altamira. There are no longer any

genuine passions in the nineteenth century; that is why people are so

bored in France. We commit the greatest cruelties, but without cruelty.'

'All the worse!' said Julien; 'at least, when we commit crimes, we

should commit them with pleasure: that is the only good thing about

them, and the only excuse that can in any way justify them.'

Mademoiselle de La Mole, entirely forgetting what she owed to her

self, had placed herself almost bodily between Altamira and Julien. Her

brother, upon whose arm she leaned, being accustomed to obey her, was

looking about the room, and, to hide his lack of composure, pretending

to be held up by the crowd.

'You are right,' said Altamira; 'we do everything without pleasure and

without remembering it afterwards, even our crimes. I can point out to

you at this ball ten men, perhaps, who will be damned as murderers.

They have forgotten it, and the world also.

11

'Many of them are moved to tears if their dog breaks its paw. At Pere

Lachaise, when people strew flowers on their graves, as you so charm

ingly say in Paris, we are told that they combined all the virtues of the

knights of old, and we hear of the great deeds of their ancestor who lived

in the days of Henri IV: If, despite the good offices of Principe d'Araceli, I

am not hanged, and if I ever come to enjoy my fortune in Paris, I hope to

invite you to dine with nine or ten murderers who are honoured and feel

no remorse.

'You and I, at that dinner, will be the only two whose hands are free

from blood, but I shall be despised and almost hated, as a bloody and Ja

cobinical monster, and you will simply be despised as a plebeian who

has thrust his way into good society.'

'Nothing could be more true,' said Mademoiselle de La Mole.

Altamira looked at her in astonishment; Julien did not deign to look at

her.

'Note that the revolution at the head of which I found myself,' Conte

Altamira went on, 'was unsuccessful, solely because I would not cut off

three heads, and distribute among our supporters seven or eight millions

which happened to be in a safe of which I held the key. My King, who is

now burning to have me hanged, and who, before the revolt, used to ad

dress me as tu, would have given me the Grand Cordon of his Order if I

had cut off those three heads and distributed the money in those safes:

11.'A malcontent is speaking.' (Note by Moliere to Tartuffe.)

287for then I should have scored at least a partial success, and my country

would have had a Charter of sorts… Such is the way of the world, it is a

game of chess.'

'Then,' replied Julien, his eyes ablaze, 'you did not know the game;now … '

'I should cut off the heads, you mean, and I should not be a Girondin

as you gave me to understand the other day? I will answer you,' said

Altamira sadly, 'when you have killed a man in a duel, and that is a great

deal less unpleasant than having him put to death by a headsman.'

'Faith!' said Julien, 'the end justifies the means; if, instead of being a

mere atom, I had any power, I would hang three men to save the lives of

four.'

His eyes expressed the fire of conscience and a contempt for the vain

judgments of men; they met those of Mademoiselle de La Mole who

stood close beside him, and this contempt, instead of changing into an

air of gracious civility, seemed to intensify.

It shocked her profoundly; but it no longer lay in her power to forget

Julien; she moved indifferently away, taking her brother with her.

'I must take some punch, and dance a great deal,' she said to herself, 'I

intend to take the best that is going, and to create an effect at all costs.

Good, here comes that master of impertinence, the Comte de Fervaques.'

She accepted his invitation; they danced. 'It remains to be seen,' she

thought, 'which of us will be the more impertinent, but, to get the full en

joyment out of him, I must make him talk.' Presently all the rest of the

country dance became a pure formality. No one was willing to miss any

of Mathilde's piquant repartees. M. de Fervaques grew troubled, and, be

ing able to think of nothing but elegant phrases, in place of ideas, began

to smirk; Mathilde, who was out of temper, treated him cruelly, and

made an enemy of him. She danced until daybreak, and finally went

home horribly tired. But, in the carriage, the little strength that remained

to her was still employed in making her melancholy and wretched. She

had been scorned by Julien, and was unable to scorn him.

Julien was on a pinnacle of happiness. Carried away unconsciously by

the music, the flowers, the beautiful women, the general elegance, and,most of all, by his own imagination, which dreamed of distinctions for

himself and of liberty for mankind:

'What a fine ball!' he said to the Conte, 'nothing is lacking.'

'Thought is lacking,' replied Altamira.

288And his features betrayed that contempt which is all the more striking

because one sees that politeness makes it a duty to conceal it.

'You are here, Monsieur le Comte. Is not that thought, and actively

conspiring, too?'

'I am here because of my name. But they hate thought in your

drawing-rooms. It must never rise above the level of a comic song: then

it is rewarded. But the man who thinks, if he shows energy and novelty

in his sallies, you call a cynic. Is not that the name that one of your judges

bestowed upon Courier? You put him in prison, and Beranger also.

Everything that is of any value among you, intellectually, the Congrega

tion flings to the criminal police; and society applauds.

'The truth is that your antiquated society values conventionality above

everything… You will never rise higher than martial gallantry; you will

have Murats, but never a Washington. I can see nothing in France but

vanity. A man who thinks of things as he speaks may easily say

something rash, and his host then imagines himself insulted.'

At this point, the Conte's carriage, which was taking Julien home,stopped at the Hotel de La Mole. Julien was in love with his conspirator.

Altamira had paid him a handsome compliment, evidently springing

from a profound conviction: 'You have not the French frivolity, and you

understand the principle of utility.' It so happened that, only two even

ings before, Julien had seen Marino Faliero, a tragedy by M. Casimir

Delavigne.

'Has not Israel Bertuccio more character than all those Venetian

nobles?' our rebellious plebeian asked himself; 'and yet they are men

whose noble descent can be proved as far back as the year 700, a century

before Charlemagne; whereas the bluest blood at M. de Retz's ball to

night does not go farther back, and that only by a hop, skip and jump,than the thirteenth century. Very well! Among those Venetian nobles, so

great by birth, it is Israel Bertuccio that one remembers.

'A conspiracy wipes out all the titles conferred by social caprice. In

those conditions, a man springs at once to the rank which his manner of

facing death assigns to him. The mind itself loses some of its authority…

'What would Danton be today, in this age of Valenods and Renais?

Not even a Deputy Crown Prosecutor …

'What am I saying? He would have sold himself to the Congregation; he

would be a Minister, for after all the great Danton did steal. Mirabeau,too, sold himself. Napoleon stole millions in Italy, otherwise he would

289have been brought to a standstill by poverty, like Pichegru. Only La Fay

ette never stole. Must one steal, must one sell oneself?' Julien wondered.

The question arrested the flow of his imagination. He spent the rest of

the night reading the history of the Revolution.

Next day, as he copied his letters in the library, he could still think of

nothing but Conte Altamira's conversation.

'It is quite true,' he said to himself, after a long spell of absorption; 'if

those Spanish Liberals had compromised the people by a few crimes,they would not have been swept away so easily. They were conceited,chattering boys … like myself!' Julien suddenly cried, as though awaking

with a bound.

'What difficult thing have I ever done that gives me the right to judge

poor devils who, after all, once in their lives, have dared, have begun to

act? I am like a man who, on rising from table, exclaims: "Tomorrow I

shall not dine; that will not prevent me from feeling strong and brisk as I

do today." How can I tell what people feel in the middle of a great ac

tion? … ' These lofty thoughts were interrupted by the sudden arrival of

Mademoiselle de La Mole, who at this moment entered the library. He

was so excited by his admiration for the great qualities of Danton, Mira

beau, Carnot, who had contrived not to be crushed, that his eyes rested

upon Mademoiselle de La Mole, but without his thinking of her, without

his greeting her, almost without his seeing her. When at length his great

staring eyes became aware of her presence, the light died out in them.

Mademoiselle de La Mole remarked this with a feeling of bitterness.

In vain did she ask him for a volume of Vely's Histoire de France which

stood on the highest shelf, so that Julien was obliged to fetch the longer

of the two ladders. He brought the ladder; he found the volume, he

handed it to her, still without being able to think of her. As he carried

back the ladder, in his preoccupation, his elbow struck one of the glass

panes protecting the shelves; the sound of the splinters falling on the

floor at length aroused him. He hastened to make his apology to Ma

demoiselle de La Mole; he tried to be polite, but he was nothing more.

Mathilde saw quite plainly that she had disturbed him, that he would

have preferred to dream of what had been occupying his mind before

her entry, rather than to talk to her. After a long glance at him, she

slowly left the room. Julien watched her as she went. He enjoyed the

contrast between the simplicity of the attire she was now wearing and

her sumptuous magnificence overnight. The difference in her

physiognomy was hardly less striking. This girl, so haughty at the Duc

290de Retz's ball, had at this moment almost a suppliant look. 'Really,' Julien

told himself, 'that black gown shows off the beauty of her figure better

than anything; but why is she in mourning?

'If I ask anyone the reason of this mourning, I shall only make myself

appear a fool as usual.' Julien had quite come to earth from the soaring

flight of his enthusiasm. 'I must read over all the letters I have written

today; Heaven knows how many missing words and blunders I shall

find.' As he was reading with forced attention the first of these letters, he

heard close beside him the rustle of a silken gown; he turned sharply

round; Mademoiselle de La Mole was standing by his table, and smiling.

This second interruption made Julien lose his temper.

As for Mathilde, she had just become vividly aware that she meant

nothing to this young man; her smile was intended to cover her embar

rassment, and proved successful.

'Evidently, you are thinking about something that is extremely inter

esting, Monsieur Sorel. Is it by any chance some curious anecdote of the

conspiracy that has sent the Conte Altamira here to Paris? Tell me what

it is? I am burning to know; I shall be discreet, I swear to you!' This last

sentence astonished her as she uttered it. What, she was pleading with a

subordinate! Her embarrassment grew, she adopted a light manner:

'What can suddenly have turned you, who are ordinarily so cold, into

an inspired creature, a sort of Michelangelo prophet?'

This bold and indiscreet question, cutting Julien to the quick, revived

all his passion.

'Was Danton justified in stealing?' he said to her sharply, and with an

air that grew more and more savage. 'The Revolutionaries of Piedmont,of Spain, ought they to have compromised the people by crimes? To

have given away, even to men without merit, all the commands in the

army, all the Crosses? Would not the men who wore those Crosses have

had reason to fear a Restoration of their King? Ought they to have let the

Treasury in Turin be pillaged? In a word, Mademoiselle,' he said, as he

came towards her with a terrible air, 'ought the man who seeks to banish

ignorance and crime from the earth to pass like a whirlwind and do evil

as though blindly?'

Mathilde was afraid, she could not meet his gaze, and recoiled a little.

She looked at him for a moment; then, ashamed of her fear, with a light

step left the library.

291chapter10

Queen Marguerite

Love! In what folly do you not contrive to make us find pleasure?

Letters of a Portuguese Nun

Julien read over his letters. When the dinner bell sounded: 'How ri

diculous I must have appeared in the eyes of that Parisian doll!' he said

to himself; 'what madness to tell her what was really in my thoughts!

And yet perhaps not so very mad. The truth on this occasion was worthy

of me.

'Why, too, come and crossexamine me on private matters? Her ques

tion was indiscreet. She forgot herself. My thoughts on Danton form no

part of the sacrifice for which her father pays me.'

On reaching the diningroom, Julien was distracted from his ill hu

mour by Mademoiselle de La Mole's deep mourning, which was all the

more striking since none of the rest of the family was in black.

After dinner, he found himself entirely recovered from the fit of enthu

siasm which had possessed him all day. Fortunately, the Academician

who knew Latin was present at dinner. There is the man who will be

least contemptuous of me, if, as I suppose, my question about Ma

demoiselle de La Mole's mourning should prove a blunder.'

Mathilde was looking at him with a singular expression. 'There we

have an instance of the coquetry of the women of these parts, just as Ma

dame de Renal described it to me,' Julien told himself. 'I was not agree

able to her this morning, I did not yield to her impulse for conversation.

My value has increased in her eyes. No doubt the devil loses no oppor

tunity there. Later on, her proud scorn will find out a way of avenging it

self. Let her do her worst. How different from the woman I have lost!

What natural charm! What simplicity! I knew what was in her mind be

fore she did; I could see her thoughts take shape; I had no competitor, in

her heart, but the fear of losing her children; it was a reasonable and

292natural affection, indeed it was pleasant for me who felt the same fear. I

was a fool. The ideas that I had I formed of Paris prevented me from ap

preciating that sublime woman.

'What a difference, great God! And what do I find here? A sere and

haughty vanity, all the refinements of self-esteem and nothing more.'

The party left the table. 'I must not let my Academician be intercepted,'

said Julien. He went up to him as they were moving into the garden, as

sumed a meek, submissive air, and sympathised with his rage at the suc

cess of Hernani.

'If only we lived in the days of lettres de cachet!' he said.

'Ah, then he would never have dared,' cried the Academician, with a

gesture worthy of Talma.

In speaking of a flower, Julien quoted a line or two from Virgil's Geor

gics, and decided that nothing came up to the poetry of the abbe Delille.

In short, he flattered the Academician in every possible way. After

which, with an air of the utmost indifference: 'I suppose,' he said to him,'that Mademoiselle de La Mole has received a legacy from some uncle for

whom she is in mourning.'

'What! You live in the house,' said the Academician, coming to a

standstill, 'and you don't know her mania? Indeed, it is strange that her

mother allows such things; but, between you and me, it is not exactly by

strength of character that they shine in this family. Mademoiselle Math

ilde has enough for them all, and leads them by the nose. Today is the

3Oth of April!' and the Academician broke off, looking at Julien, with an

air of connivance. Julien smiled as intelligently as he was able.

'What connection can there be between leading a whole household by

the nose, wearing black and the 30th of April?' he asked himself. 'I must

be even stupider than I thought.

'I must confess to you,' he said to the Academician, and his eye contin

ued the question.

'Let us take a turn in the garden,' said the Academician, delighted to

see this chance of delivering a long and formal speech. 'What! Is it really

possible that you do not know what happened on the 30th of April,1574?'

'Where?' asked Julien, in surprise.

'On the Place de Greve.'

293Julien was so surprised that this name did not enlighten him. His curi

osity, the prospect of a tragic interest, so attuned to his nature, gave him

those sparkling eyes which a storyteller so loves to see in his audience.

The Academician, delighted to find a virgin ear, related at full length to

Julien how, on the 30th of April, 1574, the handsomest young man of his

age, Boniface de La Mole, and Annibal de Coconasso, a Piedmontese

gentleman, his friend, had been beheaded on the Place de Greve. 'La

Mole was the adored lover of Queen Marguerite of Navarre; and ob

serve,' the Academician added, 'that Mademoiselle de La Mole is named

MathildeMarguerite. La Mole was at the same time the favourite of the

Duc d'Alencon and an intimate friend of the King of Navarre, afterwards

Henri IV, the husband of his mistress. On Shrove Tuesday in this year,1574, the Court happened to be at SaintGermain, with the unfortunate

King Charles IX, who was on his deathbed. La Mole wished to carry off

the Princes, his friends, whom Queen Catherine de' Medici was keeping

as prisoners with the Court. He brought up two hundred horsemen un

der the walls of SaintGermain, the Due d'Alencon took fright, and La

Mole was sent to the scaffold.

'But what appeals to Mademoiselle Mathilde, as she told me herself,seven or eight years ago, when she was only twelve, for she has a head,such a head! … ' and the Academician raised his eyes to heaven. 'What

impresses her in this political catastrophe is that Queen Marguerite of

Navarre, who had waited concealed in a house on the Place de Greve,made bold to ask the executioner for her lover's head. And the following

night, at midnight, she took the head in her carriage, and went to bury it

with her own hands in a chapel which stood at the foot of the hill of

Montmartre.'

'Is it possible?' exclaimed Julien, deeply touched.

'Mademoiselle Mathilde despises her brother because, as you see, he

thinks nothing of all this ancient history, and never goes into mourning

on the 30th of April. It is since this famous execution, and to recall the in

timate friendship between La Mole and Coconasso, which Coconasso,being as he was an Italian, was named Annibal, that all the men of this

family have borne that name. And,' the Academician went on, lowering

his voice, 'this Coconasso was, on the authority of Charles IX, himself,one of the bloodiest assassins on the 24th of August, 1572.. But how is it

possible, my dear Sorel, that you are ignorant of these matters, you, who

are an inmate of the house?'

294'Then that is why twice, during the dinner, Mademoiselle de La Mole

addressed her brother as Annibal. I thought I had not heard aright.'

'It was a reproach. It is strange that the Marquise permits such folly …

That great girl's husband will see some fine doings!'

This expression was followed by five or six satirical phrases. The joy at

thus revealing an intimate secret that shone in the Academician's eyes

shocked Julien. 'What are we but a pair of servants engaged in slander

ing our employers?' he thought. 'But nothing ought to surprise me that is

done by this academic gentleman.'

One day Julien had caught him on his knees before the Marquise de La

Mole; he was begging her for a tobacco licence for a nephew in the coun

try. That night, he gathered from a little maid of Mademoiselle de La

Mole, who was making love to him, as Elisa had done in the past, that

her mistress's mourning was by no means put on to attract attention.

This eccentricity was an intimate part of her nature. She really loved this

La Mole, the favoured lover of the most brilliant Queen of her age, who

had died for having sought to set his friends at liberty. And what

friends! The First Prince of the Blood and Henri IV.

Accustomed to the perfect naturalness that shone through the whole of

Madame de Renal's conduct, Julien saw nothing but affectation in all the

women of Paris, and even without feeling disposed to melancholy, could

think of nothing to say to them. Mademoiselle de La Mole was the

exception.

He began no longer to mistake for hardness of heart the kind of beauty

that goes with nobility of bearing. He had long conversations with Ma

demoiselle de La Mole, who would stroll with him in the garden some

times after dinner, past the open windows of the drawing-room. She told

him one day that she was reading d'Aubigne's History, and Brantome. 'A

strange choice,' thought Julien, 'and the Marquise does not allow her to

read the novels of Walter Scott!'

One day she related to him, with that glow of pleasure in her eyes

which proves the sincerity of the speaker's admiration, the feat of a

young woman in the reign of Henri in, which she had just discovered in

the Memoires by l'Etoile: finding that her husband was unfaithful, she

had stabbed him.

Julien's self-esteem was flattered. A person surrounded by such defer

ence, one who, according to the Academician, was the leader of the

household, deigned to address him in a tone which might almost be re

garded as friendly. 'I was mistaken,' was his next thought; 'this is not

295familiarity, I am only the listener to a tragic story, it is the need to speak.

I am regarded as learned by this family. I shall go and read Brantome,d'Aubigne, l'Etoile. I shall be able to challenge some of the anecdotes

which Mademoiselle de La Mole cites to me. I must emerge from this

part of a passive listener.'

In course of time his conversations with this girl, whose manner was at

once so imposing and so easy, became more interesting. He forgot his

melancholy role as a plebeian in revolt. He found her learned and indeed

rational. Her opinions in the garden differed widely from those which

she maintained in the drawing-room. At times she displayed with him

an enthusiasm and a frankness which formed a perfect contrast with her

normal manner, so haughty and cold.

'The Wars of the League are the heroic age of France,' she said to him

one day, her eyes aflame with intellect and enthusiasm. 'Then everyone

fought to secure a definite object which he desired in order to make his

party triumph, and not merely to win a stupid Cross as in the days of

your Emperor. You must agree that there was less egoism and pettiness.

I love that period.'

'And Boniface de La Mole was its hero,' he said to her.

'At any rate he was loved as it is perhaps pleasant to be loved. What

woman alive today would not be horrified to touch the head of her de

capitated lover?'

Madame de La Mole called her daughter indoors. Hypocrisy, to be ef

fective, must be concealed; and Julien, as we see, had taken Mademois

elle de La Mole partly into his confidence as to his admiration for

Napoleon.

'That is the immense advantage which they have over us,' he said to

himself, when left alone in the garden. 'The history of their ancestors

raises them above vulgar sentiments, and they have not always to be

thinking of their daily bread! What a wretched state of things!' he added

bitterly. 'I am not worthy to discuss these serious matters. My life is

nothing more than a sequence of hypocrisies, because I have not an in

come of a thousand francs with which to buy my bread.'

'What are you dreaming of, Sir?' Mathilde asked him, running back

outdoors.

Julien was tired of despising himself. In a moment of pride, he told her

frankly what he was thinking. He blushed deeply when speaking of his

poverty to a person who was so rich. He sought to make it quite clear by

296his proud tone that he asked for nothing. Never had he seemed so hand

some to Mathilde; she found in him an expression of sensibility and

frankness which he often lacked.

Less than a month later, Julien was strolling pensively in the garden of

the Hotel de La Mole; but his features no longer showed the harshness,as of a surly philosopher, which the constant sense of his own inferiority

impressed on them. He had just come from the door of the drawing

room to which he had escorted Mademoiselle de La Mole, who preten

ded that she had hurt her foot when running with her brother.

'She leaned upon my arm in the strangest fashion!' Julien said to him

self. 'Am I a fool, or can it be true that she has a liking for me? She listens

to me so meekly even when I confess to her all the sufferings of my

pride! She, who is so haughty with everyone else! They would be greatly

surprised in the drawing-room if they saw her looking like that. There is

no doubt about it, she never assumes that meek, friendly air with anyone

but myself.'

Julien tried not to exaggerate this singular friendship. He compared it

himself to an armed neutrality. Day by day, when they met, before re

suming the almost intimate tone of the day before, they almost asked

themselves: 'Are we friends today, or enemies?' Julien had realised that,were he once to allow himself to be insulted with impunity by this

haughty girl, all was lost. 'If I must quarrel, is it not to my advantage to

do so from the first, in defending the lawful rights of my pride, rather

than in repelling the marks of contempt that must quickly follow the

slightest surrender of what I owe to my personal dignity?'

Several times, on days of mutual discord, Mathilde tried to adopt with

him the tone of a great lady; she employed a rare skill in these attempts,but Julien repulsed them rudely.

One day he interrupted her suddenly: 'Has Mademoiselle de La Mole

some order to give to her father's secretary?' he asked her; 'he is obliged

to listen to her orders and to carry them out with respect; but apart from

that, he has not one word to say to her. He certainly is not paid to com

municate his thoughts to her.'

This state of affairs, and the singular doubts which Julien felt banished

the boredom which he found regularly in that drawing-room, in which,for all its magnificence, people were afraid of everything, and it was not

thought proper to treat any subject lightly.

'It would be amusing if she loved me! Whether she loves me or not,'

Julien went on, 'I have as my intimate confidant an intelligent girl, before

297whom I see the whole household tremble, and most of all the Marquis de

Croisenois. That young man who is so polished, so gentle, so brave, who

combines in his own person all the advantages of birth and fortune, any

one of which would set my heart so at ease! He is madly in love with her,he is going to marry her. Think of all the letters M. de La Mole has made

me write to the two lawyers arranging the contract! And I who see my

self so subordinate, pen in hand, two hours later, here in the garden, I tri

umph over so attractive a young man: for after all, her preference is strik

ing, direct. Perhaps, too, she hates the idea of him as a future husband.

She is proud enough for that. And the favour she shows me, I obtain on

the footing of a confidential servant!

'But no, either I am mad, or she is making love to me; the more I show

myself cold and respectful towards her, the more she seeks me out. That

might be deliberate, an affectation; but I see her eyes become animated

when I appear unexpectedly. Are the women of Paris capable of pretend

ing to such an extent? What does it matter! I have appearances on my

side, let us make the most of them. My God, how handsome she is! How

I admire her great blue eyes, seen at close range, and looking at me as

they often do! What a difference between this spring and the last, when I

was living in misery, keeping myself alive by my strength of character,surrounded by those three hundred dirty and evilminded hypocrites! I

was almost as evil as they.'

In moments of depression: That girl is making a fool of me,' Julien

would think. 'She is plotting with her brother to mystify me. But she

seems so to despise her brother's want of energy! He is brave, and there

is no more to be said, she tells me. He has not an idea which ventures to

depart from the fashion. It is always I who am obliged to take up her de

fence. A girl of nineteen! At that age can a girl be faithful at every mo

ment of the day to the code of hypocrisy that she has laid down for

herself?

'On the other hand, when Mademoiselle de La Mole fastens her great

blue eyes on me with a certain strange expression, Comte Norbert al

ways moves away. That seems to me suspicious; ought he not to be an

noyed at his sister's singling out a domestic of their household? For I have

heard the Duc de Chaulnes use that term of me.' At this memory anger

obliterated every other feeling. 'Is it only the love of oldfashioned

speech in that ducal maniac?

298'Anyhow, she is pretty!' Julien went on, with the glare of a tiger. 'I will

have her, I shall then depart and woe to him that impedes me in my

flight!'

This plan became Julien's sole occupation; he could no longer give a

thought to anything else. His days passed like hours. At all hours of the

day, when he sought to occupy his mind with some serious business, his

thoughts would abandon everything, and he would come to himself a

quarter of an hour later, his heart throbbing, his head confused, and

dreaming of this one idea: 'Does she love me?'

299chapter11

The Tyranny of a Girl

I admire her beauty, but I fear her intelligence.

MERIMEE

Had Julien devoted to the consideration of what went on in the

drawing-room the time which he spent in exaggerating Mathilde's

beauty, or in lashing himself into a fury at the aloofness natural to her

family, whom she was forgetting in his company, he would have under

stood in what her despotic power over everyone round about her con

sisted. Whenever anyone earned Mademoiselle de La Mole's displeasure,she knew how to punish him by a witticism so calculated, so well

chosen, apparently so harmless, so aptly launched, that the wound it left

deepened the more he thought of it. In time she became deadly to

wounded vanity. As she attached no importance to many things that

were the object of serious ambition with the rest of her family, she al

ways appeared cool in their eyes. The drawing-rooms of the nobility are

pleasant things to mention after one has left them, but that is all; bare po

liteness is something in itself only for the first few days. Julien experi

enced this; after the first enchantment, the first bewilderment.

'Politeness,' he said to himself, 'is nothing more than the absence of the

irritation which would come from bad manners.' Mathilde was fre

quently bored, perhaps she would have been bored in any circum

stances. At such times to sharpen the point of an epigram was for her a

distraction and a real pleasure.

It was perhaps in order to have victims slightly more amusing than

her distinguished relatives, the Academician and the five or six other in

feriors who formed their court, that she had given grounds for hope to

the Marquis de Croisenois, the Comte de Caylus and two or three other

young men of the highest distinction. They were nothing more to her

than fresh subjects for epigram.

300We confess with sorrow, for we are fond of Mathilde, that she had re

ceived letters from several of their number, and had occasionally

answered them. We hasten to add that this character in our story forms

an exception to the habits of the age. It is not, generally speaking, with

want of prudence that one can reproach the pupils of the noble Convent

of the SacreCoeur.

One day the Marquis de Croisenois returned to Mathilde a distinctly

compromising letter which she had written him the day before. He

thought that by this sign of extreme prudence he was greatly strengthen

ing his position. But imprudence was what Mathilde enjoyed in her cor

respondence. It was her chief pleasure to play with fire. She did not

speak to him again for six weeks.

She amused herself with the letters of these young men; but, according

to her, they were all alike. It was always the most profound, the most

melancholy passion.

'They are all the same perfect gentlemen, ready to set off for Palestine,'

she said to her cousin. 'Can you think of anything more insipid? Think

that this is the sort of letter that I am going to receive for the rest of my

life! These letters can only change every twenty years, according to the

kind of occupation that is in fashion. They must have been less colourless

in the days of the Empire. Then all these young men in society had seen

or performed actions in which there was real greatness. The Due de

N——, my uncle, fought at Wagram.'

'What intelligence is required to wield a sabre? And when that has

happened to them, they talk about it so often!' said Mademoiselle de

SainteHeredite, Mathilde's cousin.

'Oh, well, those stories amuse me. To have been in a real battle, one of

Napoleon's battles, in which ten thousand soldiers were killed, is a proof

of courage. Exposing oneself to danger elevates the soul, and saves it

from the boredom in which all my poor adorers seem to be plunged; and

it is contagious, that boredom. Which of them ever dreams of doing any

thing out of the common? They seek to win my hand, a fine enterprise! I

am rich, and my father will help on his soninlaw. Oh, if only he could

find one who was at all amusing!'

Mathilde's vivid, picturesque point of view affected her speech, as we

can see. Often something she said jarred on the refined nerves of her

highly polished friends. They would almost have admitted, had she been

less in the fashion, that there was something in her language a little too

highly coloured for feminine delicacy.

301She, on her part, was most unjust to the handsome men on horseback

who throng the Bois de Boulogne. She looked towards the future, not

with terror, that would have been too strong a feeling, but with a disgust

very rare at her age.

What had she left to desire? Fortune, noble birth, wit, beauty, or so it

was said, and she believed, all had been heaped upon her by the hand of

chance.

Such were the thoughts of the most envied heiress of the Faubourg

SaintGermain, when she began to find pleasure in strolling with Julien.

She was amazed at his pride; she admired the cunning of this little ple

beian. 'He will manage to get himself made a Bishop like the abbe

Maury,' she said to herself.

Presently the sincere and unfeigned resistance, with which our hero

received a number of her ideas, began to occupy her mind; she thought

about him; she reported to her cousin the pettiest details of their conver

sations, and found that she could never succeed in displaying them in

every aspect.

Suddenly an idea dawned upon her: 'I have the good fortune to be in

love,' she told herself one day, with an indescribable transport of joy. 'I

am in love, I am in love, it is quite clear! At my age, a young girl, beauti

ful, clever, where can she find sensations, if not in love? I may do what I

like, I shall never feel any love for Croisenois, Caylus, e tutti quanti. They

are perfect, too perfect perhaps; in short, they bore me.'

She turned over in her mind all the descriptions of passion which she

had read in Manon Lescaut, the Nouvelle Heloise, the Letters of a Portuguese

Nun, and so forth. There was no question, of course, of anything but a

grand passion; mere fleeting affection was unworthy of a girl of her age

and birth. She bestowed the name of love only upon that heroic senti

ment which was to be found in France in the days of Henri IV and Bas

sompierre. That love never basely succumbed to obstacles; far from it, it

caused great deeds to be done. 'What a misfortune for me that there is

not a real Court like that of Catherine de' Medici or Louis XIII! I feel that

I am equal to everything that is most daring and great. What should I not

do with a King who was a man of feeling, like Louis XII, sighing at my

feet! I should lead him to the Vendee, as Baron de Tolly is always saying,and from there he would reconquer his Kingdom; then no more talk of a

Charter … and Julien would aid me. What is it that he lacks? A name

and a fortune. He would make a name for himself, he would acquire a

fortune.

302'The Marquis de Croisenois lacks nothing, and all his life long he will

be merely a Duke, half Ultra, half Liberal, an undecided creature always

holding back from extremes, and consequently finding himself every

where in the second rank.

'Where is the great action which is not an extreme at the moment in

which one undertakes it? It is when it is accomplished that it seems pos

sible to creatures of common clay. Yes, it is love with all its miracles that

is going to reign in my heart; I feel it by the fire that is animating me.

Heaven owed me this favour. Not in vain will it have heaped every ad

vantage upon a single head. My happiness will be worthy of myself.

Each of my days will not coldly resemble the day before. There is already

something grand and audacious in daring to love a man placed so far be

neath me in social position. Let me see: will he continue to deserve me?

At the first sign of weakness that I observe in him, I abandon him. A girl

of my birth, and with the chivalrous character which they are so kind as

to attribute to me' (this was one of her father's sayings) 'ought not to be

have like a fool.

'Is not that the part that I should be playing if I loved the Marquis de

Croisenois? It would be simply a repetition of the happiness of my cous

ins, whom I despise so utterly. I know beforehand everything that the

poor Marquis would say to me, all that I should have to say to him in

reply. What is the use of a love that makes one yawn? One might as well

take to religion. I should have a scene at the signing of my marriage con

tract like my youngest cousin, with the noble relatives shedding tears,provided they were not made angry by a final condition inserted in the

contract the day before by the solicitor to the other party.'

303chapter12

Another Danton

The need for anxiety explains the character of the beautiful Mar

guerite de Valois, my aunt, who soon afterwards married the

King of Navarre, whom we now see on the throne of France un

der the name of Henri IV. The need to gamble was the key to the

character of this delightful princess; hence the quarrels and the

reconciliations with her brothers from the age of sixteen onwards.

And what does a young girl gamble with? The most precious

thing she has: her reputation, the possibility of esteem for her en

tire life.

Memoirs of the Due d'Angouleme, natural son of Charles IX

'With Julien and me there is no contract to be signed, no lawyer;everything is heroic, everything will be left to chance. But for nobility,which he lacks, it is the love of Marguerite de Valois for young La Mole,the most distinguished man of his time. Is it my fault if the young men at

Court are such ardent devotees of the Conventions, and turn pale at the

mere thought of any adventure that is slightly out of the common? A

little expedition to Greece or Africa is to them the height of audacity, and

even then they can only go in a troop. As soon as they find themselves

alone, they become afraid, not of Bedouin spears, but of ridicule, and

that drives them mad.

'My little Julien, on the contrary, will only act alone. Never, in that

privileged being, is there the slightest thought of seeking the approval

and support of others! He despises other people, that is why I do not

despise him.

'If, with his poverty, Julien had been noble, my love would be nothing

more than a piece of vulgar folly, an unfortunate marriage; I should not

object to that; it would lack that element which characterises great pas

sion: the immensity of the difficulty to be overcome and the black uncer

tainty of events.'

304Mademoiselle de La Mole was so absorbed in these fine speculations

that next day, quite unintentionally, she sang Julien's praises to the Mar

quis de Croisenois and her brother. Her eloquence went so far that they

became annoyed.

'Beware of that young man, who has so much energy,' her brother

cried; 'if the Revolution begins again, he will have us all guillotined.'

She made no answer, and hastened to tease her brother and the Mar

quis de Croisenois over the fear that energy inspired in them. It was

nothing more, really, than the fear of meeting something unexpected, the

fear of being brought up short in the presence of the unexpected …

'Still, gentlemen, still the fear of ridicule, a monster which, unfortu

nately, died in 1816.'

'There can be no more ridicule,' M. de La Mole used to say, 'in a coun

try where there are two Parties.'

His daughter had assimilated this idea.

'And so, gentlemen,' she told Julien's enemies, 'you will be haunted by

fear all your lives, and afterwards people will say of you:

'"It was not a wolf, it was only a shadow."'

Mathilde soon left them. Her brother's remark filled her with horror; it

greatly disturbed her; but after sleeping on it, she interpreted it as the

highest possible praise.

'In this age, when all energy is dead, his energy makes them afraid. I

shall tell him what my brother said. I wish to see what answer he will

make. But I shall choose a moment when his eyes are glowing. Then he

cannot lie to me.

'Another Danton?' she went on after a long, vague spell of musing.

'Very well! Let us suppose that the Revolution has begun. What parts

would Croisenois and my brother play? It is all prescribed for them: sub

lime resignation. They would be heroic sheep, allowing their throats to

be cut without a word. Their sole fear when dying would still be of com

mitting a breach of taste. My little Julien would blow out the brains of

the Jacobin who came to arrest him, if he had the slightest hope of escap

ing. He, at least, has no fear of bad taste.'

These last words made her pensive again; they revived painful

memories, and destroyed all her courage. They reminded her of the wit

ticisms of MM. de Caylus, de Croisenois, de Luz, and her brother. These

gentlemen were unanimous in accusing Julien of a priestly air, humble

and hypocritical.

305'But,' she went on, suddenly, her eye sparkling with joy, 'by the bitter

ness and the frequency of their sarcasms, they prove, in spite of them

selves, that he is the most distinguished man that we have seen this

winter. What do his faults, his absurdities matter? He has greatness, and

they are shocked by it, they who in other respects are so kind and indul

gent. He knows well that he is poor, and that he has studied to become a

priest; they are squadron commanders, and have no need of study; it is a

more comfortable life.

'In spite of all the drawbacks of his eternal black coat, and of that

priestly face, which he is obliged to assume, poor boy, if he is not to die

of hunger, his merit alarms them, nothing could be clearer. And that

priestly expression, he no longer wears it when we have been for a few

moments by ourselves. Besides, when these gentlemen say anything

which they consider clever and startling, is not their first glance always

at Julien? I have noticed that distinctly. And yet they know quite well

that he never speaks to them, unless he is asked a question. It is only my

self that he addresses. He thinks that I have a lofty nature. He replies to

their objections only so far as politeness requires. He becomes respectful

at once. With me, he will discuss things for hours on end, he is not sure

of his own ideas if I offer the slightest objection. After all, all this winter

we have not heard a shot fired; the only possible way to attract attention

has been by one's talk. Well, my father, a superior man, and one who

will greatly advance the fortunes of our family, respects Julien. All the

rest hate him, no one despises him, except my mother's religious friends.'

The Comte de Caylus had or pretended to have a great passion for

horses; he spent all his time in his stables, and often took his luncheon

there. This great passion, combined with his habit of never laughing, had

won him a great esteem among his friends: he was the 'strong man' of

their little circle.

As soon as it had assembled next day behind Madame de La Mole's

armchair, Julien not being present, M. de Caylus, supported by Crois

enois and Norbert, launched a violent attack upon the good opinion

Mathilde had of Julien, without any reason and almost as soon as he saw

Mademoiselle de La Mole. She detected this stratagem a mile off, and

was charmed by it.

'There they are all in league,' she said to herself, 'against a man who

has not ten louis to his name, and can answer them only when he is

questioned. They are afraid of him in his black coat. What would he be

with epaulettes?'

306Never had she been so brilliant. At the first onslaught, she covered

Caylus and his allies with witty sarcasm. When the fire of these brilliant

officers' pleasantries was extinguished:

'Tomorrow some country squire from the mountains of the Franche

Comte,' she said to M. de Caylus, 'has only to discover that Julien is his

natural son, and give him a name and a few thousand francs, and in six

weeks he will have grown moustaches like yourselves, gentlemen; in six

months he will be an officer of hussars like yourselves, gentlemen. And

then the greatness of his character will no longer be a joke. I can see you

reduced, My Lord Duketobe, to that old and worthless plea: the superi

ority of the nobility of the Court to the provincial nobility. But what de

fence have you left if I choose to take an extreme case, if I am so unkind

as to make Julien's father a Spanish Duke, a prisoner of war at Besancon

in Napoleon's time, who, from a scruple of conscience, acknowledges

him on his deathbed?'

All these assumptions of a birth out of wedlock were regarded by MM.

de Caylus and de Croisenois as in distinctly bad taste. This was all that

they saw in Mathilde's argument.

Obedient as Norbert was, his sister's meaning was so unmistakable

that he assumed an air of gravity, little in keeping, it must be confessed,with his genial, smiling features. He ventured to say a few words:

'Are you unwell, dear?' Mathilde answered him with a mockserious

expression. 'You must be feeling very ill to reply to a joke with a sermon.

'A sermon, from you! Are you thinking of asking to be made a

Prefect?'

Mathilde very soon forgot the annoyance of the Comte de Caylus,Norbert's ill humour and the silent despair of M. de Croisenois. She had

to make up her mind over a desperate idea which had taken possession

of her.

'Julien is quite sincere with me,' she told herself; 'at his age, in an in

ferior state of fortune, wretched as an astounding ambition makes him,he needs a woman friend. I can be that friend; but I see no sign in him of

love. With the audacity of his nature, he would have spoken to me of his

love.'

This uncertainty, this inward discussion, which, from now onwards,occupied every moment of Mathilde's life, and in support of which,whenever Julien addressed her, she found fresh arguments, completely

banished those periods of depression to which she was so liable.

307The daughter of a man of intelligence who might become a Minister,and restore their forests to the Clergy, Mademoiselle de La Mole had

been, in the Convent of the SacreCoeur, the object of the most extravag

ant flatteries. The harm done in this way can never be effaced. They had

persuaded her that, in view of all her advantages of birth, fortune, etc.,she ought to be happier than other girls. This is the source of the bore

dom from which princes suffer, and of all their follies.

Mathilde had not been immune to the fatal influence of this idea.

However intelligent a girl may be, she cannot be on her guard for ten

years against the flattery of an entire convent, especially when it appears

to be so well founded.

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From the moment in which she decided that she was in love with Juli

en, she was no longer bored. Every day she congratulated herself on the

decision she had made to indulge in a grand passion. 'This amusement

has its dangers,' she thought. 'All the better! A thousand times better!

'Without a grand passion, I was languishing with boredom at the best

moment in a girl's life, between sixteen and twenty. I have already

wasted my best years; with no pleasure but to listen to the nonsense

talked by my mother's friends, who at Coblenz, in 1792, were not quite,one gathers, so strict in their conduct, as they are today in speech.'

It was while Mathilde was still devoured by this great uncertainty that

Julien was unable to understand the gaze which she kept fastened upon

him. He did indeed find an increased coldness in Comte Herbert's man

ner, and a stiffening of pride in that of MM. de Caylus, de Luz and de

Croisenois. He was used to it. This discomfiture befell him at times after

an evening in which he had shone more brightly than befitted his posi

tion. But for the special welcome which Mathilde extended to him, and

the curiosity which the whole scene inspired in him, he would have re

frained from following into the garden these brilliant young men with

the moustaches, when after dinner they escorted Mademoiselle de La

Mole.

'Yes, I cannot possibly blind myself to the fact,' thought Julien,'Mademoiselle de La Mole keeps looking at me in a strange fashion. But,even when her beautiful blue eyes seem to gaze at me with least re

straint, I can always read in them a cold, malevolent scrutiny. Is it pos

sible that this is love? How different from the look in Madame de Renal's

eyes.'

308One evening after dinner, Julien, who had gone with M. de La Mole to

his study, came rapidly out to the garden. As he walked boldly up to the

group round Mathilde, he overheard a few words uttered in a loud

voice. She was teasing her brother. Julien heard his own name uttered

distinctly twice. He appeared; a profound silence at once fell, and vain

efforts were made to break it. Mademoiselle de La Mole and her brother

were too much excited to think of another topic of conversation. MM. de

Caylus, de Croisenois, de Luz and another of their friends met Julien

with an icy coldness. He withdrew.

309chapter13

A Plot

Disconnected remarks, chance meetings turn into proofs of the

utmost clarity in the eyes of the imaginative man, if he has any

fire in his heart.

SCHILLER

On the following day he again surprised Norbert and his sister, who

were talking about him. On his arrival, a deathly silence fell, as on the

day before. His suspicions knew no bounds. 'Can these charming young

people be planning to make a fool of me? I must own, that is far more

probable, far more natural than a pretended passion on the part of Ma

demoiselle de La Mole, for a poor devil of a secretary. For one thing, do

these people have passions? Mystification is their specialty. They are

jealous of my wretched little superiority in language. Being jealous, that

is another of their weaknesses. That explains everything. Mademoiselle

de La Mole hopes to persuade me that she is singling me out, simply to

offer me as a spectacle to her intended.'

This cruel suspicion completely changed Julien's moral attitude. The

idea encountered in his heart a germ of love which it had no difficulty in

destroying. This love was founded only upon Mathilde's rare beauty, or

rather upon her regal manner and her admirable style in dress. In this re

spect Julien was still an upstart. A beautiful woman of fashion is, we are

assured, the sight that most astonishes a clever man of peasant origin

when he arrives amid the higher ranks of society. It was certainly not

Mathilde's character that had set Julien dreaming for days past. He had

enough sense to grasp that he knew nothing about her character.

Everything that he saw of it might be only a pretence.

For instance, Mathilde would not for anything in the world have failed

to hear mass on a Sunday; almost every day she went to church with her

mother. If, in the drawing-room of the Hotel de La Mole, some impudent

fellow forgot where he was and allowed himself to make the remotest

310allusion to some jest aimed at the real or supposed interests of Throne or

Altar, Mathilde would at once assume an icy severity. Her glance, which

was so sparkling, took on all the expressionless pride of an old family

portrait.

But Julien knew for certain that she always had in her room one or two

of the most philosophical works of Voltaire. He himself frequently ab

stracted a volume or two of the handsome edition so magnificently

bound. By slightly separating the other volumes on the shelf, he con

cealed the absence of the volume he was taking away; but soon he dis

covered that someone else was reading Voltaire. He had recourse to a

trick of the Seminary, he placed some little pieces of horsehair across the

volumes which he supposed might interest Mademoiselle de La Mole.

They vanished for weeks at a time.

M. de La Mole, losing patience with his bookseller, who kept sending

him all the sham Memoirs, gave Julien orders to buy every new book that

was at all sensational. But, so that the poison might not spread through

the household, the secretary was instructed to place these books in a

little bookcase that stood in the Marquis's own room. He soon acquired

the certainty that if any of these books were hostile to the interests of

Throne and Altar, they were not long in vanishing. It was certainly not

Norbert that was reading them.

Julien, exaggerating the importance of this discovery, credited Ma

demoiselle de La Mole with a Machiavellian duplicity. This feigned

criminality wa a charm in his eyes, almost the only moral charm that she

possessed. The tediousness of hypocrisy and virtuous conversation

drove him to this excess.

He excited his imagination rather than let himself be carried away by

love.

It was after he had lost himself in dreams of the elegance of Ma

demoiselle de La Mole's figure, the excellent taste of her toilet, the white

ness of her hand, the beauty of her arm, the disinvoltura of all her move

ments, that he found himself in love. Then, to complete her charm, he

imagined her to be a Catherine de' Medici. Nothing was too profound or

too criminal for the character that he assigned to her. It was the ideal of

the Maslons, the Frilairs and Castanedes whom he had admired in his

younger days. It was, in short, the ideal, to him, of Paris.

Was ever anything so absurd as to imagine profundity or criminality

in the Parisian character?

311'It is possible that this trio may be making a fool of me,' he thought.

The reader has learned very little of Julien's nature if he has not already

seen the sombre, frigid expression that he assumed when his eyes met

those of Mathilde. A bitter irony repulsed the assurances of friendship

with which Mademoiselle de La Mole in astonishment ventured on two

or three occasions, to try him.

Piqued by his sudden eccentricity, the heart of this girl, naturally cold,bored, responsive to intelligence, became as passionate as it was in her

nature to be. But there was also a great deal of pride in Mathilde's

nature, and the birth of a sentiment which made all her happiness de

pendent upon another was attended by a sombre melancholy.

Julien had made sufficient progress since his arrival in Paris to discern

that this was not the barren melancholy of boredom. Instead of being

eager, as in the past, for parties, shows and distractions of every kind,she avoided them.

Music performed by French singers bored Mathilde to death, and yet

Julien, who made it his duty to be present at the close of the Opera, ob

served that she made her friends take her there as often as possible. He

thought he could detect that she had lost a little of the perfect balance

which shone in all her actions. She would sometimes reply to her friends

with witticisms that were offensive in their pointed emphasis. It seemed

to him that she had taken a dislike to the Marquis de Croisenois. 'That

young man must have a furious passion for money, not to go off and

leave a girl like that, however rich she may be!' thought Julien. As for

himself, indignant at the insults offered to masculine dignity, his cold

ness towards her increased. Often he went the length of replying with

positive discourtesy.

However determined he might be not to be taken in by the signs of in

terest shown by Mathilde, they were so evident on certain days, and Juli

en, from whose eyes the scales were beginning to fall, found her so at

tractive, that he was at times embarrassed by them.

'The skill and forbearance of these young men of fashion will end by

triumphing over my want of experience,' he told himself; 'I must go

away, and put an end to all this.' The Marquis had recently entrusted to

him the management of a number of small properties and houses which

he owned in lower Languedoc. A visit to the place became necessary: M.

de La Mole gave a reluctant consent. Except in matters of high ambition,Julien had become his second self.

312'When all is said and done, they have not managed to catch me,' Julien

told himself as he prepared for his departure. 'Whether the jokes which

Mademoiselle de La Mole makes at the expense of these gentlemen be

real, or only intended to inspire me with confidence, I have been amused

by them.

'If there is no conspiracy against the carpenter's son, Mademoiselle de

La Mole is inexplicable, but she is just as much so to the Marquis de

Croisenois as to me. Yesterday, for instance, her ill humour was quite

genuine, and I had the pleasure of seeing discomfited in my favour a

young man as noble and rich as I am penniless and plebeian. That is my

finest triumph. It will keep me in good spirits in my postchaise, as I

scour the plains of Languedoc.'

He had kept his departure secret, but Mathilde knew better than he

that he was leaving Paris next day, and for a long time. She pleaded a

splitting headache, which was made worse by the close atmosphere of

the drawing-room. She walked for hours in the garden, and so pursued

with her mordant pleasantries Norbert, the Marquis de Croisenois,Caylus, de Luz and various other young men who had dined at the

Hotel de La Mole, that she forced them to take their leave. She looked at

Julien in a strange fashion.

'This look is perhaps a piece of playacting,' thought he; 'but her quick

breathing, all that emotion! Bah!' he said to himself, 'who am I to judge of

these matters? This is an example of the most consummate, the most arti

ficial behaviour to be found among the women of Paris. That quick

breathing, which so nearly proved too much for me, she will have

learned from Leontine Fay, whom she admires so.'

They were now left alone; the conversation was plainly languishing.

'No! Julien has no feeling for me,' Mathilde told herself with genuine

distress.

As he took leave of her, she clutched his arm violently:

'You will receive a letter from me this evening,' she told him in a voice

so strained as to be barely audible.

This had an immediate effect on Julien.

'My father,' she went on, 'has a most natural regard for the services

that you render him. You must not go tomorrow; find some excuse.' And

she ran from the garden.

Her figure was charming. It would have been impossible to have a

prettier foot, she ran with a grace that enchanted Julien; but guess what

313was his second thought when she had quite vanished. He was offended

by the tone of command in which she had uttered the words, you must.

Similarly Louis XV, as he breathed his last, was keenly annoyed by the

words you must awkwardly employed by his Chief Physician, and yet

Louis XV was no upstart.

An hour later, a footman handed Julien a letter; it was nothing less

than a declaration of love.

'The style is not unduly affected,' he said to himself, seeking by literary

observations to contain the joy that was contorting his features and for

cing him to laugh in spite of himself.

'And so I,' he suddenly exclaimed, his excitement being too strong to

be held in check, 'I, a poor peasant, have received a declaration of love

from a great lady!

'As for myself, I have not done badly,' he went on, controlling his joy

as far as was possible. 'I have succeeded in preserving the dignity of my

character. I have never said that I was in love.' He began to study the

shapes of her letters; Mademoiselle de La Mole wrote in a charming little

English hand. He required some physical occupation to take his mind

from a joy which was bordering on delirium.

'Your departure obliges me to speak… It would be beyond my endur

ance not to see you any more.'

A sudden thought occurred to strike Julien as a discovery, interrupt

the examination that he was making of Mathilde's letter, and intensify

his joy. 'I am preferred to the Marquis de Croisenois,' he cried, 'I, who

never say anything that is not serious! And he is so handsome! He wears

moustaches, a charming uniform; he always manages to say, just at the

right moment, something witty and clever.'

It was an exquisite moment for Julien; he roamed about the garden,mad with happiness.

Later, he went upstairs to his office, and sent in his name to the Mar

quis de La Mole, who fortunately had not gone out. He had no difficulty

in proving to him, by showing him various marked papers that had ar

rived from Normandy, that the requirements of his employer's lawsuits

there obliged him to postpone his departure for Languedoc.

'I am very glad you are not going,' the Marquis said to him, when they

had finished their business, 'I like to see you.' Julien left the room; this

speech disturbed him.

314'And I am going to seduce his daughter! To render impossible, per

haps, that marriage with the Marquis de Croisenois, which is the bright

spot in his future: if he is not made Duke, at least his daughter will be en

titled to a tabouret.' Julien thought of starting for Languedoc in spite of

Mathilde's letter, in spite of the explanation he had given the Marquis.

This virtuous impulse soon faded.

'How generous I am,' he said to himself; 'I, a plebeian, to feel pity for a

family of such high rank! I, whom the Duc de Chaulnes calls a domestic!

How does the Marquis increase his vast fortune? By selling national se

curities, when he hears at the Chateau that there is to be the threat of a

Coup d' Etat next day. And I, cast down to the humblest rank by a step

motherly Providence, I, whom Providence has endowed with a noble

heart and not a thousand francs of income, that is to say not enough for

my daily bread, literally speaking, not enough for my daily bread; am I to re

fuse a pleasure that is offered me? A limpid spring which wells up to

quench my thirst in the burning desert of mediocrity over which I trace

my painful course! Faith, I am no such fool; everyone for himself in this

desert of selfishness which is called life.'

And he reminded himself of several disdainful glances aimed at him

by Madame de La Mole, and especially by the ladies, her friends.

The pleasure of triumphing over the Marquis de Croisenois completed

the rout of this lingering trace of virtue.

'How I should love to make him angry!' said Julien; 'with what assur

ance would I now thrust at him with my sword.' And he struck a sweep

ing blow at the air. 'Until now, I was a smug, basely profiting by a trace

of courage. After this letter, I am his equal.

'Yes,' he said to himself with an infinite delight, dwelling on the

words, 'our merits, the Marquis's and mine, have been weighed, and the

poor carpenter from the Jura wins the day.

'Good!' he cried, 'here is the signature to my reply ready found. Do not

go and imagine, Mademoiselle de La Mole, that I am forgetting my sta

tion. I shall make you realise and feel that it is for the son of a carpenter

that you are betraying a descendant of the famous Guy de Croisenois,who followed Saint Louis on his Crusade.'

Julien was unable to contain his joy. He was obliged to go down to the

garden. His room, in which he had locked himself up, seemed too con

fined a space for him to breathe in.

315'I, a poor peasant from the Jura,' he kept on repeating, 'I, I condemned

always to wear this dismal black coat! Alas, twenty years ago, I should

have worn uniform like them! In those days a man of my sort was either

killed, or a General at six and thirty.' The letter, which he kept tightly

clasped in his hand, gave him the bearing and pose of a hero.

'Nowadays, it is true, with the said black coat, at the age of forty, a man

has emoluments of one hundred thousand francs and the Blue Riband,like the Bishop of Beauvais.

'Oh, well!' he said to himself, laughing like Mephistopheles, 'I have

more sense than they; I know how to choose the uniform of my genera

tion.' And he felt an intensification of his ambition and of his attachment

to the clerical habit. 'How many Cardinals have there been of humbler

birth than mine, who have risen to positions of government! My fellow

countryman Granvelle, for instance.'

12

Gradually Julien's agitation subsided; prudence rose to the surface. He

said to himself, like his master Tartuffe, whose part he knew by heart:

'I might suppose these words an honest artifice… Nay, I shall not be

lieve so flattering a speech Unless some favour shown by her for whom I

sigh Assure me that they mean all that they might imply.' (Tartuffe, Act

IV, Scene V)

'Tartuffe also was ruined by a woman, and he was as good a man as

most … My answer may be shewn… a mishap for which we find this

remedy,' he went on, pronouncing each word slowly, and in accents of

restrained ferocity, 'we begin it by quoting the strongest expressions

from the letter of the sublime Mathilde.

'Yes, but then four of M. de Croisenois's flunkeys will spring upon me,and tear the original from me.

'No, for I am well armed, and am accustomed, as they know, to firing

on flunkeys.

'Very well! Say, one of them has some courage; he springs upon me.

He has been promised a hundred napoleons. I kill or injure him, all the

better, that is what they want. I am flung into prison with all the forms of

law; I appear in the police court, and they send me, with all justice and

equity on the judges' part, to keep MM. Fontan and Magalon company at

Poissy. There, I lie upon straw with four hundred poor wretches, pell

mell … And I am to feel some pity for these people,' he cried, springing

12.Antoine de Granvelle, born at Besancon in 1517, was Minister to Charles V and

Philip II and Governor of the Netherlands. C. K. S. M.

316impetuously to his feet. 'What pity do they show for the Third Estate

when they have us in their power?' These words were the dying breath

of his gratitude to M. de La Mole which, in spite of himself, had tormen

ted him until then.

'Not so fast, my fine gentlemen, I understand this little stroke of Ma

chiavellianism; the abbe Maslon or M. Castanede of the Seminary could

not have been more clever. You rob me of my incitement, the letter, and I

become the second volume of Colonel Caron at Colmar.

'One moment, gentlemen, I am going to send the fatal letter in a care

fully sealed packet to the custody of M. l'abbe Pirard. He is an honest

man, a Jansenist, and as such out of reach of the temptations of the

Budget. Yes, but he opens letters… it is to Fouque that I must send this

one.'

It must be admitted the glare in Julien's eyes was ghastly, his expres

sion hideous; it was eloquent of unmitigated crime. He was an unhappy

man at war with the whole of society.

'To arms!' cried Julien. And he sprang with one bound down the steps

that led from the house. He entered the letterwriter's booth at the street

corner; the man was alarmed. 'Copy this,' said Julien, giving him Ma

demoiselle de La Mole's letter.

While the writer was thus engaged, he himself wrote to Fouque; he

begged him to keep for him a precious article. 'But,' he said to himself,laying down his pen, 'the secret room in the post office will open my let

ter, and give you back the one you seek; no, gentlemen.' He went and

bought an enormous Bible from a Protestant bookseller, skilfully con

cealed Mathilde's letter in the boards, had it packed up with his own let

ter, and his parcel went off by the mail, addressed to one of Fouque's

workmen, whose name was unknown to anybody in Paris.

This done, he returned joyful and brisk to the Hotel de La Mole. 'It is

our turn, now,' he exclaimed, as he locked himself into his room, and

flung off his coat:

'What, Mademoiselle,' he wrote to Mathilde, 'it is Mademoiselle de La

Mole who, by the hand of Arsene, her father's servant, transmits a letter

couched in too seductive terms to a poor carpenter from the Jura, doubt

less to play a trick upon his simplicity … ' And he transcribed the most

unequivocal sentences from the letter he had received.

His own would have done credit to the diplomatic prudence of M. le

Chevalier de Beauvoisis. It was still only ten o'clock; Julien, intoxicated

317with happiness and with the sense of his own power, so novel to a poor

devil like himself, went off to the Italian opera. He heard his friend Ger

onimo sing. Never had music raised him to so high a pitch. He was a

god.

13

13.Esprit per, pre. gui II. A. 30. (Note by Stendhal.)

318chapter14

A Girl's Thoughts

So much perplexity? So many sleepless nights! Good God! Am I

making myself despicable? He will despise me himself. But he's

leaving, he's going.

ALFRED DE MUSSET

It was not without an inward struggle that Mathilde had brought her

self to write. Whatever might have been the beginning of her interest in

Julien, it soon overcame the pride which, ever since she had been aware

of herself, had reigned alone in her heart. That cold and haughty spirit

was carried away for the first time by a passionate sentiment. But if this

overcame her pride, it was still faithful to the habits bred of pride. Two

months of struggle and of novel sensations had so to speak altered her

whole moral nature.

Mathilde thought she had happiness in sight. This prospect, irresistible

to a courageous spirit combined with a superior intellect, had to make a

long fight against dignity and every sentiment of common duty. One day

she entered her mother's room, at seven o'clock in the morning, begging

her for leave to retire to Villequier. The Marquise did not even deign to

answer her, and recommended her to go back to her bed. This was the

last effort made by plain sense and the deference paid to accepted ideas.

The fear of wrongdoing and of shocking the ideas held as sacred by

the Caylus, the de Luz, the Croisenois, had little or no hold over her;such creatures as they did not seem to her to be made to understand her;she would have consulted them had it been a question of buying a car

riage or an estate. Her real terror was that Julien might be displeased

with her.

'Perhaps, too, he has only the outward appearance of a superior

person.'

319She abhorred want of character, it was her sole objection to the hand

some young men among whom she lived. The more gracefully they

mocked at everything which departed from the fashion, or which fol

lowed it wrongly when intending to follow it, the more they condemned

themselves in her eyes.

They were brave, and that was all. 'And besides, how are they brave?'

she asked herself: 'in a duel. But the duel is nothing more now than a

formality. Everything is known beforehand, even what a man is to say

when he falls. Lying on the grass, his hand on his heart, he must extend a

handsome pardon to his adversary and leave a message for a fair one

who is often imaginary, or who goes to a ball on the day of his death, for

fear of arousing suspicion.

'A man will face danger at the head of a squadron all glittering with

steel, but a danger that is solitary, strange, sudden, truly ugly?

'Alas!' said Mathilde, 'it was at the Court of Henri in that one found

men great by character as well as by birth! Ah, if Julien had served at Jar

nac or at Moncontour, I should no longer be in doubt. In those days of

strength and prowess, Frenchmen were not mere dolls. The day of battle

was almost the day of least perplexity.

'Their life was not imprisoned like an Egyptian mummy, within an en

velope always common to them all, always the same. Yes,' she went on,'there was more true courage in crossing the town alone at eleven o'clock

at night, after leaving the Hotel de Soissons, occupied by Catherine de'

Medici, than there is today in dashing to Algiers. A man's life was a suc

cession of hazards. Nowadays civilisation has banished hazard, there is

no room for the unexpected. If it appears in our ideas, there are not epi

grams enough to cope with it; if it appears in events, no act of cowardice

is too great for our fear. Whatever folly our fear makes us commit is ex

cused us. Degenerate and boring age! What would Boniface de La Mole

have said if, raising his severed head from the tomb, he had seen, in

1793, seventeen of his descendants allow themselves to be penned like

sheep, to be guillotined a day or two later? Their death was certain, but it

would have been in bad form to defend themselves and at least kill a Ja

cobin or two. Ah! In the heroic age of France, in the days of Boniface de

La Mole, Julien would have been the squadron commander, and my

brother the young priest, properly behaved, with wisdom in his eyes and

reason on his lips.'

A few months since, Mathilde had despaired of meeting anyone a little

different from the common pattern. She had found a certain happiness in

320allowing herself to write to various young men of fashion. This act of

boldness, so unconventional, so imprudent in a young girl, might dis

honour her in the eyes of M. de Croisenois, of his father, the Duc de

Chaulnes, and of the whole house of Chaulnes, who, seeing the projected

marriage broken off, would wish to know the reason. At that time, on the

night after she had written one of these letters, Mathilde was unable to

sleep. But these letters were mere replies.

Now she had ventured to say that she was in love. She had written

first (what a terrible word!) to a man in the lowest rank of society.

This circumstance assured her, in the event of discovery, eternal dis

grace. Which of the women who came to see her mother would dare to

take her part? What polite expression could be put into their mouths to

lessen the shock of the fearful contempt of the drawing-rooms?

And even to speak to a man was fearful, but to write! 'There are things

which one does not write,' Napoleon exclaimed when he heard of the

surrender of Baylen. And it was Julien who had told her of this saying!

As though teaching her a lesson in advance.

But all this was still nothing, Mathilde's anguish had other causes.

Oblivious of the horrible effect upon society, of the ineradicable blot, the

universal contempt, for she was outraging her caste, Mathilde was writ

ing to a person of a very different nature from the Croisenois, the de Luz,the Caylus.

The depth, the strangeness of Julien's character had alarmed her, even

when she was forming an ordinary relation with him. And she was go

ing to make him her lover, possibly her master!

'What claims will he not assert, if ever he is in a position to do as he

likes with me? Very well! I shall say to myself like Medea: "Midst all these

perils, I have still MYSELF."'

Julien had no reverence for nobility of blood, she understood. Worse,still, perhaps, he felt no love for her!

In these final moments of tormenting doubts, she was visited by ideas

of feminine pride. 'Everything ought to be strange in the lot of a girl like

myself,' cried Mathilde, with impatience. And so the pride that had been

inculcated in her from her cradle began to fight against her virtue. It was

at this point that Julien's threatened departure came to precipitate

events.

(Such characters are fortunately quite rare.)

321Late that night, Julien was malicious enough to have an extremely

heavy trunk carried down to the porter's lodge; to carry it, he summoned

the footman who was courting Mademoiselle de La Mole's maid. 'This

device may lead to no result,' he said to himself, 'but if it proves success

ful, she will think that I have gone.' He went to sleep, highly delighted

with his trick. Mathilde never closed an eye.

Next morning, at a very early hour, Julien left the house unobserved,but returned before eight o'clock.

No sooner was he in the library than Mademoiselle de La Mole ap

peared on the threshold. He handed her his answer. He thought that it

was incumbent upon him to speak to her; this, at least, was the most po

lite course, but Mademoiselle de La Mole would not listen to him and

vanished. Julien was overjoyed, he had not known what to say to her.

'If all this is not a trick arranged with Comte Norbert, plainly it must

have been my frigid glance that has kindled the freakish love which this

girl of noble birth has taken it into her head to feel for me. I should be a

little too much of a fool if I ever allowed myself to be drawn into feeling

any attraction towards the great flaxen doll.' This piece of reasoning left

him more cold and calculating than he had ever been.

'In the battle that is preparing,' he went on, 'pride of birth will be like a

high hill, forming a military position between her and myself. It is there

that we must manoeuvre. I have done wrong to remain in Paris; this

postponement of my departure cheapens me, and exposes my flank if all

this is only a game. What danger was there in my going? I was fooling

them, if they are fooling me. If her interest in me has any reality, I was

increasing that interest an hundredfold.'

Mademoiselle de La Mole's letter had so flattered Julien's vanity that,while he laughed at what was happening to him, he had forgotten to

think seriously of the advantages of departure.

It was a weakness of his character to be extremely sensitive to his own

faults. He was extremely annoyed at this instance of his weakness, and

had almost ceased to think of the incredible victory which had preceded

this slight check when, about nine o'clock, Mademoiselle de La Mole ap

peared on the threshold of the library, flung him a letter, and fled.

'It appears that this is to be a romance told in letters,' he said, as he

picked this one up. 'The enemy makes a false move, now I am going to

bring coldness and virtue into play.'

322The letter called for a definite answer with an arrogance which in

creased his inward gaiety. He gave himself the pleasure of mystifying,for the space of two pages, the people who might wish to make a fool of

him, and it was with a fresh pleasantry that he announced, towards the

end of his reply, his decision to depart on the following morning.

This letter finished: 'The garden can serve me as a post office,' he

thought, and made his way there. He looked up at the window of Ma

demoiselle de La Mole's room.

It was on the first floor, next to her mother's apartment, but there was

a spacious mezzanine beneath.

This first floor stood so high, that, as he advanced beneath the limeal

ley, letter in hand, Julien could not be seen from Mademoiselle de La

Mole's window. The vault formed by the limes, which were admirably

pleached, intercepted the view.

'But what is this!' Julien said to himself, angrily, 'another imprudence!

If they have decided to make a fool of me, to let myself be seen with a

letter in my hand, is to play the enemy's game.'

Norbert's room was immediately above his sister's, and if Julien

emerged from the alley formed by the pleached branches of the limes,the Count and his friends would be able to follow his every movement.

Mademoiselle de La Mole appeared behind her closed window; he

half showed her his letter; she bowed her head. At once Julien ran up to

his own room, and happened to meet, on the main staircase, the fair

Mathilde, who snatched the letter with perfect composure and laughing

eyes.

'What passion there was in the eyes of that poor Madame de Renal,'

Julien said to himself, 'when, even after six months of intimate relations,she ventured to receive a letter from me! Never once, I am sure, did she

look at me with a laugh in her eyes.'

He did not express to himself so clearly the rest of his comment; was

he ashamed of the futility of his motives? 'But also what a difference,' his

thoughts added, 'in the elegance of her morning gown, in the elegance of

her whole appearance! On catching sight of Mademoiselle de La Mole

thirty yards off, a man of taste could tell the rank that she occupies in so

ciety. That is what one may call an explicit merit.'

Still playing with his theme, Julien did not yet confess to himself the

whole of his thoughts; Madame de Renal had had no Marquis de Crois

enois to sacrifice to him. He had had as a rival only that ignoble Sub

323Prefect M. Charcot, who had assumed the name of Maugiron, because

the Maugirons were extinct.

At five o'clock, Julien received a third letter; it was flung at him from

the library door. Mademoiselle de La Mole again fled. 'What a mania for

writing,' he said to himself with a laugh, 'when it is so easy for us to talk!

The enemy wishes to have my letters, that is clear, and plenty of them!'

He was in no haste to open this last. 'More elegant phrases,' he thought;but he turned pale as he read it. It consisted of eight lines only.

'I have to speak to you: I must speak to you, tonight; when one o'clock

strikes, be in the garden. Take the gardener's long ladder from beside the

well; place it against my window and come up to my room. There is a

moon: no matter.'

324chapter15

Is it a Plot?

Ah! How cruel is the interval between the conception of a great

project and its execution! What vain terrors! What irresolutions!

Life is at stake. Far more than life—honour!

SCHILLER

'This is becoming serious,' thought Julien … 'and a little too obvious,'

he added, after a moment's reflection. 'Why! This pretty young beauty

can speak to me in the library with a freedom which, thank heaven, is

unrestricted; the Marquis, for fear of my bothering him with accounts,never comes there. Why! M. de La Mole and Comte Norbert, the only

people who ever show their faces here, are absent almost all day; it is

easy to watch for the moment of their return to the house, and the sub

lime Mathilde, for whose hand a Sovereign Prince would not be too

noble, wishes me to commit an act of abominable imprudence!

'It is clear, they wish to ruin me, or to make a fool of me, at least. First

of all, they sought to ruin me by my letters; these proved cautious; very

well, now they require an action that shall be as clear as daylight. These

pretty little gentlemen think me too simple or too conceited. The devil!

With the brightest moon you ever saw, to climb up by a ladder to a first

floor, five and twenty feet from the ground! They will have plenty of

time to see me, even from the neighbouring houses. I shall be a fine sight

on my ladder!' Julien went up to his room and began to pack his trunk,whistling as he did so. He had made up his mind to go, and not even to

answer the letter.

But this sage resolution gave him no peace of heart. 'If, by any chance,'

he said to himself, suddenly, his trunk packed and shut, 'Mathilde were

sincere! Then I shall be cutting in her eyes the most perfect figure of a

coward. I have no birth, so I require great qualities, ready on demand,with no flattering suppositions, qualities proved by eloquent deeds … '

325He spent a quarter of an hour pacing the floor of his room. 'What use

in denying it?' he asked himself, at length; 'I shall be a coward in her

eyes. I lose not only the most brilliant young person in high society, as

everyone was saying at M. le Duc de Retz's ball, but, furthermore, the

heavenly pleasure of seeing her throw over for me the Marquis de Crois

enois, the son of a Duke, and a future Duke himself. A charming young

man who has all the qualities that I lack: a ready wit, birth, fortune …

'This remorse will pursue me all my life, not for her, there are heaps of

mistresses, "but only one honour", as old Don Diego says, and here I am

clearly and plainly recoiling from the first peril that comes my way; for

that duel with M. de Beauvoisis was a mere joke. This is quite different. I

may be shot pointblank by a servant, but that is the least danger; I may

forfeit my honour.

'This is becoming serious, my boy,' he went on, with a Gascon gaiety

and accent. 'Honur is at stake. A poor devil kept down by fate in my

lowly station will never find such an opportunity again; I shall have ad

ventures, but tawdry ones … '

He reflected at length, he paced the room with a hurried step, stopping

short now and again. There stood in his room a magnificent bust in

marble of Cardinal Richelieu, which persistently caught his eye. This

bust appeared to be gazing at him sternly, as though reproaching him for

the want of that audacity which ought to be so natural to the French

character. 'In thy time, great man, should I have hesitated?

'At the worst,' Julien told himself finally, 'let us suppose that all this is

a plot, it is a very dark one, and highly compromising for a young girl.

They know that I am not the man to keep silent. They will therefore have

to kill me. That was all very well in 1574, in the days of Boniface de La

Mole, but the La Mole of today would never dare. These people are not

the same now. Mademoiselle de La Mole is so envied! Four hundred

drawing-rooms would echo with her disgrace next day, and with what

rejoicing!

'The servants chatter among themselves of the marked preference that

is shown me; I know it, I have heard them …

'On the other hand, her letters!… They may suppose that I have them

on me. They surprise me in her room, and take them from me. I shall

have two, three, four, any number of men to deal with. But these men,where will they collect them? Where is one to find discreet agents in Par

is? They are afraid of the law… Gad! It will be the Caylus and Crois

enois and de Luz themselves. The thought of that moment, and the

326foolish figure I shall cut there among them will be what has tempted

them. Beware the fate of Abelard, Master Secretary!

'Begad, then, gentlemen, you shall bear the mark of my fists, I shall

strike at your faces, like Caesar's soldiers at Pharsalia … As for the let

ters, I can put them in a safe place.'

Julien made copies of the two last, concealed them in a volume of the

fine Voltaire from the library, and went himself with the originals to the

post.

When he returned: 'Into what madness am I rushing!' he said to him

self with surprise and terror. He had been a quarter of an hour without

considering his action of the coming night in all its aspects.

'But, if I refuse, I must despise myself ever afterwards. All my life

long, that action will be a matter for doubt to me, and such a doubt is the

most bitter agony. Have I not felt it over Amanda's lover? I believe that I

should find it easier to forgive myself what was clearly a crime; once I

had confessed it, I should cease to think about it.

'What! I shall have been the rival of a man bearing one of the best

names in France, and I myself, with a light heart, am to declare myself

his inferior! Indeed, there is a strain of cowardice in not going. That

word settles everything,' cried Julien, springing to his feet… 'besides, she

is a real beauty!

'If this is not treachery, how foolishly she is behaving for me!… If it is

a mystification, begad, gentlemen, it rests with me to turn the jest to

earnest, and so I shall.

'But if they pinion my arms, the moment I enter the room; they may

have set some diabolical machine there ready for me!

'It is like a duel,' he told himself with a laugh, 'there is a parry for

every thrust, my fencing master says, but the Almighty, who likes things

to end, makes one of the fighters forget to parry. Anyhow, here is what

will answer them'; he drew his pocket pistols; and, albeit they were fully

charged, renewed the primings.

There were still many hours to wait; in order to have something to do,Julien wrote to Fouque: 'My friend, open the enclosed letter only in case

of accident, if you hear it said that something strange has befallen me.

Then, erase the proper names from the manuscript that I am sending

you, and make eight copies of it which you will send to the newspapers

of Marseilles, Bordeaux, Lyons, Brussels, etc.; ten days later, have the

manuscript printed, send the first copy to M. le Marquis de La Mole, and

327a fortnight after that, scatter the other copies by night about the streets of

Verrieres.'

This brief exonerating memoir, arranged in the form of a tale, which

Fouque was to open only in case of accident, Julien made as little com

promising as possible to Mademoiselle de La Mole, but, nevertheless, it

described his position very accurately.

He had just sealed his packet when the dinnerbell rang; it made his

heart beat violently. His imagination, preoccupied with the narrative

which he had just composed, was a prey to all sorts of tragic presenti

ment. He had seen himself seized by servants, garrotted, carried down to

a cellar with a gag in his mouth. There, one of them kept a close watch

over him, and if the honour of the noble family required that the adven

ture should have a tragic ending, it was easy to end everything with one

of those poisons which leave no trace; then, they would say that he had

died a natural death, and would take his dead body back to his room.

Carried away by his own story like a dramatic author, Julien was

really afraid when he entered the diningroom. He looked at all the ser

vants in full livery. He studied their expressions. 'Which of them have

been chosen for tonight's expedition?' he asked himself. 'In this family,the memories of the Court of Henri in are so present, so often recalled,that, when they think themselves outraged, they will show more de

cision than other people of their rank.' He looked at Mademoiselle de La

Mole in order to read in her eyes what were the plans of her family; she

was pale, and had quite a mediaeval appearance. Never had he found

such an air of grandeur in her, she was truly beautiful and imposing. He

almost fell in love with her. 'Pallida morte futura,' he told himself, 'her pal

lor betokens that something serious is afoot.'

In vain, after dinner, did he prolong his stroll in the garden, Ma

demoiselle de La Mole did not come out. Conversation with her would,at that moment, have relieved his heart of a great burden.

Why not confess it? He was afraid. As he was determined to act, he

abandoned himself to this sentiment without shame. 'Provided that at

the moment of action, I find the courage that I require,' he said to him

self, 'what does it matter how I may be feeling now?' He went to recon

noitre the position and to try the weight of the ladder.

'It is an instrument,' he said to himself, with a laugh, 'which it is writ

ten in my destiny that I am to use! Here as at Verrieres. What a differ

ence! Then,' he continued with a sigh, 'I was not obliged to be suspicious

328of the person for whose sake I was exposing myself. What a difference,too, in the danger!

'I might have been killed in M. de Renal's gardens without any harm

to my reputation. It would have been easy to make my death unaccount

able. Here, what abominable tales will they not bandy about in the

drawing-rooms of the Hotel de Chaulnes, the Hotel de Caylus, the Hotel

de Retz, and in short everywhere? I shall be handed down to posterity as

a monster.

'For two or three years,' he added, laughing at himself. But the thought

of this overwhelmed him. 'And I, who is going to justify me? Supposing

that Fouque prints my posthumous pamphlet, it will be only an infamy

the more. What! I am received in a house, and in payment for the hospit

ality I receive there, the kindness that is showered upon me, I print a

pamphlet reporting all that goes on in the house! I attack the honour of

its women! Ah, a thousand times rather, let us be trapped!'

It was a terrible evening.

329chapter16

One o'Clock in the Morning

The garden was extremely large, laid out with perfect taste just a

few years previously. But the trees were over a century old. The

place had something rustic about it.

MASSINGER 14

He was on the point of countermanding his instructions to Fouque

when the clock struck eleven. He came out of his bedroom and shut the

door behind him, turning the key noisily in the lock, as though he were

locking himself in. He prowled round the house to see what was afoot

everywhere, especially on the fourth floor, where the servants slept.

There was nothing unusual. One of Madame de La Mole's maids was

giving a party, the servants were merrily imbibing punch. 'The men who

are laughing like that,' thought Julien, 'cannot have been detailed for the

midnight encounter, they would be more serious.'

Finally he took his stand in a dark corner of the garden. 'If their plan is

to avoid the notice of the servants of the house, they will make the men

they have hired to seize me come in over the garden wall.

'If M. de Croisenois is taking all this calmly, he must feel that it will be

less compromising for the young person whom he intends to marry to

have me seized before the moment when I shall have entered her room.'

He made an extremely careful military reconnaissance. 'My honour is

at stake,' he thought; 'if I make some blunder, it will be no excuse in my

own eyes to say to myself: "I never thought of that."'

The sky was maddeningly clear. About eleven o'clock the moon rose,at halfpast twelve it lighted the whole garden front of the house.

14.I have left this motto untranslated, as the attribution to Massinger seems to be en

tirely fantastic. C. K. S. M.

330'She is mad,' Julien said to himself; when one o'clock struck, there was

still a light in Comte Norbert's windows. Never in his life had Julien

been so much afraid, he saw only the dangers of the enterprise, and felt

not the least enthusiasm.

He went to fetch the huge ladder, waited five minutes, to allow time

for a countermand, and at five minutes past one placed the ladder

against Mathilde's window. He climbed quietly, pistol in hand, aston

ished not to find himself attacked. As he reached the window, she

opened it silently:

'Here you are, Sir,' Mathilde said to him with deep emotion; 'I have

been following your movements for the last hour.'

Julien was greatly embarrassed, he did not know how to behave, he

did not feel the least vestige of love. In his embarrassment, he decided

that he must show courage, he attempted to embrace Mathilde.

'Fie, Sir!' she said, and thrust him from her.

Greatly relieved at this repulse, he hastened to cast an eye round the

room: the moonlight was so brilliant that the shadows which it formed in

Mademoiselle de La Mole's room were black. 'There may easily be men

concealed there without my seeing them,' he thought.

'What have you in the side pocket of your coat?' Mathilde asked him,delighted at finding a topic of conversation. She was strangely ill at ease;all the feelings of reserve and timidity, so natural to a young girl of good

family, had resumed their sway and were keeping her on tenterhooks.

'I have all sorts of weapons and pistols,' replied Julien, no less pleased

at having something to say.

'You must pull up the ladder,' said Mathilde.

'It is huge, and may break the windows of the room below, or of the

mezzanine.'

'It must not break the windows,' Mathilde went on, trying in vain to

adopt the tone of ordinary conversation; 'you might, it seems to me, let

the ladder down by means of a cord tied to the top rung. I always keep a

supply of cords by me.'

'And this is a woman in love!' thought Julien, 'she dares to say that she

loves! Such coolness, such sagacity in her precautions make it plain to

me that I am not triumphing over M. de Croisenois, as I foolishly ima

gined; but am simply becoming his successor. After all, what does it mat

ter? I am not in love! I triumph over the Marquis in this sense, that he

will be greatly annoyed at having a successor, and still more annoyed

331that his successor should be myself. How arrogantly he stared at me last

night in the Cafe Tortoni, pretending not to know me! How savagely he

bowed to me afterwards, when he could no longer avoid it!'

Julien had fastened the cord to the highest rung of the ladder, he now

let it down gently, leaning far out over the balcony so as to see that it did

not touch the windows. 'A fine moment for killing me,' he thought, 'if

there is anyone hidden in Mathilde's room'; but a profound silence con

tinued to reign everywhere.

The head of the ladder touched the ground. Julien succeeded in con

cealing it in the bed of exotic flowers that ran beneath the wall.

'What will my mother say,' said Mathilde, 'when she sees her beautiful

plants all ruined! You must throw down the cord,' she went on, with per

fect calm. 'If it were seen running up to the balcony, it would be difficult

to explain its presence.'

'And how me gwine get way?' asked Julien, in a playful tone, imitating

Creole speech. (One of the maids in the house was a native of San

Domingo.)

'You get way by the door,' said Mathilde, delighted at this solution.

'Ah! How worthy this man is of all my love,' she thought.

Julien had just let the cord drop into the garden; Mathilde gripped him

by the arm. He thought he was being seized by an enemy, and turned

sharply round drawing a dagger. She thought she had heard a window

being opened. They stood motionless, without breathing. The moon

shone full upon them. As the sound was not repeated, there was no fur

ther cause for alarm.

Then their embarrassment began again, and was great on both sides.

Julien made sure that the door was fastened with all its bolts; he even

thought of looking under the bed, but dared not; they might have hidden

a footman or two there. Finally, the fear of a subsequent reproach from

his prudence made him look.

Mathilde had succumbed to all the agonies of extreme shyness. She

felt a horror of her position.

'What have you done with my letters?' she said, at length.

'What a fine opportunity to discomfit these gentlemen, if they are

listening, and so avoid the conflict!' thought Julien.

'The first is hidden in a stout Protestant Bible which last night's mail

has carried far from here.'

332He spoke very distinctly as he entered into these details, and in such a

way as to be overheard by anyone who might be concealed in two great

mahogany wardrobes which he had not dared to examine.

'The other two are in the post, and are going the same way as the first.'

'Good Lord! But why all these precautions?' said Mathilde, with

astonishment.

'Is there any reason why I should lie to her?' thought Julien; and he

confessed to her all his suspicions.

'So that accounts for the coldness of thy letters!' cried Mathilde, in ac

cents rather of frenzy than of affection.

Julien did not observe her change of tone. This use of the singular pro

noun made him lose his head, or at least his suspicions vanished; he ven

tured to clasp in his arms this girl who was so beautiful and inspired

such respect in him. He was only half repulsed.

He had recourse to his memory, as once before, long ago, at Besancon

with Amanda Binet, and repeated several of the finest passages from the

Nouvelle Heloise.

'Thou hast a man's heart,' she replied, without paying much attention

to what he was saying; 'I wished to test thy bravery, I admit. Thy first

suspicions and thyu determination to come shew thee to be even more

intrepid than I supposed.'

Mathilde made an effort to use the more intimate form; she was evid

ently more attentive to this unusual way of speaking than to what she

was saying. This use of the tu form, stripped of the tone of affection,ceased, after a moment, to afford Julien any pleasure, he was astonished

at the absence of happiness; finally, in order to feel it, he had recourse to

his reason. He saw himself highly esteemed by this girl who was so

proud, and never bestowed unrestricted praise; by this line of reasoning

he arrived at a gratification of his self-esteem.

This was not, it is true, that spiritual ecstasy which he had found at

times in the company of Madame de Renal. There was nothing tender in

his sentiments at this first moment. What he felt was the keenest gratific

ation of his ambition, and Julien was above all things ambitious. He

spoke again of the people he suspected and of the precautions he had

contrived. As he spoke he was thinking of how best to profit by his

victory.

Mathilde, who was still greatly embarrassed and had the air of one ap

palled by what she had done, seemed enchanted at finding a topic of

333conversation. They discussed how they should meet again. Julien em

ployed to the full the intelligence and daring of which he furnished fresh

proofs in the course of this discussion. They had some extremely sharp

sighted people against them, young Tanbeau was certainly a spy, but

Mathilde and he were not altogether incompetent either.

What could be easier than to meet in the library, and arrange

everything?

'I can appear, without arousing suspicion, in any part of the house, I

could almost appear in Madame de La Mole's bedroom.' It was abso

lutely necessary to pass through this room to reach her daughter's. If

Mathilde preferred that he should always come by a ladder, it was with

a heart wild with joy that he would expose himself to this slight risk.

As she listened to him speaking, Mathilde was shocked by his air of

triumph. 'He is my master, then!' she told herself. Already she was de

voured by remorse. Her reason felt a horror of the signal act of folly

which she had just committed. Had it been possible, she would have des

troyed herself and Julien. Whenever, for an instant, the strength of her

will made her remorse silent, feelings of shyness and outraged modesty

made her extremely wretched. She had never for a moment anticipated

the dreadful plight in which she now found herself.

'I must speak to him, though,' she said to herself, finally, 'that is laid

down in the rules, one speaks to one's lover.' And then, as though per

forming a duty, and with a tenderness that was evident rather in the

words that she used than in the sound of her voice, she told him of the

various decisions to which she had come with regard to him during the

last few days.

She had made up her mind that if he ventured to come to her with the

aid of the gardener's ladder, as she had bidden him, she would give her

self to him. But never were things so tender said in a colder and more

formal tone. So far, their intercourse was icebound. It was enough to

make one hate the thought of love. What a moral lesson for a rash young

woman! Is it worth her while to wreck her future for such a moment?

After prolonged uncertainties, which might have appeared to a super

ficial observer to be due to the most decided hatred, so hard was it for

the feeling of selfrespect which a woman owes to herself, to yield to so

masterful a will, Mathilde finally became his mistress.

To tell the truth, their transports were somewhat deliberate. Passionate

love was far more a model which they were imitating than a reality with

them.

334Mademoiselle de La Mole believed that she was performing a duty to

wards herself and towards her lover. 'The poor boy,' she told herself, 'has

been the last word in daring, he deserves to be made happy, or else I am

wanting in character.' But she would gladly have redeemed at the cost of

an eternity of suffering the cruel necessity to which she found herself

committed.

In spite of the violence she was doing to herself, she retained entire

command of her speech.

No regret, no reproach came to mar this night which seemed odd

rather than happy to Julien. What a difference, great God, from his last

visit, of twentyfour hours, to Verrieres! 'These fine Paris manners have

found out the secret of spoiling everything, even love,' he said to himself

with an extreme disregard of justice.

He abandoned himself to these reflections, standing upright in one of

the great mahogany wardrobes into which he had been thrust at the first

sound heard from the next room, which was Madame de La Mole's bed

room. Mathilde accompanied her mother to mass, the maids soon left the

apartment, and Julien easily made his escape before they returned to

complete their labours.

He mounted his horse and made at a leisurely pace for the most solit

ary recesses of one of the forests near Paris. He was still more surprised

than happy. The happiness which, from time to time, came flooding into

his heart, was akin to that of a young Second Lieutenant who, after some

astounding action, has just been promoted Colonel by the Commander

in Chief; he felt himself carried to an immense height. Everything that

had been above him the day before was now on his level or far beneath

him. Gradually Julien's happiness increased as he put the miles behind

him.

If there was nothing tender in his heart, it was because, strange as it

may appear, Mathilde, throughout the whole of her conduct with him,had been performing a duty. There was nothing unforeseen for her in all

the events of this night but the misery and shame which she had found

in the place of that utter bliss of which we read in novels.

'Can I have been mistaken? Am I not in love with him?' she asked

herself.

335chapter17

An Old Sword

I now mean to be serious:—it is time, Since laughter nowadays is

deem'd too serious. A jest at Vice by Virtue's call'd a crime.

Don Juan, XIII.

She did not appear at dinner. In the evening she came to the drawing

room for a moment, but did not look at Julien. This behaviour seemed to

him strange; 'but,' he thought, 'I do not know the ways of good society,she will give me some good reason for all this.' At the same time, urged

by the most intense curiosity, he studied the expression on Mathilde's

features; he could not conceal from himself that she had a sharp and

malevolent air. Evidently this was not the same woman who, the night

before, had felt or pretended to feel transports of joy too excessive to be

genuine.

Next day, and the day after, the same coldness on her part; she never

once looked at him, she seemed unaware of his existence. Julien, de

voured by the keenest anxiety, was a thousand leagues from the feeling

of triumph which alone had animated him on the first day. 'Can it, by

any chance,' he asked himself, 'be a return to the path of virtue?' But that

was a very middleclass expression to use of the proud Mathilde.

'In the ordinary situations of life she has no belief in religion,' thought

Julien; 'she values it as being very useful to the interests of her caste.

'But out of simple delicacy may she not be bitterly reproaching herself

with the mistake that she has made?' Julien assumed that he was her first

lover.

'But,' he said to himself at other moments, 'one must admit that there

is nothing artless, simple, tender, in her attitude; never have I seen her

looking so haughty. Can she despise me? It would be like her to re

proach herself with what she has done for me, solely on account of my

humble birth.'

336While Julien, steeped in the prejudices he had derived from books and

from memories of Verrieres, was pursuing the chimera of a tender mis

tress who never gives a thought to her own existence the moment she

has gratified the desires of her lover, Mathilde in her vanity was furious

with him.

As she had ceased to be bored for the last two months, she was no

longer afraid of boredom; so, albeit he could not for a moment suspect it,Julien was deprived of his strongest advantage.

'I have given myself a master!' Mademoiselle de La Mole was saying to

herself, in the grip of the blackest despond. 'He may be the soul of hon

our; but if I goad his vanity to extremes, he will have his revenge by

making public the nature of our relations.' Mathilde had never had a lov

er, and at this epoch in life, which gives certain tender illusions to even

the most sterile hearts, she was a prey to the bitterest reflections.

'He has an immense power over me, since he reigns by terror and can

inflict a fearful punishment on me if I drive him to extremes.' This idea,by itself, was enough to provoke Mathilde to insult him. Courage was

the fundamental quality in her character. Nothing was capable of giving

her any excitement and of curing her of an everpresent tendency to

boredom, but the idea that she was playing heads or tails with her whole

existence.

On the third day, as Mademoiselle de La Mole persisted in not looking

at him, Julien followed her after dinner, to her evident annoyance, into

the billiard room.

'Well, Sir; you must imagine yourself to have acquired some very

powerful hold over me,' she said to him, with illcontrolled rage, 'since in

opposition to my clearly expressed wishes, you insist on speaking to me?

Are you aware that nobody in the world has ever been so

presumptuous?'

Nothing could be more entertaining than the dialogue between these

two lovers; unconsciously they were animated by a mutual sentiment of

the keenest hatred. As neither of them had a consistent nature, as

moreover they were used to the ways of good society, it was not long be

fore they both declared in plain terms that they had quarrelled for ever.

'I swear to you eternal secrecy,' said Julien; 'I would even add that I

will never address a word to you again, were it not that your reputation

might be injured by too marked a change.' He bowed respectfully and

left her.

337He performed without undue difficulty what he regarded as a duty;he was far from imagining himself to be deeply in love with Mademois

elle de La Mole. No doubt he had not been in love with her three days

earlier, when he had been concealed in the great mahogany wardrobe.

But everything changed rapidly in his heart from the moment when he

saw himself parted from her for ever.

His pitiless memory set to work reminding him of the slightest incid

ents of that night which in reality had left him so cold.

During the very night after their vow of eternal separation, Julien

nearly went mad when he found himself forced to admit that he was in

love with Mademoiselle de La Mole.

A ghastly conflict followed this discovery: all his feelings were thrown

into confusion.

Two days later, instead of being haughty with M. de Croisenois, he

could almost have burst into tears and embraced him.

The force of continued unhappiness gave him a glimmer of common

sense; he decided to set off for Languedoc, packed his trunk and went to

the posting house.

He almost fainted when, on reaching the coach office, he was informed

that, by mere chance, there was a place vacant next day in the Toulouse

mail. He engaged it and returned to the Hotel de La Mole to warn the

Marquis of his departure.

M. de La Mole had gone out. More dead than alive, Julien went to wait

for him in the library. What were his feelings on finding Mademoiselle

de La Mole there?

On seeing him appear, she assumed an air of malevolence which it

was impossible for him to misinterpret,Carried away by his misery, dazed by surprise, Julien was weak

enough to say to her, in the tenderest of tones and one that sprang from

the heart: 'Then, you no longer love me?'

'I am horrified at having given myself to the first comer,' said Math

ilde, weeping with rage at herself.

'To the first comer!' cried Julien, and he snatched up an old mediaeval

sword which was kept in the library as a curiosity.

His grief, which he had believed to be intense at the moment of his

speaking to Mademoiselle de La Mole, had now been increased an

338hundredfold by the tears of shame which he saw her shed. He would

have been the happiest of men had it been possible to kill her.

Just as he had drawn the sword, with some difficulty, from its anti

quated scabbard, Mathilde, delighted by so novel a sensation, advanced

proudly towards him; her tears had ceased to flow.

The thought of the Marquis de La Mole, his benefactor, arose vividly

in Julien's mind. 'I should be killing his daughter!' he said to himself;'how horrible!' He made as though to fling away the sword. 'Certainly,'

he thought, 'she will now burst out laughing at the sight of this melodra

matic gesture': thanks to this consideration, he entirely regained his self

possession. He examined the blade of the old sword with curiosity, and

as though he were looking for a spot of rust, then replaced it in its scab

bard, and with the utmost calm hung it up on the nail of gilded bronze

from which he had taken it.

This series of actions, very deliberate towards the end, occupied fully a

minute; Mademoiselle de La Mole gazed at him in astonishment. 'So I

have been within an inch of being killed by my lover!' she said to herself.

This thought carried her back to the bravest days of the age of Charles

IX and Henri III.

She stood motionless before Julien who had now replaced the sword,she gazed at him with eyes in which there was no more hatred. It must

be admitted that she was very attractive at that moment, certainly no

woman had ever borne less resemblance to a Parisian doll (this label ex

pressed Julien's chief objection to the women of that city).

'I am going to fall back into a fondness for him,' thought Mathilde;'and then at once he would suppose himself to be my lord and master,after a relapse, and at the very moment when I have just spoken to him

so firmly.' She fled.

'My God! How beautiful she is!' said Julien, as he watched her run

from the room: 'that is the creature who flung herself into my arms with

such frenzy not a week ago … And those moments will never come

again! And it is my fault! And, at the moment of so extraordinary an ac

tion, and one that concerned me so closely, I was not conscious of it!… I

must admit that I was born with a very dull and unhappy nature.'

The Marquis appeared; Julien made haste to inform him of his

departure.

'For where?' said M. de La Mole.

'For Languedoc.'

339'No, if you please, you are reserved for a higher destiny; if you go any

where, it will be to the North… Indeed, in military parlance, I confine

you to your quarters. You will oblige me by never being absent for more

than two or three hours, I may need you at any moment.'

Julien bowed, and withdrew without uttering a word, leaving the

Marquis greatly astonished; he was incapable of speech, and shut him

self up in his room. There, he was free to exaggerate all the iniquity of his

lot.

'And so,' he thought, 'I cannot even go away! God knows for how

many days the Marquis is going to keep me in Paris; great God! What is

to become of me? And not a friend that I can consult; the abbe Pirard

would not let me finish my first sentence, Conte Altamira would offer to

enlist me in some conspiracy.

'And meanwhile I am mad, I feel it; I am mad!

'Who can guide me, what is to become of me?'

340chapter18

Painful Moments

And she admits it to me! She goes into the minutest details! Her

lovely eye fixed on mine reveals the love that she felt for another!

SCHILLER

Mademoiselle de La Mole, in an ecstasy, could think only of the felicity

of having come within an inch of being killed. She went so far as to say

to herself: 'He is worthy to be my master, since he has been on the point

of killing me. How many of the good-looking young men in society

would one have to fuse together to arrive at such an impulse of passion?

'One must admit that he did look handsome when he climbed on the

chair, to replace the sword, precisely in the picturesque position which

the decorator had chosen for it! After all, I was not such a fool to fall in

love with him.'

At that moment, had any honourable way of renewing their relations

presented itself, she would have seized it with pleasure. Julien, locked

and doublelocked in his room, was a prey to the most violent despair. In

the height of his folly, he thought of flinging himself at her feet. If, in

stead of remaining hidden in a remote corner, he had wandered through

the house and into the garden, so as to be within reach of any opportun

ity, he might perhaps in a single instant have converted his fearful

misery into the keenest happiness.

But the adroitness with the want of which we are reproaching him

would have debarred the sublime impulse of seizing the sword which, at

that moment, made him appear so handsome in the eyes of Mademois

elle de La Mole. This caprice, which told in Julien's favour, lasted for the

rest of the day; Mathilde formed a charming impression of the brief mo

ments during which she had loved him, and looked back on them with

regret.

341'Actually,' she said to herself, 'my passion for that poor boy lasted, in

his eyes, only from one o'clock in the morning, when I saw him arrive by

his ladder, with all his pistols in the side pocket of his coat, until eight. It

was at a quarter past eight, when hearing mass at SainteValere, that it

first occurred to me that he would imagine himself to be my master, and

might try to make me obey him by force of terror.'

After dinner, Mademoiselle de La Mole, far from avoiding Julien,spoke to him, and almost ordered him to accompany her to the garden;he obeyed. This proved too much for her selfcontrol. Mathilde yielded,almost unconsciously, to the love which she began to feel for him. She

found an intense pleasure in strolling by his side, it was with curiosity

that she gazed at his hands which that morning had seized the sword to

kill her.

After such an action, after all that had passed, there could no longer be

any question of their conversing on the same terms as before.

Gradually Mathilde began to talk to him with an intimate confidence

of the state of her heart. She found a strange delight in this kind of con

versation; she proceeded to tell him of the fleeting impulses of enthusi

asm which she had felt for M. de Croisenois, for M. de Caylus …

'What! For M. de Caylus as well!' cried Julien; and all the bitter jeal

ousy of a past jilted lover was made manifest in his words. Mathilde re

ceived them in that light, and was not offended.

She continued to torture Julien, detailing her past feelings in the most

picturesque fashion, and in accents of the most absolute sincerity. He

saw that she was describing what was present before her eyes. He had

the grief of remarking that as she spoke she made fresh discoveries in

her own heart.

The agony of jealousy can go no farther.

The suspicion that a rival is loved is painful enough already, but to

have the love that he inspires in her confessed to one in detail by the wo

man whom one adores is without doubt the acme of suffering.

Oh, how she punished, at that moment, the impulse of pride which

had led Julien to set himself above all the Caylus and Croisenois! With

what an intense and heartfelt misery he now exaggerated their most

trivial advantages! With what ardent sincerity he now despised himself!

Mathilde seemed adorable to him, language fails to express the intens

ity of his admiration. As he walked by her side, he cast furtive glances at

342her hands, her arms, her regal bearing. He was on the point of falling at

her feet, crushed with love and misery, and crying: 'Pity!'

'And this creature who is so lovely, so superior to all the rest, who has

once loved me, it is M. de Caylus whom, no doubt, she will presently be

loving!'

Julien could not doubt Mademoiselle de La Mole's sincerity; the accent

of truth was all too evident in everything that she said. That absolutely

nothing might be wanting to complete his misery, there were moments

when, by dint of occupying her mind with the sentiments which she had

at one time felt for M. de Caylus, Mathilde was led to speak of him as

though she loved him still. Certainly there was love in her accents, Julien

could see it plainly.

Had his bosom been flooded with a mass of molten lead, he would

have suffered less. How, arrived at this extreme pitch of misery, was the

poor boy to guess that it was because she was talking to him that Ma

demoiselle de La Mole found such pleasure in recalling all the niceties of

love that she had felt in the past for M. de Caylus or M. de Luz?

No words could express Julien's anguish. He was listening to the de

tailed confidences of the love felt for others in that same lime walk

where, so few days since, he had waited for one o'clock to strike before

making his way into her room. Human nature is incapable of enduring

misery at a higher pitch than this.

This kind of cruel intimacy lasted for a whole week. Mathilde now ap

peared to seek, now did not shun opportunities of speaking to him; and

the subject of conversation, to which they seemed both to return with a

sort of torturing pleasure, was the recital of the sentiments that she had

felt for others; she recounted to him the letters that she had written, told

him the very words of them, repeated whole sentences. On the final days

she seemed to be studying Julien with a sort of malignant delight. His

sufferings were a source of keen enjoyment to her.

We can see that Julien had no experience of life, he had not even read

any novels; if he had been a little less awkward, and had said with a cer

tain coldness to this girl, whom he so adored and who made him such

strange confidences: 'Admit that though I am not the equal of all these

gentlemen, it is still myself that you love … '

Perhaps she would have been glad to have her secret guessed; at any

rate his success would have depended entirely upon the grace with

which Julien expressed this idea, and the moment that he chose.

However that might be, he came out well, and yith advantage to himself,343from a situation which was tending to become monotonous in Mathilde's

eyes.

'And you no longer love me, me who adore you!' Julien said |o her

one day, desperate with love and misery. It was almost She worst blun

der that he could have made.

This speech destroyed in an instant all the pleasure that lademoiselle

de La Mole found in speaking to him of the state of her heart. She was

beginning to feel astonished that after what had happened he did not

take offence at her confidences, he was on the point of imagining, at the

moment when he made this foolish speech, that perhaps he no longer

loved her. 'Pride has doubtless quenched his love,' she said to herself.

'He is not the man to see himself set with impunity beneath creatures like

Caylus, de Luz, Croisenois, who he admits are so far his superiors. No, I

shall never see him at my feet again!'

On the preceding days, in the artlessness of his misery, Julien had paid

a heartfelt tribute to the brilliant qualities of these gentlemen; he went so

far as to exaggerate them. This change of attitude had by no means es

caped the notice of Mademoiselle de La Mole; it had surprised her, but

she did not suspect the reason or it. Julien's frenzied soul, in praising a

rival whom he believed to be loved, sympathised with that rival in his

good fortune.

This speech, so frank but so stupid, altered the whole situation an in

stant: Mathilde, certain of being loved, despised him completely.

She was strolling with him at the moment of this unfortunate utter

ance; she left him, and her final glance was expressive of the most bitter

scorn. Returning to the drawing-room, for the rest of the evening she

never looked at him again. Next day, this scorn of him had entire posses

sion of her heart; there was no longer any question of the impulse which,for a whole week, had made her find such pleasure in treating Julien as

her most intimate friend; the sight of him was repulsive to her.

Mathilde's feeling reached the point of disgust; no words could express

the intensity of the scorn that she felt when her eyes happened to fall on

him.

Julien had understood nothing of all that had been happening in

Mathilde's heart, but for the past week he discerned her scorn. He had

the good sense to appear in her presence as rarely as possible, and never

looked her in the face.

But it was not without a mortal anguish that he deprived himself to

some extent of her company. He thought he could feel that his misery

344was thereby actually increased. 'The courage of a man's heart can go no

farther,' he told himself. He spent all his time at a little window in the at

tics of the house; the shutters were carefully closed, and from there, at

least, he could catch a glimpse of Mademoiselle de La Mole when she ap

peared in the garden.

What were his feelings when, after dinner, he saw her strolling with

M. de Caylus, M. de Luz or any of the others for whom she had avowed

some slight amorous inclination in the past?

Julien had had no idea of such an intensity of misery; he was on the

point of crying aloud; that resolute heart was at last reduced to utter

helplessness.

Any thought that was not of Mademoiselle de La Mole had become

odious to him; he was incapable of writing the most simple letters.

'You are crazy,' the Marquis said to him.

Julien, trembling with fear of a disclosure, pleaded illness and man

aged to make himself believed. Fortunately for him, the Marquis teased

him at dinner over his coming journey: Mathilde gathered that it might

be prolonged. For several days now Julien had been avoiding her, and

the brilliant young men who had everything that was lacking in this

creature so pale and sombre, once loved by her, had no longer the power

to distract her from her dreams.

'An ordinary girl,' she said to herself, 'would have sought for the man

of her choice among the young fellows who attract every eye in a

drawing-room; but one of the characteristics of genius is not to let its

thoughts move in the rut traced by the common herd.

'As the partner of such a man as Julien, who lacks nothing but the for

tune which I possess, I shall continue to attract attention, I shall by no

means pass unperceived through life. So far from incessantly dreading a

Revolution like my cousins, who, in their fear of the people, dare not

scold a postilion who drives them badly, I shall be certain of playing a

part and a great part, for the man of my choice has character and an un

bounded ambition. What does he lack? Friends? Money? I can give him

all that.' But in her thoughts she treated Julien rather as an inferior being

who can be made to love one when one wills.

345chapter19

The OperaBouffe

O how this spring of love resembleth The uncertain glory of an

April day; Which now shows all the beauty of the sun, And by

and by a cloud takes all away!

SHAKESPEARE

Occupied with thoughts of the future and of the singular part which

she hoped to play, Mathilde soon came to look back with regret upon the

dry, metaphysical discussions which she often had with Julien. Wearied

with keeping her thoughts on so high a plane, sometimes also she would

sigh for the moments of happiness which she had found in his company;these memories were not untouched by remorse, which at certain mo

ments overwhelmed her.

'But if one has a weakness,' she said to herself, 'it is incumbent upon a

girl like myself to forget her duties only for a man of merit; people will

not be able to say that it was his handsome moustaches or his elegant

seat on a horse that seduced me, but his profound discussions of the fu

ture in store for France, his ideas as to the resemblance the events that

are going to burst upon us may bear to the Revolution of 1688 in Eng

land. I have been seduced,' she answered the voice of remorse, 'I am a

weak woman, but at least I have not been led astray like a puppet by out

ward advantages.

'If there be a Revolution, why should not Julien Sorel play the part of

Roland, and I that of Madame Roland? I prefer that to the part of Ma

dame de Stael: immoral conduct will be an obstacle in our time. Cer

tainly they shall not reproach me with a second lapse; I should die of

shame.'

Mathilde's meditations were not all as grave, it must be admitted, as

the thoughts we have just transcribed.

346She would look at Julien, and found a charming grace in his most trivi

al actions.

'No doubt,' she said to herself, 'I have succeeded in destroying every

idea in his mind that he has certain rights.

'The air of misery and profound passion with which the poor boy ad

dressed those words of love to me a week ago, is proof positive; I must

confess that it was extraordinary in me to be vexed by a speech so fer

vent with respect and passion. Am I not his wife? That speech was only

natural, and, I am bound to say, quite agreeable. Julien still loved me

after endless conversations, in which I had spoken to him, and with great

cruelty, I admit, only of the feelings of love which the boredom of the life

I lead had inspired in me for the young men in society of whom he is so

jealous. Ah, if he knew how little danger there is in them for me! How

lifeless they seem to me when compared with him, all copies of each

other.'

As she made these reflections, Mathilde was tracing lines with a pencil

at random on a page of her album. One of the profiles as she finished it

startled and delighted her: it bore a striking resemblance to Julien. 'It is

the voice of heaven! This is one of the miracles of love,' she cried in a

transport, 'quite unconsciously I have drawn his portrait.'

She fled to her room, locked herself in, set to work, tried seriously to

make a portrait of Julien, but could not succeed; the profile drawn at ran

dom was still the best likeness. Mathilde was enchanted; she saw in it a

clear proof of her grand passion.

She did not lay aside her album until late in the evening, when the

Marquise sent for her to go to the Italian opera. She had only one idea, to

catch Julien's eye, so as to make her mother invite him to join them.

He did not appear; the ladies had only the most commonplace people

in their box. During the whole of the first act of the opera, Mathilde sat

dreaming of the man whom she loved with transports of the most in

tense passion; but in the second act a maxim of love sung, it must be ad

mitted, to a melody worthy of Cimarosa, penetrated her heart. The

heroine of the opera said: 'I must be punished for all the adoration that I

feel for him, I love him too well!'

The moment she had heard this sublime cantilena, everything that exis

ted in the world vanished from Mathilde's ken. People spoke to her; she

did not answer; her mother scolded her, it was all she could do to look at

her. Her ecstasy reached a state of exaltation and passion comparable to

the most violent emotions that, during the last few days, Julien had felt

347for her. The cantilena, divinely graceful, to which was sung the maxim

that seemed to her to bear so striking an application to her own situation,occupied every moment in which she was not thinking directly of Julien.

Thanks to her love of music, she became that evening as Madame de

Renal invariably was when thinking of him. Love born in the brain is

more spirited, doubtless, than true love, but it has only flashes of enthu

siasm; it knows itself too well, it criticises itself incessantly; so far from

banishing thought, it is itself reared only upon a structure of thought.

On her return home, in spite of anything that Madame de La Mole

might say, Mathilde alleged an attack of fever, and spent part of the

night playing over the cantilena on her piano. She sang the words of the

famous aria which had charmed her:

Devo punirmi, devo punirmi, Se troppo amai.

The result of this night of madness was that she imagined herself to

have succeeded in conquering her love. (This page will damage the un

fortunate author in more ways than one. The frigid hearts will accuse it

of indecency. It does not offer the insult to the young persons who shine

in the drawing-rooms of Paris, of supposing that a single one of their

number is susceptible to the mad impulses which degrade the character

of Mathilde. This character is wholly imaginary, and is indeed imagined

quite apart from the social customs which among all the ages will assure

so distinguished a place to the civilisation of the nineteenth century.

It is certainly not prudence that is lacking in the young ladies who

have been the ornament of the balls this winter.

Nor do I think that one can accuse them of unduly despising a brilliant

fortune, horses, fine properties, and everything that ensures an agreeable

position in society. So far from their seeing nothing but boredom in all

these advantages, they are as a rule the object of their most constant de

sires, and if there is any passion in their hearts it is for them.

Neither is it love that provides for the welfare of young men endowed

with a certain amount of talent like Julien; they attach themselves insep

arably to a certain set, and when the set 'arrives', all the good things of

society rain upon them. Woe to the student who belongs to no set, even

his minute and far from certain successes will be made a reproach to

him, and the higher virtue will triumph over him as it robs him. Ah, Sir,a novel is a mirror carried along a high road. At one moment it reflects to

your vision the azure skies, at another the mire of the puddles at your

feet. And the man who carries this mirror in his pack will be accused by

you of being immoral! His mirror shows the mire, and you blame the

348mirror! Rather blame that high road upon which the puddle lies, still

more the inspector of roads who allows the water to gather and the

puddle to form.

Now that it is quite understood that the character of Mathilde is im

possible in our age, no less prudent than virtuous, I am less afraid of

causing annoyance by continuing the account of the follies of this charm

ing girl.)

Throughout the whole of the day that followed she looked out for op

portunities to assure herself that she had indeed conquered her insane

passion. Her main object was to displease Julien in every way; but none

of her movements passed unperceived by him.

Julien was too wretched and above all, too greatly agitated, to inter

pret so complicated a stratagem of passion, still less could he discern all

the promise that it held out to himself: he fell a victim to it; never per

haps had his misery been so intense. His actions were so little under the

control of his mind that if some morose philosopher had said to him:

'Seek to take advantage rapidly of a disposition which for the moment is

favourable to you; in this sort of brainfed love, which we see in Paris,the same state of mind cannot continue for more than a couple of days,'

he would not have understood. But, excited as he might be, Julien had a

sense of honour. His first duty was discretion; so much he did under

stand. To ask for advice, to relate his agony to the first comer would

have been a happiness comparable to that of the wretch who, crossing a

burning desert, receives from the sky a drop of icecold water. He was

aware of the danger, he was afraid of answering with a torrent of tears

the indiscreet person who should question him; he closeted himself in

his room.

He saw Mathilde strolling late and long in the garden; when at length

she had left it, he went down there; he made his way to a rose tree from

which she had plucked a rose.

The night was dark, he could indulge the full extent of his misery

without fear of being seen. It was evident to him that Mademoiselle de

La Mole was in love with one of those young officers to whom she had

been chattering so gaily. He himself had been loved by her, but she had

seen how slight were his merits.

'And indeed, they are slight!' Julien told himself with entire conviction;'I am, when all is said, a very dull creature, very common, very tedious

to others, quite insupportable to myself.' He was sick to death of all his

own good qualities, of all the things that he had loved with enthusiasm;349and in this state of inverted imagination he set to work to criticise life

with his imagination. This is an error that stamps a superior person.

More than once the idea of suicide occurred to him; this image was full

of charm, it was like a delicious rest; it was the glass of icecold water

offered to the wretch who, in the desert, is dying of thirst and heat.

'My death will increase the scorn that she feels for me!' he exclaimed.

'What a memory I shall leave behind me!'

Sunk into the nethermost abyss of misery, a human being has no re

source left but courage. Julien had not wisdom enough to say to himself:

'I must venture all'; but as he looked up at the window of Mathilde's

room, he could see through the shutters that she was putting out her

light: he pictured to himself that charming room which he had seen, alas,once only in his life. His imagination went no farther.

One o'clock struck; from hearing the note of the bell to saying to him

self: 'I am going up by the ladder,' did not take a moment.

This was a flash of genius, cogent reasons followed in abundance. 'Can

I possibly be more wretched?' he asked himself. He ran to the ladder, the

gardener had made it fast with a chain. With the hammer of one of his

pocket pistols, which he broke, Julien, animated for the moment by a su

perhuman force, wrenched open one of the iron links of the chain which

bound the ladder; in a few minutes it was free, and he had placed it

against Mathilde's window.

'She will be angry, will heap contempt upon me, what of that? I give

her a kiss, a final kiss, I go up to my room and kill myself … ; my lips

will have touched her cheek before I die!'

He flew up the ladder, tapped at the shutter; a moment later Mathilde

heard him, she tried to open the shutter, the ladder kept it closed. Julien

clung to the iron latch intended to hold the shutter open, and, risking a

thousand falls, gave the ladder a violent shake, and displaced it a little.

Mathilde was able to open the shutter.

He flung himself into the room more dead than alive: 'So it is you!' she

said, and fell into his arms …

What words can describe the intensity of Julien's happiness?

Mathilde's was almost as great.

She spoke to him against herself, she accused herself to him.

350'Punish me for my atrocious pride,' she said to him, squeezing him in

her arms as though to strangle him; 'you are my master, I am your slave,I must beg pardon upon my knees for having sought to rebel.' She

slipped from his embrace to fall at his feet. 'Yes, you are my master,' she

said again, intoxicated with love and joy; 'reign over me for ever, punish

your slave severely when she seeks to rebel.'

In another moment she had torn herself from his arms, lighted the

candle, and Julien had all the difficulty in the world in preventing her

from cutting off all one side of her hair.

'I wish to remind myself,' she told him, 'that I am your servant: should

my accursed pride ever make me forget it, show me these locks and say:

"There is no question now of love, we are not concerned with the emo

tion that your heart may be feeling at this moment, you have sworn to

obey, obey upon your honour."'

But it is wiser to suppress the description of so wild a felicity.

Julien's chivalry was as great as his happiness; 'I must go down now

by the ladder,' he said to Mathilde, when he saw the dawn appear over

the distant chimneys to the east, beyond the gardens. The sacrifice that I

am imposing on myself is worthy of you, I am depriving myself of some

hours of the most astounding happiness that a human soul can enjoy, it

is a sacrifice that I am offering to your reputation: if you know my heart

you appreciate the effort that I have to make. Will you always be to me

what you are at this moment? But the voice of honour speaks, it is

enough. Let me tell you that, since our first meeting, suspicion has not

been directed only against robbers. M. de La Mole has set a watch in the

garden. M. de Croisenois is surrounded by spies, we know what he is,doing night by night … '

When she heard this idea, Mathilde burst out laughing. Her mother

and one of the maids were aroused: immediately they called to her

through the door. Julien looked at her, she turned pale as she scolded the

maid, and did not condescend to speak to her mother.

'But if it should occur to them to open the window, they will see the

ladder!' Julien said to her.

He clasped her once more in his arms, sprang on to the ladder and slid

rather than climbed down it; in a moment he was on the ground.

Three seconds later the ladder was under the lime alley, and

Mathilde's honour was saved. Julien, on recovering his senses, found

351himself bleeding copiously and half naked: he had cut himself in his

headlong descent.

The intensity of his happiness had restored all the energy of his nature:

had a score of men appeared before him, to attack them singlehanded

would, at that moment, have been but a pleasure the more. Fortunately,his martial valour was not put to the proof: he laid down the ladder in its

accustomed place; he replaced the chain that fastened it; he did not for

get to come back and obliterate the print which the ladder had left in the

border of exotic flowers beneath Mathilde's window.

As in the darkness he explored the loose earth with his hand, to make

sure that the mark was entirely obliterated, he felt something drop on his

hand; it was a whole side of Mathilde's hair which she had clipped and

threw down to him.

She was at her window.

'See what your servant sends you,' she said in audible tones, 'it is the

sign of eternal obedience. I renounce the exercise of my own reason; be

my master.'

Julien, overcome, was on the point of fetching back the ladder and

mounting again to her room. Finally reason prevailed.

To enter the house from the garden was by no means easy. He suc

ceeded in forcing the door of a cellar; once in the house he was obliged to

break open, as silently as possible, the door of his own room. In his con

fusion he had left everything behind, including the key, which was in the

pocket of his coat. 'Let us hope,' he thought, 'that she will remember to

hide all that corpus delicti!'

Finally exhaustion overpowered happiness, and, as the sun rose, he

fell into a profound slumber.

The luncheon bell just succeeded in waking him, he made his appear

ance in the diningroom. Shortly afterwards, Mathilde entered the room.

Julien's pride tasted a momentary joy when he saw the love that glowed

in the eyes of this beautiful creature, surrounded by every mark of defer

ence; but soon his prudence found an occasion for alarm.

On the pretext of not having had time to dress her hair properly,Mathilde had so arranged it that Julien could see at a glance the whole

extent of the sacrifice that she had made for him in clipping her locks

that night. If anything could have spoiled so lovely a head, Mathilde

would have succeeded in spoiling hers; all one side of those beautiful

pale golden locks were cropped to within half an inch of her scalp.

352At luncheon, Mathilde's whole behaviour was in keeping with this ori

ginal imprudence. You would have said that she was deliberately trying

to let everyone see the insane passion that she had for Julien. For

tunately, that day, M. de La Mole and the Marquise were greatly taken

up with a list of forthcoming promotions to the Blue Riband, in which

the name of M. de Chaulnes had not been included. Towards the end of

the meal, Mathilde in talking to Julien addressed him as 'my master'. He

coloured to the whites of his eyes.

Whether by accident or by the express design of Madame de La Mole,Mathilde was not left alone for an instant that day. In the evening,however, as she passed from the diningroom to the drawing-room, she

found an opportunity of saying to Julien:

'I hope you do not think that it is my idea: Mamma has just decided

that one of her maids is to sleep in my room.'

The day passed like lightning; Julien was on the highest pinnacle of

happiness. By seven o'clock next morning he was installed in the library;he hoped that Mademoiselle de La Mole would deign to appear there; he

had written her an endless letter.

He did not see her until several hours had passed, at luncheon. Her

head was dressed on this occasion with the greatest pains; a marvellous

art had been employed to conceal the gap left by the clipped locks. She

looked once or twice at Julien, but with polite, calm eyes; there was no

longer any question of her calling him 'my master'.

Julien could not breathe for astonishment … Mathilde found fault with

herself for almost everything that she had done for him.

On mature reflection, she had decided that he was a creature, if not al

together common, at any rate not sufficiently conspicuous to deserve all

the strange follies which she had ventured to commit for him. On the

whole, she no longer thought of love; she was tired of love that day.

As for Julien, the emotions of his heart were those of a boy of sixteen.

Harrowing doubt, bewilderment, despair, seized upon him by turns dur

ing this luncheon, which seemed to him to be everlasting.

As soon as he could decently rise from table, he flew rather than ran to

the stable, saddled his horse himself and was off at a gallop; he was

afraid of disgracing himself by some sign of weakness. 'I must kill my

heart by physical exhaustion,' he said to himself as he galloped through

the woods of Meudon. 'What have I done, what have I said to deserve

such disgrace?

353'I must do nothing, say nothing today,' he decided as he returned to

the house, 'be dead in body as I am in spirit. Julien no longer lives, it is

his corpse that is still stirring.'

354chapter20

The Japanese Vase

His heart does not at first realise the whole extent of his misery:

he is more disturbed than moved. But in proportion as his reason

returns, he feels the depth of his misfortune. All the pleasures in

life are as nothing to him, he can feel only the sharp points of the

despair that is rending him. But what is the good of speaking of

physical pain? What pain felt by the body alone is comparable to

this?

JEANPAUL

The dinner bell rang, Julien had barely time to dress; he found Math

ilde in the drawing-room urging her brother and M. de Croisenois not to

go and spend the evening with Madame la Marechale de Fervaques.

She could hardly have been more seductive and charming with them.

After dinner they were joined by M. de Luz, M. de Caylus and several of

their friends. One would have said that Mademoiselle de La Mole had

resumed, together with the observance of sisterly affection, that of the

strictest conventions. Although the weather that evening was charming,she insisted that they should not go out to the garden; she was determ

ined not to be lured away from the armchair in which Madame de La

Mole was enthroned. The blue sofa was the centre of the group, as in

winter.

Mathilde was out of humour with the garden, or at least it seemed to

her to be utterly boring: it was associated with the memory of Julien.

Misery destroys judgment. Our hero made the blunder of clinging to

that little cane chair which in the past had witnessed such brilliant tri

umphs. This evening, nobody spoke to him; his presence passed as

though unperceived or worse. Those of Mademoiselle de La Mole's

friends who were seated near him at the end of the sofa made an affecta

tion of turning their backs on him, or so he thought.

355'It is a courtier's disgrace,' he concluded. He decided to study for a mo

ment the people who were trying to crush him with their disdain.

M. de Luz's uncle held an important post in the King's Household, the

consequence of which was that this gallant officer opened his conversa

tion with each fresh arrival with the following interesting detail: His

uncle had set off at seven o'clock for SaintCloud, and expected to spend

the night there. This piece of news was introduced in the most casual

manner, but it never failed to come out.

Upon observing M. de Croisenois with the severe eye of misery, Julien

remarked the enormous influence which this worthy and amiable young

man attributed to occult causes. So much so that he became moody and

cross if he heard an event of any importance set down to a simple and

quite natural cause. 'There is a trace of madness there,' Julien told him

self. 'This character bears a striking resemblance to that of the Emperor

Alexander, as Prince Korasoff described him to me.' During the first year

of his stay in Paris, poor Julien, coming fresh from the Seminary, dazzled

by the graces, so novel to him, of all these agreeable young men, could

do nothing but admire them. Their true character was only now begin

ning to outline itself before his eyes.

'I am playing an undignified part here,' he suddenly decided. The next

thing was how to leave his little cane chair in a fashion that should not

be too awkward. He tried to think of one, he called for something origin

al upon an imagination that was fully occupied elsewhere. He was ob

liged to draw upon his memory, which, it must be confessed, was by no

means rich in resources of this order; the boy was still a thorough novice,so that his awkwardness was complete and attracted everyone's atten

tion when he rose to leave the drawing-room. Misery was all too evident

in his whole deportment. He had been playing the part for three quarters

of an hour of a troublesome inferior from whom people do not take the

trouble to conceal what they think of him.

The critical observations which he had been making at the expense of

his rivals prevented him, however, from taking his misfortune too seri

ously; he retained, to give support to his pride, the memory of what had

occurred the night before last. 'Whatever the advantages they may have

over me,' he thought as he went into the garden by himself, 'Mathilde

has not been to any of them what, on two occasions in my life, she has

deigned to be to me.'

356His sagacity went no farther. He failed entirely to understand the char

acter of the singular person whom chance had now made absolute mis

tress of his whole happiness.

He devoted the next day to killing himself and his horse with exhaus

tion. He made no further attempt, that evening, to approach the blue sofa

to which Mathilde was faithful. He remarked that Comte Norbert did

not so much as deign to look at him when they met in the house. 'He

must be making an extraordinary effort,' he thought, 'he who is naturally

so polite.'

For Julien, sleep would have meant happiness. Despite his bodily ex

haustion, memories of a too seductive kind began to invade his whole

imagination. He had not the intelligence to see that by his long rides

through the forests round Paris, acting only upon himself and in no way

upon the heart or mind of Mathilde, he was leaving the arrangement of

his destiny to chance.

It seemed to him that one thing would supply boundless comfort to

his grief: namely to speak to Mathilde. And yet what could he venture to

say to her?

This was the question upon which one morning at seven o'clock he

was pondering deeply, when suddenly he saw her enter the library.

'I know, Sir, that you desire to speak to me.'

'Great God! Who told you that?'

'I know it, what more do you want? If you are lacking in honour, you

may ruin me, or at least attempt to do so; but this danger, which I do not

regard as real, will certainly not prevent me from being sincere. I no

longer love you, Sir; my wild imagination misled me … '

On receiving this terrible blow, desperate with love and misery, Julien

tried to excuse himself. Nothing could be more absurd. Does one excuse

oneself for failing to please? But reason no longer held any sway over his

actions. A blind instinct urged him to postpone the decision of his fate. It

seemed to him that so long as he was still speaking, nothing was defin

itely settled. Mathilde did not listen to his words, the sound of them irrit

ated her, she could not conceive how he had the audacity to interrupt

her.

The twofold remorse of her virtue and her pride made her, that morn

ing, equally unhappy. She was more or less crushed by the frightful idea

of having given certain rights over herself to a little cleric, the son of a

peasant. 'It is almost,' she told herself in moments when she exaggerated

357her distress, 'as though I had to reproach myself with a weakness for one

of the footmen.'

In bold and proud natures, it is only a step from anger with oneself to

fury with other people; one's transports of rage are in such circumstances

a source of keen pleasure.

In a moment, Mademoiselle de La Mole reached the stage of heaping

on Julien the marks of the most intense scorn. She had infinite cleverness,and this cleverness triumphed in the art of torturing the self-esteem of

others and inflicting cruel wounds upon them.

For the first time in his life, Julien found himself subjected to the action

of a superior intelligence animated by the most violent hatred of himself.

So far from entertaining the slightest idea of defending himself at that

moment, he began to despise himself. Hearing her heap upon him such

cruel marks of scorn, so cleverly calculated to destroy any good opinion

that he might have of himself, he felt that Mathilde was right, and that

she was not saying enough.

As for her, her pride found an exquisite pleasure in thus punishing

herself and him for the adoration which she had felt a few days earlier.

She had no need to invent or to think for the first time of the cruel

words which she now uttered with such complacence. She was only re

peating what for the last week had been said in her heart by the counsel

of the opposite party to love.

Every word increased Julien's fearful misery an hundredfold. He tried

to escape, Mademoiselle de La Mole held him by the arm with a gesture

of authority.

'Please to observe,' he said to her, 'that you are speaking extremely

loud; they will hear you in the next room.'

'What of that!' Mademoiselle de La Mole retorted proudly, 'who will

dare to say to me that he has heard me? I wish to rid your petty selfes

teem for ever of the ideas which it may have formed of me.'

When Julien was able to leave the library, he was so astounded that he

already felt his misery less keenly. 'Well! She no longer loves me,' he re

peated to himself, speaking aloud as though to inform himself of his pos

ition. 'It appears that she loved me for a week or ten days, and I shall

love her all my life.

'Is it really possible, she meant nothing, nothing at all to my heart, only

a few days ago.'

358The delights of satisfied pride flooded Mathilde's bosom; so she had

managed to break with him for ever! The thought of so complete a tri

umph over so strong an inclination made her perfectly happy. 'And so

this little gentleman will understand, and once for all, that he has not

and never will have any power over me.' She was so happy that really

she had ceased to feel any love at that moment.

After so atrocious, so humiliating a scene, in anyone less passionate

than Julien, love would have become impossible. Without departing for

a single instant from what she owed to herself, Mademoiselle de La Mole

had addressed to him certain of those disagreeable statements, so well

calculated that they can appear to be true, even when one remembers

them in cold blood.

The conclusion that Julien drew at the first moment from so astonish

ing a scene was that Mathilde had an unbounded pride. He believed

firmly that everything was at an end for ever between them, and yet, the

following day, at luncheon, he was awkward and timid in her presence.

This was a fault that could not have been found with him until then. In

small matters as in great, he knew clearly what he ought and wished to

do, and carried it out.

That day, after luncheon, when Madame de La Mole asked him for a

seditious and at the same time quite rare pamphlet, which her parish

priest had brought to her secretly that morning, Julien, in taking it from a

side table, knocked over an old vase of blue porcelain, the ugliest thing

imaginable.

Madame de La Mole rose to her feet with a cry of distress and came

across the room to examine the fragments of her beloved vase. 'It was old

Japan,' she said, 'it came to me from my greataunt the Abbess of Chelles;it was a present from the Dutch to the Duke of Orleans when he was Re

gent and he gave it to his daughter … '

Mathilde had followed her mother, delighted to see the destruction of

this blue vase which seemed to her horribly ugly. Julien stood silent and

not unduly distressed; he saw Mademoiselle de La Mole standing close

beside him.

'This vase,' he said to her, 'is destroyed for ever; so is it with a senti

ment which was once the master of my heart; I beg you to accept my

apologies for all the foolish things it has made me do'; and he left the

room.

'Really, one would think,' said Madame de La Mole as he went, 'that

this M. Sorel is proud and delighted with what he has done.'

359This speech fell like a weight upon Mathilde's heart. 'It is true,' she told

herself, 'my mother has guessed aright, such is the sentiment that is an

imating him.' Then and then only ended her joy in the scene that she had

made with him the day before. 'Ah, well, all is at an end,' she said to her

self with apparent calm; 'I am left with a great example; my mistake has

been fearful, degrading! It will make me wise for all the rest of my life.'

'Was I not speaking the truth?' thought Julien; 'why does the love that I

felt for that madwoman torment me still?'

This love, so far from dying, as he hoped, was making rapid strides.

'She is mad, it is true,' he said to himself, 'but is she any less adorable? Is

it possible for a girl to be more lovely? Everything that the most elegant

civilisation can offer in the way of keen pleasures, was it not all com

bined to one's heart's content in Mademoiselle de La Mole?' These

memories of past happiness took possession of Julien, and rapidly undid

all the work of reason.

Reason struggles in vain against memories of this sort; its stern en

deavours serve only to enhance their charm.

Twentyfour hours after the breaking of the old Japanese vase, Julien

was decidedly one of the unhappiest of men.

360chapter21

The Secret Note

For I saw everything that I am telling you; and if I may have been

deceived when I saw it, I am most certainly not deceiving you in

telling you of it.

From a Letter to the Author

The Marquis sent for him; M. de La Mole seemed rejuvenated, there

was a gleam in his eye.

'Let us hear a little about your memory,' he said to Julien. 'I am told it

is prodigious! Could you learn four pages by heart and go and repeat

them in London? But without altering a word!'

The Marquis was feverishly turning the pages of that morning's Quoti

dienne, and seeking in vain to dissimulate a highly serious air, which Juli

en had never seen him display, not even when they were discussing the

Frilair case.

Julien had by this time sufficient experience to feel that he ought to ap

pear thoroughly deceived by the light manner that was being assumed

for his benefit.

'This number of the Quotidienne is perhaps not very amusing; but, if M.

le Marquis will allow me, tomorrow morning I shall have the honour to

recite it to him from beginning to end.'

'What! Even the advertisements?'

'Literally, and without missing a word.'

'Do you give me your word for that?' went on the Marquis with a sud

den gravity.

'Yes, Sir, only the fear of not keeping it might upset my memory.'

'What I mean is that I forgot to ask you this question yesterday; I do

not ask you on your oath never to repeat what you are about to hear; I

know you too well to insult you in that way. I have answered for you, I

361am going to take you to a room where there will be twelve persons as

sembled; you will take note of what each of them says.

'Do not be uneasy, it is not going to be a confused conversation, each

one will speak in his turn, I do not mean a set speech,' the Marquis went

on, resuming the tone of careless superiority which came so naturally to

him. 'While we are talking, you will write down twenty pages or so; you

will return here with me, we shall cut down those twenty pages to four.

It is those four pages that you shall recite to me tomorrow morning in

stead of the whole number of the Quotidienne. You will then set off at

once; you will have to take post like a young man who is travelling for

his pleasure. Your object will be to pass unobserved by anyone. You will

arrive in the presence of a great personage. There, you will require more

skill. It will be a question of taking in everyone round him; for among his

secretaries, among his servants, there are men in the pay of our enemies,who lie in wait for our agents to intercept them. You shall have a formal

letter of introduction. When His Excellency looks at you, you will take

out my watch here, which I am going to lend you for the journey. Take it

now, while you are about it, and give me yours.

'The Duke himself will condescend to copy out at your dictation the

four pages which you will have learned by heart.

'When this has been done, but not before, remember, you may, if His

Excellency questions you, give him an account of the meeting which you

are now about to attend.

'One thing that will prevent you from feeling bored on your jorney is

that between Paris and the residence of the Minister there are people

who would ask for nothing better than to fire a shot at M. l'abbe Sorel.

Then his mission is at an end and I foresee a long delay; for, my dear fel

low, how shall we hear of your death? Your zeal cannot go so far as to

inform us of it.

'Run off at once and buy yourself a complete outfit,' the Marquis went

on with a serious air. 'Dress in the style of the year before last. This even

ing you will have to look a little shabby. On the journey, however, you

will dress as usual. Does that surprise you, does your suspicious mind

guess the reason? Yes, my friend, one of the venerable personages whom

you are about to hear discuss is fully capable of transmitting information

by means of which someone may quite possibly administer opium to

you, if nothing worse, in the evening, in some respectable inn at which

you will have called for supper.'

362'It would be better,' said Julien, 'to travel thirty leagues farther and

avoid the direct route. My destination is Rome, I suppose… '

The Marquis assumed an air of haughty displeasure which Julien had

not seen to so marked a degree since BrayleHaut.

'That is what you shall learn, Sir, when I think fit to tell you. I do not

like questions.'

'It was not a question,' replied Julien effusively: 'I swear to you, Sir, I

was thinking aloud, I was seeking in my own mind the safest route.'

'Yes, it seems that your thoughts were far away. Never forget that an

ambassador, one of your youth especially, ought not to appear to be for

cing confidences.'

Julien was greatly mortified, he was in the wrong. His self-esteem

sought for an excuse and could find none.

'Understand then,' M. de La Mole went on, 'that people always appeal

to their hearts when they have done something foolish.'

An hour later, Julien was in the Marquis's waitingroom in the garb of

an inferior, with oldfashioned clothes, a doubtfully clean neckcloth and

something distinctly smug about his whole appearance.

At the sight of him, the Marquis burst out laughing, and then only was

Julien's apology accepted.

'If this young man betrays me,' M. de La Mole asked himself, 'whom

can I trust? And yet when it comes to action, one has to trust somebody.

My son and his brilliant friends of the same kidney have honest hearts,and loyalty enough for a hundred thousand; if it were a question of

fighting, they would perish on the steps of the throne, they know

everything… except just what is required at the moment. Devil take me

if I can think of one of them who could learn four pages by heart and

travel a hundred leagues without being tracked. Norbert would know

how to let himself be killed like his ancestors, but any conscript can do

that… '

The Marquis fell into a profound meditation: 'And even being killed,'

he said with a sigh, 'perhaps this Sorel would manage that as well as

he …

'The carriage is waiting,' said the Marquis, as though to banish a vexa

tious thought.

'Sir,' said Julien, 'while they were altering this coat for me, I committed

to memory the first page of today's Quotidienne.'

363The Marquis took the paper, Julien repeated the page without a single

mistake. 'Good,' said the Marquis, every inch the diplomat that evening;'meanwhile this young man is not observing the streets through which

we are passing.'

They arrived in a large room of a distinctly gloomy aspect, partly pan

elled and partly hung in green velvet. In the middle of the room, a scowl

ing footman had just set up a large dinnertable, which he proceeded to

convert into a writing table, by means of an immense green cloth

covered with ink stains, a relic of some Ministry.

The master of the house was a corpulent man whose name was never

uttered; Julien decided that his expression and speech were those of a

man engaged in digestion.

At a sign from the Marquis, Julien had remained at the lower end of

the table. To avoid drawing attention to himself he began to point the

quills. He counted out of the corner of his eye seven speakers, but he

could see nothing more of them than their backs. Two of them appeared

to him to be addressing M. de La Mole on terms of equality, the others

seemed more or less deferential.

Another person entered the room unannounced. 'This is strange,'

thought Julien, 'no one is announced in this room. Can this precaution

have been taken in my honour?' Everyone rose to receive the newcomer.

He was wearing the same extremely distinguished decoration as three of

the men who were already in the room. They spoke in low tones. In

judging the newcomer, Julien was restricted to what he could learn from

his features and dress. He was short and stout, with a high complexion

and a gleaming eye devoid of any expression beyond the savage glare of

a wild boar.

Julien's attention was sharply distracted by the almost immediate ar

rival of a wholly different person. This was a tall man, extremely thin

and wearing three or four waistcoats. His eye was caressing, his gestures

polished.

'That is just the expression of the old Bishop of Besancon,' thought Juli

en. This man evidently belonged to the Church, he did not appear to be

more than fifty or fiftyfive, no one could have looked more fatherly.

The young Bishop of Agde appeared, and seemed greatly surprised

when, in making a survey of those present, his eye rested on Julien. He

had not spoken to him since the ceremony at BrayleHaut. His look of

surprise embarrassed and irritated Julien. 'What,' the latter said to him

self, 'is knowing a man to be always to my disadvantage? All these great

364gentlemen whom I have never seen before do not frighten me in the

least, and the look in this young Bishop's eyes freezes me! It must be ad

mitted that I am a very strange and very unfortunate creature.'

A small and extremely dark man presently made a noisy entrance, and

began speaking from the door; he had a sallow complexion and a slightly

eccentric air. On the arrival of this pitiless talker, groups began to form,apparently to escape the boredom of listening to him.

As they withdrew from the fireplace they drew near to the lower end

of the table, where Julien was installed. His expression became more and

more embarrassed, for now at last, in spite of all his efforts, he could not

avoid hearing them, and however slight his experience might be, he real

ised the full importance of the matters that were being discussed without

any attempt at concealment; and yet how careful the evidently exalted

personages whom he saw before him ought to be to keep them secret.

Already, working as slowly as possible, Julien had pointed a score of

quills; this resource must soon fail him. He looked in vain for an order in

the eyes of M. de La Mole; the Marquis had forgotten him.

'What I am doing is absurd,' thought Julien as he pointed his pens; 'but

people who are so commonplace in appearance, and are entrusted by

others or by themselves with such high interests, must be highly suscept

ible. My unfortunate expression has a questioning and scarcely respect

ful effect which would doubtless annoy them. If I lower my eyes too far I

shall appear to be making a record of their talk.'

His embarrassment was extreme, he was hearing some strange things

said.

365chapter22

The Discussion

The republic—for every person today willing to sacrifice all to the

common good, there are thousands and millions who know only

their own pleasures and their vanity. One is esteemed in Paris for

one's carriage, not for one's virtue.

NAPOLEON, Memorial

The footman burst in, announcing: 'Monsieur le Duc de ——.'

'Hold your tongue, you fool,' said the Duke as he entered the room. He

said this so well, and with such majesty that Julien could not help think

ing that knowing how to lose his temper with a footman was the whole

extent of this great personage's knowledge. Julien raised his eyes and at

once lowered them again. He had so clearly divined the importance of

this new arrival that he trembled lest his glance should be thought an

indiscretion.

This Duke was a man of fifty, dressed like a dandy, and treading as

though on springs. He had a narrow head with a large nose, and a

curved face which he kept thrusting forward. It would have been hard

for anyone to appear at once so noble and so insignificant. His coming

was a signal for the opening of the discussion.

Julien was sharply interrupted in his physiognomical studies by the

voice of M. de La Mole. 'Let me present to you M. l'abbe Sorel,' said the

Marquis. 'He is endowed with an astonishing memory; it was only an

hour ago that I spoke to him of the mission with which he might perhaps

be honoured, and, in order to furnish us with a proof of his memory, he

has learned by heart the first page of the Quotidienne.'

'Ah! The foreign news, from poor N ——,' said the master of the

house. He picked up the paper eagerly and, looking at Julien with a

whimsical air, in the effort to appear important: 'Begin, Sir,' he said to

him.

366The silence was profound, every eye was fixed on Julien; he repeated

his lesson so well that after twenty lines: 'That will do,' said the Duke.

The little man with the boar's eyes sat down. He was the chairman for, as

soon as he had taken his place, he indicated a card table to Julien, and

made a sign to him to bring it up to his side. Julien established himself

there with writing materials. He counted twelve people seated round the

green cloth.

'M. Sorel,' said the Duke, 'retire to the next room. We shall send for

you.'

The master of the house assumed an uneasy expression. 'The shutters

are not closed,' he murmured to his neighbour. 'It is no use your looking

out of the window,' he foolishly exclaimed to Julien. 'Here I am thrust in

to a conspiracy at the very least,' was the latter's thought. 'Fortunately, it

is not one of the kind that end on the Place de Greve. Even if there were

danger, I owe that and more to the Marquis. I should be fortunate, were

it granted me to atone for all the misery which my follies may one day

cause him!'

Without ceasing to think of his follies and of his misery, he studied his

surroundings in such a way that he could never forget them. Only then

did he remember that he had not heard the Marquis tell his footman the

name of the street, and the Marquis had sent for a cab, a thing he never

did.

Julien was left for a long time to his reflections. He was in a parlour

hung in green velvet with broad stripes of gold. There was on the side

table a large ivory crucifix, and on the mantelpiece the book Du Pape, by

M. de Maistre, with gilt edges, and magnificently bound. Julien opened it

so as not to appear to be eavesdropping. Every now and then there was a

sound of raised voices from the next room. At length the door opened,his name was called.

'Remember, Gentlemen,' said the chairman, 'that from this moment we

are addressing the Duc de ——. This gentleman,' he said, pointing to

Julien, 'is a young Levite, devoted to our sacred cause, who will have no

difficulty in repeating, thanks to his astonishing memory, our most trivi

al words.

'Monsieur has the floor,' he said, indicating the personage with the

fatherly air, who was wearing three or four waistcoats. Julien felt that it

would have been more natural to call him the gentleman with the waist

coats. He supplied himself with paper and wrote copiously.

367(Here the author would have liked to insert a page of dots. 'That will

not look pretty,' says the publisher, 'and for so frivolous a work not to

look pretty means death.'

'Politics,' the author resumes, 'are a stone attached to the neck of liter

ature, which, in less than six months, drowns it. Politics in the middle of

imaginative interests are like a pistolshot in the middle of a concert. The

noise is deafening without being emphatic. It is not in harmony with the

sound of any of the instruments. This mention of politics is going to give

deadly offence to half my readers, and to bore the other half, who have

already found far more interesting and emphatic politics in their morn

ing paper.'

'If your characters do not talk politics,' the publisher retorts, 'they are

no longer Frenchmen of 1830, and your book ceases to hold a mirror, as

you claim… .')

Julien's report amounted to twentysix pages; the following is a quite

colourless extract; for I have been obliged, as usual, to suppress the ab

surdities, the frequency of which would have appeared tedious or highly

improbable. (Compare the Gazette des Tribunaux. )

The man with the waistcoats and the fatherly air (he was a Bishop,perhaps), smiled often, and then his eyes, between their tremulous lids,assumed a strange brilliance and an expression less undecided than was

his wont. This personage, who was invited to speak first, before the

Duke ('but what Duke?' Julien asked himself), apparently to express

opinions and to perform the functions of Attorney General, appeared to

Julien to fall into the uncertainty and absence of definite conclusions

with which those officers are often reproached. In the course of the dis

cussion the Duke went so far as to rebuke him for this.

After several phrases of morality and indulgent philosophy, the man

with the waistcoats said:

'Noble England, guided by a great man, the immortal Pitt, spent forty

thousand million francs in destroying the Revolution. If this assembly

will permit me to express somewhat boldly a melancholy reflection, Eng

land does not sufficiently understand that with a man like Bonaparte, es

pecially when one had had to oppose to him only a collection of good in

tentions, there was nothing decisive save personal measures … '

'Ah! Praise of assassination again!' said the master of the house with an

uneasy air.

368'Spare us your sentimental homilies,' exclaimed the chairman angrily;his boar's eye gleamed with a savage light. 'Continue,' he said to the man

with the waistcoats. The chairman's cheeks and brow turned purple.

'Noble England,' the speaker went on, 'is crushed today, for every Eng

lishman, before paying for his daily bread, is obliged to pay the interest

on the forty thousand million francs which were employed against the

Jacobins. She has no longer a Pitt … '

'She has the Duke of Wellington,' said a military personage who as

sumed an air of great importance.

'Silence, please, Gentlemen,' cried the chairman; 'if we continue to dis

agree, there will have been no use in our sending for M. Sorel.'

'We know that Monsieur is full of ideas,' said the Duke with an air of

vexation and a glance at the interrupter, one of Napoleon's Generals.

Julien saw that this was an allusion to something personal and highly of

fensive. Everyone smiled; the turncoat General seemed beside himself

with rage.

'There is no longer a Pitt,' the speaker went on, with the discouraged

air of a man who despairs of making his hearers listen to reason. 'Were

there a fresh Pitt in England, one does not hoodwink a nation twice by

the same means… '

'That is why a conquering General, a Bonaparte is impossible now in

France,' cried the military interrupter.

On this occasion, neither the chairman nor the Duke dared show an

noyance, though Julien thought he could read in their eyes that they

were tempted to do so. They lowered their eyes, and the Duke contented

himself with a sigh loud enough to be audible to them all.

But the speaker had lost his temper.

'You are in a hurry for me to conclude,' he said with heat, entirely dis

carding that smiling politeness and measured speech which Julien had

assumed to be the natural expression of his character: 'you are in a hurry

for me to conclude; you give me no credit for the efforts that I am mak

ing not to offend the ears of anyone present, however long they may be.

Very well, Gentlemen, I shall be brief.

'And I shall say to you in the plainest of words: England has not a half

penny left for the service of the good cause. Were Pitt to return in person,with all his genius he would not succeed in hoodwinking the small

landowners of England, for they know that the brief campaign of Water

loo cost them, by itself, one thousand million francs. Since you wish for

369plain speaking,' the speaker added, growing more and more animated, 'I

shall say to you: Help yourselves, for England has not a guinea for your

assistance, and if England does not pay, Austria, Russia, Prussia, which

have only courage and no money, cannot support more than one cam

paign or two against France.

'You may hope that the young soldiers collected by Jacobinism will be

defeated in the first campaign, in the second perhaps; but in the third

(though I pass for a revolutionary in your prejudiced eyes), in the third

you will have the soldiers of 1794, who were no longer the recruited

peasants of 1792.'

Here the interruption broke out in three or four places at once.

'Sir,' said the chairman to Julien, 'go and make a fair copy in the next

room of the first part of the report which you have taken down.' Julien

left the room with considerable regret. The speaker had referred to prob

abilities which formed the subject of his habitual meditations.

'They are afraid of my laughing at them,' he thought. When he was re

called, M. de La Mole was saying, with an earnestness, which, to Julien,who knew him, seemed highly amusing:

'Yes, Gentlemen, it is above all of this unhappy race that one can say:

"Shall it be a god, a table or a bowl?"

'"It shall be a god!" cries the poet. It is to you, Gentlemen, that this say

ing, so noble and so profound, seems to apply. Act for yourselves, and

our noble France will reappear more or less as our ancestors made her

and as our own eyes beheld her before the death of Louis XVI.

'England, her noble Lords at least, curses as heartily as we ignoble Ja

cobinism: without English gold, Austria, Russia, Prussia cannot fight

more than two or three battles. Will that suffice to bring about a glorious

occupation, like that which M. de Richelieu squandered so stupidly in

1817? I do not think so.'

At this point an interruption occurred, but it was silenced by a general

murmur. It arose once more from the former Imperial General, who de

sired the Blue Riband, and was anxious to appear among the compilers

of the secret note.

'I do not think so,' M. de La Mole resumed after the disturbance. He

dwelt upon the word 'I' with an insolence which charmed Julien. 'That is

well played,' he said to himself as he made his pen fly almost as fast as

the Marquis's utterance. With a wellplaced word, M. de La Mole anni

hilated the twenty campaigns of the turncoat.

370'It is not to foreigners alone,' the Marquis continued in the most meas

ured tone, 'that we can remain indebted for a fresh military occupation.

That youthful band who contribute incendiary articles to the Globe will

provide you with three or four thousand young captains, among whom

may be found a Kleber, a Hoche, a Jourdan, a Pichegru, but less well

intentioned.'

'We did wrong in not crowning him with glory,' said the chairman,'we ought to have made him immortal.'

'There must, in short, be two parties in France,' went on M. de La

Mole, 'but two parties, not in name only, two parties clearly defined,sharply divided. Let us be certain whom we have to crush. On one side

the journalists, the electors, public opinion; in a word, youth and all

those who admire it. While it is dazed by the sound of its own idle

words, we, we have the certain advantage of handling the budget.'

Here came a fresh interruption.

'You, Sir,' M. de La Mole said to the interrupter with a supercilious

ease that was quite admirable, 'you do not handle, since the word ap

pears to shock you, you devour forty thousand francs borne on the state

budget and eighty thousand which you receive from the Civil List.

'Very well, Sir, since you force me to it, I take you boldly as an ex

ample. Like your noble ancestors who followed Saint Louis to the Cru

sade, you ought, for those hundred and twenty thousand francs, to let us

see at least a regiment, a company, shall I say a halfcompany, were it

composed only of fifty men ready to fight, and devoted to the good

cause, alive or dead. You have only footmen who, in the event of a re

volt, would frighten nobody but yourself.

The Throne, the Altar, the Nobility may perish any day, Gentlemen, so

long as you have not created in each Department a force of five hundred

devoted men; devoted, I mean, not only with all the gallantry of France

but with the constancy of Spain.

'One half of this troop will have to be composed of our sons, our neph

ews, in short of true gentlemen. Each of them will have by his side, not a

glib little cockney ready to hoist the striped cockade if another 1815

should arrive, but an honest peasant, simple and open like Cathelineau;our gentleman will have trained him, it should be his fosterbrother, if

possible. Let each of us sacrifice the fifth part of his income to form this

little devoted troop of five hundred men to a Department. Then you may

count upon a foreign occupation. Never will the foreign soldier cross our

371borders as far as Dijon even, unless he is certain of finding five hundred

friendly soldiers in each Department.

'The foreign Kings will listen to you only when you can inform them

that there are twenty thousand gentlemen ready to take up arms to open

to them the gates of France. This service is arduous, you will say. Gentle

men, it is the price of our heads. Between the liberty of the press and our

existence as gentlemen, there is war to the knife. Become manufacturers,peasants, or take up your guns. Be timid if you like, but do not be stupid.

Open your eyes.

'Form your battalions, I say to you, in the words of the Jacobin song;then there will appear some noble GustavusAdolphus, who, moved by

the imminent peril to the monarchical principle will come flying three

hundred leagues beyond his borders, and do for you what Gustavus did

for the Protestant princes. Do you propose to go on talking without act

ing? In fifty years there will be nothing in Europe but Presidents of Re

publics, not one King left. And with those four letters KING, go the

priests and the gentlemen. I can see nothing but candidates paying court

to draggletailed majorities.

'It is no use your saying that France has not at this moment a trust

worthy General, known and loved by all, that the army is organised only

in the interests of Throne and Altar, that all the old soldiers have been

discharged from it, whereas each of the Prussian and Austrian regiments

includes fifty noncommissioned officers who have been under fire.

'Two hundred thousand young men of the middle class are in love

with the idea of war… .'

'Enough unpleasant truths,' came in a tone of importance from a grave

personage, apparently high on the ladder of ecclesiastical preferment, for

M. de La Mole smiled pleasantly instead of showing annoyance, which

was highly significant to Julien.

'Enough unpleasant truths; Gentlemen, to sum up: the man with

whom it was a question of amputating his gangrened leg would be ill

advised to say to his surgeon: this diseased leg is quite sound. Pardon

me the simile, Gentlemen, the noble Duke of —— is our surgeon.'

15

'There is the great secret out at last,' thought Julien; 'it is to the ——

that I shall be posting tonight.'

15.The Duke of Wellington. C. K. S. M.

372chapter23

The Clergy, their Forests, Liberty

The first law for every creature is that of selfpreservation, of life.

You sow hemlock, and expect to see the corn ripen!

MACHIAVELLI

The grave personage continued; one could see that he knew; he set

forth with a gentle and moderate eloquence, which vastly delighted Juli

en, the following great truths:

(1) England has not a guinea at our service; economy and Hume are

the fashion there. Even the Saints will not give us any money, and Mr

Brougham will laugh at us.

(2,) Impossible to obtain more than two campaigns from the Monarchs

of Europe, without English gold; and two campaigns will not be enough

against the middle classes.

(3) Necessity of forming an armed party in France, otherwise the mon

archical principle in the rest of Europe will not risk even those two

campaigns.

'The fourth point which I venture to suggest to you as selfevident is

this:

'The impossibility of forming an armed party in France without the Clergy. I

say it to you boldly, because I am going to prove it to you, Gentlemen.

We must give the Clergy everything:

'(i) Because, occupying themselves with their own business night and

day, and guided by men of high capacity established out of harm's way

three hundred leagues from your frontiers … '

'Ah! Rome! Rome!' exclaimed the master of the house …

'Yes, Sir, Rome!' the Cardinal answered proudly. 'Whatever be the

more or less ingenious pleasantries which were in fashion when you

373were young, I will proclaim boldly, in 1830, that the Clergy, guided by

Rome, speak and speak alone to the lower orders.

'Fifty thousand priests repeat the same words on the day indicated by

their leaders, and the people, who, after all, furnish the soldiers, will be

more stirred by the voice of their priests than by all the cheap poems in

the world… .' (This personal allusion gave rise to murmurs.)

'The Clergy have an intellect superior to yours,' the Cardinal went on,raising his voice; 'all the steps that you have taken towards this essential

point, having an armed party here in France, have been taken by us.' Here

facts were cited. Who had sent eighty thousand muskets to the Vendee?

and so forth.

'So long as the Clergy are deprived of their forests, they have no ten

ure. At the first threat of war, the Minister of Finance writes to his agents

that there is no more money except for the parish priests. At heart,France is not religious, and loves war. Whoever it be that gives her war,he will be doubly popular, for to make war is to starve the Jesuits, in vul

gar parlance; to make war is to deliver those monsters of pride, the

French people, from the menace of foreign intervention.'

The Cardinal had a favourable hearing … 'It was essential,' he said,'that M. de Nerval should leave the Ministry, his name caused needless

irritation.'

Upon this, they all rose to their feet and began speaking at once. 'They

will be sending me out of the room again,' thought Julien; but the

prudent chairman himself had forgotten Julien's presence and indeed his

existence.

Every eye turned to a man whom Julien recognised. It was M. de Ner

val, the First Minister, whom he had seen at the Duc de Retz's ball.

The disorder was at its height, as the newspapers say, when reporting the

sittings of the Chamber. After fully a quarter of an hour, silence began to

be restored.

Then M. de Nerval rose and, adopting the tone of an Apostle:

'I shall not for one moment pretend,' he said, in an unnatural voice,'that I am not attached to office.

'It has been proved to me, Gentlemen, that my name doubles the

strength of the Jacobins by turning against us a number of moderate

men. I should willingly resign, therefore; but the ways of the Lord are

visible to but a small number; but,' he went on, looking fixedly at the

Cardinal, 'I have a mission; heaven has said to me: "You shall lay down

374your head on the scaffold, or you shall reestablish the Monarchy in

France, and reduce the Chambers to what Parliament was under Louis

XV," and that, Gentlemen, I will do.'

He ceased, sat down, and a great silence fell.

'There is a good actor,' thought Julien. He made the mistake, then as

always, of crediting people with too much cleverness.

Animated by the debates of so lively an evening, and above all by the

sincerity of the discussion, at that moment M. de Nerval believed in his

mission. With his great courage the man did not combine any sense.

Midnight struck during the silence that followed the fine peroration

'that I will do'. Julien felt that there was something imposing and funereal

in the sound of the clock. He was deeply moved.

The discussion soon began again with increasing energy and above all

with an incredible simplicity. 'These men will have me poisoned,'

thought Julien, at certain points. 'How can they say such things before a

plebeian?'

Two o'clock struck while they were still talking. The master of the

house had long been asleep; M. de La Mole was obliged to ring to have

fresh candles brought in. M. de Nerval, the Minister, had left at a quarter

to two, not without having frequently studied Julien's face in a mirror

which hung beside him. His departure had seemed to create an atmo

sphere of relief.

While the candles were being changed: 'Heaven knows what that fel

low is going to say to the King!' the man with the waistcoats murmured

to his neighbour. 'He can make us look very foolish and spoil our future.

'You must admit that he shows a very rare presumption, indeed ef

frontery, in appearing here. He used to come here before he took office;but a portfolio alters everything, swallows up all a man's private in

terests, he ought to have felt that.'

As soon as the Minister was gone, Bonaparte's General had shut his

eyes. He now spoke of his health, his wounds, looked at his watch, and

left.

'I would bet,' said the man with the waistcoats, 'that the General is

running after the Minister; he is going to make his excuses for being

found here, and pretend that he is our leader.'

When the servants, who were half asleep, had finished changing the

candles:

375'Let us now begin to deliberate, Gentlemen,' said the chairman, 'and no

longer attempt to persuade one another. Let us consider the tenor of the

note that in fortyeight hours will be before the eyes of our friends

abroad. There has been reference to Ministers. We can say, now that M.

de Nerval has left us, what do we care for Ministers? We shall control

them.'

The Cardinal showed his approval by a delicate smile.

'Nothing easier, it seems to me, than to sum up our position,' said the

young Bishop of Agde with the concentrated and restrained fire of the

most exalted fanaticism. Hitherto he had remained silent; his eye, which

Julien had watched, at first mild and calm, had grown fiery after the first

hour's discussion. Now his heart overflowed like lava from Vesuvius.

'From 1806 to 1814, England made only one mistake,' he said, 'which

was her not dealing directly and personally with Napoleon. As soon as

that man had created Dukes and Chamberlains, as soon as he had re

stored the Throne, the mission that God had entrusted to him was at an

end; he was ripe only for destruction. The Holy Scriptures teach us in

more than one passage the way to make an end of tyrants.' (Here fol

lowed several Latin quotations.)

'Today, Gentlemen, it is not a man that we must destroy; it is Paris.

The whole of France copies Paris. What is the use of arming your five

hundred men in each Department? A hazardous enterprise and one that

will never end. What is the use of involving France in a matter which is

peculiar to Paris? Paris alone, with her newspapers and her drawing

rooms, has done the harm; let the modern Babylon perish.

'Between the Altar and Paris, there must be a fight to the finish. This

catastrophe is indeed to the earthly advantage of the Throne. Why did

not Paris dare to breathe under Bonaparte? Ask the artillery of Saint

Roch.'

It was not until three o'clock in the morning that Julien left the house

with M. de La Mole.

The Marquis was depressed and tired. For the first time, in speaking to

Julien, he used a tone of supplication. He asked him to promise never to

disclose the excesses of zeal, such was his expression, which he had

chanced to witness. 'Do not mention it to our friend abroad, unless he

deliberately insists on knowing the nature of our young hotheads. What

does it matter to them if the State be overthrown? They will be Cardinals,376and will take refuge in Rome. We, in our country seats, shall be mas

sacred by the peasants.'

The secret note which the Marquis drafted from the long report of six

and twenty pages, written by Julien, was not ready until a quarter to

five.

'I am dead tired,' said the Marquis, 'and so much can be seen from this

note, which is lacking in precision towards the end; I am more dissatis

fied with it than with anything I ever did in my life. Now, my friend,' he

went on, 'go and lie down for a few hours, and for fear of your being ab

ducted, I am going to lock you into your room.'

Next day, the Marquis took Julien to a lonely mansion, at some dis

tance from Paris. They found there a curious company who, Julien de

cided, were priests. He was given a passport which bore a false name,but did at last indicate the true goal of his journey, of which he had al

ways feigned ignorance. He started off by himself in a calash.

The Marquis had no misgivings as to his memory, Julien had repeated

the text of the secret note to him several times; but he was greatly afraid

of his being intercepted.

'Remember, whatever you do, to look like a fop who is travelling to

kill time,' was his friendly warning, as Julien was leaving the room.

'There may perhaps have been several false brethren in our assembly last

night.'

The journey was rapid and very tedious. Julien was barely out of the

Marquis's sight before he had forgotten both the secret note and his mis

sion, and was thinking of nothing but Mathilde's scorn.

In a village, some leagues beyond Metz, the postmaster came to inform

him that there were no fresh horses. It was ten o'clock at night; Julien,greatly annoyed, ordered supper. He strolled up and down outside the

door and passed unperceived into the stableyard. He saw no horses

there.

'The man had a singular expression all the same,' he said to himself;'his coarse eye was scrutinising me.'

We can see that he was beginning not to believe literally everything

that he was told. He thought of making his escape after supper, and in

the meanwhile, in order to learn something of the lie of the land, left his

room to go and warm himself by the kitchen fire. What was his joy upon

finding there Signor Geronimo, the famous singer!

377Comfortably ensconced in an armchair which he had made them push

up close to the fire, the Neapolitan was groaning aloud and talking more,by himself, than the score of German peasants who were gathered round

him openmouthed.

'These people are ruining me,' he cried to Julien, 'I have promised to

sing tomorrow at Mayence. Seven Sovereign Princes have assembled

there to hear me. But let us take the air,' he added, in a significant tone.

When he had gone a hundred yards along the road, and was well out

of earshot:

'Do you know what is happening?' he said to Julien; 'this postmaster is

a rogue. As I was strolling about, I gave a franc to a little ragamuffin who

told me everything. There are more than a dozen horses in a stable at the

other end of the village. They mean to delay some courier.'

'Indeed?' said Julien, with an innocent air.

It was not enough to have discovered the fraud, they must get on: this

was what Geronimo and his friend could not manage to do. 'We must

wait for the daylight,' the singer said finally, 'they are suspicious of us.

Tomorrow morning we shall order a good breakfast; while they are pre

paring it we go out for a stroll, we escape, hire fresh horses, and reach

the next post.'

'And your luggage?' said Julien, who thought that perhaps Geronimo

himself might have been sent to intercept him. It was time to sup and re

tire to bed. Julien was still in his first sleep, when he was awakened with

a start by the sound of two people talking in his room, apparently quite

unconcerned.

He recognised the postmaster, armed with a dark lantern. Its light was

concentrated upon the carriagetrunk, which Julien had had carried up

to his room. With the postmaster was another man who was calmly go

ing through the open trunk. Julien could make out only the sleeves of his

coat, which were black and closefitting.

'It is a cassock,' he said to himself, and quietly seized the pocket pistols

which he had placed under his pillow.

'You need not be afraid of his waking, Monsieur le Cure,' said the

postmaster. 'The wine we gave them was some of what you prepared

yourself.'

'I can find no trace of papers,' replied the cure. 'Plenty of linen, oils, po

mades and fripperies; he is a young man of the world, occupied with his

378own pleasures. The envoy will surely be the other, who pretends to

speak with an Italian accent.'

The men came up to Julien to search the pockets of his travelling coat.

He was strongly tempted to kill them as robbers. This could involve no

dangerous consequences. He longed to do it… 'I should be a mere fool,'

he said to himself, 'I should be endangering my mission.' After searching

his coat, 'this is no diplomat,' said the priest: he moved away, and wisely.

'If he touches me in my bed, it will be the worse for him!' Julien was

saying to himself; 'he may quite well come and stab me, and that I will

not allow.'

The cure turned his head, Julien halfopened his eyes; what was his as

tonishment! It was the abbe Castanede! And indeed, although the two

men had tried to lower their voices, he had felt, from the first, that he re

cognised the sound of one of them. He was seized with a passionate de

sire to rid the world of one of its vilest scoundrels …

'But my mission!' he reminded himself.

The priest and his acolyte left the room. A quarter of an hour later,Julien pretended to awake. He called for help and roused the whole

house.

'I have been poisoned,' he cried, 'I am in horrible agony!' He wanted a

pretext for going to Geronimo's rescue. He found him half asphyxiated

by the laudanum that had been in his wine.

Julien, fearing some pleasantry of this kind, had supped upon chocol

ate which he had brought with him from Paris. He could not succeed in

arousing Geronimo sufficiently to make him agree to leave the place.

'Though you offered me the whole Kingdom of Naples,' said the sing

er, 'I would not forgo the pleasure of sleep at this moment.'

'But the seven Sovereign Princes!'

'They can wait.'

Julien set off alone and arrived without further incident at the abode of

the eminent personage. He spent a whole morning in vainly soliciting an

audience. Fortunately, about four o'clock, the Duke decided to take the

air. Julien saw him leave the house on foot, and had no hesitation in go

ing up to him and begging for alms. When within a few feet of the emin

ent personage, he drew out the Marquis de La Mole's watch, and flour

ished it ostentatiously. 'Follow me at distance,' said the other, without

looking at him.

379After walking for a quarter of a league, the Duke turned abruptly in to

a little Kaffeehaus. It was in a bedroom of this humblest form of inn that

Julien had the honour of reciting his four pages to the Duke. When he

had finished: 'Begin again, and go more slowly,' he was told.

The Prince took down notes. 'Go on foot to the next post. Leave your

luggage and your calash here. Make your way to Strasbourg as best you

can, and on the twentysecond of the month'—it was now the tenth—'be

in this coffeehouse here at halfpast twelve. Do not leave here for half an

hour. Silence!'

Such were the only words that Julien heard said. They sufficed to fill

him with the deepest admiration. 'It is thus,' he thought, 'that one

handles affairs; what would this great statesman say if he had heard

those hotheaded chatterboxes three days ago?'

Julien took two days to reach Strasbourg, he felt that there was noth

ing for him to do there. He made a wide circuit. 'If that devil, the abbe

Castanede has recognised me, he is not the man to be easily shaken

off … And what a joy to him to make a fool of me, and to spoil my

mission!'

The abbe Castanede, Chief of Police to the Congregation along the

whole of the Northern frontier, had mercifully not recognised him. And

the Jesuits of Strasbourg, albeit most zealous, never thought of keeping

an eye on Julien, who, with his Cross and his blue greatcoat, had the air

of a young soldier greatly concerned with his personal appearance.

380chapter24

Strasbourg

Fascination! Thou sharest with love all its energy, all its capacity

for suffering. Its enchanting pleasures, its sweet delights are alone

beyond thy sphere. I could not say, as I saw her asleep: She is all

mine with her angelic beauty and her sweet frailties! Behold her

delivered into my power, as heaven made her in its compassion

to enchant a man's heart.

Ode by SCHILLER

Obliged to spend a week in Strasbourg, Julien sought to distract him

self with thoughts of martial glory and of devotion to his country. Was

he in love, then? He could not say, only he found in his bruised heart

Mathilde the absolute mistress of his happiness as of his imagination. He

required all his natural energy to keep himself from sinking into despair.

To think of anything that bore no relation to Mademoiselle de La Mole

was beyond his power. Ambition, the mere triumphs of vanity, had I dis

tracted him in the past from the sentiments that Madame de Renal in

spired in him. Mathilde had absorbed all; he found her everywhere in

his future.

On every hand, in this future, Julien foresaw failure. This creature

whom we saw at Verrieres so filled with presumption, so arrogant, had

fallen into an absurd extreme of modesty.

Three days earlier he would have killed the abbe Castanede with

pleasure, and at Strasbourg, had a boy picked a quarrel with him, he

would have offered the boy an apology. In thinking over the adversaries,the enemies whom he had encountered in the course of his life, he found

that invariably he, Julien, had been in the wrong.

The fact was that he had now an implacable enemy in that powerful

imagination, which before had been constantly employed in painting

such brilliant successes for him in the future.

381The absolute solitude of a traveller's existence strengthened the power

of this dark imagination. What a treasure would a friend have been!

'But,' Julien asked himself, 'is there a heart in the world that beats for me?

And if I had a friend, does not honour impose on me an eternal silence?'

He took a horse and rode sadly about the neighbourhood of Kehl; it is

a village on the bank of the Rhine, immortalised by Desaix and Gouvion

SaintCyr. A German peasant pointed out to him the little streams, the

roads, the islands in the Rhine which the valour of those great Generals

has made famous. Julien, holding the reins in his left hand, was carrying

spread out in his right the superb map which illustrates the Memoirs of

Marshal SaintCyr. A joyful exclamation made him raise his head.

It was Prince Korasoff, his London friend, who had expounded to him

some months earlier the first principles of high fatuity. Faithful to this

great art, Korasoff, who had arrived in Strasbourg the day before, had

been an hour at Kehl, and had never in his life read a line about the siege

of 1796, began to explain it all to Julien. The German peasant gazed at

him in astonishment; for he knew enough French to make out the enorm

ous blunders into which the Prince fell. Julien's thoughts were a thou

sand leagues away from the peasant's, he was looking with amazement

at this handsome young man, and admiring his grace in the saddle.

'A happy nature!' he said to himself. 'How well his breeches fit him,how elegantly his hair is cut! Alas, if I had been like that, perhaps after

loving me for three days she would not have taken a dislike to me.'

When the Prince had come to an end of his version of the siege of

Kehl: 'You look like a Trappist,' he said to Julien, 'you are infringing the

principle of gravity I taught you in London. A melancholy air can never

be the right thing; what you want is a bored air. If you are melancholy, it

must be because you want something, there is something in which you

have not succeeded.

'It is shewing your inferiority. If you are bored, on the other hand, it is

the person who has tried in vain to please you who is inferior. Realise,my dear fellow, what a grave mistake you are making.'

Julien flung a crown to the peasant who stood listening to them, open

mouthed.

'Good,' said the Prince, 'that is graceful, a noble disdain! Very good!'

And he put his horse into a gallop. Julien followed him, filled with a stu

pefied admiration.

382'Ah! If I had been like that, she would not have preferred Croisenois to

me!' The more his reason was shocked by the absurdities of the Prince,the more he despised himself for not admiring them, and deemed him

self unfortunate in not sharing them. Selfcontempt can be carried no

farther.

The Prince found him decidedly melancholy: 'Ah, my dear fellow,' he

said to him, as they rode into Strasbourg, 'have you lost all your money,or can you be in love with some little actress?'

The Russians imitate French ways, but always at a distance of fifty

years. They have now reached the days of Louis XV.

These jests, at the expense of love, filled Julien's eyes with tears: 'Why

should not I consult so friendly a man?' he asked himself suddenly.

'Well, yes, my friend,' he said to the Prince, 'you find me in Strasbourg,madly in love, indeed crossed in love. A charming woman, who lives in

a neighbouring town, has abandoned me after three days of passion, and

the change is killing me.'

He described to the Prince, under an assumed name, the actions and

character of Mathilde.

'Do not go on,' said Korasoff: 'to give you confidence in your physi

cian, I am going to cut short your confidences. This young woman's hus

band possesses an enormous fortune, or, what is more likely, she herself

belongs to the highest nobility of the place. She must be proud of

something.'

Julien nodded his head, he had no longer the heart to speak.

'Very good,' said the Prince, 'here are three medicines, all rather bitter,which you are going to take without delay:

'First: You must every day see Madame —— what do you call her?'

'Madame de Dubois.'

'What a name!' said the Prince, with a shout of laughter; 'but forgive

me, to you it is sublime. It is essential that you see Madame de Dubois

every day; above all do not appear to her cold and cross; remember the

great principle of your age: be the opposite to what people expect of you.

Show yourself precisely as you were a week before you were honoured

with her favours.'

'Ah! I was calm then,' cried Julien, in desperation, 'I thought that I pit

ied her… '

383'The moth singes its wings in the flame of the candle,' the Prince con

tinued, 'a metaphor as old as the world.

'First of all: you will see her every day.

'Secondly: you will pay court to a woman of her acquaintance, but

without any appearance of passion, you understand? I do not conceal

from you, yours is a difficult part to play: you have to act, and if she dis

covers that you are acting, you are doomed.'

'She is so clever, and I am not! I am doomed,' said Julien sadly.

'No, you are only more in love than I thought. Madame de Dubois is

profoundly taken up with herself, like all women who have received

from heaven either too high a rank or too much money. She looks at her

self instead of looking at you, and so does not know you. During the two

or three amorous impulses to which she has yielded in your favour, by a

great effort of imagination, she beheld in you the hero of her dreams and

not yourself as you really are…

'But what the devil, these are the elements, my dear Sorel, are you still

a schoolboy?…

'Egad! Come into this shop; look at that charming black cravat; you

would say it was made by John Anderson, of Burlington Street; do me

the pleasure of buying it, and of throwing right away that dreadful black

rope which you have round your neck.

'And now,' the Prince went on as they left the shop of the first hosier in

Strasbourg, 'who are the friends of Madame de Dubois? Good God, what

a name! Do not be angry, my dear Sorel, I cannot help it… To whom will

you pay court?'

'To a prude of prudes, the daughter of an enormously rich stocking

merchant. She has the loveliest eyes in the world, which please me

vastly; she certainly occupies the first place in the district; but amid all

her grandeur she blushes and loses her head entirely if anyone refers to

trade and a shop. And unfortunately for her, her father was one of the

bestknown tradesmen in Strasbourg.'

'So that if one mentions industry,' said the Prince, with a laugh, 'you

may be sure that your fair one is thinking of herself and not of you. The

weakness is divine and most useful, it will prevent you from ever doing

anything foolish in her fair eyes. Your success is assured.'

Julien was thinking of Madame la Marechale de Fervaques, who often

came to the Hotel de La Mole. She was a beautiful foreigner who had

married the Marshal a year before his death. Her whole life seemed to

384have no other object than to make people forget that she was the daugh

ter of an industrial, and in order to count for something in Paris she had

set herself at the head of the forces of virtue.

Julien admired the Prince sincerely; what would he not have given to

have his absurd affectations! The conversation between the friends was

endless; Korasoff was in raptures: never had a Frenchman given him so

long a hearing. 'And so I have succeeded at last,' the Prince said to him

self with delight, 'in making my voice heard when I give lessons to my

masters!

'It is quite understood,' he repeated to Julien for the tenth time, 'not a

vestige of passion when you are talking to the young beauty, the

Strasbourg stockingmerchant's daughter, in the presence of Madame de

Dubois. On the contrary, burning passion when you write. Reading a

wellwritten love letter is a prude's supreme pleasure; it is a momentary

relaxation. She is not acting a part, she dares to listen to her heart; and so,two letters daily.'

'Never, never!' said Julien, losing courage; 'I would let myself be

brayed in a mortar sooner than compose three sentences; I am a corpse,my dear fellow, expect nothing more of me. Leave me to die by the

roadside.'

'And who said anything about composing phrases? I have in my hold

all six volumes of love letters in manuscript. There are specimens for

every kind of woman, I have a set for the most rigid virtue. Didn't

Kalisky make love on Richmond Terrace, you know, a few miles out of

London, to the prettiest Quakeress in the whole of England?'

Julien was less wretched when he parted from his friend at two o'clock

in the morning.

Next day the Prince sent for a copyist, and two days later Julien had

fiftythree love letters carefully numbered, intended to cope with the

most sublime and melancholy virtue.

'There would be fiftyfour,' said the Prince, 'only Kalisky was shown

the door; but what does it matter to you, being illtreated by the

stockingmerchant's daughter, since you are seeking to influence only

the heart of Madame de Dubois?'

Every day they went out riding: the Prince was madly taken with Juli

en. Not knowing what token to give him of his sudden affection, he

ended by offering him the hand of one of his cousins, a wealthy heiress

385in Moscow; 'and once you are married,' he explained, 'my influence and

the Cross you are wearing will make you a Colonel in two years.'

'But this Cross was not given me by Napoleon, quite the reverse.'

'What does that matter,' said the Prince, 'didn't he invent it? It is still

the first decoration by far in Europe.'

Julien was on the point of accepting; but duty recalled him to the em

inent personage; on parting from Korasoff, he promised to write. He re

ceived the reply to the secret note that he had brought, and hastened to

Paris; but he had barely been by himself for two days on end, before the

thought of leaving France and Mathilde seemed to him a punishment

worse than death itself. 'I shall not wed the millions that Korasoff offers

me,' he told himself, 'but I shall follow his advice.

'After all, the art of seduction is his business; he has thought of nothing

else for more than fifteen years, for he is now thirty. One cannot say that

he is lacking in intelligence; he is shrewd and cautious; enthusiasm, po

etry are impossible in such a nature: he is calculating; all the more reason

why he should not be mistaken.

'There is no help for it, I am going to pay court to Madame de

Fervaques.

'She will bore me a little, perhaps, but I shall gaze into those lovely

eyes which are so like the eyes that loved me best in the world.

'She is foreign; that is a fresh character to be studied.

'I am mad, I am going under, I must follow the advice of a friend, and

pay no heed to myself.'

386chapter25

The Office of Virtue

But if I take this pleasure with so much prudence and circum

spection, it ceases to be a pleasure for me.

LOPE DE VEGA

Immediately on his return to Paris, and on leaving the study of the

Marquis de La Mole, who appeared greatly disconcerted by the mes

sages that were conveyed to him, our hero hastened to find Conte

Altamira. With the distinction of being under sentence of death, this

handsome foreigner combined abundant gravity and had the good for

tune to be devout; these two merits and, more than all, the exalted birth

of the Count were entirely to the taste of Madame de Fervaques, who

saw much of him.

Julien confessed to him gravely that he was deeply in love with her.

'She represents the purest and loftiest virtue,' replied Altamira, 'only it

is a trifle Jesuitical and emphatic. There are days on which I understand

every word that she uses, but I do not understand the sentence as a

whole. She often makes me think that I do not know French as well as

people say. This acquaintance will make you talked about; it will give

you a position in society. But let us go and see Bustos,' said Conte

Altamira, who had an orderly mind; 'he has made love to Madame la

Marechale.'

Don Diego Bustos made them explain the matter to him in detail,without saying a word, like a barrister in chambers. He had a plump,monkish face, with black moustaches, and an unparalleled gravity; in

other respects, a good carbonaro.

'I understand,' he said at length to Julien. 'Has the Marechale de Fer

vaques had lovers, or has she not? Have you, therefore, any hope of suc

cess? That is the question. It is as much as to say that, for my own part, I

have failed. Now that I am no longer aggrieved, I put it to myself in this

387way: often she is out of temper, and, as I shall shortly prove to you, she

is nothing if not vindictive.

'I do not find in her that choleric temperament which is a mark of geni

us and covers every action with a sort of glaze of passion. It is, on the

contrary, to her calm and phlegmatic Dutch manner that she owes her

rare beauty and the freshness of her complexion.'

Julien was growing impatient with the deliberateness and imperturb

able phlegm of the Spaniard; now and again, in spite of himself, he gave

vent to a monosyllabic comment.

'Will you listen to me?' Don Diego Bustos inquired gravely.

'Pardon the furia francese; I am all ears,' said Julien.

'Well, then, the Marechale de Fervaques is much given to hatred; she is

pitiless in her pursuit of people she has never seen, lawyers, poor devils

of literary men who have written songs like Colle, you know?

"J'ai la marotte D'aimer Marote," etc.'

And Julien was obliged to listen to the quotation to the end. The Span

iard greatly enjoyed singing in French.

That divine song was never listened to with greater impatience. When

he had finished: 'The Marechale,' said Don Diego Bustos, 'has ruined the

author of the song:

"Un jour l'amant au cabaret … "'

Julien was in an agony lest he should wish to sing it. He contented

himself with analysing it. It was, as a matter of fact, impious and hardly

decent.

'When the Marechale flew into a passion with that song,' said Don

Diego, 'I pointed out to her that a woman of her rank ought not to read

all the stupid things that are published. Whatever progress piety and

gravity may make, there will always be in France a literature of the tav

ern. When Madame de Fervaques had the author, a poor devil on half

pay, deprived of a post worth eighteen hundred francs: "Take care," said

I to her, "you have attacked this rhymester with your weapons, he may

reply to you with his rhymes: he will make a song about virtue. The gil

ded saloons will be on your side; the people who like to laugh will repeat

his epigrams." Do you know, Sir, what answer the Marechale made me?

"In the Lord's service all Paris would see me tread the path of martyr

dom; it would be a novel spectacle in France. The people would learn to

respect the quality. It would be the happiest day of my life." Never were

her eyes more brilliant.'

388'And she has superb eyes,' exclaimed Julien.

'I see that you are in love… Very well, then,' Don Diego Bustos went

on gravely, 'she has not the choleric constitution that impels one to ven

geance. If she enjoys injuring people, nevertheless, it is because she is un

happy, I suspect inward suffering. May she not be a prude who has grown

weary of her calling?'

The Spaniard gazed at him in silence for fully a minute.

'That is the whole question,' he went on gravely, 'and it is from this

that you may derive some hope. I gave it much thought during the two

years in which I professed myself her most humble servant. Your whole

future, you, Sir, who are in love, hangs on this great problem. Is she a

prude, weary of her calling, and malicious because she is miserable?'

'Or rather,' said Altamira, emerging at last from his profound silence,'can it be what I have said to you twenty times? Simply and solely

French vanity; it is the memory of her father, the famous cloth merchant,that causes the unhappiness of a character naturally morose and dry.

There could be only one happiness for her, that of living in Toledo, and

being tormented by a confessor, who every day would show her hell

gaping for her.'

As Julien rose to leave: 'Altamira tells me that you are one of us,' Don

Diego said to him, graver than ever. 'One day you will help us to recon

quer our freedom, and so I wish to help you in this little diversion. It is

as well that you should be acquainted with the Marechale's style; here

are four letters in her hand.'

'I shall have them copied,' cried Julien, 'and return them to you.'

'And no one shall ever learn from you a single word of what we have

been saying?'

'Never, upon my honour!' cried Julien.

'Then may heaven help you!' the Spaniard concluded; and he accom

panied Julien and Altamira in silence to the head of the stair.

This scene cheered our hero somewhat; he almost smiled. 'And here is

the devout Altamira,' he said to himself, 'helping me in an adulterous

enterprise.'

Throughout the whole of the grave conversation of Don Diego Bustos,Julien had been attentive to the stroke of the hours on the clock of the

Hotel d'Aligre.

389The dinner hour was approaching, he was to see Mathilde again! He

went home, and dressed himself with great care.

'My first blunder,' he said to himself, as he was going downstairs; 'I

must carry out the Prince's orders to the letter.'

He returned to his room, and put on a travelling costume of the ut

most simplicity.

'Now,' he thought, 'I must consider how I am to look at her.' It was

only halfpast five, and dinner was at six. He decided to go down to the

drawing-room, which he found deserted. The sight of the blue sofa

moved him to tears; soon his cheeks began to burn. 'I must get rid of this

absurd sensibility,' he said to himself angrily; 'it will betray me.' He took

up a newspaper to keep himself in countenance, and strolled three or

four times from the drawing-room to the garden.

It was only in fear and trembling and safely concealed behind a big

oak tree that he ventured to raise his eyes to the window of Mademois

elle de La Mole's room. It was fast shut; he nearly fell to the ground, and

stood for a long time leaning against the oak; then, with a tottering step,he went to look at the gardener's ladder.

The link of the chain, forced open by him in circumstances, alas, so dif

ferent, had not been mended. Carried away by a mad impulse, Julien

pressed it to his lips.

After a long course of wandering between drawing-room and garden,he found himself horribly tired; this was an initial success which pleased

him greatly. 'My eyes will be dull and will not betray me!' Gradually, the

guests arrived in the drawing-room; the door never opened without

plunging Julien in mortal dread.

They sat down to table. At length Mademoiselle de La Mole appeared,still faithful to her principle of keeping the others waiting. She blushed a

deep red on seeing Julien; she had not been told of his arrival. Following

Prince Korasoff's advice, Julien looked at her hands; they were trem

bling. Disquieted himself, beyond all expression, by this discovery, he

was thankful to appear to be merely tired.

M. de La Mole sang his praises. The Marquise addressed him shortly

afterwards, and expressed concern at his appearance of fatigue. Julien

kept on saying to himself: 'I must not look at Mademoiselle de La Mole

too much, but I ought not either to avoid her eye. I must appear to be

what I really was a week before my disaster… ' He had occasion to be

satisfied with his success, and remained in the drawing-room. Attentive

390for the first time to the lady of the house, he spared no effort to make the

men of her circle talk, and to keep the conversation alive.

His politeness was rewarded: about eight o'clock, Madame la Mare

chale de Fervaques was announced. Julien left the room and presently

reappeared, dressed with the most scrupulous care. Madame de La Mole

was vastly flattered by this mark of respect, and sought to give him a

proof of her satisfaction by speaking of his travels to Madame de Fer

vaques. Julien took his seat beside the Marechale, in such a way that his

eyes should not be visible to Mathilde. Thus placed, and following all the

rules of the art, he made Madame de Fervaques the object of the most

awed admiration. It was with an outburst on this sentiment that the first

of the fiftythree letters of which Prince Korasoff had made him a present

began.

The Marechale announced that she was going on to the OperaBouffe.

Julien hastened there; he found the Chevalier de Beauvoisis, who took

him to the box of the Gentlemen of the Household, immediately beside

that of Madame de Fervaques. Julien gazed at her incessantly. 'I must,' he

said to himself, as he returned home, 'keep a diary of the siege; otherwise

I should lose count of my attacks.' He forced himself to write down two

or three pages on this boring subject, and thus succeeded (marvel of mar

vels!) in hardly giving a thought to Mademoiselle de La Mole.

Mathilde had almost forgotten him during his absence. 'After all, he is

only a common person,' she thought, 'his name will always remind me of

the greatest mistake of my life. I must return in all sincerity to the recog

nised standards of prudence and honour; a woman has everything to

lose in forgetting them.' She showed herself ready to permit at length the

conclusion of the arrangement with the Marquis de Croisenois, begun so

long since. He was wild with joy; he would have been greatly astonished

had anyone told him that it was resignation that lay at the root of this at

titude on Mathilde's part, which was making him so proud.

All Mademoiselle de La Mole's ideas changed at the sight of Julien. 'In

reality, that is my husband,' she said to herself; 'if I return in sincerity to

the standards of prudence, it is obviously he that I ought to marry.'

She was prepared for importunities, for an air of misery on Julien's

part; she prepared her answers: for doubtless, on rising from table, he

would endeavour to say a few words to her. Far from it, he remained

fixed in the drawing-room, his eyes never even turned towards the

garden, heaven knows with how great an effort! 'It would be better to get

our explanation over at once,' Mademoiselle de La Mole told herself; she

391went out by herself to the garden, Julien did not appear there. Mathilde

returned and strolled past the drawing-room windows; she saw him

busily engaged in describing to Madame de Fervaques the old ruined

castles that crown the steep banks of the Rhine and give them so distinct

ive a character. He was beginning to acquit himself none too badly in the

use of the sentimental and picturesque language which is called wit in

certain drawing-rooms.

Prince Korasoff would indeed have been proud, had he been in Paris:

the evening was passing exactly as he had foretold.

He would have approved of the mode of behaviour to which Julien

adhered throughout the days that followed.

An intrigue among those constituting the Power behind the Throne

was about to dispose of several Blue Ribands; Madame la Marechale de

Fervaques insisted that her greatuncle should be made a Knight of the

Order. The Marquis de La Mole was making a similar claim for his

fatherinlaw; they combined their efforts, and the Marechale came al

most every day to the Hotel de La Mole. It was from her that Julien

learned that the Marquis was to become a Minister: he offered the

Camarilla a highly ingenious plan for destroying the Charter, without any

fuss, in three years' time.

Julien might expect a Bishopric, if M. de La Mole entered the Ministry;but to his eyes all these important interests were as though hidden by a

veil. His imagination perceived them now only vaguely, and so to speak

in the distance. The fearful misery which was driving him mad made

him see every interest in life in the state of his relations with Mademois

elle de La Mole. He calculated that after five or six years of patient effort,he might succeed in making her love him once again.

This coolest of heads had, as we see, sunk to a state of absolute unreas

on. Of all the qualities that had distinguished him in the past, there re

mained to him only a trace of firmness. Faithful to the letter to the plan

of conduct dictated to him by Prince Korasoff, every evening he took his

place as near as possible to the armchair occupied by Madame de Fer

vaques, but found it impossible to think of a word to say to her.

The effort that he was imposing on himself to appear cured in the eyes

of Mathilde absorbed all his spiritual strength, he remained rooted be

side the Marechale like a barely animate being; his eyes even, as in the

extremity of physical suffering, had lost all their fire.

Since Madame de La Mole's attitude towards the world was never

anything more than a feeble copy of the opinions of that husband who

392might make her a Duchess, for some days she had been lauding Julien's

merits to the skies.

393chapter26

Moral Love

There also was of course in Adeline That calm patrician polish in

the address, Which ne'er can pass the equinoctial line Of anything

which nature would express; Just as a mandarin finds nothing

fine, At least his manner suffers not to guess That anything he

views can greatly please.

Don Juan, XIII. 34

'There is a trace of madness in the way the whole of this family have of

looking at things,' thought the Marechale; 'they are infatuated with their

little abbe, who can do nothing but sit and stare at one; it is true, his eyes

are not badlooking.'

Julien, for his part, found in the Marechale's manner an almost perfect

example of that patrician calm which betokens a scrupulous politeness

and still more the impossibility of any keen emotion. Any sudden out

burst, a want of selfcontrol, would have shocked Madame de Fervaques

almost as much as a want of dignity towards one's inferiors. The least

sign of sensibility would have been in her eyes like a sort of moral intox

ication for which one ought to blush, and which was highly damaging to

what a person of exalted rank owed to herself. Her great happiness was

to speak of the King's latest hunt, her favourite book the Memoires du duc

de SaintSimon, especially the genealogical part.

Julien knew the place in the drawing-room which, as the lights were

arranged, suited the style of beauty of Madame de Fervaques. He would

be there waiting for her, but took great care to turn his chair so that he

should not be able to see Mathilde. Astonished by this persistence in hid

ing from her, one evening she left the blue sofa and came to work at a

little table that stood by the Marquise's armchair. Julien could see her at

quite a close range from beneath the brim of Madame de Fervaques's hat.

Those eyes, which governed his destiny, frightened him at first, seen at

394such close range, then jerked him violently out of his habitual apathy; he

talked, and talked very well.

He addressed himself to the Marechale, but his sole object was to in

fluence the heart of Mathilde. He grew so animated that finally Madame

de Fervaques could not understand what he said.

This was so much to the good. Had it occurred to Julien to follow it up

with a few expressions of German mysticism, religious fervour and Je

suitry, the Marechale would have numbered him straightway among the

superior persons called to regenerate the age.

'Since he shows such bad taste,' Mademoiselle de La Mole said to her

self, 'as to talk for so long and with such fervour to Madame de Fer

vaques, I shall not listen to him any more.' For the rest of the evening she

kept her word, albeit with difficulty.

At midnight, when she took up her mother's candlestick, to escort her

to her room, Madame de La Mole stopped on the stairs to utter a perfect

panegyric of Julien. This completed Mathilde's ill humour; she could not

send herself to sleep. A thought came to her which soothed her: 'The

things that I despise may even be great distinctions in the Marechale's

eyes.'

As for Julien, he had now taken action, he was less wretched; his eyes

happened to fall on the Russialeather portfolio in which Prince Korasoff

had placed the fiftythree love letters of which he had made him a

present. Julien saw a note at the foot of the first letter: 'Send No. 1 a week

after the first meeting.'

'I am late!' exclaimed Julien, 'for it is ever so long now since I first met

Madame de Fervaques.' He set to work at once to copy out this first love

letter; it was a homily stuffed with phrases about virtue, and of a deadly

dullness; Julien was fortunate in falling asleep over the second page.

Some hours later the risen sun surprised him crouching with his head

on the table. One of the most painful moments of his life was that in

which, every morning, as he awoke, he discovered his distress. This

morning, he finished copying his letter almost with a laugh. 'Is it pos

sible,' he asked himself, 'that there can ever have been a young man who

could write such stuff?' He counted several sentences of nine lines. At

the foot of the original he caught sight of a pencilled note.

'One delivers these letters oneself: on horseback, a black cravat, a blue

greatcoat. One hands the letter to the porter with a contrite air; profound

395melancholy in the gaze. If one should see a lady's maid, wipe the eyes

furtively. Address a few words to the maid.'

All these instructions were faithfully carried out.

'What I am doing is very bold,' thought Julien, as he rode away from

the Hotel de Fervaques, 'but so much the worse for Korasoff. To dare

write to so notorious a prude! I am going to be treated with the utmost

contempt, and nothing will amuse me more. This is, really, the only form

of comedy to which I can respond. Yes, to cover with ridicule that odious

being whom I call myself will amuse me. If I obeyed my instincts I

should commit some crime for the sake of distraction.'

For a month past, the happiest moment in Julien's day had been that in

which he brought his horse back to the stables. Korasoff had expressly

forbidden him to look, upon any pretext whatsoever, at the mistress who

had abandoned him. But the paces of that horse which she knew so well,the way in which Julien rapped with his whip at the stable door to sum

mon a groom, sometimes drew Mathilde to stand behind her window

curtain. The muslin was so fine that Julien could see through it. By look

ing up in a certain way from under the brim of his hat, he caught a

glimpse of Mathilde's form without seeing her eyes. 'Consequently,' he

told himself, 'she cannot see mine, and this is not the same as looking at

her.'

That evening, Madame de Fervaques behaved to him exactly as

though she had not received the philosophical, mystical and religious

dissertation which, in the morning, he had handed to her porter with

such an air of melancholy. The evening before, chance had revealed to

Julien the secret springs of eloquence; he arranged himself so as to be

able to see Mathilde's eyes. She, meanwhile, immediately after the arrival

of the Marechale, rose from the blue sofa: this was a desertion of her reg

ular company. M. de Croisenois showed consternation at this new

caprice; his evident distress relieved Julien of the keenest pangs of his

own sufferings.

This unexpected turn in his affairs made him talk like an angel; and as

self-esteem finds its way even into hearts that serve as temples to the

most august virtue: 'Madame de La Mole is right,' the Marechale said to

herself, as she stepped into her carriage, 'that young priest has distinc

tion. My presence must, at first, have frightened him. Indeed, everything

that one finds in that house is very frivolous; all the virtue I see there is

the result of age, and stood in great need of the congealing hand of time.

That young man must have seen the difference; he writes well; but I am

396much afraid that the request that I should enlighten him with my advice,which he makes in his letter, is in reality only a sentiment unaware of

itself.

'And yet, how many conversions have begun in this way! What leads

me to augur well of this one is the difference in his style from that of the

young men whose letters I have had occasion to see. It is impossible not

to recognise unction, a profound earnestness and great conviction in the

prose of this young Levite; he must have the soothing virtue of

Massillon.'

397chapter27

The Best Positions in the Church

Service! talent! merit! bah! belong to a coterie.

TELEMACHUS

Thus the idea of a Bishopric was for the first time blended with that of

Julien in the head of a woman who sooner or later would be distributing

the best positions in the Church of France. This prospect would have

made little difference to him; for the moment, his thoughts rose to noth

ing that was alien to his present misery: everything intensified it; for in

stance the sight of his bedroom had become intolerable to him. At night,when he came upstairs with his candle, each piece of furniture, every

little ornament seemed to acquire the power of speech to inform him

harshly of some fresh detail of his misery.

This evening, 'I am a galley slave,' he said to himself, as he entered it,with a vivacity long unfamiliar to him: 'let us hope that the second letter

will be as boring as the first.'

It was even more so. What he was copying seemed to him so absurd

that he began to transcribe it line for line, without a thought of the

meaning.

'It is even more emphatic,' he said to himself, 'than the official docu

ments of the Treaty of Muenster, which my tutor in diplomacy made me

copy out in London.'

It was only then that he remembered the letters from Madame de Fer

vaques, the originals of which he had forgotten to restore to the grave

Spaniard, Don Diego Bustos. He searched for them; they were really al

most as fantastic a rigmarole as those of the young Russian gentleman.

They were completely vague. They expressed everything and nothing. 'It

is the Aeolian harp of style,' thought Julien. 'Amid the most lofty

thoughts about annihilation, death, the infinite, etc., I can see no reality

save a shocking fear of ridicule.'

398The monologue which we have here abridged was repeated nightly for

a fortnight. Falling asleep while transcribing a sort of commentary on the

Apocalypse, going next day to deliver a letter with a melancholy air,leaving his horse in the stable yard with the hope of catching a glimpse

of Mathilde's gown, working, putting in an appearance in the evening at

the Opera when Madame de Fervaques did not come to the Hotel de La

Mole; such were the monotonous events of Julien's existence. They be

came more interesting when Madame de Fervaques paid a visit to the

Marquise; then he could steal a glance at Mathilde's eyes beneath the

side of the Marechale's hat, and would wax eloquent. His picturesque

and sentimental phrases began to assume a turn at once more striking

and more elegant.

He was fully aware that what he was saying seemed absurd to Math

ilde, but he sought to impress her by the elegance of his diction. 'The

falser the things I say, the more I ought to appeal to her,' thought Julien;and then, with a shocking boldness, he began to exaggerate certain as

pects of nature. He very soon perceived that, if he were not to appear

vulgar in the eyes of the Marechale, he must above all avoid any simple

or reasonable idea. He continued on these lines, or abridged his amplific

ations according as he read success or indifference in the eyes of the two

great ladies to whom he must appeal.

On the whole, his life was less horrible than at the time when his days

passed in inaction.

'But,' he said to himself one evening, 'here I am transcribing the fif

teenth of these abominable dissertations; the first fourteen have been

faithfully delivered to the Marechale's Swiss. I shall soon have the hon

our of filling all the pigeonholes in her desk. And yet she treats me ex

actly as though I were not writing! What can be the end of all this? Can

my constancy bore her as much as it bores me? I am bound to say that

this Russian, Korasoff's friend, who was in love with the fair Quakeress

of Richmond, must have been a terrible fellow in his day; no one could

be more deadly.'

Like everyone of inferior intelligence whom chance brings into touch

with the operations of a great general, Julien understood nothing of the

attack launched by the young Russian upon the heart of the fair English

maid. The first forty letters were intended only to make her pardon his

boldness in writing. It was necessary to make this gentle person, who

perhaps was vastly bored, form the habit of receiving letters that were

perhaps a trifle less insipid than her everyday life.

399One morning, a letter was handed to Julien; he recognised the armorial

bearings of Madame de Fervaques, and broke the seal with an eagerness

which would have seemed quite impossible to him a few days earlier: it

was only an invitation to dine.

He hastened to consult Prince Korasoff's instructions. Unfortunately,the young Russian had chosen to be as frivolous as Dorat, just where he

ought to have been simple and intelligible; Julien could not discover the

moral attitude which he was supposed to adopt at the Marechale's table.

Her drawing-room was the last word in magnificence, gilded like the

Galerie de Diane in the Tuileries, with oil paintings in the panels. There

were blank spaces in these paintings, Julien learned later on that the sub

jects had seemed hardly decent to the lady of the house, who had had

the pictures corrected. 'A moral age!' he thought.

In this drawing-room he remarked three of the gentlemen who had

been present at the drafting of the secret note. One of them, the Right

Reverend Bishop of ——, the Marechale's uncle, had the patronage of be

nefices, and, it was said, could refuse nothing to his niece. 'What a vast

stride I have made,' thought Julien, with a melancholy smile, 'and how

cold it leaves me! Here I am dining with the famous Bishop of ——.'

The dinner was indifferent and the conversation irritating. 'It is like the

table of contents of a dull book,' thought Julien. 'All the greatest subjects

of human thought are proudly displayed in it. Listen to it for three

minutes, and you ask yourself which is more striking, the emphasis of

the speaker or his shocking ignorance.'

The reader has doubtless forgotten that little man of letters, named

Tanbeau, the nephew of the Academician and an embryo professor, who,with his vile calumnies, seemed to be employed in poisoning the

drawing-room of the Hotel de La Mole.

It was from this little man that Julien first gleaned the idea that it

might well be that Madame de Fervaques, while refraining from answer

ing his letters, looked with indulgence upon the sentiment that dictated

them. The black heart of M. Tanbeau was torn asunder by the thought of

Julien's successes; but inasmuch as, looking at it from another angle, a

deserving man cannot, any more than a fool, be in two places at once, 'if

Sorel becomes the lover of the sublime Marechale,' the future professor

told himself, 'she will place him in the Church in some advantageous

manner, and I shall be rid of him at the Hotel de La Mole.'

M. l'abbe Pirard also addressed long sermons to Julien on his successes

at the Hotel de Fervaques. There was a sectarian jealousy between the

400austere Jansenist and the Jesuitical, regenerative and monarchical

drawing-room of the virtuous Marechale.

401chapter28

Manon Lescaut

Now once he was fully convinced of the foolishness and idiocy of

the prior, he succeeded quite straightforwardly by calling black

white, and white black.

LICHTENBERG

The Russian instructions laid down categorically that one must never

contradict in speech the person with whom one corresponded. One must

never depart, upon any account, from an attitude of the most ecstatic ad

miration; the letters were all based upon this supposition.

One evening, at the Opera, in Madame de Fervaques's box, Julien

praised to the skies the ballet in Manon Lescaut.

16 His sole reason for do

ing so was that he found it insipid.

The Marechale said that this ballet was greatly inferior to abbe

Prevost's novel.

'What!' thought Julien, with surprise and amusement, 'a person of such

extreme virtue praise a novel!' Madame de Fervaques used to profess,two or three times weekly, the most utter scorn for the writers, who, by

means of those vulgar works, sought to corrupt a younger generation

only too prone to the errors of the senses.

'In that immoral and pernicious class, Manon Lescaut,' the Marechale

went on, 'occupies, they say, one of the first places. The frailties and well

merited sufferings of a thoroughly criminal heart are, they say, described

in it with a truth that is almost profound; which did not prevent your

Bonaparte from declaring on Saint Helena that it was a novel written for

servants.'

This speech restored all its activity to Julien's spirit. 'People have been

trying to damage me with the Marechale; they have told her of my

16.Composed by Halevy upon a libretto by Scribe, and performed in 1830.

402enthusiasm for Napoleon. This intelligence has stung her sufficiently for

her to yield to the temptation to let me feel her resentment.' This discov

ery kept him amused for the rest of the evening and made him amusing.

As he was bidding the Marechale good night in the vestibule of the

Opera: 'Bear in mind, Sir,' she said to him, 'that people must not love Na

poleon when they love me; they may, at the most, accept him as a neces

sity imposed by Providence. Anyhow, the man had not a soul pliant

enough to feel great works of art.'

'When they love me!' Julien repeated to himself; 'either that means noth

ing at all, or it means everything. There is one of the secrets of language

that are hidden from us poor provincials.' And he thought incessantly of

Madame de Renal as he copied an immensely long letter intended for the

Marechale.

'How is it,' she asked him the following evening, with an air of indif

ference which seemed to him unconvincing, 'that you speak to me of

London and Richmond in a letter which you wrote last night, it appears,after leaving the Opera?'

Julien was greatly embarrassed; he had copied the letter line for line,without thinking of what he was writing, and apparently had forgotten

to substitute for the words London and Richmond, which occurred in the

original, Paris and SaintCloud. He began two or three excuses, but found

it impossible to finish any of them; he felt himself on the point of giving

way to an outburst of helpless laughter. At length, in his search for the

right words, he arrived at the following idea: 'Exalted by the discussion

of the most sublime, the highest interests of the human soul, my own, in

writing to you, must have become distracted.

'I am creating an impression,' he said to himself, 'therefore I can spare

myself the tedium of the rest of the evening.' He left the Hotel de Fer

vaques in hot haste. That evening, as he looked over the original text of

the letter which he had copied the night before, he very soon came to the

fatal passage where the young Russian spoke of London and Richmond.

Julien was quite surprised to find this letter almost tender.

It was the contrast between the apparent frivolity of his talk and the

sublime and almost apocalyptic profundity of his letters that had marked

him out. The length of his sentences was especially pleasing to the Mare

chale; this was not the cursory style brought into fashion by Voltaire,that most immoral of men! Although our hero did everything in the

world to banish any suggestion of common sense from his conversation,it had still an antimonarchical and impious colour which did not escape

403the notice of Madame de Fervaques. Surrounded by persons who were

eminently moral, but who often had not one idea in an evening, this lady

was profoundly impressed by everything that bore a semblance of nov

elty; but, at the same time, she felt that she owed it to herself to be

shocked by it. She called this defect, 'retaining the imprint of the frivolity

of the age'.

But such drawing-rooms are worth visiting only when one has a fa

vour to ask. All the boredom of this life without interests which Julien

was leading is doubtless shared by the reader. These are the barren

moorlands on our journey.

Throughout the time usurped in Julien's life by the Fervaques episode,Mademoiselle de La Mole had to make a constant effort not to think of

him. Her heart was exposed to violent combats: sometimes she flattered

herself that she was despising this gloomy young man; but, in spite of

her efforts, his conversation captivated her. What astonished her most of

all was his complete insincerity; he never uttered a word to the Mare

chale which was not a lie, or at least a shocking travesty of his point of

view, which Mathilde knew so perfectly upon almost every subject. This

Machiavellism impressed her. 'What profundity!' she said to herself;'how different from the emphatic blockheads or the common rascals, like

M. Tanbeau, who speak the same language!'

Nevertheless, Julien passed some fearful days. It was to perform the

most arduous of his duties that he appeared each evening in the

Marechale's drawing-room. His efforts to play a part ended by sapping

all his spiritual strength. Often, at night, as he crossed the vast courtyard

of the Hotel de Fervaques, it was only by force of character and reason

that he succeeded in keeping himself from sinking into despair.

'I conquered despair at the Seminary,' he said to himself: 'and yet what

an appalling prospect I had before me then! I stood to make my fortune

or to fail; in either case, I saw myself obliged to spend my whole life in

the intimate society of all that is most contemptible and disgusting under

heaven. The following spring, when only eleven short months had

passed, I was perhaps the happiest of all the young men of my age.'

But often enough all these fine arguments proved futile when faced

with the frightful reality. Every day he saw Mathilde at luncheon and at

dinner. From the frequent letters which M. de La Mole dictated to him,he knew her to be on the eve of marrying M. de Croisenois. Already that

amiable young man was calling twice daily at the Hotel de La Mole: the

404jealous eye of an abandoned lover did not miss a single one of his

actions.

When he thought he had noticed that Mademoiselle de La Mole was

treating her suitor kindly, on returning to his room, Julien could not help

casting a loving glance at his pistols.

'Ah, how much wiser I should be,' he said to himself, 'to remove the

marks from my linen, and retire to some lonely forest, twenty leagues

from Paris, there to end this accursed existence! A stranger to the coun

tryside, my death would remain unknown for a fortnight, and who

would think of me after a fortnight had passed?'

This reasoning was extremely sound. But next day, a glimpse of

Mathilde's arm, seen between her sleeve and her glove, was enough to

plunge our young philosopher in cruel memories, which, at the same

time, made him cling to life. 'Very well!' he would then say to himself, 'I

shall follow out this Russian policy to the end. How is it going to end?

'As for the Marechale, certainly, after I have copied these fiftythree

letters, I shall write no more.

'As for Mathilde, these six weeks of such painful playacting, will

either fail altogether to appease her anger, or will win me a moment of

reconciliation. Great God! I should die of joy!' And he was unable to pur

sue the idea farther.

When, after a long spell of meditation, he succeeded in recovering the

use of his reason: 'Then,' he said to himself, 'I should obtain a day's hap

piness, after which would begin again her severities, founded, alas, upon

the scant power that I have to please her, and I should be left without

any further resource, I should be ruined, lost for ever…

'What guarantee can she give me, with her character? Alas, my scant

merit is responsible for everything. I must be wanting in elegance in my

manners, my way of speaking must be heavy and monotonous. Great

God! Why am I myself?'

405chapter29

Boredom

Sacrificing oneself to one's passions is one thing; but to passions

that one doesn't have! O sad nineteenth century!

GIRODET

After having read without pleasure at first Julien's long letters, Ma

dame de Fervaques began to take an interest in them; but one thing dis

tressed her: 'What a pity that M. Sorel is not really a priest! One could

admit him to a sort of intimacy: with that Cross and what is almost a

layman's coat, one is exposed to cruel questions, and how is one to an

swer them?' She did not complete her thought: 'some malicious friend

may suppose and indeed spread the report that he is some humble little

cousin, one of my father's family, some tradesman decorated by the Na

tional Guard.'

Until the moment of her first meeting Julien, Madame de Fervaques's

greatest pleasure had been to write the word Marechale before her own

name. Thenceforward the vanity of an upstart, morbid and easily offen

ded, had to fight a nascent interest.

'It would be so easy for me,' the Marechale said to herself, 'to make a

VicarGeneral of him in some diocese not far from Paris! But M. Sorel by

itself, and to add to that a mere secretary of M. de La Mole! It is

deplorable.'

For the first time, this spirit which dreaded everything was stirred by an

interest apart from its own pretensions to rank and to social superiority.

Her old porter noticed that, when he brought her a letter from that hand

some young man, who wore such a melancholy air, he was certain to see

vanish the distracted and irritated expression which the Marechale al

ways took care to assume when any of her servants entered the room.

The boredom of a mode of life whose sole ambition was to create an

effect on the public, without there being at the bottom of her heart any

406real enjoyment of this kind of success, had become so intolerable since

she had begun to think of Julien, that, if her maids were not to be ill

treated throughout the whole of a day, it was enough that during the

previous evening she should have spent an hour with this strange young

man. His growing credit survived anonymous letters, very well com

posed. In vain did little Tanbeau supply MM. de Luz, de Croisenois, de

Caylus, with two or three most adroit calumnies which those gentlemen

took pleasure in spreading abroad, without stopping to consider the

truth of the accusations. The Marechale, whose mind was not framed to

withstand these vulgar methods, reported her doubts to Mathilde, and

was always comforted.

One day, after having inquired three times whether there were any let

ters, Madame de Fervaques suddenly decided to write to Julien. This

was a victory gained by boredom. At the second letter, the Marechale

was almost brought to a standstill by the unpleasantness of writing with

her own hand so vulgar an address as: 'a M. Sorel, chez M. le Marquis de

La Mole'.

'You must,' she said to Julien that evening in the driest of tones, 'bring

me some envelopes with your address written on them.'

'So now I am to combine the lover and the flunkey,' thought Julien,and bowed, amusing himself by screwing up his face like Arsene, the

Marquis's old footman.

That same evening he brought a supply of envelopes, and next day,early in the morning, he received a third letter: he read five or six lines at

the beginning, and two or three towards the end. It covered four pages

in a small and very close script.

Gradually she formed the pleasant habit of writing almost every day.

Julien replied with faithful copies of the Russian letters, and, such is the

advantage of the emphatic style, Madame de Fervaques was not at all

surprised by the want of connection between the replies and her own

letters.

What would have been the irritation to her pride if little Tanbeau, who

had appointed himself a voluntary spy upon Julien's actions, had been

able to tell her that all these letters, with their seals unbroken, were flung

pellmell into Julien's drawer!

One morning, the porter brought to him in the library a letter from the

Marechale; Mathilde met the man, saw the letter, and read the address in

Julien's hand. She entered the library as the porter left it; the letter was

407still lying on the edge of the table; Julien, busily engaged in writing, had

not placed it in his drawer.

'This is what I cannot endure,' cried Mathilde, seizing the letter; 'you

are forgetting me entirely, me who am your wife. Your conduct is ap

palling, Sir.'

With these words, her pride, astonished by the fearful impropriety of

her action, stifled her; she burst into tears, and a moment later appeared

to Julien to be unable to breathe.

Surprised, confounded, Julien did not clearly distinguish all the admir

able and happy consequences which this scene foreboded for himself. He

helped Mathilde to a seat; she almost abandoned herself in his arms.

The first instant in which he perceived this relaxation was one of ex

treme joy. His second thought was of Korasoff: 'I may ruin everything by

a single word.'

His arms ached, so painful was the effort imposed on him by policy. 'I

ought not even to allow myself to press to my heart this supple and

charming form, or she will despise and abuse me. What a frightful

nature!'

And as he cursed Mathilde's nature, he loved her for it a hundred

times more; he felt as though he were holding a queen in his arms.

Julien's unfeeling coldness intensified the misery of wounded pride

which was tearing the heart of Mademoiselle de La Mole. She was far

from possessing the necessary coolness to seek to read in his eyes what

he was feeling for her at that moment. She could not bring herself to look

at him; she trembled lest she should meet an expression of scorn.

Seated on the divan in the library, motionless and with her head

turned away from Julien, she was a prey to the keenest suffering that

pride and love can make a human heart feel. Into what a frightful course

of action had she fallen!

'It was reserved for me, wretch that I am, to see the most indelicate ad

vances repulsed! And repulsed by whom?' added a pride mad with suf

fering, 'by one of my father's servants.

'That is what I will not endure,' she said aloud.

And, rising with fury, she opened the drawer of Julien's table, which

stood a few feet away from her. She remained frozen with horror on see

ing there nine or ten letters unopened, similar in every respect to the let

ter which the porter had just brought in. On all the envelopes, she recog

nised Julien's hand, more or less disguised.

408'And so,' she cried, beside herself with rage, 'not only have you found

favour with her, but you despise her. You, a man of nought, to despise

Madame la Marechale de Fervaques!

'Ah, forgive me, my dear,' she went on, flinging herself at his feet,'despise me if you wish, but love me, I can no longer live deprived of

your love.' And she fell to the ground in a dead faint.

'So there she is, that proud creature, at my feet!' thought Julien.

409chapter30

A Box at the Bouffes

As the blackest sky Foretells the heaviest tempest.

Don Juan, I. 73

In the thick of all this great commotion, Julien was more bewildered

than happy. Mathilde's abuse of him showed him how wise the Russian

policy had been. 'Say little, do little, that is my one way of salvation.'

He lifted up Mathilde and without a word laid her down again on the

divan. Gradually she gave way to tears.

To keep herself in countenance, she took Madame de Fervaques's let

ters in her hands; she broke the seals slowly. She gave a nervous start on

recognising the Marechale's handwriting. She turned over the sheets of

these letters without reading them; the majority of them covered six

pages.

'Answer me this, at least,' said Mathilde at length in the most supplic

ating tone, but without venturing to look at Julien. 'You know very well

that I am proud; it is the misfortune of my position, and indeed of my

nature, I must admit; so Madame de Fervaques has stolen your heart

from me… Has she offered you all the sacrifices to which that fatal pas

sion led me?'

A grim silence was Julien's only answer. 'By what right,' he thought,'does she ask of me an indiscretion unworthy of an honourable man?'

Mathilde endeavoured to read the letters; the tears that filled her eyes

made it impossible for her to do so.

For a month past she had been miserable, but that proud spirit was far

from confessing its feelings to itself. Chance alone had brought about

this explosion. For an instant jealousy and love had overcome pride. She

was seated upon the divan and in close proximity to him. He saw her

hair and her throat of alabaster; for a moment he forgot all that he owed

410to himself; he slipped his arm round her waist, and almost hugged her to

his bosom.

She turned her head towards him slowly: he was astonished at the in

tense grief that was visible in her eyes, and made them quite unrecognis

able as hers.

Julien felt his strength begin to fail him, so colossal was the effort in

volved in the act of courage which he was imposing on himself.

'Those eyes will soon express nothing but the coldest disdain,' he said

to himself, 'if I allow myself to be carried away by the joy of loving her.'

Meanwhile, in a faint voice and in words which she had barely the

strength to utter, she was repeating to him at that moment her assurance

of all her regret for the action which an excessive pride might have coun

selled her to take.

'I too, have my pride,' Julien said to her in a voice that was barely artic

ulate, and his features indicated the extreme limit of physical exhaustion.

Mathilde turned sharply towards him. The sound of his voice was a

pleasure the hope of which she had almost abandoned. At that moment

she recalled her pride only to curse it, she would fain have discovered

some unusual, incredible act to prove to him how greatly she adored

him and detested herself.

'It is probably because of that pride,' Julien went on, 'that you have

singled me out for an instant; it is certainly because of that courageous

firmness, becoming in a man, that you respect me at this moment. I may

be in love with the Marechale … '

Mathilde shuddered; her eyes assumed a strange expression. She was

about to hear her sentence uttered. This movement did not pass unob

served by Julien; he felt his courage weaken.

'Ah!' he said to himself, listening to the sound of the vain words that

came from his lips, as he might have listened to a noise from without; 'if I

could only cover those pale cheeks with kisses, and you not feel them!

'I may be in love with the Marechale,' he continued… and his voice

grew fainter and fainter; 'but certainly, of her interest in myself I have no

decisive proof… '

Mathilde gazed at him; he met her gaze, at least he hoped that his fea

tures had not betrayed him. He felt himself penetrated by love to the in

nermost recesses of his heart. Never had he adored her so intensely; he

was scarcely less mad than Mathilde. Could she have found sufficient

selfcontrol and courage to manoeuvre, he would have fallen at her feet,411forswearing all idle playacting. He had strength enough to be able to

continue to speak. 'Ah! Korasoff,' he exclaimed inwardly, 'why are not

you here? How I need a word of advice to direct my conduct!' Mean

while his voice was saying:

'Failing any other sentiment, gratitude would suffice to attach me to

the Marechale; she has shown me indulgence, she has comforted me

when others scorned me … I may perhaps not repose an unbounded

faith in certain signs which are extremely flattering, no doubt, but also,perhaps, are of very brief duration.'

'Ah! Great God!' cried Mathilde.

'Very well! What guarantee will you give me?' Julien went on in sharp,firm accents, seeming to abandon for an instant the prudent forms of

diplomacy. 'What guarantee, what god will assure me that the position

which you seem disposed to restore to me at this moment will last for

more than two days?'

'The intensity of my love and of my misery if you no longer love me,'

she said, clasping his hands and turning her face towards him.

The violent movement which she thus made had slightly displaced her

pelerine: Julien caught a glimpse of her charming shoulders. Her hair,slightly disordered, recalled to him an exquisite memory …

He was about to yield. 'An imprudent word,' he told himself, 'and I be

gin once more that long succession of days passed in despair. Madame

de Renal used to find reasons for obeying the dictates of her heart: this

young girl of high society allows her heart to be moved only when she

has proved to herself with good reasons that it ought to be moved.'

He perceived this truth in a flash, and in a flash also regained his

courage.

He freed his hands which Mathilde was clasping in her own, and with

marked respect withdrew a little way from her. Human courage can go

no farther. He then busied himself in gathering together all Madame de

Fervaques's letters which were scattered over the divan, and it was with

a show of extreme politeness, so cruel at that moment, that he added:

'Mademoiselle de La Mole will deign to permit me to think over all

this.' He withdrew rapidly and left the library; she heard him shut all the

doors in turn.

'The monster is not in the least perturbed,' she said to herself…

'But what am I saying, a monster! He is wise, prudent, good; it is I who

have done more wrong than could be imagined.'

412This point of view persisted. Mathilde was almost happy that day, for

she was altogether in love; you would have said that never had that

heart been stirred by pride—and such pride!

She shuddered with horror when, that evening in the drawing-room, a

footman announced Madame de Fervaques; the man's voice seemed to

her to have a sinister sound. She could not endure the sight of the Mare

chale, and quickly left the room. Julien, with little pride in his hardwon

victory, had been afraid lest his own eyes should betray him, and had

not dined at the Hotel de La Mole.

His love and his happiness increased rapidly as the hour of battle re

ceded; he had already begun to find fault with himself. 'How could I res

ist her?' he asked himself; 'if she was going to cease to love me! A single

moment may alter that proud spirit, and I must confess that I have

treated her scandalously.'

In the evening, he felt that he absolutely must appear at the Bouffes in

Madame de Fervaques's box. She had given him an express invitation:

Mathilde would not fail to hear of his presence there or of his discour

teous absence. Despite the selfevidence of this argument, he had not the

strength, early in the evening, to plunge into society. If he talked, he

would forfeit half his happiness.

Ten o'clock struck: he must absolutely show his face.

Fortunately he found the Marechale's box filled with women, and was

relegated to a place by the door, and entirely concealed by their hats.

This position saved him from making a fool of himself; the divine ac

cents of despair of Carolina in Il matrimonio segreto made him burst into

tears. Madame de Fervaques saw these tears; they were in so marked a

contrast to the manly firmness of his usual appearance, that this spirit of

a great lady long saturated in all the most corrosive elements of the pride

of an upstart was touched by them. What little she had left of a woman's

heart led her to speak. She wished to enjoy the sound of her own voice at

that moment.

'Have you seen the ladies de La Mole,' she said to him, 'they are in the

third tier.' Instantly Julien bent forward into the house, leaning some

what rudely upon the ledge of the box: he saw Mathilde; her eyes were

bright with tears.

'And yet it is not their day for the Opera,' thought Julien; 'what

eagerness!'

413Mathilde had made her mother come to the Bouffes, despite the inferi

or position of the box which a sycophant of their circle had made haste to

offer them. She wished to see whether Julien would spend that evening

with the Marechale.

414chapter31

Making Her Afraid

So this is the fine miracle of your civilisation! You have turned

love into an ordinary matter.

BARNAVE

Julien hurried to Madame de La Mole's box. His eyes met first the tear

ful eyes of Mathilde; she was weeping without restraint, there was no

one present but people of minor importance, the friend who had lent

them the box and some men of her acquaintance. Mathilde laid her hand

upon Julien's; she seemed to have forgotten all fear of her mother. Al

most stifled by her sobs, she said nothing to him but the single word:

'Guarantees!'

'Whatever I do, I must not speak to her,' thought Julien, greatly moved

himself, and covering his eyes as best he could with his hand, ostensibly

to avoid the lustre that was blazing into the boxes on the third tier. 'If I

speak, she can no longer doubt the intensity of my emotion, the sound of

my voice will betray me, all may be lost once more.'

His struggles were far more painful than in the morning, his spirit had

had time to grow disturbed. He was afraid of seeing Mathilde's vanity

wounded. Frantic with love and passion, he pledged himself not to

speak to her.

This is, to my mind, one of the finest traits of his character; a person

capable of such an effort to control himself may go far, si fata sinant.

Mademoiselle de La Mole insisted upon taking Julien home. For

tunately it was raining in torrents. But the Marquise made him sit facing

herself, talked to him continuously, and prevented his saying a word to

her daughter. One would have thought that the Marquise was concerned

for Julien's happiness; no longer afraid of destroying everything by the

intensity of his emotion, he abandoned himself to it with frenzy.

415Dare I say that on entering his own room Julien threw himself on his

knees and covered with kisses the love letters given him by Prince

Korasoff?

'Oh, you great man! What do I not owe to you?' he cried in his frenzy.

Gradually a little coolness returned to him. He compared himself to a

general who had just won the first half of a great battle. 'The advantage

is certain, immense,' he said to himself; 'but what is going to happen to

morrow? An instant may ruin everything.'

He opened with a passionate impulse the Memoirs dictated at Saint

Helena by Napoleon, and for two solid hours forced himself to read them;his eyes alone read the words, no matter, he forced himself to the task.

During this strange occupation, his head and heart, rising to the level of

everything that is most great, were at work without his knowledge. 'This

is a very different heart from Madame de Renal's,' he said to himself, but

he went no farther.

'Make her afraid,' he cried of a sudden, flinging the book from him.

'The enemy will obey me only so long as I make him fear me, then he

will not dare to despise me.'

He paced up and down his little room, wild with joy. To be frank, this

happiness was due to pride rather than love.

'Make her afraid!' he repeated proudly to himself, and he had reason

to be proud. 'Even in her happiest moments, Madame de Renal always

doubted whether my love were equal to hers. Here, it is a demon that I

am conquering, I must therefore conquer.'

He knew well that next morning, by eight o'clock, Mathilde would be

in the library; he did not appear there until nine, burning with love, but

his head controlled his heart. Not a single minute passed, perhaps,without his repeating to himself: 'Always keep her mind occupied with

the great uncertainty: "Does he love me?" Her privileged position, the

flattery she receives from all who speak to her make her a little too much

inclined to selfassurance.'

He found her pale, calm, seated upon the divan, but incapable, appar

ently, of making any movement. She offered him her hand.

'Dear, I have offended you, it is true; you are perhaps vexed with me?'

Julien was not expecting so simple a tone. He was on the point of be

traying himself.

'You wish for guarantees, dear,' she went on after a silence which she

had hoped to see broken; 'that is only fair. Carry me off, let us start for

416London. I shall be ruined for ever, disgraced… ' She found the courage

to withdraw her hand from Julien so as to hide her eyes with it. All the

sentiments of modesty and feminine virtue had returned to her heart…

'Very well! Disgrace me,' she said at length with a sigh, 'it is a guarantee.'

'Yesterday I was happy, because I had the courage to be severe with

myself,' thought Julien. After a brief interval of silence, he gained suffi

cient mastery over his heart to say in an icy tone:

'Once we are on the road to London, once you are disgraced, to use

your own words, who can promise me that you will love me? That my

company in the postchaise will not seem to you an annoyance? I am not

a monster, to have ruined your reputation will be to me only an addi

tional grief. It is not your position in society that is the obstacle, it is un

fortunately your own nature. Can you promise yourself that you will

love me for a week?

'(Ah! Let her love me for a week, for a week only,' Julien murmured to

himself, 'and I shall die of joy. What do I care for the future, what do I

care for life itself? And this divine happiness may begin at this moment if

I choose, it depends entirely upon myself!)'

Mathilde saw him turn pensive.

'So I am altogether unworthy of you,' she said, clasping his hand.

Julien embraced her, but at once the iron hand of duty gripped his

heart. 'If she sees how I adore her, then I lose her.' And, before with

drawing himself from her arms, he had resumed all the dignity that be

fits a man.

On that day and the days that followed, he managed to conceal the in

tensity of his bliss; there were moments in which he denied himself even

the pleasure of clasping her in his arms.

At other moments, the frenzy of happiness swept aside all the counsels

of prudence.

It was beside a bower of honeysuckle arranged so as to hide the lad

der, in the garden, that he was accustomed to take his stand in order to

gaze at the distant shutters of Mathilde's window and lament her incon

stancy. An oak of great size stood close by, and the trunk of this tree pre

vented him from being seen by indiscreet persons.

As he passed with Mathilde by this spot which recalled to him so

vividly the intensity of his grief, the contrast between past despair and

present bliss was too strong for him; tears flooded his eyes, and, carrying

to his lips the hand of his mistress: 'Here I lived while I thought of you;417from here I gazed at that shutter, I awaited for hours on end the fortu

nate moment when I should see this hand open it… '

He gave way completely. He portrayed to her, in those true colours

which one does not invent, the intensity of his despair at that time. In

spasmodic utterances he spoke of his present happiness which had put

an end to that cruel suffering…

'What am I doing, Great God!' said Julien, coming suddenly to his

senses. 'I am destroying everything.'

In the height of his alarm he thought he already saw less love in the

eyes of Mademoiselle de La Mole. This was an illusion; but Julien's face

changed rapidly and was flooded with a deathly pallor. His eyes grew

dull for a moment, and an expression of arrogance not devoid of malice

succeeded that of the most sincere, the most wholehearted love.

'Why, what is the matter with you, dear?' Mathilde tenderly, anxiously

inquired.

'I am lying,' said Julien savagely, 'and I am lying to you. I reproach

myself for it, and yet God knows that I respect you sufficiently not to lie.

You love me, you are devoted to me, and I have no need to make fine

speeches in order to please you.'

'Great God! They were only fine speeches, all the exquisite things you

have been saying to me for the last ten minutes?'

'And I reproach myself for them strongly, dear friend. I made them up

long ago for a woman who loved me and used to bore me… That is the

weak spot in my character, I denounce myself to you, forgive me.'

Bitter tears streamed down Mathilde's cheeks.

'Whenever some trifle that has shocked me sets me dreaming for a mo

ment,' Julien went on, 'my execrable memory, which I could curse at this

moment, offers me a way of escape, and I abuse it.'

'So I have unconsciously done something that has displeased you?'

said Mathilde with a charming simplicity.

'One day, I remember, as you passed by these honeysuckles, you

plucked a flower, M. de Luz took it from you, and you let him keep it. I

was close beside you.'

'M. de Luz? It is impossible,' replied Mathilde with the dignity that

came so naturally to her: 'I never behave like that.'

'I am certain of it,' Julien at once rejoined.

418'Ah, well! Then it must be true, dear,' said Mathilde, lowering her eyes

sadly. She was positive that for many months past she had never al

lowed M. de Luz to take any such liberty.

Julien gazed at her with an inexpressible tenderness:

'No,' he said to himself, 'she does not love me any the less.'

She rebuked him that evening, with a laugh, for his fondness for Ma

dame de Fervaques: a bourgeois in love with a parvenue. 'Hearts of that

class are perhaps the only ones that my Julien cannot inflame. She has

turned you into a regular dandy,' she said, playing with his hair.

During the period in which he supposed himself to be scorned by

Mathilde, Julien had become one of the bestdressed men in Paris. But he

had an additional advantage over the other men of this sort; once his toi

let was performed, he never gave it another thought.

One thing still vexed Mathilde. Julien continued to copy out the Russi

an letters, and to send them to the Marechale.

419chapter32

The Tiger

Alas! why these things and not others!

BEAUMARCHAIS

An English traveller relates how he lived upon intimate terms with a

tiger; he had reared it and used to play with it, but always kept a loaded

pistol on the table.

Julien abandoned himself to the full force of his happiness only at

those moments when Mathilde could not read the expression of it in his

eyes. He was punctilious in his performance of the duty of addressing a

few harsh words to her from time to time.

When Mathilde's meekness, which he observed with astonishment,and the intensity of her devotion came near to destroying all his selfcon

trol, he had the courage to leave her abruptly.

For the first time Mathilde was in love.

Life, which had always crawled for her at a snail's pace, now flew.

As it was essential, nevertheless, that her pride should find some out

let, she sought to expose herself with temerity to all the risks that her

love could make her run. It was Julien who showed prudence; and it was

only when there was any question of danger that she did not comply

with his wishes; but, submissive, and almost humble towards him, she

showed all the more arrogance towards anyone else who came near her

in the house, relatives and servants alike.

In the evenings in the drawing-room, she would summon Julien, and

would hold long conversations with him in private.

Little Tanbeau took his place one evening beside them; she asked him

to go to the library and fetch her the volume of Smollett which dealt with

the Revolution of 1688; and as he seemed to hesitate: There is no need to

hurry,' she went on with an expression of insulting arrogance, which was

balm to Julien's spirit.

420'Did you notice the look in that little monster's eyes?' he asked her.

'His uncle has done ten or twelve years of service in this drawing

room, otherwise I should have him shown the door this instant.'

Her behaviour towards MM. de Croisenois, de Luz, and the rest, per

fectly polite in form, was scarcely less provoking in substance. Mathilde

blamed herself severely for all the confidences she had made to Julien in

the past, especially as she did not dare confess to him that she had exag

gerated the almost wholly innocent marks of interest of which those gen

tlemen had been the object.

In spite of the most admirable resolutions, her womanly pride preven

ted her every day from saying to Julien: 'It was because I was speaking to

you that I found pleasure in the thought of my weakness in not with

drawing my hand when M. de Croisenois laid his hand on a marble table

beside mine, and managed to touch it.'

Nowadays, whenever one of these gentlemen had spoken to her for a

few moments, she found that she had a question to ask Julien, and this

was a pretext for keeping him by her side.

She found that she was pregnant, and told the news joyfully to Julien.

'Now will you doubt me? Is not this a guarantee? I am your wife for

ever.'

This announcement filled Julien with profound astonishment. He was

on the point of forgetting his principle of conduct. 'How can I be deliber

ately cold and offensive to this poor girl who is ruining herself for me?'

Did she appear at all unwell, even on the days on which wisdom made

her dread accents heard, he no longer found the courage to address to

her one of those cruel speeches, so indispensable, in his experience, to

the continuance of their love.

'I mean to write to my father,' Mathilde said to him one day; 'he is

more than a father to me; he is a friend; and so I should feel it unworthy

of you and of myself to seek to deceive him, were it only for a moment.'

'Great God! What are you going to do?' said Julien in alarm.

'My duty,' she replied, her eyes sparkling with joy.

She felt herself to be more magnanimous than her lover.

'But he will turn me from the house in disgrace!'

'He is within his rights, we must respect them. I shall give you my

arm, and we shall go out by the front door, in the full light of day.'

Julien in astonishment begged her to wait for a week.

421'I cannot,' she replied, 'the voice of honour speaks. I have seen what is

my duty, I must obey, and at once.'

'Very well! I order you to wait,' said Julien at length. 'Your honour is

covered, I am your husband. This drastic step is going to alter both our

positions. I also am within my rights. Today is Tuesday; next Tuesday is

the day of the Duc de Retz's party; that evening, when M. de La Mole

comes home, the porter shall hand him the fatal letter… He thinks only

of making you a Duchess, of that I am certain; think of his grief!'

'Do you mean by that: think of his revenge?'

'I may feel pity for my benefactor, distress at the thought of injuring

him; but I do not and never shall fear any man.'

Mathilde submitted. Since she had told Julien of her condition, this

was the first time that he had spoken to her with authority; never had he

loved her so dearly. It was with gladness that the softer side of his heart

seized the pretext of Mathilde's condition to forgo the duty of saying a

few cruel words. The idea of a confession to M. de La Mole disturbed

him greatly. Was he going to be parted from Mathilde? And, however

keen the distress with which she saw him go, a month after his departure

would she give him a thought?

He felt almost as great a horror of the reproaches which the Marquis

might justly heap upon him.

That evening, he admitted to Mathilde this second cause of his dis

tress, and then, carried away by love, admitted the other also.

She changed colour.

'Indeed,' she said, 'six months spent out of my company would be a

grief to you!'

'Immense, the only one in the world on which I look with terror.'

Mathilde was delighted. Julien had played his part with such thor

oughness that he had succeeded in making her think that of the two she

was the more in love.

The fatal Tuesday came. At midnight, on returning home, the Marquis

found a letter with the form of address which indicated that he was to

open it himself, and only when he was unobserved.

'MY FATHER,'Every social tie that binds us is broken, there remain only the ties of

nature. After my husband, you are and will ever be the dearest person in

the world to me. My eyes fill with tears, I think of the distress that I am

422causing you, but, that my shame may not be made public, to give you

time to deliberate and act, I have been unable to postpone any further

the confession that I owe you. If your affection for me, which I know to

be extreme, chooses to allow me a small pension, I shall go and settle

myself where you please, in Switzerland, for instance, with my husband.

His name is so obscure that no one will recognise your daughter in Ma

dame Sorel, daughterinlaw of a carpenter of Verrieres. There you have

the name I have found it so hard to write. I dread, for Julien, your anger,apparently so righteous. I shall not be a Duchess, Father; but I knew it

when I fell in love with him; for it was I that fell in love first, it was I who

seduced him. I inherit from you a spirit too exalted to let my attention be

arrested by what is or seems to me vulgar. It is in vain that with the idea

of pleasing you I have thought of M. de Croisenois. Why did you place

real merit before my eyes? You told me yourself on my return from

Hyeres: "This young Sorel is the only person who amuses me"; the poor

boy is as greatly distressed as myself, if it be possible, by the pain which

this letter must cause you. I cannot prevent your being angry with me as

a father; but care for me still as a friend.

'Julien respected me. If he spoke to me now and again, it was solely be

cause of his profound gratitude to you: for the natural pride of his char

acter leads him never to reply save officially to anyone who is placed so

far above him. He has a strong and inborn sense of the differences of so

cial position. It was I, I admit, with a blush, to my best friend, and never

shall such an admission be made to any other, it was I who one day in

the garden pressed his arm.

'In twentyfour hours from now, why should you be angry with him?

My fault is irreparable. If you require it, I shall be the channel to convey

to you the assurances of his profound respect and of his distress at dis

pleasing you. You will not set eyes on him; but I shall go and join him

wherever he may choose. It is his right, it is my duty, he is the father of

my child. If in your generosity you are pleased to allow us six thousand

francs upon which to live, I shall accept them with gratitude: otherwise,Julien intends to settle at Besancon where he will take up the profession

of teacher of Latin and Literature. However low the degree from which

he springs, I am certain that he will rise. With him, I have no fear of ob

scurity. If there be a Revolution, I am sure of a leading part for him.

Could you say as much for any of those who have sought my hand?

They have fine estates? I cannot find in that single circumstance a reason

for admiration. My Julien would attain to a high position even under the

423present form of government, if he had a million and were protected by

my father … '

Mathilde, who knew that the Marquis was a man entirely governed by

first impressions, had written eight pages.

'What is to be done?' Julien said to himself while M. de La Mole was

reading this letter; 'where do, first of all, my duty, secondly, my interest

lie? The debt that I owe him is immense: I should have been, but for him,a rascally understrapper, and not rascal enough to be hated and perse

cuted by the rest. He has made me a man of the world. My necessary ras

calities will be, first of all, rarer, and secondly, less ignoble. That is more

than if he had given me a million. I owe to him this Cross and the record

of socalled diplomatic services which have raised me above my rank.

'If he were to take his pen to prescribe my conduct, what would he

write?'

Julien was sharply interrupted by M. de La Mole's old valet.

'The Marquis wishes to see you this moment, dressed or undressed.'

The valet added in an undertone as they were side by side: 'He is furi

ous, beware.'

424chapter33

The Torment of the Weak

In cutting this diamond, a clumsy jeweller removed some of its

brightest sparkles. In the Middle Ages, what am I saying? even

under Richelieu, a Frenchman still had the power to desire.

MIRABEAU

Julien found the Marquis furious: for the first time in his life, perhaps,this gentleman was guilty of bad taste; he heaped on Julien all the insults

that came to his lips. Our hero was astonished, irritated, but his sense of

gratitude was not shaken. 'How many fine projects long cherished in his

secret thoughts, the poor man sees crumble in an instant. But I owe it to

him to answer him, my silence would increase his rage.' His answer was

furnished for him from the part of Tartuffe.

'I am no angel… I have served you well, you have rewarded me gener

ously … I was grateful, but I am twentytwo years old … In this house

hold, my thoughts were intelligible only to yourself, and to that obliging

person … '

'Monster!' cried the Marquis. 'Obliging! Obliging! On the day when

you found her obliging, you ought to have fled.'

'I made an attempt; I asked you if I might go to Languedoc.'

Tired of pacing the room in fury, the Marquis, broken by grief, threw

himself into an armchair; Julien heard him murmur to himself: 'This is no

scoundrel.'

'No, I am not one to you,' cried Julien, falling at his feet. But he felt ex

tremely ashamed of this impulse and rose quickly.

The Marquis was really out of his mind. On seeing this movement he

began again to shower upon Julien atrocious insults worthy of a cab

driver. The novelty of these oaths was perhaps a distraction.

'What? My daughter is to be called Madame Sorel! What! My daughter

is not to be a Duchess!' Whenever these two ideas presented themselves

425in such clear terms, the Marquis was in torment, and his impulses were

uncontrolled. Julien began to fear a thrashing.

In his lucid intervals, and when the Marquis began to grow accus

tomed to his disgrace, his reproaches became quite reasonable.

'You ought to have gone, Sir,' he said. 'It was your duty to go … You

are the meanest of mankind… '

Julien went to the table and wrote:

'For a long time my life has been insupportable, I am putting an end to it. I

beg Monsieur le Marquis to accept, with my expression of a gratitude that

knows no bounds, my apologies for the trouble which my death in his house may

cause.'

'Will Monsieur le Marquis deign to peruse this paper… Kill me,' said

Julien, 'or have me killed by your valet. It is one o'clock in the morning, I

am going to stroll in the garden towards the wall at the far end.'

'Go to the devil,' the Marquis shouted after him as he left the room.

'I understand,' thought Julien; 'he would not be sorry to see me spare

his valet the responsibility for my death… Let him kill me, well and

good, it is a satisfaction that I am offering him … But, by Jove, I am in

love with life … I owe myself to my child.'

This idea, which for the first time appeared thus clearly before his ima

gination, completely absorbed him after the first few minutes of his stroll

had been devoted to the sense of danger.

This entirely novel interest made a prudent creature of him. 'I need ad

vice to guide me in dealing with that fiery man… He has no judgment,he is capable of anything. Fouque is too far off, besides he would not un

derstand the sentiments of a heart like the Marquis's.

'Conte Altamira… Can I be sure of eternal silence? My request for ad

vice must not be a definite action, nor complicate my position. Alas!

There is no one left but the sombre abbe Pirard … His mind is narrowed

by Jansenism … A rascally Jesuit would know the world better, and

would be more to my purpose… M. Pirard is capable of beating me, at

the mere mention of my crime.'

The genius of Tartuffe came to Julien's aid: 'Very well, I shall go and

confess to him.' This was the resolution to which he finally came in the

garden, after pacing it for fully two hours. He no longer thought that he

might be surprised by a gunshot; sleep was overpowering him.

426Next morning, before daybreak, Julien was several leagues from Paris,knocking at the door of the stern Jansenist. He found, greatly to his as

tonishment, that the other was not unduly surprised at his confession.

'I ought perhaps to blame myself,' the abbe said to himself, more

anxious than angry. 'I had thought that I detected this love affair. My af

fection for yourself, you little wretch, restrained me from warning her

father… '

'What will he do?' Julien asked him boldly.

(At that moment, he loved the abbe and a scene would have been most

painful to him.)

'I can see three courses of action,' Julien continued: 'First of all, M. de

La Mole may have me put to death'; and he told the abbe of the letter an

nouncing his suicide which he had left with the Marquis; 'secondly, he

may have me shot down by Comte Norbert, who will challenge me to a

duel.'

'You would accept?' said the abbe in a fury, rising to his feet.

'You do not allow me to finish. Certainly I should never fire at the son

of my benefactor.

'Thirdly, he may send me away. If he says to me: "Go to Edinburgh, to

New York," I shall obey. Then they can conceal Mademoiselle de La

Mole's condition; but I shall never allow them to destroy my child.'

'That, you may be sure, will be the first idea to occur to that corrupt

man… '

In Paris, Mathilde was in despair. She had seen her father about seven

o'clock. He had shown her Julien's letter, she trembled lest he should

have deemed it noble to put an end to his life: 'And without my permis

sion?' she said to herself with an agony which partook of anger.

'If he is dead, I shall die,' she said to her father. 'It is you that will be

the cause of my death… You will rejoice at it, perhaps … But I swear to

his ghost that I shall at once put on mourning, and shall be publicly Ma

dame veuve Sorel [the widow of M. Sorel], I shall send out the usual an

nouncements, you may count on that… You will not find me pusillan

imous nor a coward.'

Her love rose to the pitch of madness. It was now M. de La Mole's turn

to be left speechless.

He began to look upon what had happened more reasonably. At

luncheon Mathilde did not put in an appearance. The Marquis was

427relieved of an immense burden, and flattered as well, when he dis

covered that she had said nothing to her mother.

Julien dismounted from his horse. Mathilde sent for him, and flung

herself into his arms almost in the sight of her maid. Julien was not un

duly grateful for this transport, he had come away most diplomatic and

most calculating from his long conference with the abbe Pirard. His ima

gination was extinguished by the calculation of possibilities. Mathilde,with tears in her eyes, informed him that she had seen the letter announ

cing his suicide.

'My father may change his mind; oblige me by setting off instantly for

Villequier. Mount your horse, leave the premises before they rise from

table.'

As Julien did not in any way alter his air of cold astonishment, she

burst into a flood of tears.

'Allow me to manage our affairs,' she cried to him with a transport,clasping him in her arms. 'You know very well that it is not of my own

free will that I part from you. Write under cover to my maid, let the ad

dress be in a strange hand; as for me, I shall write you volumes.

Farewell! Fly.'

This last word wounded Julien, he obeyed nevertheless. 'It is fated,' he

thought, 'that even in their best moments, these people must find a way

of hurting me.'

Mathilde put up a firm resistance to all her father's prudent plans. She

steadfastly refused to set the negotiation upon any other basis than this:

She was to be Madame Sorel, and would live in poverty with her hus

band in Switzerland, or with her father in Paris. She thrust from her the

suggestion of a clandestine confinement. 'That would pave the way to

the possibility of calumny and dishonour. Two months after our mar

riage, I shall travel abroad with my husband, and it will be easy for us to

pretend that my child was born at a suitable date.'

Received at first with transports of rage, this firmness ended by inspir

ing the Marquis with doubts.

In a weak moment: 'Here,' he said to his daughter, 'is a transfer of ten

thousand livres a year in the Funds, send it to your Julien, and let him

speedily make it impossible for me to reclaim it.'

To obey Mathilde, whose love of giving orders he knew, Julien had

made an unnecessary journey of forty leagues: he was at Villequier, ex

amining the accounts of the agents; this generosity on the part of the

428Marquis was the occasion of his return. He went to seek asylum with the

abbe Pirard, who, during his absence, had become Mathilde's most ef

fective ally. As often as he was interrogated by the Marquis, he proved to

him that any other course than a public marriage would be a crime in the

sight of God.

'And happily,' the abbe added, 'the wisdom of the world is here in ac

cordance with religion. Could you reckon for an instant, knowing the

fiery character of Mademoiselle de La Mole, upon a secrecy which she

had not imposed on herself? If you do not allow the frank course of a

public marriage, society will occupy itself for far longer with this strange

misalliance. Everything must be stated at one time, without the least

mystery, apparent or real.'

'It is true,' said the Marquis, growing pensive. 'By this method, to talk

of the marriage after three days becomes the chatter of a man who lacks

ideas. We ought to profit by some great antiJacobin measure by the

Government to slip in unobserved in its wake.'

Two or three of M. de La Mole's friends shared the abbe Pirard's view.

The great obstacle, in their eyes, was Mathilde's decided nature. But in

spite of all these specious arguments, the Marquis could not grow recon

ciled to abandoning the hope of a tabouret for his daughter.

His memory and his imagination were full of all sorts of trickeries and

pretences which had still been possible in his younger days. To yield to

necessity, to go in fear of the law seemed to him an absurd thing and dis

honouring to a man of his rank. He was paying dearly for those enchant

ing dreams in which he had indulged for the last ten years as to the fu

ture of his beloved daughter.

'Who could have foreseen it?' he said to himself. 'A girl of so haughty a

character, so elevated a mind, prouder than myself of the name she

bears! One whose hand had been asked of me in advance by all the most

illustratious blood in France!

'We must abandon all prudence. This age is destined to bring

everything to confusion! We are marching towards chaos.'

429chapter34

A Man of Spirit

The prefect riding along on his horse thought to himself, Why

should I not be a minister, head of the Cabinet, a duke? This is

how I would wage war… In that way I would have innovators

put in chains.

Le Globe

No argument is sufficient to destroy the mastery acquired by ten years

of pleasant fancies. The Marquis thought it unreasonable to be angry, but

could not bring himself to forgive. 'If this Julien could die by accident,'

he said to himself at times… Thus it was that his sorrowful imagination

found some relief in pursuing the most absurd chimeras. They paralysed

the influence of the wise counsels of the abbe Pirard. A month passed in

this way without the slightest advance in the negotiations.

In this family affair, as in affairs of politics, the Marquis had brilliant

flashes of insight which would leave him enthusiastic for three days on

end. At such times a plan of conduct would not please him because it

was backed by sound reasons; the reasons found favour in his sight only

in so far as they supported his favourite plan. For three days, he would

labour with all the ardour and enthusiasm of a poet, to bring matters to a

certain position; on the fourth, he no longer gave it a thought.

At first Julien was disconcerted by the dilatoriness of the Marquis; but,after some weeks, he began to discern that M. de La Mole had, in dealing

with this affair, no definite plan.

Madame de La Mole and the rest of the household thought that Julien

had gone into the country to look after the estates; he was in hiding in

the abbe Pirard's presbytery, and saw Mathilde almost every day; she,each morning, went to spend an hour with her father, but sometimes

they remained for weeks on end without mentioning the matter that was

occupying all their thoughts.

430'I do not wish to know where that man is,' the Marquis said to her one

day; 'send him this letter.' Mathilde read:

'The estates in Languedoc bring in 20,600 francs. I give 10,600 francs to

my daughter, and 10,000 francs to M. Julien Sorel. I make over the estates

themselves, that is to say. Tell the lawyer to draft two separate deeds of

gift, and to bring me them tomorrow; after which, no further relations

between us. Ah! Sir, how was I to expect such a thing as this?

'LE MARQUIS DE LA MOLE'

'I thank you very much,' said Mathilde gaily. 'We are going to settle in

the Chateau d'Aiguillon, between Agen and Marmande. They say that

the country there is as beautiful as Italy.'

This donation came as a great surprise to Julien. He was no longer the

severe, cold man that we have known. The destiny of his child absorbed

all his thoughts in anticipation. This unexpected fortune, quite consider

able for so poor a man, made him ambitious. He now saw, settled on his

wife or himself, an income of 30,600 francs. As for Mathilde, all her senti

ments were absorbed in one of adoration of her husband, for thus it was

that her pride always named Julien. Her great, her sole ambition was to

have her marriage recognised. She spent her time in exaggerating the

high degree of prudence that she had shown in uniting her destiny with

that of a superior man. Personal merit was in fashion in her brain.

Their almost continuous separation, the multiplicity of business, the

little time that they had to talk of love, now completed the good effect of

the wise policy adopted by Julien in the past.

Finally Mathilde grew impatient at seeing so little of the man whom

she had now come to love sincerely.

In a moment of ill humour she wrote to her father, and began her letter

like Othello:

'That I have preferred Julien to the attractions which society offered to

the daughter of M. le Marquis de La Mole, my choice of him sufficiently

proves. These pleasures of reputation and petty vanity are nothing to

me. It will soon be six weeks that I have lived apart from my husband.

That is enough to prove my respect for you. Before next Thursday, I shall

leave the paternal roof. Your generosity has made us rich. No one knows

my secret save the estimable abbe Pirard. I shall go to him; he will marry

us, and an hour after the ceremony we shall be on our way to Langue

doc, and shall never appear again in Paris save by your order. But what

pierces me to the heart is that all this will furnish a savoury anecdote at

431my expense, and at yours. May not the epigrams of a foolish public ob

lige our excellent Norbert to seek a quarrel with Julien? In that event, I

know him, I should have no control over him. We should find in his

heart the plebeian in revolt. I implore you on my knees, O my father,come and attend our wedding, in M. Pirard's church, next Thursday. The

point of the malicious anecdote will be blunted, and the life of your only

son, my husband's life will be made safe,' etc., etc.

This letter plunged the Marquis in a strange embarrassment. He must

now at length make up his mind. AH his little habits, all his common

place friends had lost their influence.

In these strange circumstances, the salient features of his character,stamped upon it by the events of his younger days, resumed their full

sway. The troubles of the Emigration had made him a man of imagina

tion. After he had enjoyed for two years an immense fortune and all the

distinctions of the Court, 1790 had cast him into the fearful hardships of

the Emigration. This hard school had changed the heart of a man of two

and twenty. Actually he was encamped amid his present wealth rather

than dominated by it. But this same imagination which had preserved

his soul from the gangrene of gold, had left him a prey to an insane pas

sion for seeing his daughter adorned with a finesounding title.

During the six weeks that had just elapsed, urged at one moment by a

caprice, the Marquis had decided to enrich Julien; poverty seemed to

him ignoble, dishonouring to himself, M. de La Mole, impossible in the

husband of his daughter; he showered money upon him. Next day, his

imagination taking another direction, it seemed to him that Julien would

hear the silent voice of this generosity in the matter of money, change his

name, retire to America, write to Mathilde that he was dead to her. M. de

La Mole imagined this letter as written, and traced its effect on his

daughter's character…

On the day on which he was awakened from these youthful dreams by

Mathilde's real letter, after having long thought of killing Julien or of

making him disappear, he was dreaming of building up for him a bril

liant future. He was making him take the name of one of his properties;and why should he not secure the transmission of his peerage to him? M.

le Duc de Chaulnes, his fatherinlaw, had spoken to him several times,since his only son had been killed in Spain, of wishing to hand on his

title to Norbert …

'One cannot deny that Julien shows a singular aptitude for business,audacity, perhaps even brilliance,' the Marquis said to himself… 'But at

432the back of that character, I find something alarming. It is the impression

that he produces on everyone, therefore there must be something real in

it' (the more difficult this reality was to grasp, the more it alarmed the

imaginative spirit of the old Marquis).

'My daughter expressed it to me very cleverly the other day' (in a letter

which we have suppressed): '"Julien belongs to no drawing-room, to no

set." He has not contrived to find any support against me, not the slight

est resource if I abandon him… But is that due to ignorance of the actual

state of society? Two or three times I have said to him: "There is no real

and profitable candidature save that of the drawing-rooms … "

'No, he has not the adroit and cautious spirit of a pettifogger who nev

er loses a minute or an opportunity… It is not at all the character of a

Louis XI. On the other hand, I see in him the most ungenerous max

ims … I lose track of him… Does he repeat those maxims to himself, to

serve as a dam to his passions?

'Anyhow, one thing is clear: he cannot endure contempt, in that way I

hold him.

'He has not the religious feeling for high birth, it is true, he does not re

spect us by instinct … That is bad; but, after all, the heart of a seminarist

should be impatient only of the want of pleasure and money. He is very

different; he cannot endure contempt at any price.'

Forced by his daughter's letter, M. de La Mole saw the necessity of

making up his mind: 'Well, here is the great question: has Julien's auda

city gone the length of setting him to make love to my daughter, because

he knows that I love her more than anything in the world, and that I

have an income of a hundred thousand crowns?

'Mathilde protests the opposite… No, master Julien, that is a point

upon which I wish to be under no illusion.

'Has there been genuine, unpremeditated love? Or rather a vulgar de

sire to raise himself to a good position? Mathilde is perspicacious, she

felt from the first that this suspicion might ruin him with me; hence that

admission: it was she who thought first of loving him…

'That a girl of so lofty a character should so far have forgotten herself

as to make tangible advances! … Press his arm in the garden, one even

ing, how horrible! As though she had not had a hundred less indelicate

ways of letting him know that she favoured him.

'To excuse is to accuse; I distrust Mathilde… ' That day, the Marquis's

arguments were more conclusive than usual. Habit, however, prevailed;433he resolved to gain time and to write to his daughter; for they commu

nicated by letter between different parts of the house. M. de La Mole

dared not discuss matters with Mathilde and hold out against her. He

was afraid of bringing everything to an end by a sudden concession.

'Take care not to commit any fresh act of folly; here is a commission as

Lieutenant of Hussars for M. le Chevalier Julien Sorel de La Vernaye.

You see what I am doing for him. Do not cross me, do not question me.

He shall start within twentyfour hours, and report himself at Stras

bourg, where his regiment is quartered. Here is a draft upon my banker;I expect obedience.'

Mathilde's love and joy knew no bounds; she sought to profit by her

victory and replied at once:

'M. de La Vernaye would be at your feet, speechless with gratitude, if

he knew all that you are deigning to do for him. But, in the midst of this

generosity, my father has forgotten me; your daughter's honour is in

danger. A single indiscretion may leave an everlasting blot, which an in

come of twenty thousand crowns would not efface. I shall send this com

mission to M. de La Vernaye only if you give me your word that, in the

course of the next month, my marriage shall be celebrated in public, at

Villequier. Soon after that period, which I beg you not to prolong, your

daughter will be unable to appear in public save with the name of Ma

dame de La Vernaye. How I thank you, dear Papa, for having saved me

from the name of Sorel,' etc., etc.

The reply was unexpected.

'Obey or I retract all. Tremble, rash girl, I do not yet know what your

Julien is, and you yourself know even less than I. Let him start for Stras

bourg, and put his best foot foremost. I shall make my wishes known in

a fortnight's time.'

The firmness of this reply astonished Mathilde. 'I do not know Julien';these words plunged her in a daydream which presently ended in the

most enchanting suppositions; but she believed them to be the truth. 'My

Julien's mind has not donned the tawdry little uniform of the drawing

rooms, and my father disbelieves in his superiority because of the very

fact which proves it …

'Anyhow, if I do not obey this sudden impulse, I foresee the possibility

of a public scene; a scandal lowers my position in society, and may make

me less attractive in Julien's eyes. After the scandal… ten years of

poverty; and the folly of choosing a husband on account of his merit can

only be saved from ridicule by the most brilliant opulence. If I live apart

434from my father, at his age, he may forget me … Norbert will marry some

attractive, clever woman: the old Louis XIV was beguiled by the

Duchesse de Bourgogne … '

She decided to obey, but refrained from communicating her father's

letter to Julien; his unaccountable nature might lead him to commit some

act of folly.

That evening, when she informed Julien that he was a Lieutenant of

Hussars, his joy knew no bounds. We may form an idea of it from the

ambition that marked his whole life, and from the passionate love that he

now felt for his child. The change of name filled him with astonishment.

'At last,' he thought, 'the tale of my adventures is finished, and the

credit is all mine. I have contrived to make myself loved by this monster

of pride,' he added, looking at Mathilde; 'her father cannot live without

her, nor she without me.'

435chapter35

A Storm

My God, give me mediocrity!

MIRABEAU

He was completely absorbed; he made only a halfhearted response to

the keen affection that she showed for him. He remained taciturn and

sombre. Never had he appeared so great, so adorable in the eyes of

Mathilde. She feared some subtle refinement of his pride which would

presently upset the whole position.

Almost every morning, she saw the abbe Pirard come to the Hotel.

Through his agency might not Julien have penetrated to some extent into

her father's intentions? Might not the Marquis himself, in a moment of

caprice, have written to him? After so great a happiness, how was she to

account for Julien's air of severity? She dared not question him.

Dared not! She, Mathilde! There was, from that moment, in her feeling

for Julien, something vague, unaccountable, almost akin to terror. That

sere heart felt all the passion that is possible in one brought up amid all

that excess of civilisation which Paris admires.

Early next morning, Julien was in the abbe Pirard's presbytery. A pair

of posthorses arrived in the courtyard drawing a dilapidated chaise,hired at the nearest post.

'Such an equipage is no longer in keeping,' the stern abbe told him,with a cantankerous air. 'Here are twenty thousand francs, of which M.

de La Mole makes you a present; he expects you to spend them within

the year, but to try and make yourself as little ridiculous as possible.' (In

so large a sum, bestowed on a young man, the priest saw only an occa

sion of sin.)

'The Marquis adds: "M. Julien de La Vernaye will have received this

money from his father, whom there is no use in my identifying more pre

cisely. M. de La Vernaye will doubtless think it proper to make a present

436to M. Sorel, carpenter at Verrieres, who looked after him in his child

hood … " I will undertake this part of the commission,' the abbe went on;'I have at last made M. de La Mole decide to compromise with that abbe

de Frilair, who is such a Jesuit. His position is unquestionably too strong

for us. The implicit recognition of your noble birth by that man who gov

erns Besancon will be one of the implied conditions of the arrangement.'

Julien was no longer able to control his enthusiasm, he embraced the

abbe, he saw himself recognised.

'Fie!' said M. Pirard, and thrust him away; 'what is the meaning of this

worldly vanity? As for Sorel and his sons, I shall offer them, in my name,an annual pension of five hundred francs, which will be paid to each of

them separately, so long as I am satisfied with them.'

Julien was by this time cold and stiff. He thanked the abbe, but in the

vaguest terms and without binding himself to anything. 'Can it indeed

be possible,' he asked himself, 'that I am the natural son of some great

nobleman, banished among our mountains by the terrible Napoleon?'

Every moment this idea seemed to him less improbable … 'My hatred for

my father would be a proof … I should no longer be a monster!'

A few days after this monologue, the Fifteenth Regiment of Hussars,one of the smartest in the Army, was drawn up in order of battle on the

parade ground of Strasbourg. M. le Chevalier de La Vernaye was moun

ted upon the finest horse in Alsace, which had cost him six thousand

francs. He had joined as Lieutenant, without having ever been a Second

Lieutenant, save on the musterroll of a Regiment of which he had never

even heard.

His impassive air, his severe and almost cruel eyes, his pallor, his un

alterable coolness won him a reputation from the first day. In a short

time, his perfect and entirely measured courtesy, his skill with the pistol

and sabre, which he made known without undue affectation, removed

all temptation to joke audibly at his expense. After five or six days of

hesitation, the general opinion of the Regiment declared itself in his fa

vour. 'This young man has everything,' said the older officers who were

inclined to banter, 'except youth.'

>

From Strasbourg, Julien wrote to M. Chelan, the former cure of Verri

eres, who was now reaching the extreme limits of old age:

'You will have learned with a joy, of which I have no doubt, of the

events that have led my family to make me rich. Here are five hundred

437francs which I beg you to distribute without display, and with no men

tion of my name, among the needy, who are poor now as I was once, and

whom you are doubtless assisting as in the past you assisted me.'

Julien was intoxicated with ambition and not with vanity; he still ap

plied a great deal of his attention to his outward appearance. His horses,his uniforms, the liveries of his servants were kept up with a nicety

which would have done credit to the punctiliousness of a great English

nobleman. Though only just a Lieutenant, promoted by favour and after

two days' service, he was already calculating that, in order to be Com

mander in Chief at thirty, at latest, like all the great Generals, he would

need at three and twenty to be something more than Lieutenant. He

could think of nothing but glory and his son.

It was in the midst of the transports of the most frenzied ambition that

he was interrupted by a young footman from the Hotel de La Mole, who

arrived with a letter.

'All is lost,' Mathilde wrote to him; 'hasten here as quickly as possible,sacrifice everything, desert if need be. As soon as you arrive, wait for me

in a cab, outside the little gate of the garden, No.— Rue ——. I shall

come out to speak to you; perhaps I may be able to let you into the

garden. All is lost, and, I fear, beyond hope of repair; count upon me,you will find me devoted and steadfast in adversity. I love you.'

In a few minutes, Julien obtained leave from his Colonel, and left

Strasbourg at a gallop; but the fearful anxiety which was devouring him

did not allow him to continue this method of travel farther than Metz.

He flung himself into a postchaise; and it was with an almost incredible

rapidity that he arrived at the appointed place, outside the little gate of

the garden of the Hotel de La Mole. The gate was flung open, and in a

moment, Mathilde, forgetting all selfrespect, threw herself into his arms.

Fortunately, it was but five o'clock in the morning and the street was still

deserted.

'All is lost; my father, dreading my tears, went away on Thursday

night. Where? No one knows. Here is his letter; read it.' And she got into

the cab with Julien.

'I could forgive everything, except the plan of seducing you because

you are rich. That, unhappy girl, is the appalling truth. I give you my

word of honour that I will never consent to a marriage with that man. I

promise him an income of ten thousand livres if he consents to live

abroad, beyond the frontiers of France, or better still in America. Read

the letter which I have received in reply to a request for information. The

438shameless scoundrel had himself invited me to write to Madame de Ren

al. Never will I read a line from you about the man. I have a horror of

Paris and of you. I request you to cloak with the greatest secrecy what

must shortly happen. Renounce honestly a vile fellow, and you will re

gain a father.'

'Where is Madame de Renal's letter?' said Julien coldly. 'Here it is. I

did not wish to show it to you until you were prepared.'

LETTER

'What I owe to the sacred cause of religion and morals obliges me, Sir,to the painful step which I take in addressing you; a rule, which admits

of no relaxation, orders me at this moment to do harm to my neighbour,but in order to avoid a greater scandal. The grief which I feel must be

overborne by a sense of duty. It is only too true, Sir, the conduct of the

person with regard to whom you ask me to tell the whole truth may

have seemed inexplicable or indeed honourable. It may have been

thought expedient to conceal or to disguise a part of the truth, prudence

required this as well as religion. But that conduct, which you desire to

know, has been in fact extremely reprehensible, and more so than I can

say. Poor and avaricious, it is by the aid of the most consummate hypo

crisy, and by the seduction of a weak and unhappy woman, that this

man has sought to make a position for himself and to become somebody.

It is a part of my painful duty to add that I am obliged to believe that M.

J—— has no religious principles. I am bound in conscience to think that

one of his avenues to success in a household is to seek to seduce the wo

man who has most influence there. Cloaked by a show of disinterested

ness and by phrases from novels, his great and sole object is to contrive

to secure control over the master of the house and over his fortune. He

leaves in his wake misery and undying regret,' etc., etc., etc.

This letter, extremely long and half obliterated by tears, was certainly

in the hand of Madame de Renal; it was even written with greater care

than usual.

'I cannot blame M. de La Mole,' said Julien when he had finished read

ing it; 'he is just and prudent. What father would give his beloved

daughter to such a man! Farewell!'

Julien sprang out of the cab, and ran to his postchaise which had

drawn up at the end of the street. Mathilde, whom he seemed to have

forgotten, followed him for a little way; but the sight of the tradesmen

who were coming to the doors of their shops, and to whom she was

known, forced her to retire in haste into the garden.

439Julien had set off for Verrieres. On this rapid journey, he was unable to

write to Mathilde as he had intended, his hand traced nothing more than

an illegible scrawl on the paper.

He arrived at Verrieres on a Sunday morning. He entered the shop of

the local gunsmith, who congratulated him effusively on his recent ac

cess to fortune. It was the talk of the town.

Julien had some difficulty in making him understand that he required

a brace of pistols. The gunsmith, at his request, loaded the pistols.

The three bells sounded; this is a signal well known in French villages,which, after the various peals of the morning, announces that mass is just

about to begin.

Julien entered the new church of Verrieres. All the tall windows of the

building were screened by crimson curtains. He found himself standing

a few yards behind Madame de Renal's bench. He had the impression

that she was praying with fervour. The sight of this woman who had

loved him so dearly made Julien's arm tremble so violently that he could

not at first carry out his design. 'I cannot,' he said to himself; 'I am phys

ically incapable of it.'

At that moment, the young clerk who was serving mass rang the bell

for the Elevation. Madame de Renal bowed her head which for a mo

ment was almost entirely concealed by the folds of her shawl. Her aspect

was less familiar to Julien; he fired a shot at her with one pistol and

missed her, he fired a second shot; she fell.

440chapter36

Painful Details

Do not look for any weakness on my part. I have avenged myself.

I have deserved death, and here I am. Pray for my soul.

SCHILLER

Julien remained motionless, seeing nothing. When he came to himself

a little, he noticed the whole congregation rushing from the church; the

priest had left the altar. Julien set off at a leisurely pace in the wake of

some women who were screaming as they went. One woman, who was

trying to escape faster than the rest, gave him a violent push; he fell. His

feet were caught in a chair overturned by the crowd; as he rose, he felt

himself gripped by the collar; it was a gendarme in full uniform who was

arresting him. Mechanically Julien's hand went to his pocket pistols; but

a second gendarme seized him by the arms.

He was led away to prison. They took him into a room, put irons on

his wrists, and left him by himself; the door was shut on him and

doublelocked; all this was carried out quickly, and he remained uncon

scious of it.

'Faith, all is over,' he said aloud on coming to himself… 'Yes, in a fort

night the guillotine … or suicide between now and then.'

His reasoning went no farther; he felt a pain in his head as though it

had been gripped with violence. He looked round to see if anyone was

holding it. A few moments later, he fell into a deep slumber.

Madame de Renal was not mortally wounded. The first bullet had

passed through her hat; as she turned round, the second shot had been

fired. This bullet had struck her in the shoulder, and, what was surpris

ing, had glanced back from the shoulderblade, which nevertheless it

shattered, against a gothic pillar, from which it broke off a huge splinter

of stone.

441When, after a long and painful examination, the surgeon, a grave man,said to Madame de Renal: 'I answer for your life as for my own,' she was

deeply affected.

For a long time she had sincerely longed for death. The letter which

she had been ordered to write by her confessor of the moment, and had

written to M. de La Mole, had dealt the final blow to this creature

weakened by an everpresent sorrow. This sorrow was Julien's absence;she herself called it remorse. Her director, a young cleric, virtuous and

fervent, recently arrived from Dijon, was under no illusion.

'To die thus, but not by my own hand, is not a sin,' thought Madame

de Renal. 'God will pardon me perhaps for rejoicing in my death.' She

dared not add: 'And to die by the hand of Julien is the acme of bliss.'

As soon as she was rid of the presence of the surgeon, and of all her

friends who had come crowding round her, she sent for Elisa, her maid.

'The gaoler,' she said to her, blushing deeply, 'is a cruel man. Doubt

less he intends to maltreat him, thinking that by so doing he will be

pleasing me … The thought of such a thing is unendurable. Could you

not go, as though on your own behalf, and give the gaoler this packet

which contains a few louis? You will tell him that religion does not per

mit his maltreating him … But on no account must he mention this gift

of money.'

It was to this circumstance that Julien was indebted for the humanity

of the gaoler of Verrieres; he was still that M. Noiroud, the loyal support

er of the government, whom we have seen thrown into such a panic by

the arrival of M. Appert.

A magistrate appeared in the prison. 'I have taken life with premedita

tion,' Julien said to him; 'I bought the pistols and had them loaded by So

andso, the gunsmith. Article 1342. of the Penal Code is quite clear, I de

serve death and await it.' The magistrate, surprised by the character of

this reply, sought to multiply his questions so that the accused might

contradict himself in his answers.

'But don't you see,' Julien said to him with a smile, 'that I am making

myself out as guilty as you can wish? Go, Sir, you shall not lack the

quarry that you are pursuing. You shall have the pleasure of passing sen

tence. Spare me your presence.

'I have still a tiresome duty to perform,' thought Julien, 'I must write to

Mademoiselle de La Mole.

442'I have avenged myself,' he told her. 'Unfortunately, my name will ap

pear in the newspapers, and I cannot escape from this world incognito. I

shall die within two months. My revenge has been terrible, like the grief

of being parted from you. From this moment, I forbid myself to write

and to utter your name. Never speak of me, even to my son: silence is the

only way of honouring me. To the average man I shall be a common

murderer … Allow me to tell the truth in this supreme moment: you will

forget me. This great catastrophe, as to which I recommend you never to

open your lips to a living soul, will suppress for some years all the ro

mantic and unduly adventurous element that I saw in your character.

You were made to live among the heroes of the Middle Ages; show in

this crisis their firmness of character. Let what is bound to happen be ac

complished in secret and without compromising you. You will take a

false name and dispense with a confidant. If you must absolutely have

the assistance of a friend, I bequeath to you the abbe Pirard.

'Do not speak to anyone else, especially to men of your own class; de

Luz or Caylus.

'A year after my death, marry M. de Croisenois; I order you as your

husband. Do not write to me at all, I should not answer you. Though far

less of a villain than Iago, or so it seems to me, I shall say like him: From

this time forth I never will speak word.

'No one shall see me either speak or write; you will have had my last

words, with my last adoration.

'J. S.'

It was after he had sent off this letter that for the first time, Julien, hav

ing slightly recovered himself, became extremely unhappy. One by one,each of the hopes of his ambition must be wrenched from his heart by

those solemn words: 'I am to die.' Death, in itself, was not horrible in his

eyes. His whole life had been merely a long preparation for misfortune,and he had certainly never forgotten what is reckoned the greatest mis

fortune of all.

'Why!' he said to himself, 'if in sixty days I had to fight a duel with a

man who was a champion fencer, should I be so weak as to think of it in

cessantly and with terror in my soul?'

He spent more than an hour in seeking to discover his exact senti

ments in this connection.

443When he had seen clearly into his soul, and the truth appeared before

his eyes as sharply defined as one of the pillars of his prison, he thought

of remorse.

'Why should I feel any? I have been outraged in a terrible manner; I

have taken life, I deserve death, but that is all. I die after having paid my

reckoning with humanity. I leave behind me no unfulfilled obligation, I

owe nothing to anyone; there is nothing shameful in my death but the in

strument of it: that by itself, it is true, will amply suffice to shame me in

the eyes of the townsfolk of Verrieres; but, from an intellectual point of

view, what could be more contemptible? There remains one way of ac

quiring distinction in their eyes: namely, by scattering gold coins among

the crowd on my way to the scaffold. My memory, linked with the

thought of gold, will then be resplendent to them.'

After this consideration, which at the end of a minute seemed to him

conclusive: 'I have nothing more to do on earth,' Julien said to himself

and fell into a deep slumber.

About nine o'clock in the evening, the gaoler awakened him by bring

ing in his supper.

'What are they saying in Verrieres?'

'Monsieur Julien, the oath that I took before the Crucifix, in the King's

court, the day I was installed in my post, compels me to keep silence.'

He was silent, but remained in the room. The spectacle of this vulgar

hypocrisy amused Julien. 'I must,' he thought, 'keep him waiting a long

time for the five francs which he wants as the price of his conscience.'

When the gaoler saw the meal come to an end without any attempt at

corruption:

'The friendship that I feel for you, Monsieur Julien,' he began, with a

false, winning air, 'obliges me to speak; although they may say that it is

against the interests of justice, because it may help you to arrange your

defence … Monsieur Julien, who has a good heart, will be glad if I tell

him that Madame de Renal is going on well.'

'What! She is not dead?' cried Julien, beside himself with amazement.

'What! Didn't you know?' said the gaoler with an air of stupidity

which presently turned to one of joyful greed. 'It would only be right for

Monsieur to give something to the surgeon who, according to law and

justice, ought not to speak. But, to oblige Monsieur, I went to his house,and he told me everything… '

444'In short, the injury is not mortal,' said Julien, losing patience, 'you an

swer for that with your life?'

The gaoler, a giant six feet in stature, took fright and retreated towards

the door. Julien saw that he was going the wrong way to reach the truth,he sat down again and tossed a napoleon to M. Noiroud.

As the man's story began to convince Julien that Madame de Renal's

injury was not mortal, he felt himself overcome by tears. 'Leave me!' he

said suddenly.

The gaoler obeyed. As soon as the door was shut: 'Great God! She is

not dead!' exclaimed Julien; and he fell on his knees, weeping hot tears.

In this supreme moment he was a believer. What matter the hypocris

ies of the priests? Can they destroy anything of the truth and sublimity

of the idea of God?

Only then did Julien begin to repent of the crime that he had commit

ted. By a coincidence which saved him from despair, at that moment

only had passed away the state of irritation and semiinsanity in which

he had been plunged since leaving Paris for Verrieres.

His tears sprang from a generous source, he had no doubt as to the

sentence that was in store for him.

'And so she will live!' he said to himself… 'She will live to pardon me

and to love me.'

Late next morning, when the gaoler awakened him:

'You must have a wonderful heart, Monsieur Julien,' the man said to

him. 'Twice I have come in and did not want to wake you. Here are two

bottles of excellent wine which M. Maslon, our cure, sends you.'

'What? Is that rascal here still?' said Julien.

'Yes, Sir,' replied the gaoler, lowering his voice, 'but do not speak so

loud, it may damage you.'

Julien laughed heartily.

'At the stage I have reached, my friend, you alone could damage me, if

you ceased to be gentle and human … You shall be well paid,' Julien

broke off, resuming his imperious air. This air was immediately justified

by the gift of a small coin.

M. Noiroud told him once more, going into the fullest detail, all that

he had heard about Madame de Renal, but he did not mention Miss

Elisa's visit.

445This man was as menial and submissive as possible. An idea came into

Julien's head: 'This sort of ungainly giant may earn three or four hundred

francs, for his prison is never crowded; I can guarantee him ten thousand

francs, if he cares to escape to Switzerland with me… The difficulty will

be to persuade him of my sincerity.' The thought of the long colloquy

that he would have to hold with so vile a creature filled Julien with dis

gust, he turned his mind to other things.

That evening, there was no longer time. A postchaise came to fetch

him at midnight. He was charmed with the gendarmes, his travelling

companions. In the morning, when he arrived at the prison of Besancon,they were so kind as to lodge him on the upper floor of a gothic dun

geon. He guessed the architecture to date from the beginning of the four

teenth century; he admired its grace and pointed airiness. Through a nar

row gap between two walls on the farther side of a deep courtyard, there

was a glimpse of a superb view.

Next day he was examined, after which, for several days, he was left to

himself. His spirit was calm. He could find nothing that was not quite

simple in his case: 'I sought to kill, I must be killed.'

His thoughts did not linger to consider this argument. The trial, the

annoyance of appearing in public, the defence, he regarded as so many

trifling embarrassments, tiresome ceremonies of which it would be time

to think when the day came. The prospect of death detained him almost

as little: 'I shall think of that after the sentence.' Life was by no means te

dious to him, he looked at everything in a fresh light. He had no ambi

tion left. He thought rarely of Mademoiselle de La Mole. His remorse oc

cupied him a great deal and often called up before him the image of Ma

dame de Renal, especially in the silence of the night, disturbed only, in

this lofty dungeon, by the cry of the osprey!

He thanked heaven for not having let him wound her mortally. 'An as

tonishing thing!' he said to himself, 'I thought that by her letter to M. de

La Mole she had destroyed my future happiness for all time, and, in less

than a fortnight after the date of that letter, I no longer think of all that

was occupying my mind… Two or three thousand livres a year to live

quietly in a mountain village like Vergy… I was happy then … I did not

recognise my own happiness!'

At other moments, he would rise with a bound from his chair. 'If I had

wounded Madame de Renal mortally, I should have killed myself … I re

quire that certainty to make me feel a horror of myself. ,,,446'Kill myself! That is the great question,' he said to himself. Those

judges so steeped in formalities, so thirsty for the blood of the wretched

prisoner, who would have the best of citizens hanged in order to hang a

Cross from their own buttonholes… I should remove myself from their

power, from their insults in bad French, which the local newspaper will

proceed to call eloquence.

'I may live for five or six weeks still, more or less … Kill myself! Faith,no,' he said to himself after a few days, 'Napoleon lived…

'Besides, life is pleasant to me; this is a quiet spot to stay in; I have no

worries,' he added, laughing, and set to work to make a list of the books

which he wished to have sent to him from Paris.

447chapter37

A Dungeon

The tomb of a friend.

STERNE

He heard a great din in the corridor; it was not the hour for visiting his

cell; the osprey flew away screaming, the door opened, and the vener

able cure Chelan, trembling all over and leaning upon his cane, flung

himself into Julien's arms.

'Ah, great God! Is it possible, my child… Monster, I ought to say.'

And the good old man could not add another word. Julien was afraid

of his falling. He was obliged to lead him to a chair. The hand of time

had fallen heavily upon this man, so vigorous in days gone by. He ap

peared to Julien to be only the ghost of his former self.

When he had recovered his breath: 'Only the day before yesterday, I

received your letter from Strasbourg, with your five hundred francs for

the poor of Verrieres; it was brought to me up in the mountains at

Liveru, where I have gone to live with my nephew Jean. Yesterday, I

learned of the catastrophe… Oh, heavens! Is it possible?' The old man's

tears ceased to flow, he seemed incapable of thought and added mechan

ically: 'You will need your five hundred francs, I have brought them

back to you.'

'I need to see you, Father!' Julien exclaimed with emotion. 'I have

plenty of money.'

But he could not extract any coherent answer. From time to time, M.

Chelan shed a few tears which rolled in silence down his cheeks; then he

gazed at Julien, and was almost stupefied at seeing him take his hands

and raise them to his lips. That countenance, once so lively, and so vigor

ous in its expression of the noblest sentiments, was no longer to be

aroused from a state of apathy. A sort of peasant came presently to fetch

the old man. 'It does not do to tire him,' he said to Julien, who realised

448that this was the nephew. This visit left Julien plunged in bitter grief

which stopped his tears. Everything seemed to him sad and comfortless;he felt his heart freeze in his bosom.

This was the most cruel moment that he had experienced since the

crime. He had seen death face to face, and in all its ugliness. All the illu

sions of greatness of soul and generosity had been scattered like a cloud

before the storm.

This fearful situation lasted for some hours. After moral poisoning,one requires physical remedies and a bottle of champagne. Julien would

have deemed himself a coward had he had recourse to them. Towards

the end of a horrible day, the whole of which he had spent in pacing the

floor of his narrow dungeon: 'What a fool I am!' he exclaimed. 'It would

be if I expected to die in my bed that the sight of that poor old man

ought to make me so utterly wretched; but a swift death in the springtide

of life is the very thing to save me from that miserable decrepitude.'

Whatever arguments he might thus advance, Julien found that he was

moved like any pusillanimous creature and made wretched in con

sequence by this visit.

There was no longer any trace of rugged grandeur in him, any Roman

virtue; death appeared to him on a higher plane, and as a thing less eas

ily to be won.

'This shall be my thermometer,' he said to himself. This evening I am

ten degrees below the level of courage that must lead me to the guillot

ine. This morning, I had that courage. What does it matter, after all?

Provided that it returns to me at the right moment.' This idea of a ther

mometer amused him and succeeded finally in distracting him.

Next morning, on waking, he was ashamed of his behaviour the day

before. 'My happiness, my tranquillity are at stake.' He almost made up

his mind to write to the AttorneyGeneral to ask that nobody should be

admitted to his cell. 'And Fouque?' he thought. 'If he can manage to

come to Besancon, how distressed he will be.'

It was perhaps two months since he had given Fouque a thought. 'I

was an utter fool at Strasbourg, my thoughts never went beyond my coat

collar.' Memories of Fouque kept recurring to his mind and left him in a

more tender mood. He paced the floor with agitation. 'Now I am cer

tainly twenty degrees below the level of death … If this weakness in

creases, it will pay me better to kill myself. What a joy for the abbe

Maslons and the Valenods if I die here like a rat!'

449Fouque arrived; the simple, honest fellow was shattered by grief. His

sole idea, if he had one at all, was to sell all that he possessed in order to

corrupt the gaoler and so save Julien's life. He spoke to him for hours of

the escape of M. de Lavalette.

'You distress me,' Julien said to him; 'M. de Lavalette was innocent, I

am guilty. Without meaning to do so, you make me realise the

difference…

'But is it true? What! You would sell all that you have?' said Julien,suddenly becoming observant and suspicious once more.

Fouque, delighted to see his friend at last responsive to his dominant

idea, explained to him in full detail, and to within a hundred francs or

so, what he expected to receive for each of his properties.

'What a sublime effort in a small landowner!' thought Julien. 'How

many savings, how many little cheeseparings, which made me blush so

when I saw him make them, he is willing to sacrifice for me! None of

those fine young fellows whom I used to see at the Hotel de La Mole,who read Rene, would have any of his absurdities; but apart from those

of them who are very young and have inherited fortunes, as well, and

know nothing of the value of money, which of those fine Parisians

would be capable of such a sacrifice?'

All Fouque's mistakes in grammer, all his vulgar mannerisms van

ished, he flung himself into his arms. Never have the provinces, when

contrasted with Paris, received a nobler homage. Fouque, delighted by

the enthusiasm which he read in his friend's eyes, mistook it for consent

to an escape.

This glimpse of the sublime restored to Julien all the strength of which

M. Chelan's visit had robbed him. He was still very young; but, to my

mind, he was a fine plant. Instead of his advancing from tenderness to

cunning, like the majority of men, age would have given him an easy ac

cess to emotion, he would have been cured of an insane distrust … But

what good is there in these vain predictions?

The examinations became more frequent, in spite of the efforts of Juli

en, whose answers were all aimed at cutting the whole business short. 'I

have taken life, or at least I have sought to take life, and with premedita

tion,' he repeated day after day. But the magistrate was a formalist first

and foremost. Julien's statements in no way cut short the examinations;the magistrate's feelings were hurt. Julien did not know that they had

proposed to remove him to a horrible cellar, and that it was thanks to

450Fouque's intervention that he was allowed to remain in his charming

room one hundred and eighty steps from the ground.

M. l'abbe de Frilair was one of the important persons who contracted

with Fouque for the supply of their firewood. The honest merchant had

access even to the allpowerful VicarGeneral. To his inexpressible de

light, M. de Frilair informed him that, touched by the good qualities of

Julien and by the services which he had rendered in the past to the Sem

inary, he intended to intervene on his behalf with the judges. Fouque

saw a hope of saving his friend, and on leaving his presence, bowing to

the ground, begged the VicarGeneral to expend upon masses, to pray

for the acquittal of the prisoner, a sum of ten louis.

Fouque was strangely in error. M. de Frilair was by no means a Valen

od. He refused, and even tried to make the worthy peasant understand

that he would do better to keep his money in his pocket. Seeing that it

was impossible to make his meaning clear without indiscretion, he ad

vised him to distribute the sum in alms, for the poor prisoners, who, as a

matter of fact, were in need of everything.

'This Julien is a strange creature, his action is inexplicable,' thought M.

de Frilair, 'and nothing ought to be inexplicable to me… Perhaps it will

be possible to make a martyr of him … In any case, I shall get to the true

inwardness of this business and may perhaps find an opportunity of in

spiring fear in that Madame de Renal, who has no respect for us, and de

tests me in her heart… Perhaps I may even discover in all this some sen

sational means of reconciliation with M. de La Mole, who has a weak

ness for this little Seminarist.'

The settlement of the lawsuit had been signed some weeks earlier, and

the abbe Pirard had left Besancon, not without having spoken of the

mystery of Julien's birth, on the very day on which the wretched fellow

tried to kill Madame de Renal in the church of Verrieres.

Julien saw only one disagreeable incident in store for him before his

death, namely a visit from his father. He consulted Fouque as to his idea

of writing to the AttorneyGeneral, asking to be excused any further vis

itors. This horror at the sight of a father, at such a moment, shocked the

honest and respectable heart of the timbermerchant profoundly.

He thought he understood why so many people felt a passionate

hatred of his friend. Out of respect for another's grief, he concealed his

feelings.

'In any case,' he replied coldly, 'an order for solitary confinement

would not apply to your father.'

451chapter38

A Man of Power

But there is such mystery in her movements, such elegance in her

form. Who can she be?

SCHILLER

The doors of the dungeon were thrown open at a very early hour the

next morning. Julien awoke with a start.

'Oh, good God,' he thought, 'here comes my father. What a disagree

able scene!'

At that moment, a woman dressed as a peasant flung herself into his

arms; he had difficulty in recognising her. It was Mademoiselle de La

Mole.

'Miscreant, it was only from your letter that I learned where you were.

What you call your crime, though it is nothing but a noble revenge

which shows me all the loftiness of the heart that beats in your bosom, I

learned only at Verrieres … '

Notwithstanding his prejudices against Mademoiselle de La Mole, pre

judices of which, moreover, he had not himself formed any definite idea,Julien found her extremely good-looking. How could he fail to see in all

this manner of speech and action a noble, disinterested sentiment, far

above anything that a petty, vulgar spirit would have dared? He ima

gined once again that he was in love with a queen, and after a few mo

ments it was with a rare nobility of speech and thought that he said to

her:

'The future was tracing itself quite clearly before my eyes. After my

death, I married you to Croisenois, who would be marrying a widow.

The noble but slightly romantic spirit of this charming widow, startled

and converted to the service of common prudence by an event at once

singular, tragic and for her momentous, would have deigned to appreci

ate the quite genuine merit of the young Marquis. You would have

452resigned yourself to enjoying the happiness of the rest of the world: es

teem, riches, high rank … But, dear Mathilde, your coming to Besancon,if it is suspected, is going to be a mortal blow to M. de La Mole, and that

is what I will never forgive myself. I have already caused him so much

sorrow! The Academician will say that he has been warming a serpent in

his bosom.'

'I must confess that I hardly expected so much cold reasoning, so

much thought for the future,' said Mademoiselle de La Mole, half an

noyed. 'My maid, who is almost as prudent as yourself, procured a pass

port for herself, and it is in the name of Madame Michelet that I have

travelled post.'

'And Madame Michelet found it so easy to make her way in to me?'

'Ah! You are still the superior man, the man of my choice! First of all, I

offered a hundred francs to a magistrate's secretary, who assured me that

it was impossible for me to enter this dungeon. But after taking the

money, this honest man made me wait, raised objections, I thought that

he meant to rob me … ' She broke off.

'Well?' asked Julien.

'Do not be angry with me, my little Julien,' she said, embracing him, 'I

was obliged to give my name to this secretary, who took me for a young

milliner from Paris, enamoured of the handsome Julien… Indeed, those

are his very words. I swore to him that I was your wife, and I am to have

permission to see you every day.'

'That finishes everything,' thought Julien; 'I could not prevent it. After

all, M. de La Mole is so great a nobleman that public opinion will easily

find an excuse for the young Colonel who will wed this charming wid

ow. My approaching death will cover everything'; and he abandoned

himself with ecstasy to Mathilde's love; there followed madness, mag

nanimity, everything that was most strange. She seriously proposed to

him that she should die with him.

After these first transports, and when she had grown used to the hap

piness of seeing Julien, a keen curiosity suddenly took possession of her

soul. She examined her lover, and found him far superior to what she

had imagined. Boniface de La Mole seemed to her reincarnate in him,but in a more heroic mould.

Mathilde saw the leading counsel of the place, whom she insulted by

offering them gold too crudely; but they ended by accepting.

453She speedily came to the conclusion that in doubtful matters of high

import, everything in Besancon depended upon M. l'abbe de Frilair.

Under the obscure name of Madame Michelet, she at first found insu

perable obstacles in the way to the presence of the allpowerful leader of

the Congregation. But the rumour of the beauty of a young milliner,madly in love, who had come from Paris to Besancon to comfort the

young abbe Julien Sorel, began to spread through the town.

Mathilde went alone and on foot through the streets of Besancon; she

hoped that she might not be recognised. In any event, she thought that it

must help her cause to create a strong impression upon the populace. In

her folly she thought of making them revolt, to save Julien on his way to

the scaffold. Mademoiselle de La Mole imagined herself to be dressed

simply and in a manner becoming a woman stricken with grief; she was

dressed in such a fashion as to attract every eye.

She was the sole object of attention in Besancon, when, after a week of

solicitation, she obtained an audience of M. Frilair.

Great as her courage might be, the idea of an influential head of the

Congregation and that of a profound and cautious rascality were so

closely associated in her mind that she trembled as she rang the bell at

the door of the Bishop's palace. She could barely stand when she had to

climb the stair that led to the First VicarGeneral's apartment. The loneli

ness of the episcopal palace chilled her with fear. 'I may sit down in an

armchair, and the armchair grip me by the arms, I shall have vanished.

Of whom can my maid ask for news of me? The Captain of Police will

decline to interfere… I am all alone in this great town!'

Her first sight of the apartment set Mademoiselle de La Mole's heart at

rest. First of all, it was a footman in the most elegant livery that had

opened the door to her. The parlour in which she was asked to wait dis

played that refined and delicate luxury, so different from vulgar magni

ficence, which one finds in Paris only in the best houses. As soon as she

caught sight of M. de Frilair, who came towards her with a fatherly air,all thoughts of a dastardly crime vanished. She did not even find on his

handsome countenance the imprint of that energetic, that almost wild

virtue, so antipathetic to Parisian society. The halfsmile that animated

the features of the priest who was in supreme control of everything at

Besancon, betokened the man used to good society, the cultured prelate,the able administrator. Mathilde imagined herself in Paris.

454It needed only a few minutes for M. de Frilair to lead Mathilde on to

admit to him that she was the daughter of his powerful adversary, the

Marquis de La Mole.

'I am not, as a matter of fact, Madame Michelet,' she said, resuming all

the loftiness of her bearing, 'and this admission costs me little, for I have

come to consult you, Sir, as to the possibility of procuring the escape of

M. de La Vernaye. In the first place he is guilty of nothing worse than a

piece of stupidity; the woman at whom he fired is doing well. In the

second place, to corrupt the subordinates, I can put down here and now

fifty thousand francs, and bind myself to pay double that sum. Lastly,my gratitude and the gratitude of my family will consider no request im

possible from the person who has saved M. de La Vernaye.'

M. de Frilair appeared to be surprised at this name. Mathilde showed

him a number of letters from the Ministry of War, addressed to M. Julien

Sorel de La Vernaye.

'You see, Sir, that my father undertook to provide for his future. I mar

ried him secretly, my father wished him to be a senior officer before

making public this marriage, which is a little odd for a La Mole.'

Mathilde remarked that the expression of benevolence and of a mild

gaiety speedily vanished as M. de Frilair began to arrive at important

discoveries. A subtlety blended with profound insincerity was portrayed

on his features.

The abbe had his doubts, he perused the official documents once more

slowly.

'What advantage can I gain from these strange confidences?' he asked

himself. 'Here I am suddenly brought into close personal contact with a

friend of the famous Marechale de Fervaques, the allpowerful niece of

the Lord Bishop of ——, through whom one becomes a Bishop in France.

'What I have always regarded as hidden in the future suddenly

presents itself. This may lead me to the goal of all my ambition.'

At first Mathilde was alarmed by the rapid change in the

physiognomy of this powerful man, with whom she found herself shut

up alone in a remote part of the building. 'But why!' she said to herself

presently, 'would it not have been worse to have made no impression

upon the cold egoism of a priest sated with the enjoyment of power?'

Dazzled by this rapid and unexpected avenue to the episcopate that

was opening before his eyes, astonished at Mathilde's intelligence, for a

moment M. de Frilair was off his guard. Mademoiselle de La Mole saw

455him almost at her feet, trembling nervously with the intensity of his

ambition.

'Everything becomes clear,' she thought, 'nothing will be impossible

here for a friend of Madame de Fervaques.' Despite a sense of jealousy

that was still most painful, she found courage to explain that Julien was

an intimate friend of the Marechale, and almost every evening used to

meet, in her house, the Lord Bishop of ——.

'If you were to draw by lot four or five times in succession a list of

thirtysix jurymen from among the principal inhabitants of this Depart

ment,' said the VicarGeneral with the harsh glare of ambition, dwelling

upon each of his words, 'I should consider myself most unfortunate if in

each list I did not find eight or nine friends, and those the most intelli

gent of the lot. Almost invariably I should have a majority, more than

that, even for a verdict of guilty; you see, Mademoiselle, with what ease I

can secure an acquittal… "

The abbe broke off suddenly, as though startled by the sound of his

words; he was admitting things which are never uttered to the profane.

But Mathilde in turn was stupefied when he informed her that what

was most astonishing and interesting to Besancon society in Julien's

strange adventure, was that in the past he had inspired a grand passion

in Madame de Renal, which he had long reciprocated. M. de Frilair had

no difficulty in perceiving the extreme distress which his story

produced.

'I have my revenge!' he thought. 'Here, at last, is a way of controlling

this decided young person; I was trembling lest I should not succeed in

finding one.' Her distinguished air, as of one not easily led, intensified in

his eyes the charm of the rare beauty which he saw almost suppliant be

fore him. He recovered all his selfpossession and had no hesitation in

turning the knife in the wound.

'I should not be surprised after all,' he said to her lightly, 'were we to

learn that it was from jealousy that M. Sorel fired two shots at this wo

man whom once he loved so dearly. She must have had some relaxation,and for some time past she had been seeing a great deal of a certain abbe

Marquinot of Dijon, a sort of Jansenist, utterly without morals, like all of

them.'

M. de Frilair went on torturing with voluptuous relish and at his leis

ure the heart of this beautiful girl, whose weak spot he had discovered.

456'Why,' he said, fixing a pair of burning eyes on Mathilde, 'should M.

Sorel have chosen the church, if not because at that very moment his

rival was celebrating mass there? Everyone agrees in ascribing boundless

intelligence and even more prudence to the man who is so fortunate as to

enjoy your protection. What more simple than to conceal himself in M.

de Renal's gardens, which he knows so well? There, with almost a cer

tainty of not being seen, nor caught, nor suspected, he could have inflic

ted death on the woman of whom he was jealous.'

These arguments, apparently so well founded, reduced Mathilde to ut

ter despair. Her spirit, haughty enough but saturated with all that dry

prudence which passes in society as a faithful portrayal of the human

heart, was not made to understand in a moment the joy of defying all

prudence which can be so keen a joy to an ardent soul. In the upper

classes of Parisian society, in which Mathilde had lived, passion can only

very rarely divest itself of prudence, and it is from the attics on the fifth

floor that girls throw themselves out of windows.

At last the abbe de Frilair was sure of his control. He gave Mathilde to

understand (he was probably lying) that he could influence as he chose

the Crown Counsel, who would have to support the charge against

Julien.

After the names of the thirtysix jurors for the assize had been drawn

by lot, he would make a direct and personal appeal to at least thirty of

them.

If M. de Frilair had not thought Mathilde so good-looking, he would

not have spoken to her in such plain terms until their fifth or sixth

interview.

457chapter39

Intrigue

Castres, 1676.—He that endeavoured to kill his sister in our

house, had before killed a man, and it had cost his father five

hundred ecus to get him off; by their secret distribution, gaining

the favour of the counsellors.

LOCKE, Travels in France 17

On leaving the Bishop's palace, Mathilde did not hesitate to send a

messenger to Madame de Fervaques; the fear of compromising herself

did not restrain her for a second. She implored her rival to obtain a letter

for M. de Frilair, written throughout in the hand of the Lord Bishop of

——. She even went the length of beseeching the other to hasten, herself,to Besancon. This was a heroic measure on the part of a proud and jeal

ous spirit.

On the advice of Fouque, she had taken the precaution of saying noth

ing about what she was doing to Julien. Her presence was disturbing

enough in itself. A more honourable man at the approach of death than

he had been during his life, he now felt compunction at the thought not

only of M. de La Mole, but also of Mathilde.

'What is this?' he asked himself, 'I experience in her company moments

of abstraction and even of boredom. She is ruining herself for me, and it

is thus that I reward her. Can I indeed be wicked?' This question would

have troubled him little when he was ambitious; then, not to succeed in

life was the only disgrace in his eyes.

His moral uneasiness, in Mathilde's presence, was all the more

marked, in that he inspired in her at that moment the most extraordinary

17.I am indebted to the patience and ingenuity of Mr. Vyvyan Holland, who has traced

the original text of this motto in The Life of John Locke, with extracts from his Correspond

ence, Journals and Commonplace Books by Lord King (new edition, 1830) C. K. S. M.

458and insensate passion. She could speak of nothing but the strange sacri

fices which she was anxious to make to save him.

Carried away by a sentiment of which she was proud and which com

pletely overbore her pride, she would have liked not to allow a moment

of her life to pass that was not filled with some extraordinary action. The

strangest plans, the most perilous to herself, formed the theme of her

long conversations with Julien. His gaolers, well rewarded, allowed her

to have her way in the prison. Mathilde's ideas were not confined to the

sacrifice of her reputation; it mattered nothing to her though she made

her condition known to the whole of society. To fling herself on her

knees to crave pardon for Julien, in front of the King's carriage as it came

by at a gallop, to attract the royal attention, at the risk of a thousand

deaths, was one of the tamest fancies of this exalted and courageous ima

gination. Through her friends who held posts at court, she could count

upon being admitted to the reserved parts of the park of SaintCloud.

Julien felt himself to be hardly worthy of such devotion, to tell the

truth he was tired of heroism. It would have required a simple, artless,almost timid affection to appeal to him, whereas on the contrary,Mathilde's proud spirit must always entertain the idea of a public, of

what people would say.

In the midst of all her anguish, of all her fears for the life of this lover,whom she was determined not to outlive, she had a secret longing to as

tonish the public by the intensity of her love and the sublimity of her

actions.

He resented the discovery that he was unable to feel at all touched by

all this heroism. What would his resentment have been, had he known of

all the follies with which Mathilde overpowered the devoted, but emin

ently reasonable and limited mind of the good Fouque?

The latter could scarcely find fault with Mathilde's devotion; for he,too, would have sacrificed his whole fortune and exposed his life to the

greatest risks to save Julien. He was stupefied by the quantity of gold

which Mathilde scattered abroad. At first, the sums thus spent impressed

Fouque, who had for money all the veneration of a provincial.

Later, he discovered that Mademoiselle de La Mole's plans often var

ied, and, to his great relief, found a word with which to reproach this

character which was so exhausting to him: she was changeable. To this

epithet, that of wrongheaded, the direst anathema in the provinces, is the

immediate sequel.

459'It is strange,' Julien said to himself one day as Mathilde was leaving

his prison, 'that so warm a passion, and one of which I am the object,leaves me so unmoved! And I worshipped her two months ago! I have

indeed read that at the approach of death we lose interest in everything;but it is frightful to feel oneself ungrateful and to be unable to change.

Can I be an egoist?' He heaped on himself, in this connection, the most

humiliating reproaches.

Ambition was dead in his heart, another passion had risen from its

ashes; he called it remorse for having murdered Madame de Renal.

As a matter of fact, he was hopelessly in love with her. He found a

strange happiness when, left absolutely alone and without any fear of

being disturbed, he could abandon himself entirely to the memory of the

happy days which he had spent in the past at Verrieres or at Vergy. The

most trifling incidents of that time, too swiftly flown, had for him a

freshness and a charm that were irresistible. He never gave a thought to

his Parisian successes; they bored him.

This tendency, which grew rapidly stronger, was not entirely hidden

from the jealous Mathilde. She saw quite plainly that she had to contend

with the love of solitude. Now and again, she uttered with terror in her

heart the name of Madame de Renal. She saw Julien shudder. From that

moment, her passion knew no bounds nor measure.

'If he dies, I die after him,' she said to herself with absolute sincerity.

'What would the drawing-rooms of Paris say, to see a girl of my rank

carry to such a point her adoration of a lover condemned to death? To

find such sentiments, we must go back to the days of the heroes; it was

love of this nature that set hearts throbbing in the age of Charles IX and

Henri III.'

Amid the most impassioned transports, when she pressed Julien's

head to her heart: 'What!' she said to herself with horror, 'can this pre

cious head be doomed to fall? Very well!' she added, inflamed by a hero

ism that was not devoid of happiness, 'my lips, which are now pressed

against these dear locks, will be frozen within twentyfour hours after.'

Memories of these moments of heroism and fearful ecstasy seized her

in an ineluctable grip. The thought of suicide, so absorbing in itself, and

hitherto so remote from that proud spirit, penetrated its defences and

soon reigned there with an absolute sway. 'No, the blood of my ancestors

has not grown lukewarm in its descent to me,' Mathilde told herself

proudly.

460'I have a favour to ask you,' her lover said to her one day: Put your

child out to nurse at Verrieres, Madame de Renal will look after the

nurse.'

'That is a very harsh saying… ' Mathilde turned pale.

'True, and I ask a thousand pardons,' cried Julien, awakening from his

dream and pressing her to his bosom.

Having dried her tears, he returned to the subject of his thoughts, but

with more subtlety. He had given the conversation a turn of melancholy

philosophy. He spoke of that future which was soon to close for him.

'You must agree, my dear friend, that the passions are an accident in life,but this accident is to be found only in superior beings … The death of

my son would be in reality a relief to the pride of your family, so much

the subordinate agents will perceive. Neglect will be the lot of that child

of misery and shame… I hope that at a date which I do not wish to spe

cify, which however I have the courage to anticipate, you will obey my

final behest: You will marry the Marquis de Croisenois.'

'What, dishonoured!'

'Dishonour can have no hold over such a name as yours. You will be a

widow, and the widow of a madman, that is all. I shall go farther: my

crime, being free from any pecuniary motive, will be in no way dishon

ouring. Perhaps by that time some philosophical legislator will have se

cured, from the prejudices of his contemporaries, the suppression of cap

ital punishment. Then, some friendly voice will cite as an instance: "Why,Mademoiselle de La Mole's first husband was mad, but not a wicked

man, he was no criminal. It was absurd to cut his head off … " Then my

memory will cease to be infamous; at least, after a certain time… Your

position in society, your fortune, and, let me say, your genius will enable

M. de Croisenois to play a part, once he is your husband, to which by

himself he could not hope to attain.

He has only his birth and his gallantry, and those qualities by them

selves, which made a man accomplished in 1729, are an anachronism a

hundred years later, and only give rise to pretensions. A man must have

other things besides if he is to place himself at the head of the youth of

France.

'You will bring the support of a firm and adventurous character to the

political party in which you will place your husband. You may succeed

the Chevreuses and Longuevilles of the Fronde… But by then, my dear

friend, the heavenly fire which animates you at this moment will have

cooled a little.

461'Allow me to tell you,' he went on, after many other preliminary

phrases, 'in fifteen years from now you will regard as an act of folly, par

donable but still an act of folly, the love that you have felt for me … '

He broke off abruptly and returned to his dreams. He found himself

once again confronted by that idea, so shocking to Mathilde: 'In fifteen

years Madame de Renal will adore my son, and you will have forgotten

him.'

462chapter40

Tranquillity

It is because I was foolish then that I am now wise. O philosopher

who see nothing save in a flash, how short is your vision! Your

eye is not made to follow the underground working of the

passions.

FRAU VON GOETHE

This conversation was interrupted by a judicial examination, followed

by a conference with the lawyer retained for the defence. These were the

only absolutely disagreeable moments in a heedless existence full of

tender fantasies.

'It was murder, and premeditated murder,' said Julien to magistrate

and counsel alike. 'I am sorry, gentlemen,' he added, smiling; 'but this re

duces your task to a very small matter.

'After all,' thought Julien, when he had succeeded in ridding himself of

these two persons, 'I must be brave, and braver, evidently, than these

two men. They regard as the worst of evils, as the king of terrors, this duel

to a fatal issue, of which I shall begin to think seriously only upon the

day itself.

'That is because I have known a greater evil,' Julien continued, philo

sophising to himself. 'I suffered far more keenly on my first journey to

Strasbourg, when I thought that I had been abandoned by Mathilde…

And to think that I longed with such passion for this perfect intimacy

which today leaves me so unmoved! Indeed, I am happier by myself

than when that lovely girl shares my solitude … '

The lawyer, a man of rules and formalities, thought him mad, and sup

posed, with the rest of the public, that it was jealousy that had put the

pistol in his hand. One day, he ventured to suggest to Julien that this al

legation, whether true or false, would be an excellent line of defence. But

the prisoner became in a flash passionate and incisive.

463'On your life, Sir,' cried Julien beside himself with rage, 'bear in mind

never again to utter that abominable falsehood.' The prudent advocate

was afraid for a moment of being murdered himself.

He prepared his defence, because the decisive moment was rapidly

approaching. Besancon and the whole Department could talk of nothing

but this cause celebre. Julien was in ignorance of this, he had begged that

no one should ever speak to him of such matters.

That very day, Fouque and Mathilde having sought to inform him of

certain public rumours, which seemed to them to furnish grounds for

hope, Julien had cut them short at the first word.

'Leave me to enjoy my ideal life. Your petty bickerings, your details of

real life, all more or less irritating to me, would bring me down from

heaven. One dies as best one can; as for me, I wish to think of death only

in my own way. What do I care for other people? My relations with other

people are soon to be cut short. For pity's sake, do not speak to me of

them again: it is quite enough to have to see the magistrate and my

counsel.

'Indeed,' he said to himself, 'it appears to be my destiny to die in a

dream. An obscure creature, like myself, sure of being forgotten within a

fortnight, would indeed be foolish, one must admit, were he to play a

part …

'It is strange, all the same, that I have learned the art of enjoying life

only now that I see its term draw so near.'

He spent these last days in pacing the narrow terrace on the roof of his

dungeon, smoking some excellent cigars for which Mathilde had sent a

courier to Holland, and with no suspicion that his appearance was daily

awaited by all the telescopes in the town. His thoughts were at Vergy.

Never did he speak of Madame de Renal to Fouque, but on two or three

occasions this friend told him that she was recovering rapidly, and these

words echoed in his heart.

While Julien's spirit was almost always completely lost in the world of

ideas, Mathilde, occupied with realities, as becomes an aristocratic heart,had contrived to increase the intimacy of the direct correspondence

between Madame de Fervaques and M. de Frilair to such a point that

already the mighty word Bishopric had been uttered.

The venerable prelate, in whose hands was the list of benefices, added

as a postscript to one of his niece's letters: 'That poor Sorel is nothing

worse than a fool, I hope that he will be restored to us.'

464At the sight of these lines, M. de Frilair was almost out of his mind. He

had no doubt of his ability to save Julien.

'But for that Jacobinical law which prescribes the registration of an

endless list of jurors, and has no other real object than to take away all

influence from wellborn people,' he said to Mathilde, on the eve of the

drawing by lot of the thirtysix jurors for the assize, 'I could have

answered for the verdict. Did I not secure the acquittal of the cure

N—— ?'

It was with pleasure that, on the following day, among the names

drawn from the urn, M. de Frilair found those of five members of the

Congregation of Besancon, and, among those who were strangers to the

town, the names of MM. Valenod, de Moirod and de Cholin. 'I can an

swer at once for these eight jurors,' he told Mathilde. 'The first five are

machines. Valenod is my agent, Moirod owes all he has to me, Cholin is

an imbecile, who is afraid of everything.'

The newspaper published throughout the Department the names of

the jurors, and Madame de Renal, to the inexpressible terror of her hus

band, decided to come to Besancon. All that M. de Renal could obtain

from her was that she would not leave her bed, so that she might not be

exposed to the nuisance of being summoned to give evidence. 'You do

not understand my position,' said the former Mayor of Verrieres. 'I am

now a Liberal of the defection, as they call it; no doubt but that rascal

Valenod and M. de Frilair will easily persuade the Attorney General and

the Judges to anything that can be unpleasant for me.'

Madame de Renal yielded without protest to her husband's orders, '?f I

were to appear at the Assize Court,' she told herself, 'I should seem to be

demanding vengeance.'

Notwithstanding all the promises of prudence made to her spiritual

director and to her husband, no sooner had she arrived in Besancon than

she wrote with her own hand to each of the thirtysix jurors:

'I shall not appear in Court upon the day of the trial, Sir, because my

presence might prejudice M. Sorel's case. I desire but one thing in the

world, and that passionately, namely his acquittal. Be assured of this, the

terrible thought that on my account an innocent man has been sent to his

death would poison the remainder of my life, and would doubtless

shorten it. How could you sentence him to death, while I still live? No,beyond question, society has not the right to take life, especially from

such a man as Julien Sorel. Everyone at Verrieres has seen him in mo

ments of distraction. This poor young man has powerful enemies; but,465even among his enemies (and how many they are!) who is there that has

any doubt of his admirable talents and his profound learning? It is not an

ordinary person that you are about to judge, Sir. For nearly eighteen

months we have all known him to be pious, wise, studious; but, two or

three times in the year, he was seized by fits of melancholy which

bordered on insanity. The whole town of Verrieres, all our neighbours at

Vergy where we go in the fine weather, all my family, the Sub-Prefect

himself, will bear testimony to his exemplary piety; he knows by heart

the whole of the Holy Bible. Would an unbeliever have applied himself

for years on end to learning the Holy Scriptures? My sons will have the

honour to present this letter to you: they are children. Deign to question

them, Sir, they will furnish you with all the details relative to this poor

young man that may still be necessary to convince you of the barbarity of

condemning him. Far from avenging me, you would be sentencing me to

death.

'What is there that his enemies can advance in rebuttal of the following

fact? The injury that ensued from one of those moments of insanity

which my children themselves used to remark in their tutor was so far

from dangerous that within less than two months, it has allowed me to

post from Verrieres to Besancon. If I learn, Sir, that you have even the

slightest hesitation in saving from the barbarity of our laws a person

who is so little guilty, I shall leave my bed, to which I am confined solely

by my husband's orders, and shall come to throw myself at your feet.

'Declare, Sir, that the premeditation is not proven, and you will not

have to reproach yourself with the blood of an innocent man,' etc., etc.

466chapter41

The Trial

The country will remember this celebrated trial for a long time to

come. Interest in the accused reached fever pitch; this was be

cause his crime was astonishing and yet not atrocious. Even if it

had been, the young man was so handsome! His great destiny ab

ruptly cut short heightened the pity felt for him. Will he be con

demned? the women would ask the men of their acquaintance

and one could see them grow pale as they awaited the reply.

SAINTEBEUVE

At length the day dawned so dreaded by Madame de Renal and

Mathilde.

The strange appearance of the town increased their terror, and did not

leave even Fouque's stout heart unmoved. The whole Province had

swarmed into Besancon to witness the trial of this romantic case.

For some days past there had not been a bed to be had in the inns. The

President of the Assize Court was assailed with requests for cards of ad

mission; all the ladies of the town wished to be present at the trial;Julien's portrait was hawked through the streets, etc., etc.

Mathilde was keeping in reserve for this supreme moment a letter

written throughout in the hand of the Lord Bishop of ——. This Prelate,who controlled the Church in France and appointed Bishops, deigned to

ask for the acquittal of Julien. On the eve of the trial, Mathilde took this

letter to the allpowerful VicarGeneral.

At the close of the interview, as she was leaving the room in a flood of

tears: 'I answer for the verdict of the jury,' M. de Frilair told her, emer

ging at length from his diplomatic reserve, and almost showing signs of

emotion himself. 'Among the twelve persons charged with the duty of

finding whether your protege's crime is proven, and especially whether

there was premeditation, I number six friends devoted to my welfare,467and I have given them to understand that it rested with them to raise me

to the episcopate. Baron de Valenod, whom I have made Mayor of Verri

eres, has entire control over two of his subordinates, MM. de Moirod and

de Cholin. To tell the truth, chance has given us, for dealing with this af

fair, two jurors who are extremely disaffected; but, although UltraLiber

als, they loyally obey my orders on great occasions, and I have sent word

asking them to vote with M. Valenod. I learn that a sixth juror of the in

dustrial class, an immensely rich and garrulous Liberal, is secretly hop

ing for a contract from the Ministry of War, and no doubt he would not

wish to vex me. I have let him know that M. Valenod has my last word.'

'And who is this M. Valenod?' said Mathilde, anxiously.

'If you knew him, you would have no doubt of our success. He is a

bold speaker, impudent, coarse, a man made to be the leader of fools.

1814 raised him from penury, and I am going to make him a Prefect. He

is capable of thrashing the other jurors if they refuse to vote as he

wishes.'

Mathilde was somewhat reassured.

There was another discussion in store for her that evening. In order

not to prolong a painful scene, the outcome of which appeared to him

certain, Julien was determined not to open his mouth.

'My counsel will speak, that is quite sufficient,' he said to Mathilde. 'As

it is, I shall be all too long exposed as a spectacle to my enemies. These

provincials are shocked by the rapid advancement which I owe to you,and, believe me, there is not one of them that does not wish for my con

viction, except that he will cry like a fool when I am led to the scaffold.'

'They wish to see you humiliated, it is only too true,' replied Mathilde,'but I do not believe that they are cruel. My presence in Besancon and the

spectacle of my grief have interested all the women; your handsome face

will do the rest. If you say but one word before your judges, the whole

court will be on your side,' etc., etc.

The following morning at nine o'clock, when Julien came down from

his prison to enter the great hall of the Law Courts, it was with the ut

most difficulty that the gendarmes succeeded in clearing a passage

through the immense crowd that packed the courtyard. Julien had slept

well, he was quite calm, and felt no other sentiment than one of philo

sophical piety towards this crowd of envious persons who, without

cruelty, were ready to applaud his sentence of death. He was quite sur

prised when, having been detained for more than a quarter of an hour

among the crowd, he was obliged to admit that his presence was

468inspiring a tender pity in the assembly. He did not hear a single unpleas

ant remark. 'These provincials are less evilminded than I supposed,' he

said to himself.

On entering the court, he was struck by the elegance of the architec

ture. It was pure gothic, with a number of charming little pillars carved

in stone with the most perfect finish. He imagined himself in England.

But presently his whole attention was absorbed in twelve or fifteen

pretty women who, seated opposite the dock, filled the three galleries

above the bench and the jurybox. On turning round towards the public

seats, he saw that the circular gallery which overhung the well of the

court was filled with women; most of them were young and seemed to

him extremely pretty; their eyes were bright and full of interest. In the

rest of the court, the crowd was enormous; people were struggling at the

doors, and the sentries were unable to preserve silence.

When all the eyes that were looking for Julien became aware of his

presence, on seeing him take his place on the slightly raised bench re

served for the prisoner, he was greeted with a murmur of astonishment

and tender interest.

One would have said that morning that he was not yet twenty; he was

dressed quite simply, but with a perfect grace; his hair and brow were

charming; Mathilde had insisted on presiding in person over his toilet.

His pallor was intense. As soon as he had taken his seat on the bench, he

heard people say on all sides: 'Lord, how young he is! … ' 'But he is a

boy.' 'He is far better looking than his portrait.'

'Prisoner,' said the gendarme seated on his right, 'do you see those six

ladies who are on that balcony?' The gendarme pointed to a little gallery

which jutted out above the amphitheatre in which the jury was placed.

'That is the Prefect's lady,' the gendarme continued; 'next to her, Madame

la Marquise de M ——; that one loves you dearly. I heard her speak to

the examining magistrate. Next to her is Madame Derville.'

'Madame Derville,' exclaimed Julien, and a vivid blush suffused his

brow. 'When she leaves the court,' he thought, 'she will write to Madame

de Renal.' He knew nothing of Madame de Renal's arrival at Besancon.

The witnesses were quickly heard. At the first words of the speech for

the prosecution made by the counsel for the prosecution, two of the

ladies seated on the little balcony burst into tears. 'Madame Derville is

not so easily moved,' thought Julien. He noticed, however, that she was

extremely flushed.

469The counsel for the prosecution was labouring an emotional point in

bad French about the barbarity of the crime that had been committed;Julien noticed that Madame Derville's neighbours showed signs of

strong disapproval. Several of the jury, evidently friends of these ladies,spoke to them and seemed to reassure them. 'That can only be a good

sign,' thought Julien.

Until then he had felt himself penetrated by an unmixed contempt for

all the men who were taking part in this trial. The insipid eloquence of

the counsel for the prosecution increased this sense of disgust. But

gradually the sereneness of Julien's heart melted before the marks of in

terest of which he was plainly the object.

He was pleased with the firm expression of his counsel. 'No fine lan

guage,' he murmured to him as he stood up to speak.

'All the emphasis stolen from Bossuet, which has been displayed

against you, has helped your case,' said the counsel. And indeed, he had

not been speaking for five minutes before almost all the ladies had their

handkerchiefs in their hands. The counsel, encouraged by this, ad

dressed the jury in extremely strong language. Julien shuddered, he felt

that he was on the point of bursting into tears. 'Great God! What will my

enemies say?'

He was about to yield to the emotion that was overpowering him,when, fortunately for himself, he caught an insolent glance from M.

Valenod.

'That wretch's eyes are ablaze,' he said to himself; 'what a triumph for

that vile nature! Had my crime led to this alone, I should be bound to ab

hor it. Heaven knows what he will say of me to Madame de Renal!'

This thought obliterated all the rest. Shortly afterwards, Julien was re

called to himself by sounds of approval from the public. His counsel had

just concluded his speech. Julien remembered that it was the correct

thing to shake hands with him. The time had passed quickly.

Refreshments were brought to counsel and prisoner. It was only then

that Julien was struck by a curious circumstance: none of the women had

left the court for dinner.

'Faith, I am dying of hunger,' said his counsel, 'and you?'

'I am also,' replied Julien.

'Look, there is the Prefect's lady getting her dinner, too,' his counsel

said to him, pointing to the little balcony. 'Cheer up, everything is going

well.' The trial was resumed.

470As the President was summing up, midnight struck. He was obliged to

pause; amid the silence of the universal anxiety, the echoing notes of the

clock filled the court.

'Here begins the last day of my life,' thought Julien. Presently he felt

himself inflamed by the idea of duty. He had kept his emotion in check

until then, and maintained his determination not to speak; but when the

President of the Assizes asked him if he had anything to say, he rose. He

saw in front of him the eyes of Madame Derville, which, in the lamp

light, seemed to shine with a strange brilliance. 'Can she be crying, by

any chance,' he wondered.

'Gentlemen of the Jury,'My horror of the contempt which I believed that I could endure at the

moment of my death, impels me to speak. Gentlemen, I have not the

honour to belong to your class, you see in me a peasant who has risen in

revolt against the lowliness of his station.

'I ask you for no mercy,' Julien went on, his voice growing stronger. 'I

am under no illusion; death is in store for me; it will be a just punish

ment. I have been guilty of attempting the life of the woman most

worthy of all respect, of all devotion. Madame de Renal had been like a

mother to me. My crime is atrocious, and it was premeditated. I have,therefore, deserved death, Gentlemen of the Jury. But, even were I less

guilty, I see before me men who, without pausing to consider what pity

may be due to my youth, will seek to punish in me and to discourage

forever that class of young men who, born in an inferior station and in a

sense burdened with poverty, have the good fortune to secure a sound

education, and the audacity to mingle with what the pride of rich people

calls society.

'That is my crime, Gentlemen, and it will be punished with all the

more severity inasmuch as actually I am not being tried by my peers. I

do not see, anywhere among the jury, a peasant who has grown rich, but

only indignant bourgeois… '

For twenty minutes Julien continued to speak in this strain; he said

everything that was in his heart; the counsel for the prosecution, who as

pired to the favour of the aristocracy, kept springing from his seat; but in

spite of the somewhat abstract turn which Julien had given the debate,all the women were dissolved in tears. Madame Derville herself had her

handkerchief pressed to her eyes. Before concluding, Julien returned to

the question of premeditation, to his repentance, to the respect, the filial

471and unbounded adoration which, in happier times, he had felt for Ma

dame de Renal … Madame Derville uttered a cry and fainted.

One o'clock struck as the jury retired to their waitingroom. None of

the women had left their seats; several of the men had tears in their eyes.

The general conversation was at first most lively; but gradually, as the

jury delayed their verdict, the feeling of weariness spread a calm over

the assembly. It was a solemn moment; the lamps burned more dimly.

Julien, who was dead tired, heard them discussing round him whether

this delay augured well or ill. He noticed with pleasure that everyone

was on his side; the jury did not return, and still not a woman left the

court.

Just as two o'clock had struck, a general stir was audible. The little

door of the juryroom opened. M. le Baron de Valenod advanced with a

grave, theatrical step, followed by the rest of the jury. He coughed, then

declared that on his soul and conscience the unanimous opinion of the

jury was that Julien Sorel was guilty of murder, and of murder with pre

meditation: this verdict inferred a sentence of death; it was pronounced a

moment later. Julien looked at his watch, and remembered M. de La

valette; it was a quarter past two. Today is Friday,' he thought.

'Yes, but this is a lucky day for Valenod, who is sentencing me… I am

too closely guarded for Mathilde to be able to effect my escape, like Ma

dame de Lavalette … And so, in three days, at this same hour, I shall

know what to think of the great hereafter.'

At that moment, he heard a cry and was recalled to the things of this

world. The women round him were sobbing; he saw that every face was

turned towards a little gallery concealed by the capital of a gothic pi

laster. He learned afterwards that Mathilde had been hidden there. As

the cry was not repeated, everyone turned back to look at Julien, for

whom the gendarmes were trying to clear a passage through the crowd.

'Let us try not to give that rascal Valenod any food for laughter,'

thought Julien. 'With what a contrite and coaxing air he uttered the ver

dict that involved the death penalty! Whereas that poor president, even

though he has been a judge for all these years, had tears in his eyes when

he sentenced me. What a joy for Valenod to have his revenge for our old

rivalry for Madame de Renal! And so I shall never see her any more! It is

all finished… A last farewell is impossible between us, I feel it… How

happy I should have been to express to her all the horror I feel for my

crime!

'These words only: I feel that I am justly condemned.'

472chapter42

In the Prison

When Julien was lee back to prison he had been put in a cell reserved for

those under sentence of death. He, who, as a rule, observed the most tri

fling details, had never noticed that he was not being taken up to his old

dungeon. He was thinking of what he would say to Madame de Renal, if,before the fatal moment, he should have the good fortune to see her. He

felt that she would not allow him to speak, and was seeking a way of ex

pressing his repentance in the first words he would utter. 'After such an

action, how am I to convince her that I love her and her only? For after

all I sought to kill her either out of ambition or for love of Mathilde.'

On getting into bed he found himself between sheets of a coarse cloth.

The scales fell from his eyes. 'Ah! I am in the condemned cell,' he said to

himself, 'awaiting my sentence. It is right …

'Conte Altamira told me once that, on the eve of his death, Danton said

in his loud voice: "It is strange, the verb to guillotine cannot be conjug

ated in all its tenses; one can say: I shall be guillotined, thou shalt be guil

lotined, but one does not say: I have been guillotined."

'Why not,' Julien went on, 'if there is another life? Faith, if I meet the

Christian Deity, I am lost: He is a tyrant, and, as such, is full of ideas of

vengeance; His Bible speaks of nothing but fearful punishments. I never

loved Him! I could never even believe that anyone did love Him sin

cerely. He is devoid of pity.' (Here Julien recalled several passages from

the Bible.) 'He will punish me in some abominable manner…

'But if I meet the God of Fenelon! He will say to me perhaps: "Much

shall be pardoned thee, because thou hast loved much … "

'Have I loved much? Ah! I did love Madame de Renal, but my conduct

has been atrocious. There, as elsewhere, I abandoned a simple and mod

est merit for what was brilliant…

'But then, what a prospect! Colonel of Hussars, should we go to war;Secretary of Legation in time of peace; after that, Ambassador … for I

473should soon have learned the business… and had I been a mere fool,need the soninlaw of the Marquis de La Mole fear any rival? All my

foolish actions would have been forgiven me, or rather counted to me as

merits. A man of distinction, enjoying the most splendid existence in Vi

enna or London …

'Not precisely that, Sir, to be guillotined in three days' time.'

Julien laughed heartily at this sally of his own wit. 'Indeed, man has

two different beings inside him,' he reflected. 'What devil thought of that

malicious touch?

'Very well, yes, my friend, guillotined in three days' time,' he replied

to the interrupter. 'M. de Cholin will hire a window, sharing the expense

with the abbe Maslon. Well, for the cost of hiring that window, which of

those two worthies will rob the other?'

A passage from Rotrou's Venceslas entered his head suddenly.

Ladislas: My soul is well prepared. The King (his father): So is the scaf

fold; lay your head thereon.

'A good answer,' he thought, and fell asleep. Someone awakened him

in the morning by shaking him violently.

'What, already!' said Julien, opening a haggard eye. He imagined him

self to be in the headsman's hands.

It was Mathilde. 'Fortunately, she did not understand.' This reflection

restored all his presence of mind. He found Mathilde changed as though

after six months of illness: she was positively unrecognisable.

'That wretch Frilair has betrayed me,' she said to him, wringing her

hands; rage prevented her from speaking.

'Was I not fine yesterday when I rose to speak?' replied Julien. 'I was

improvising, and for the first time in my life! It is true that there is reason

to fear it may also be the last.'

At this moment Julien was playing upon Mathilde's nature with all the

calm of a skilled pianist touching the keys of a piano… 'The advantage

of noble birth I lack, it is true,' he went on, 'but the great heart of Math

ilde has raised her lover to her own level. Do you suppose that Boniface

de La Mole cut a better figure before his judges?'

Mathilde, that morning, was tender without affectation, like any poor

girl dwelling in an attic; but she could not win from him any simpler

speech. He paid her back, unconsciously, the torment that she had often

inflicted on him.

474'We do not know the source of the Nile,' Julien said to himself; 'it has

not been granted to the eye of man to behold the King of Rivers in the

form of a simple rivulet: similarly no human eye shall ever see Julien

weak, if only because he is not weak. But I have a heart that is easily

moved; the most commonplace words, if they are uttered with an accent

of truth, may soften my voice and even make my tears begin to flow.

How often have not the sere hearts despised me for this defect! They be

lieved that I was begging for mercy: that is what I cannot endure.

'They say that the thought of his wife overcame Danton at the foot of

the scaffold; but Danton had given strength to a nation of coxcombs, and

prevented the enemy from reaching Paris . . I alone know what I might

have managed to do… To others, I am at best only a mighthavebeen.

'If Madame de Renal had been here, in my cell, instead of Mathilde,should I have been able to control myself? The intensity of my despair

and of my repentance would have appeared in the eyes of the Valenods,and of all the patricians of the neighbourhood, a craven fear of death;they are so proud, those feeble hearts, whom their financial position

places out of reach of temptation! "You see what it is," M. de Moirod and

M. de Cholin, who have just sentenced me to death, would have said, "to

be born the son of a carpenter! One may become learned, clever, but

courage!… Courage is not taught at school." Even this poor Mathilde,who is now weeping, or rather who can no longer weep,' he said, look

ing at her red eyes … and he took her in his arms: the sight of genuine

grief made him forget his syllogism. 'She has been weeping all night,perhaps,' he said to himself: 'but one day how ashamed she will be when

she remembers! She will regard herself as having been led astray, in

early youth, by the low opinions of a plebeian… Croisenois is weak

enough to marry her, and, i' faith, he will do well for himself. She will

make him play a part,"By that right Which a firm spirit planning vast designs Has o'er the

loutish minds of common men."

'Ah, now; here is a pleasant thing: now that I am to die, all the poetry I

ever learned in my life comes back to me. It must be a sign of

decadence … '

Mathilde kept on saying to him in a faint voice: 'He is there, in the next

room.' At length he began to pay attention to her words. 'Her voice is

feeble,' he thought, 'but all her imperious nature is still in its accents. She

lowers her voice in order not to lose her temper.

'Who is there?' he asked her gently.

475'The lawyer, to make you sign your appeal.'

'I shall not appeal.'

'What! You will not appeal,' she said, rising to her feet, her eyes ablaze

with anger, 'and why not, if you please?'

'Because at this moment I feel that I have the courage to die without

exciting undue derision. And who can say that in two months' time, after

a long confinement in this damp cell, I shall be so well prepared? I fore

see interviews with priests, with my father … I can imagine nothing so

unpleasant. Let us die.'

This unexpected obstinacy awoke all the latent pride in Mathilde's

nature. She had not been able to see the abbe de Frilair before the hour at

which the cells in the prison of Besancon were opened; her anger fell

upon Julien. She adored him, and for the next quarter of an hour he was

reminded by her imprecations against his character, her regrets that she

had ever loved him, of that proud spirit which in the past had heaped

such poignant insults upon him, in the library of the Hotel de La Mole.

'Heaven owed it to the glory of your race to bring you into the world a

man,' he told her.

'But as for myself,' he thought, 'I should be a rare fool to live two

months longer in this disgusting abode, the butt of all the infamous and

humiliating lies that the patrician faction is capable of inventing,18 my

sole comfort the imprecations of this madwoman… Well, the day after

tomorrow, I shall be fighting a duel in the morning with a man well

known for his coolness and for his remarkable skill… Very remarkable,'

whispered Mephistopheles, 'he never misses his stroke.

'Very well, so be it, all's well that ends well.' (Mathilde's eloquence

continued to flow.) 'Begad, no,' he said to himself, 'I shall not appeal.'

Having made this decision, he relapsed into his dreams … 'The post

man on his rounds will bring the newspaper at six o'clock, as usual; at

eight, after M. de Renal has read it, Elisa, entering the room on tiptoe,will lay it down on her bed. Later, she will awake: suddenly, as she

reads, she will grow troubled; her lovely hand will tremble; she will

come to the words: At five minutes past ten he had ceased to live.

'She will shed hot tears, I know her; in vain did I seek to murder her,all will be forgotten, and the person whose life I sought to take will be

the only one who will weep sincerely for my death.

18.A Jacobin is speaking. (Stendhal's note.)

476'Ah, this is a paradox!' he thought, and, for the next quarter of an hour,while Mathilde continued to make a scene, he thought only of Madame

de Renal. In spite of himself, and albeit frequently replying to what

Mathilde said to him, he could not free his mind from the memory of

that bedroom at Verrieres. He saw the Gazette de Besancon lying on the

counterpane of orange taffeta. He saw that snowy hand clutching it with

a convulsive movement; he saw Madame de Renal weep … He followed

the course of each tear over that charming face. Mademoiselle de La

Mole, having failed to get anything out of Julien, made the lawyer come

in. He was fortunately an old Captain of the Army of Italy, of 1796, when

he had served with Manuel.

For the sake of form, he opposed the condemned man's decision. Juli

en, wishing to treat him with respect, explained all his reasons to him.

'Faith, one may think as you do,' M. Felix Vaneau (this was the

lawyer's name) said to him at length. 'But you have three clear days in

which to appeal, and it is my duty to come back each day. If a volcano

opened beneath the prison, in the next two months, you would be saved.

You may die a natural death,' he said, looking at Julien.

Julien shook his hand. 'I thank you, you are an honest man. I shall

think it over.'

And when Mathilde left him, finally, with the lawyer, he felt far more

affection for the lawyer than for her.

477chapter43

Last Adieux

An hour later, when he was fast asleep, he was awakened by the tears

which he felt trickling over his hand. 'Ah! Mathilde again,' he thought to

himself, half awake. 'She has come, faithful to her theory, to attack my

resolve by force of tender sentiments.' Irritated by the prospect of this

fresh scene in the pathetic manner, he did not open his eyes. The lines of

Belphegor flying from his wife came into his mind.

He heard a strange sigh; he opened his eyes; it was Madame de Renal.

'Ah! Do I see you again before my death? Is it a phantom?' he cried, as

he flung himself at her feet.

'But forgive me, Madame, I am nothing but a murderer in your eyes,'

he at once added, regaining his composure.

'Sir, … I have come to implore you to appeal, I know that you do not

wish to… ' She was choked by her sobs; she was unable to speak.

'Deign to forgive me.'

'If you wish me to forgive you,' she said to him, rising and throwing

herself into his arms, 'appeal at once from the sentence of death.'

Julien covered her with kisses.

'Will you come and see me every day during the next two months?'

'I swear it to you. Every day, unless my husband forbids me.'

'Then I sign!' cried Julien. 'What! You forgive me! Is it possible?'

He clasped her in his arms; he was mad. She uttered a faint cry.

'It is nothing,' she told him, 'you hurt me.'

'In your shoulder,' cried Julien, bursting into tears. He stepped back

from her, and covered her hand with burning kisses. 'Who would ever

have said, last time I saw you, in your bedroom, at Verrieres … ?'

'Who would ever have said then that I should write M. de La Mole

that infamous letter… ?'

478'Know that I have always loved you, that I have never loved anyone

but you.'

'Is it really possible?' cried Madame de Renal, equally enraptured. She

bowed herself over Julien, who was kneeling at her feet, and for a long

time they wept in silence.

At no time in his life had Julien experienced such a moment.

After a long interval, when they were able to speak:

'And that young Madame Michele!' said Madame de Renal, 'or rather

that Mademoiselle de La Mole; for I am beginning really to believe this

strange tale!'

'It is true only in appearance,' replied Julien. 'She is my wife, but she is

not my mistress… '

And, each interrupting the other a hundred times, they managed with

difficulty, each of them, to tell what the other did not know. The letter

sent to M. de La Mole had been written by the young priest who directed

Madame de Renal's conscience, and then copied out by her. 'What a ter

rible crime religion has made me commit!' she said to him; 'though I did

modify the worst passages in the letter… .'

Julien's transports of joy proved to her how completely he forgave her.

Never had he been so madly in love.

'And yet I regard myself as pious,' Madame de Renal told him in the

course of their conversation. 'I believe sincerely in God; I believe equally,indeed it has been proved to me, that the crime I am committing is fear

ful, and yet, as soon as I set eyes on you, even after you have fired at me

twice with a pistol… ' Here, in spite of her resistance, Julien covered her

with kisses.

'Let me alone,' she went on, 'I wish to argue with you, before I for

get… As soon as I set eyes on you, all sense of duty vanishes, there is

nothing left of me but love for you, or rather love is too feeble a word. I

feel for you what I ought to feel only for God: a blend of respect, love,obedience … In truth, I do not know what feeling you inspire in me.

Were you to bid me thrust a knife into your gaoler, the crime would be

committed before I had had time to think. Explain this to me in simple

terms before I leave you, I wish to see clearly into my own heart; for in

two months we must part … For that matter, need we part?' she said,with a smile.

'I take back my word,' cried Julien, springing to his feet; 'I shall not ap

peal from the sentence of death, if by poison, knife, pistol, charcoal or

479any other means whatsoever, you seek to put an end to, or to endanger

your life.'

Madame de Renal's expression altered suddenly; the warmest affec

tion gave place to a profound abstraction.

'If we were to die at once?' she said to him at length.

'Who knows what we shall find in our next life?' replied Julien;'torments perhaps, perhaps nothing at all. Can we not spend two months

together in a delicious manner? Two months, that is ever so many days.

Never shall I have been so happy.'

'You will never have been so happy?'

'Never,' replied Julien with rapture, 'and I am speaking to you as I

speak to myself. Heaven preserve me from exaggeration.'

'To speak so is to command me,' she said with a timid and melancholy

smile.

'Very well! You swear, by the love that you bear me, not to attempt

your life by any direct means, or indirect means… Remember,' he ad

ded, 'that you are compelled to live for my son, whom Mathilde will

abandon to the care of servants as soon as she is Marquise de Croisenois.'

'I swear,' she replied coldly, 'but I mean to take away with me your ap

peal written and signed by your hand. I shall go myself to the Attorney

General.'

'Take care, you will compromise yourself.'

'After coming publicly to see you in prison, I am for ever, for Besancon

and the whole of the Franche-Comte, a heroine of anecdotes,' she said

with an air of profound distress. 'I have gone beyond the last limits of

modesty… I am a woman who has forfeited her honour; it is true that it

was for your sake … '

Her tone was so melancholy that Julien embraced her with a happi

ness that was quite new to him. It was no longer the intoxication of love,it was extreme gratitude. He had just realised, for the first time, the full

extent of the sacrifice that she had made for him.

Some charitable soul doubtless informed M. de Renal of the long visits

which his wife was paying to Julien's prison; for, after three days, he sent

his carriage for her, with express orders that she was to return immedi

ately to Verrieres.

This cruel parting had begun the day ill for Julien. He was informed,two or three hours later, that a certain intriguing priest, who for all that

480had not succeeded in making any headway among the Jesuits of Bes

ancon, had taken his stand that morning outside the gate of the prison, in

the street. It was raining hard, and outside there the man was trying to

pose as a martyr. Julien was out of temper, this piece of foolishness

moved him profoundly.

That morning he had already refused a visit from the priest, but the

man had made up his mind to hear Julien's confession, and to make a

name for himself among the young women of Besancon, on the strength

of all the confidences which he would pretend to have received.

He declared in a loud voice that he was going to remain day and night

at the gate of the prison: 'God has sent me to touch the heart of this other

apostate.' And the lower orders, always curious spectators of a scene,began to assemble in crowds.

'Yes, my brethren,' he said to them, 'I shall spend the day here, and the

night, and every day and night from now onwards. The Holy Spirit has

spoken to me. I have a mission from on high; it is I that am to save the

soul of young Sorel. Join with me in my prayers,' etc., etc.

Julien had a horror of scandal, and of anything that might attract atten

tion to himself. He thought of seizing the opportunity to escape from the

world unknown; but he had still some hope of seeing Madame de Renal

again, and was desperately in love.

The gate of the prison was situated in one of the most frequented

streets. The thought of that mudbespattered priest, drawing a crowd

and creating a scandal, was torture to his soul. 'And, without a doubt, at

every instant he is repeating my name!' This moment was more painful

than death itself.

He called two or three times, at intervals of an hour, for a turnkey who

was devoted to him, to send him out to see whether the priest were still

at the gate of the prison.

'Sir, he is on both his knees in the mud,' was the turnkey's invariable

answer; 'he is praying aloud, and repeating Litanies for your soul.' 'The

impertinent fellow!' thought Julien. At that moment, indeed, he heard a

dull roar, it was the crowd responding to the Litany. To increase his im

patience, he saw the turnkey move his lips as he repeated the Latin

words. 'They are beginning to say,' the turnkey added, 'that your heart

must indeed be hardened if you refuse the succour of this holy man.'

481'O my country! How barbarous you still are!' cried Julien in a frenzy of

rage. And he continued his reasoning aloud, without a thought of the

turnkey's presence.

'The man wants an article in the paper, and now he is certain of obtain

ing it.

'Oh, cursed provincials! In Paris, I should not have been subjected to

all these vexations. They are more adept there in charlatanism.

'Let this holy priest come in,' he said at length to the turnkey, and the

sweat trickled in great drops from his brow. The turnkey made the sign

of the Cross, and left the cell radiant.

The holy priest proved to be hideously ugly, and was even more foul

with mud. The cold rain outside intensified the darkness and dampness

of the cell. The priest tried to embrace Julien, and began to show emotion

as he spoke to him. The vilest hypocrisy was all too evident; never in his

life had Julien been in such a rage.

A quarter of an hour after the priest had entered, Julien found himself

a complete coward. For the first time death appeared to him horrible. He

thought of the state of putrefaction in which his body would be two days

after his execution, etc., etc.

He was on the point of betraying himself by some sign of weakness, or

of flinging himself upon the priest and strangling him with his chain,when it occurred to him to beg the holy man to go and say a good forty

franc mass for him, that very day.

As it was almost midday, the priest decamped.

482chapter44

The Shadow of the Guillotine

As soon as he had gone, Julien began to weep copiously, at the thought

of dying. After a while he said to himself that, if Madame de Renal had

been at Besancon, he would have confessed his weakness to her… .

At the moment when he most regretted the absence of that beloved

woman, he heard Mathilde's step.

'The worst drawback of a prison,' he thought, 'is that one can never

close one's door.' All that Mathilde had to say served only to irritate him.

She informed him that, on the day of the trial, M. de Valenod, having

in his pocket his appointment as Prefect, had ventured to defy M. de Fri

lair and indulge himself in the pleasure of condemning Julien to death.

'"Whatever induced your friend," M. de Frilair said to me just now, "to

go and arouse and attack the petty vanity of that middleclass aristo

cracy? Why speak of caste? He showed them what they ought to do in

their own political interest: the fools had never thought of it, and were

ready to cry. This caste interest blinded their eyes to the horror of con

demning a man to death. You must admit that M. Sorel shows great in

experience. If we do not succeed in saving him by an appeal to clemency,his death will be a sort of suicide … "'

Mathilde did not, of course, mention to Julien a thing which she her

self did not yet suspect; namely, that the Abbe de Frilair, seeing Julien ir

remediably lost, thought that it would serve his own ambition to aspire

to become his successor.

Almost out of his mind with helpless rage and vexation: 'Go and hear

a mass for me,' he said to Mathilde, 'and leave me a moment's peace.'

Mathilde, who was extremely jealous already at Madame de Renal's vis

its and had just heard of her departure, realised the cause of Julien's ill

humour and burst into tears.

Her grief was genuine, Julien saw this and was all the more irritated.

He felt a compelling need of solitude, and how was he to secure it?

483Finally Mathilde, having tried every argument to soften him, left him

to himself, but almost at that moment Fouque appeared.

'I want to be alone,' he said to this faithful friend. And, as he saw him

hesitate: 'I am composing a memorial for my appeal to clemency … but

anyhow… do me a favour, never to speak to me of death. If I want any

special services on the day, let me be the first to mention them.'

When Julien had at length secured solitude, he found himself more

crushed and more of a coward than before. What little strength remained

to his enfeebled spirit had been used up in the effort to conceal his condi

tion from Mademoiselle de La Mole and Fouque.

Towards evening, a comforting thought came to him:

'If this morning, at the moment when death seemed so ugly, I had

been warned to prepare for execution, the eye of the public would have been

the incentive to glory; my gait might perhaps have been a little heavy, like

that of a timid fop on entering a drawing-room. A few perspicacious

people, if there be any such among these provincials, might have

guessed my weakness… but no one would have seen it.'

And he felt himself relieved of part of his load of misery. 'I am a cow

ard at this moment,' he chanted to himself, 'but no one will know of it.'

An almost more disagreeable incident was in store for him on the mor

row. For a long time past, his father had been threatening a visit; that

morning, before Julien was awake, the whitehaired old carpenter ap

peared in his cell.

Julien felt utterly weak, he expected the most unpleasant reproaches.

To complete his painful sensation, that morning he felt a keen remorse at

not loving his father.

'Chance has placed us together on this earth,' he said to himself while

the turnkey was making the cell a little tidy, 'and we have done one an

other almost all the harm imaginable. He comes in the hour of my death

to deal me his final blow.'

The old man's severe reproaches began as soon as they were left

without a witness.

Julien could not restrain his tears. 'What unworthy weakness!' he said

to himself angrily. 'He will go about everywhere exaggerating my want

of courage; what a triumph for Valenod and for all the dull hypocrites

who reign at Verrieres! They are very great people in France, they com

bine all the social advantages. Until now I could at least say to myself:

484They receive money, it is true, all the honours are heaped upon them,but I have nobility at heart.

'And here is a witness whom they will all believe, and who will assure

the whole of Verrieres, exaggerating the facts, that I have been weak in

the face of death! I shall be said to have turned coward in this trial which

they can all understand!'

Julien was almost in despair. He did not know how to get rid of his

father. And to makebelieve in such a way as to deceive this sharpwitted

old man was, for the moment, utterly beyond his power.

His mind ran swiftly over all the possible ways of escape. 'I have saved

money!' he exclaimed suddenly.

This inspired utterance altered the old man's expression and Julien's

own position.

'How ought I to dispose of it?' he continued, with more calm: the effect

produced by his words had rid him of all sense of inferiority.

The old carpenter was burning with a desire not to allow any of this

money to escape, a part of which Julien seemed to wish to leave to his

brothers. He spoke at great length and with heat. Julien managed to

tease him.

'Well, the Lord has given me inspiration for making my testament. I

shall give a thousand francs to each of my brothers, and the remainder to

you.'

'Very good,' said the old man, 'that remainder is my due; but since

God has been graciously pleased to touch your heart, if you wish to die

like a good Christian, you ought first to pay your debts. There is still the

cost of your maintenance and education, which I advanced, and which

you have forgotten… '

'So that is a father's love!' Julien repeated to himself with despair in his

heart, when at length he was alone. Soon the gaoler appeared.

'Sir, after a visit from the family, I always bring my lodgers a bottle of

good champagne. It is a trifle dear, six francs the bottle, but it rejoices the

heart.'

'Bring three glasses,' Julien told him with boyish glee, 'and send in two

of the prisoners whom I hear walking in the corridor.'

The gaoler brought him in two gaolbirds who had repeated their of

fence and were waiting to be sent back to penal servitude. They were a

485merry pair of scoundrels and really quite remarkable for cunning, cour

age and coolness.

'If you give me twenty francs,' one of them said to Julien, 'I will tell

you the whole story of my life. It is as good as a play.'

'But you will tell me lies?' said Julien.

'Not at all,' was the answer; 'my friend here, who wants my twenty

francs, will give me away if I don't tell the truth.'

His history was abominable. It revealed a courageous heart, in which

there survived but a single passion, the lust for money.

After they had left him, Julien was no longer the same man. All his an

ger with himself had vanished. The piercing grief, envenomed by cow

ardice, to which he had been a prey since the departure of Madame de

Renal, had turned to melancholy.

'If I had only been less taken in by appearance,' he told himself, 'I

should have seen that the drawing-rooms of Paris are inhabited by hon

est people like my father, or by able rascals like these gaolbirds. They are

right, the men in the drawing-rooms never rise in the morning with that

poignant thought: "How am I to dine today?" And they boast of their

probity! And, when summoned to a jury, they proudly condemn the

man who has stolen a silver fork because he felt faint with hunger!

'But when there is a Court, when it is a question of securing or losing a

Portfolio, my honest men of the drawing-rooms fall into crimes precisely

similar to those which the want of food has inspired in this pair of

gaolbirds …

'There is no such thing as natural law: the expression is merely a hoary

piece of stupidity well worthy of the AdvocateGeneral who hunted me

down the other day, and whose ancestor was made rich by one of Louis

XIV's confiscations. There is no law, save when there is a statute to pre

vent one from doing something, on pain of punishment. Before the stat

ute, there is nothing natural save the strength of the lion, or the wants of

the creature who suffers from hunger, or cold; in a word, necessity …

No, the men whom we honour are merely rascals who have had the

good fortune not to be caught redhanded. The accuser whom society

sets at my heels has been made rich by a scandalous injustice … I have

committed a murderous assault, and I am rightly condemned, but, short

of murder only, the Valenod who condemned me is a hundred times

more injurious to society.

486'Ah, well,' Julien added sorrowfully, but without anger, 'for all his av

arice, my father is worth more than any of those men. He has never

loved me. I am now going to fill his cup to overflowing, in dishonouring

him by a shameful death. That fear of being in want of money, that exag

gerated view of the wickedness of mankind which we call avarice, makes

him see a prodigious source of consolation and security in a sum of three

or four hundred louis which I may leave to him. On Sunday afternoons

he will display his gold to all his envious neighbours in Verrieres. "To

this tune," his glance will say to them, "which of you would not be

charmed to have a son guillotined?"'

This philosophy might be true, but it was of a nature to make a man

long for death. In this way passed five endless days. He was polite and

gentle to Mathilde, whom he saw to be exasperated by the most violent

jealousy. One evening Julien thought seriously of taking his life. His spir

it was exhausted by the profound dejection into which the departure of

Madame de Renal had cast him. Nothing pleased him any more, either in

real life or in imagination. Want of exercise was beginning to affect his

health and to give him the weak and excitable character of a young Ger

man student. He was losing that manly pride which repels with a for

cible oath certain degrading ideas by which the miserable are assailed.

'I have loved the Truth… Where is it to be found?… Everywhere hy

pocrisy, or at least charlatanism, even among the most virtuous, even

among the greatest'; and his lips curled in disgust … 'No, man cannot

place any trust in man.

'Madame de ——, when she was making a collection for her poor

orphans, told me that some Prince had just given her ten louis; a lie. But

what am I saying? Napoleon at SaintHelena!… Pure charlatanism, a

proclamation in favour of the King of Rome.

'Great God! If such a man as he, at a time, too, when misfortune ought

to recall him sternly to a sense of duty, stoops to charlatanism, what is

one to expect of the rest of the species?

'Where is Truth? In religion… Yes,' he added with a bitter smile of the

most intense scorn, 'in the mouths of the Maslons, the Frilairs, the

Castanedes … Perhaps in true Christianity, whose priests would be no

more paid than were the Apostles? But Saint Paul was paid with the

pleasure of commanding, of speaking, of hearing himself spoken of…

'Ah! If there were a true religion… Idiot that I am! I see a gothic

cathedral, storied windows; my feeble heart imagines the priest from

those windows … My soul would understand him, my soul has need of

487him. I find only a fop with greasy hair … little different, in fact, from the

Chevalier de Beauvoisis.

'But a true priest, a Massillon, a Fenelon… . Massillon consecrated

Dubois. The Memoires de SaintSimon have spoiled Fenelon for me; but

still, a true priest… Then the tender hearts would have a meetingplace

in this world … We should not remain isolated… This good priest

would speak to us of God. But what God? Not the God of the Bible, a

petty despot, cruel and filled with a thirst for vengeance… but the God

of Voltaire, just, good, infinite … '

He was disturbed by all his memories of that Bible which he knew by

heart … 'But how, whenever three are gathered together, how is one to

believe in that great name of GOD, after the frightful abuse that our

priests make of it?

'To live in isolation! … What torture! …

'I am becoming foolish and unjust,' said Julien, beating his brow. 'I am

isolated here in this cell; but I have not lived in isolation on this earth; I

had always the compelling idea of duty. The duty that I had laid down

for myself, rightly or wrongly, was like the trunk of a strong tree against

which I leaned during the storm; I tottered, I was shaken. After all, I was

only a man… but I was not carried away.

'It is the damp air of this cell that makes me think of isolation…

'And why be a hypocrite still when I am cursing hypocrisy? It is not

death, nor the cell, nor the damp air, it is the absence of Madame de Ren

al that is crushing me. If I were at Verrieres, and, in order to see her,were obliged to live for weeks on end hidden in the cellars of her house,should I complain?

'The influence of my contemporaries is too strong for me,' he said

aloud and with a bitter laugh. 'Talking alone to myself, within an inch of

death, I am still a hypocrite … Oh, nineteenth century!

'A hunter fires his gun in a forest, his quarry falls, he runs forward to

seize it. His boot strikes an anthill two feet high, destroys the habitation

of the ants, scatters the ants and their eggs to the four winds … The most

philosophical among the ants will never understand that black, enorm

ous, fearful body—the hunter's boot which all of a sudden has burst into

their dwelling with incredible speed, preceded by a terrifying noise, ac

companied by a flash of reddish flame …

'So it is with death, life, eternity, things that would be quite simple to

anyone who had organs vast enough to conceive them …

488'An ephemeral fly is born at nine o'clock in the morning, on one of the

long days of summer, to die at five o'clock in the afternoon; how should

it understand the word night?

'Grant it five hours more of existence, it sees and understands what

night is.

'And so with myself, I am to die at three and twenty. Grant me five

years more of life, to live with Madame de Renal.'

Here he gave a satanic laugh. What folly to discuss these great

problems!

'Imprimis: I am a hypocrite just as much as if there was someone in the

cell to hear me.

'Item: I am forgetting to live and love, when I have so few days left of

life … Alas! Madame de Renal is absent; perhaps her husband will not

allow her to come to Besancon again, and disgrace herself further.

'That is what is isolating me, that and not the absence of a just, good,allpowerful God, who is not wicked, not hungry for vengeance…

'Ah! If He existed … Alas! I should fall at His feet. I have deserved

death, I should say to him; but, great God, good God, indulgent God, re

store to me her whom I love!'

The night was by now far advanced. After an hour or two of peaceful

slumber, Fouque arrived.

Julien felt himself to be strong and resolute like a man who sees clearly

into his own heart.

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Exit Julien

'I will not play that poor abbe ChasBernard the unkind trick of sending

for him,' he said to Fouque; 'he would not be able to eat his dinner for

three days afterwards. But try to find me a Jansenist, a friend of M. Pir

ard and beyond the reach of intrigue.'

Fouque had been awaiting this development with impatience. Julien

acquitted himself in a decent fashion of everything that is due to public

opinion in the provinces. Thanks to M. l'abbe de Frilair, and in spite of

his unfortunate choice of a confessor, Julien, in his cell, was under the

protection of the Congregation; with a little more of the spirit of action,he might have made his escape. But, as the bad air of the cell produced

its effect, his mental powers dwindled. This made him all the happier on

the return of Madame de Renal.

'My first duty is towards you,' she said to him as she embraced him; 'I

have fled from Verrieres … '

Julien had no petty vanity in his relations with her, he told her of all

his weak moments. She was kind and charming to him.

That evening, immediately upon leaving the prison, she summoned to

her aunt's house the priest who had attached himself to Julien as to a

prey; as he wished only to acquire a reputation among the young women

belonging to the best society of Besancon, Madame de Renal easily per

suaded him to go and offer a novena at the abbey of BrayleHaut.

No words could express the intensity and recklessness of Julien's love.

By spending money freely, and by using and abusing the reputation of

her aunt, well known for her piety and riches, Madame de Renal ob

tained permission to see him twice daily.

On hearing this, Mathilde's jealousy rose to the pitch of insanity. M. de

Frilair had assured her that in spite of his position he dared not flout all

the conventions so far as to permit her to see her friend more than once

daily. Mathilde had Madame de Renal followed, so as to be kept

490informed of her most trivial actions. M. de Frilair exhausted every re

source of a most cunning mind, in trying to prove to her that Julien was

unworthy of her.

In the midst of all these torments, she loved him all the more, and, al

most every day, created a horrible scene in his cell.

Julien wished at all costs to behave like an honourable man until the

end towards this poor girl whom he had so seriously compromised; but,at every moment, the unbridled passion that he felt for Madame de Ren

al overcame him. When, through some flaw in his argument, he failed to

convince Mathilde of the innocence of her rival's visits: 'At this stage, the

end of the play must be very near,' he said to himself; 'that is some ex

cuse for me if I cannot act better.'

Mademoiselle de La Mole learned of the death of M. de Croisenois. M.

de Thaler, that man of boundless wealth, had taken the liberty of saying

unpleasant things about Mathilde's disappearance; M. de Croisenois

called on him with a request that he would withdraw them: M. de Thaler

showed him certain anonymous letters addressed to himself, and full of

details so skilfully put together that it was impossible for the poor Mar

quis not to discern the true facts.

M. de Thaler indulged in pleasantries that were distinctly broad. Mad

with rage and misery, M. de Croisenois insisted upon reparations so

drastic that the millionaire preferred a duel. Folly proved triumphant;and one of the men in Paris most worthy of a woman's love met his

death in his twentyfourth year.

This death made a strange and morbid impression on Julien's

weakened spirits.

'Poor Croisenois,' he said to Mathilde, 'did really behave quite reason

ably and honourably towards us; he had every right to hate me after

your imprudent behaviour in your mother's drawing-room, and to seek

a quarrel with me; for the hatred that follows on contempt is generally

furious.'

The death of M. de Croisenois altered all Julien's ideas with regard to

Mathilde's future; he devoted several days to proving to her that she

ought to accept the hand of M. de Luz. 'He is a shy man, not too much of

a Jesuit,' he told her, 'and a man who no doubt intends to climb. With a

more sober and persistent ambition than poor Croisenois, and with no

dukedom in his family, he will make no difficulty about marrying Julien

Sorel's widow.'

491'And a widow who scorns grand passions,' replied Mathilde coldly;'for she has lived long enough to see, after six months, her lover prefer

another woman, and a woman who was the origin of all their troubles.'

'You are unjust; Madame de Renal's visits will furnish the barrister

from Paris, who has been engaged to conduct my appeal, with some

striking phrases; he will describe the murderer honoured by the atten

tions of his victim. That may create an effect, and perhaps one day you

will see me the hero of some melodrama,' etc., etc.

A furious jealousy and one that was incapable of wreaking vengeance,the prolongation of a hopeless misery (for, even supposing Julien to be

saved, how was she to recapture his heart?), the shame and grief of lov

ing more than ever this faithless lover, had plunged Mademoiselle de La

Mole in a grim silence from which the zealous attentions of M. de Frilair

were no more capable than the rude frankness of Fouque, of making her

emerge.

As for Julien, except during the moments usurped by the presence of

Mathilde, he was living upon love and with hardly a thought of the fu

ture. A curious effect of this passion, in its extreme form and free from

all pretence, was that Madame de Renal almost shared his indifference

and mild gaiety.

'In the past,' Julien said to her, 'when I might have been so happy dur

ing our walks in the woods of Vergy, a burning ambition led my soul in

to imaginary tracts. Instead of my pressing to my heart this lovely arm

which was so near to my lips, the thought of my future tore me away

from you; I was occupied with the countless battles which I should have

to fight in order to build up a colossal fortune… No, I should have died

without knowing what happiness meant, had you not come to visit me

in this prison.'

Two incidents occurred to disturb this tranquil existence. Julien's con

fessor, for all that he was a Jansenist, was not immune from an intrigue

by the Jesuits, and quite unawares became their instrument.

He came one day to inform him that if he were not to fall into the mor

tal sin of suicide, he must take every possible step to obtain a reprieve.

Now, the clergy having considerable influence at the Ministry of Justice

in Paris, an easy method offered itself: he must undergo a sensational

conversion…

'Sensational!' Julien repeated. 'Ah! I have caught you at the same game,Father, playacting like any missionary … '

492'Your tender age,' the Jansenist went or gravely, 'the interesting ap

pearance with which Providence has blessed you, the motive itself of

your crime, which remains inexplicable, the heroic measures of which

Mademoiselle de La Mole is unsparing on your behalf, everything, in

short, including the astonishing affection that your victim shows for you,all these have combined to make you the hero of the young women of

Besancon. They have forgotten everything for you, even politics …

'Your conversion would strike an echo in their hearts, and would leave

a profound impression there. You can be of the greatest service to reli

gion, and am I to hesitate for the frivolous reason that the Jesuits would

adopt the same course in similar circumstances! And so, even in this par

ticular case which has escaped their rapacity, they would still be doing

harm! Let such a thing never be said… The tears which will flow at your

conversion will annul the corrosive effect of ten editions of the impious

works of Voltaire.'

'And what shall I have left,' replied Julien coldly, 'if I despise myself? I

have been ambitious, I have no wish to reproach myself; I acted then ac

cording to the expediency of the moment. Now, I am living from day to

day. But, generally speaking, I should be making myself extremely un

happy, if I gave way to any cowardly temptation … '

The other incident, which affected Julien far more keenly, arose from

Madame de Renal. Some intriguing friend or other had managed to per

suade this simple, timid soul that it was her duty to go to SaintCloud,and to throw herself at the feet of King Charles X.

She had made the sacrifice of parting from Julien, and after such an ef

fort, the unpleasantness of making a public spectacle of herself, which at

any other time would have seemed to her worse than death, was no

longer anything in her eyes.

'I shall go to the King, I shall confess proudly that you are my lover:

the life of a man, and of such a man as Julien, must outweigh all other

considerations. I shall say that it was out of jealousy that you attempted

my life. There are endless examples of poor young men who have been

saved in such cases by the humanity of a jury, or by that of the King … '

'I shall cease to see you, I shall bar the door of my prison against you,'

cried Julien, 'and most certainly I shall kill myself in despair, the day

after, unless you swear to me that you will take no step that will make us

both a public spectacle. This idea of going to Paris is not yours. Tell me

the name of the intriguing woman who suggested it to you …

493'Let us be happy throughout the few remaining days of this brief life.

Let us conceal our existence; my crime is only too plain. Mademoiselle

de La Mole has unbounded influence in Paris, you may be sure that she

is doing all that is humanly possible. Here in the provinces, I have all the

wealthy and respectable people against me. Your action would embitter

still further these wealthy and above all moderate men, for whom life is

such an easy matter … Let us not give food for laughter to the Maslons,the Valenods, and a thousand people better worth than they.'

The bad air of the cell became insupportable to Julien. Fortunately on

the day on which he was told that he must die, a bright sun was glad

dening the earth, and he himself was in a courageous mood. To walk in

the open air was a delicious sensation to him, as is treading solid earth to

A mariner who has long been at sea. 'There, all is well,' he said to him

self, 'I am not lacking in courage.'

Never had that head been so poetic as at the moment when it was

about to fall. The most precious moments that he had known in the past

in the woods of Vergy came crowding into his mind with an extreme

vividness.

Everything passed simply, decorously, and without affectation on his

part.

Two days earlier, he had said to Fouque: 'For my emotions I cannot

answer; this damp and hideous cell gives me moments of fever in which

I am not myself; but fear, no; no one shall see me blench.'

He had made arrangements in advance that on the morning of the last

day, Fouque should carry off Mathilde and Madame de Renal.

'Take them in the same carriage,' he had told him. 'Arrange that the

posthorses shall gallop all the time. They will fall into one another's

arms, or else will show a deadly hatred for one another. In either case,the poor women will have some slight distraction from their terrible

grief.'

Julien had made Madame de Renal swear that she would live to look

after Mathilde's child.

'Who knows? Perhaps we continue to have sensation after our death,'

he said one day to Fouque. 'I should dearly like to repose, since repose is

the word, in that little cave in the high mountain that overlooks Verri

eres. Many a time, as I have told you, retiring by night to that cave, and

casting my gaze afar over the richest provinces of France, I have felt my

heart ablaze with ambition: it was my passion then … Anyhow, that cave

494is precious to me, and no one can deny that it is situated in a spot that a

philosopher's heart might envy… Very well! These worthy members of

the Congregation of Besancon make money out of everything; if you

know how to set about it, they will sell you my mortal remains … '

Fouque was successful in this grim transaction. He was spending the

night alone in his room, by the body of his friend, when to his great sur

prise, he saw Mathilde appear. A few hours earlier, he had left her ten

leagues from Besancon. There was a wild look in her eyes.

'I wish to see him,' she said to him.

Fouque had not the courage to speak or to rise. He pointed with his

finger to a great blue cloak on the floor; in it was wrapped all that re

mained of Julien.

She fell upon her knees. The memory of Boniface de La Mole and of

Marguerite de Navarre gave her, no doubt, a superhuman courage. Her

trembling hands unfolded the cloak. Fouque turned away his eyes.

He heard Mathilde walking rapidly about the room. She lighted a

number of candles. When Fouque had summoned up the strength to

look at her, she had placed Julien's head upon a little marble table, in

front of her, and was kissing his brow …

Mathilde followed her lover to the tomb which he had chosen for him

self. A great number of priests escorted the coffin and, unknown to all,alone in her draped carriage, she carried upon her knees the head of the

man whom she had so dearly loved.

Coming thus near to the summit of one of the high mountains of the

Jura, in the middle of the night, in that little cave magnificently illumin

ated with countless candles, a score of priests celebrated the Office of the

Dead. All the inhabitants of the little mountain villages, through which

the procession passed, had followed it, drawn by the singularity of this

strange ceremony.

Mathilde appeared in their midst in a flowing garb of mourning, and,at the end of the service, had several thousands of five franc pieces

scattered among them.

Left alone with Fouque, she insisted upon burying her lover's head

with her own hands. Fouque almost went mad with grief.

By Mathilde's orders, this savage grot was adorned with marbles

sculptured at great cost, in Italy.

495Madame de Renal was faithful to her promise. She did not seek in any

way to take her own life; but, three days after Julien, died while embra

cing her children.

TO THE HAPPY FEW

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