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Théophile Gautier**

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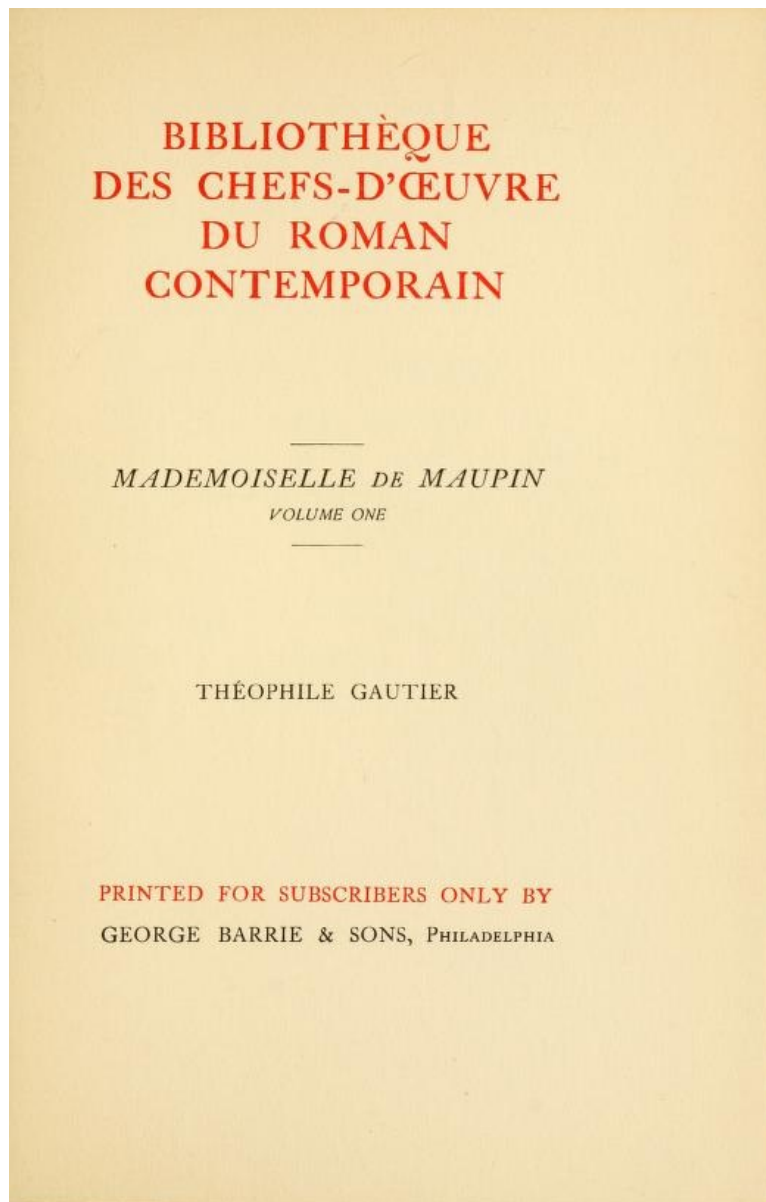
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**MADemoISELLE DE MAUPIN**

*VOLUME ONE*

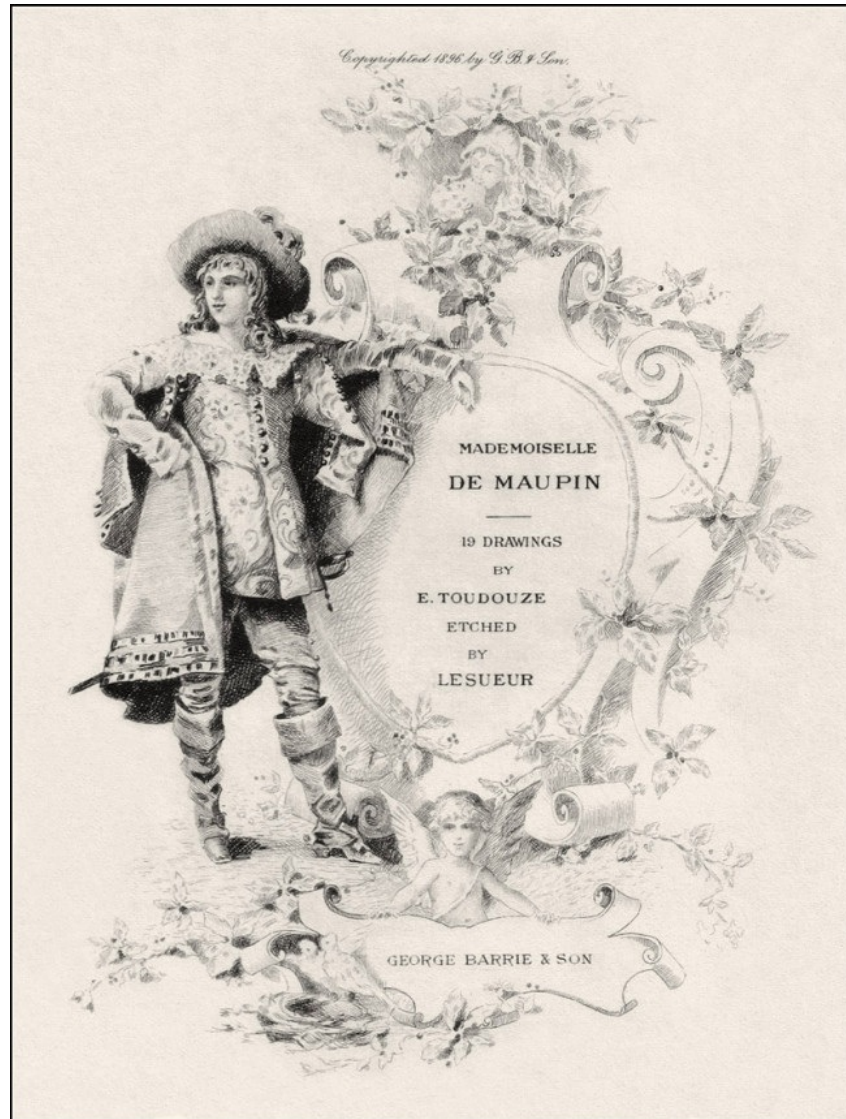
BY  
**THÉOPHILE GAUTIER**

THE REALISTS

PRINTED BY

GEORGE BARRIE & SONS, PHILADELPHIA

1897



THIS EDITION OF  
**MADemoisELLE DE MAUPIN**  
HAS BEEN COMPLETELY TRANSLATED  
BY  
**I. G. BURNHAM**  
THE ETCHINGS ARE BY  
**FRANÇOIS-XAVIER LE SUEUR**  
AND DRAWINGS BY  
**ÉDOUARD TOUDOUZE**

MADEMOISELLE DE MAUPIN Front.  
 THE IMAGINARY MISTRESS  
 FIRST MEETING WITH ROSETTE  
 EPISODE OF THE "TOILETTE DE BAL"  
 D'ALBERT AND ROSETTE  
 THE ARRIVAL OF THÉODORE  
 THÉODORE AND THE PAGE  
 ROSETTE'S MORNING AUDIENCE  
 THE ACCIDENTAL DISCOVERY

### BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTICE

This celebrated novel, the celebrity of which has not been lessened by the very numerous editions that have been published, had a very modest beginning which in no way foreshadowed the great success which it was to obtain later.

The title: *Mademoiselle de Maupin—Double Love* appeared, we believe, for the first time in Renduel's catalogue in connection with *The Life of Hoffman*, by Lœve-Weimars, which appeared in October, 1833, announcing the new work of Théophile Gautier as being in press. Renduel had made the acquaintance of the author at Victor Hugo's; he had published in August, 1833, his first volume of prose, *Young France*, and now it was a question of launching a work in two volumes, a truly daring undertaking for a publisher of that day; especially in the case of the work of an author but little known and only twenty-two years old.

*Mademoiselle de Maupin* was not, however, destined to see the light so soon. For two years Théophile Gautier, more enamored of freedom than of work, or preferring the task of making two harmonious rhymes to all the beauties of his learned and rhythmic prose, incessantly abandoned and resumed the promised work. A tradition preserved in the family of the poet tells how his father often shut him up in his room at that time, forbidding him to leave it until he had completed a certain number of pages of the *Grotesques* or of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. When the maternal kindness did not come to his aid, the frolicsome author, who then lived with his parents on Place Royale, often found the means of getting away by the window and so escaping a paternal task. Such escapades being frequently renewed, it may well be believed that the novel made but little progress; 1834 was drawing to a close; only the first of the two volumes was finished; the publisher complained, and the author tried to pacify him by notes similar to the following:

"I have just discovered at a bric-à-brac dealer's a charming picture of Boucher in a splendid state of preservation; it is an opportunity that I do not wish to miss, and not having money enough, I take the liberty of asking you for my balance.<sup>[1]</sup> You will confer on me a real pleasure in sending it to me.

"I am harnessed to *La Maupin*, and that prevents me from prowling about and calling on you.

"With cordial wishes, I am, yours,

"THÉOPHILE GAUTIER."

Finally, in 1835, the second volume was written in six weeks on Rue du Doyenné, where the poet, having left the paternal nest, had installed himself; the manuscript was delivered to Renduel and we read the following note in *Le Monde Dramatique*, of September 20th, concerning the biography of the strange person who really bore the name of Maupin, a biography signed by Rochefort and published in that number under the title: *Mademoiselle d'Aubigny-Maupin*: "One of our collaborators, Monsieur Théophile Gautier, has been busy for a long time on a romance entitled: *Mademoiselle (de) Maupin*."

The work was now soon to appear; it was issued in November, 1835, in two octavo volumes, printed by Madame Poussin under the title: *Mademoiselle de Maupin—Double Love*. The first volume bears the date 1835, the second 1836, while the preface is dated May, 1834.

The work produced no very great sensation. A few journals spoke of it, but publicity was not then systematized as it is to-day, and except by some few literary men and the small romantic group of the author's friends, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* was soon forgotten. Let us remark, nevertheless, that immediately the book appeared, Honoré de Balzac wrote Renduel a note, asking for a copy, this note we have seen ourselves; from this moment dates the admiration that he always professed thereafter for Théophile Gautier. We learn from Monsieur Arsène Houssaye, the old and faithful friend of the poet, that owing to the failure to sell the work, Renduel determined not to publish anything more for his author; *La Comédie de la Mort*, already announced upon the covers of the work (as well as *Capitaine Fracasse*), was, in fact, returned to the author, and only appeared in 1838, when it was published by Desessart, at that time one of Arsène Houssaye's publishers; it was the author of *La Couronne de Bleuets*, who introduced his friend to him and secured a favorable consideration for his collection of verses.

How strange to us and unlikely, even, all this seems, when one recalls the exorbitant prices obtained for some years past for rare, stitched copies in good condition of the first edition of the work that we are now considering. Many have realized one thousand five hundred francs, that is to say, the total sums received by the author as royalty on the first issue of his work. This sum is verified by his receipts to Renduel, which are in our hands.

A curious incident occurred as to *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. After its appearance, all the opening of the eleventh chapter was inserted in *Le Monde Dramatique* of January 4, 1836, without mentioning its source, under the title of: *La Comédie Romanesque*. Since that time, those pages have been frequently reprinted, but not a single one of these reproductions gives any indication of their origin. It must be admitted that Théophile Gautier himself gave rise to this error in *La Presse* of December 17, 1838, in again quoting these lines, inserted in an unpublished commentary, as an isolated article which had come under his notice by chance. He had forgotten this extract, and believed in good faith to have found in *Le Monde Dramatique* only a newspaper improvisation. This first mistake was the starting-point of all that succeeded, the most striking of which is the insertion in 1858 of this fragment from *Mademoiselle de Maupin* in the first volume of Théophile Gautier's work: *Histoire de l'Art Dramatique in France*. It is useless to add that no one noticed this fact.

Time, however, rolled on, and the renown of the poet continued to increase; his appearance in *La Presse* in 1836, and his critical work, had made a circle of new readers. Then, *Fortunio*, *La Comédie de la Mort*, *Une Larme du Diable*, *Tra Los Montès*, *Les Grotesques*, etc., etc., had considerably increased his literary *impedimenta*. So, when Monsieur Charpentier, the father of the present publisher of Théophile Gautier's complete works, had founded the collection to which he gave his name, he soon thought of reprinting our author's principal works. Monsieur Charpentier, who succeeded in grouping in his catalogue the most select of the remarkable works of his age, was of refined literary taste and held among the publishers of his day a place similar to that then held by Monsieur Buloz in his capacity of director of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*: it was difficult to obtain an interview with either, and to appear in print in their collections was regarded as a kind of consecration.

It was in 1845 when four of Théophile Gautier's volumes appeared in the Charpentier catalogue; they were *Poésies Complètes*, *Nouvelles*, *Voyage en Espagne*, and *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. For this reprint, the first since the original edition<sup>[2]</sup>, the author modified, but very slightly, some phrases of his work, the text of which, from that time, has never been changed.

Here ends, in reality, the history of this work. Since 1845, the number of editions has continued to increase; we will only quote two that appeared in 1878: one in two volumes, 24mo, illustrated with four designs by Eugèn Giraud, and another in a large 12mo volume, upon Holland paper, embellished with a portrait of the heroine by Théophile Gautier himself, the portrait dated 1834. Finally, in 1880, there was added to a reprint of this edition, a reproduction of the medallion of the author by David d'Anger; this reproduction is erroneously dated 1834, instead of 1835, which is the actual year of its execution.

Is it possible, as has often been asserted, that this work, whose incomparable style should have warranted the opening of the doors of the Académie Française to the author, was in part the cause of their remaining stubbornly closed against him?—We do not know; but from another tradition preserved in the poet's family, it would appear that the father himself, when he knew of the completion of the work (only the first volume, as we have seen, was written under his eyes), could not have been without apprehension as to the part which the book would play in the life of his son, and, notwithstanding his admiration for the style of the work, he would often have expressed the fear that the second volume would at times influence the future of the author.

In any case, the renown of Théophile Gautier, like that of his illustrious friend, Honoré de Balzac, who, likewise, was never a member of the Académie, has only increased since his death, and the names of these two rare talents are in truth missed among those of the members of that illustrious body. For Théophile Gautier at least, the Académie itself expressed one day, by the mouth of one of its members, its regret at not having received him. On October 25, 1872, at its public session and at the very hour of the obsequies of the great writer, Monsieur Camille Doucet pronounced the following words which do honor to their author, and we are happy to reproduce them here: "Permit me to digress a moment. When I speak of the fraternity of Letters, I should fail, messieurs, if I appeared longer to forget that at this very hour, upon the threshold of a tomb, which I have left only with regret to come here to fulfil another duty, Letters mourning, weep for a true poet dear to all, a brilliant writer whose wit was thoroughly French and whose heart was still more French. Very many votes have proved to him that his place was indicated among us, and so we deplore the more the sudden stroke to which Théophile Gautier succumbs."

We will add nothing to these touching lines and will close this notice by saying a few words as to the present edition of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*. It is the first reprint, absolutely conforming to the original text. The work appears in two volumes, divided like those of 1835, and the publishers have exerted every effort to satisfy bibliophiles desirous of possessing as perfect an edition as possible, both as regards the exactness of the text and the technical execution of the work.

Finally, let us say that the designs of E. Toudouze, made especially for this work, will render this edition still more complete. It will rank, we hope, among the most treasured editions of the book.

CHARLES DE LOVENJOL.

[1] Of his royalties as author of *Young France*.

[2] *Figaro*, of May 26, 1837, and some other journals, announced the sale, at Renduel's, of a

## PREFACE

One of the most burlesque incidents of the glorious epoch in which we have the good fortune to live side by side with Deutz and General Bugeaud, is, beyond question, the rehabilitation of virtue undertaken by all the newspapers, of whatever color they may be, red, green, or tri-colored.

Virtue is most assuredly a very respectable thing, and we have no wish to fail in our devotion to the excellent, worthy creature—God forbid!—We consider that her eyes shine with sufficient brilliancy through her spectacles, that her stockings are reasonably well put on, that she takes snuff from her gold snuff-box with all imaginable grace, that her little dog courtesies like a dancing-master.—We agree to all that.—We are even willing to admit that her figure is not bad for her age, and that she carries her years as well as any one could. She is a very agreeable grandmother, but she is a grandmother. It seems to me to be natural to prefer to her, especially when one is twenty years old, some little immorality, very pert, very coquettish, very wanton, with the hair a little out of curl, the skirt rather short than long, the foot and eye alluring, the cheek slightly flushed, a smile on the lips and the heart in the hand.—The most horribly virtuous journalists can hardly be of a different opinion; and, if they say the contrary, it is very probable that they do not think it. To think one thing and write another is something that happens every day, especially among virtuous folk.

I remember the epigrams uttered before the Revolution—I refer to the Revolution of July—against the ill-fated and virginal Vicomte Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld, who lengthened the skirts of the dancers at the Opéra and applied with his own patrician hands a chaste plaster around the middle of all the statues.—Monsieur le Vicomte Sosthène de la Rochefoucauld is far surpassed.—Modesty has been greatly perfected since his day, and we go into refinements that he would never have imagined.

I, who am not accustomed to look at statues in certain places, considered, as others did, the vine-leaf cut by the scissors of Monsieur le Chargé des Beaux-Arts, the most absurd thing in the world. It seems that I was wrong, and that the vine-leaf is one of the most meritorious of institutions.

I have been told, but I refused to believe it, it seemed to me so extraordinary, that there were people who, when looking at Michael Angelo's fresco of the *Last Judgment*, had seen nothing therein but the episode of the lewd priests, and had veiled their faces, crying out at the abomination of desolation!

Such people know nothing of the romance of Rodrigue except the couplet of the snake.—If there is any nudity in a book or a picture, they go straight to it as the swine to the mire, and pay no attention to the blooming flowers or the golden fruit that hang within reach on all sides.

I confess that I am not virtuous enough for that. Dorine, the brazen-faced soubrette, may display before me her swelling bosom, I certainly will not draw my handkerchief to cover it so that it cannot be seen.—I will look at her bosom as at her face, and if it is fair and well-shaped I will take pleasure in it.—But I will not touch Elmire's dress to see if it is soft, nor will I push her reverently upon the table as that poor devil of a Tartuffe did.

This great affectation of morality that reigns to-day would be very laughable if it were not very tiresome.—Every *feuilleton* becomes a pulpit; every journalist a preacher; only the tonsure and the little neckband are wanting. The weather is rainy and homiletic; one can defend one's self against both by going out only in a carriage and reading Pantagruel between one's bottle and one's pipe.

Blessed Jesus! what an outcry! what a frenzy!—Who bit you? who pricked you? what the devil's the matter with you that you cry so loud, and what has poor vice done to you that you should bear him such a grudge, he is such a good fellow, so easy to live with, and asks nothing except to be allowed to amuse himself and not bore others, if such a thing can be? Act with vice like Serre with the gendarme: embrace and have done with it all.—Believe me, you will be the better for it.—Eh! *Mon Dieu!* my worthy preachers, what would you do without vice? You would be reduced to beggary to-morrow, if the world should become virtuous to-day.

The theatres would be closed to-night.—What would you take for the subject of your *feuilleton*?—No more Opéra balls to fill your columns,—no more novels to dissect; for balls, novels, plays, are the real pomps of Satan, if we are to believe our holy Mother Church.—The actress would dismiss her protector and could no longer pay you for puffing her.—Nobody would subscribe to your newspapers; people would read Saint Augustine, they would go to church, they would tell their beads. That would be very praiseworthy, perhaps, but you would gain nothing by it. If people were virtuous, what would you do with your articles on the immorality of the age? You see plainly that vice is good for something.

But it is the fashion nowadays to be virtuous and Christ-like, it is an attitude people affect; they pose as Saint Jeromes just as they used to pose as Don Juans; they are pale and wasted, they wear their hair as the apostles did, they walk with folded hands and eyes glued to the ground, they assume an expression sugared to perfection; they have an open Bible on the mantel, a crucifix and consecrated box-wood above their beds; they never swear, they smoke but little, and they chew almost not at all.—With that they become Christians, they talk about the sanctity of

art, the lofty mission of the artist, the poesy of Catholicism, about Monsieur de La Mennais, about the painters of the angelic school, about the Council of Trent, about progressive humanity, and about a thousand other fine things.—Some infuse a little republicanism into their religion, they are not the least interesting. They couple Robespierre and Jesus Christ in the most cheerful way and amalgamate with praiseworthy gravity the Acts of the Apostles and the decrees of the *Holy Convention*—that is the sacramental title; others add, for a final ingredient, some Saint-Simonian ideas.—These latter are complete, they rest upon a square foundation; after them we can look for nothing better. Human absurdity can go no farther,—*has ultra metas*—etc. They are the Hercules Pillars of Burlesque.

Christianity is so in vogue by reason of the prevailing hypocrisy, that even Neo-Christianity enjoys a certain amount of favor. They say that it can boast thus far one recruit, Monsieur Drouineau included.

An extremely interesting variety of the moral journalist, properly so-called, is the journalist with a female family.

He carries his modest sensitiveness to the point of anthropophagy, or very nearly that.

His mode of procedure, although it seems at the first glance simple and easy, is none the less clownish and superlatively entertaining, and in my opinion it deserves to be handed down to posterity—to our last nephews, as the old fogies of the so-called *Grand Siècle* used to say.

In the first place, to pose as a journalist of this variety, you need some few preliminary utensils—such as two or three legitimate wives, a few mothers, as many sisters as possible, a full assortment of daughters, and cousins innumerable.—The second requisite is a play or novel of some sort, a pen, ink, paper, and a printer. Perhaps it would be as well to have an idea or two and several subscribers; but you can do without them, if you have a large stock of philosophy and the shareholders' money.

When you have all these things you can set up as a moral journalist. The two following recipes, varied to suit the occasion, will suffice for the editorial part.

#### *Models of Virtuous Articles Concerning a First Performance.*

"After the literature of blood, the literature of mud; after the morgue and the galleys, the alcove and the brothel; after the rags stained by murder, the rags stained by debauchery; after," etc. (according to the necessity of the occasion and the available space, you can continue in this vein from six lines to fifty or more),—"this is as it should be.—This is where neglect of sacred doctrines and romantic licentiousness lead: the stage has become a school of prostitution where one dares not venture, save with fear and trembling, with a woman one respects. You come upon the faith of an illustrious name, and you are obliged to retire at the third act with your young daughter all confused and abashed. Your wife hides her blushes behind her fan; your sister, your cousin," etc. (The degrees of relationship may be diversified at pleasure; it is enough that they be all females.)

NOTE.—There is one man who has carried morality so far as to say: "I will not go to see that play with my mistress."—That man I admire and love; I carry him in my heart, as Louis XVIII. carried all France in his; for he has conceived the most triumphant, the most monumental, the most insane, the most extravagant idea that has passed through the brain of man in this blessed nineteenth century, which has seen the birth of so many and such amusing ideas.

The method of dealing with a book is very expeditious and within the range of every intellect:

"If you choose to read this book, lock yourself securely into your own room; do not leave it lying on the table. If your wife and your daughter should open it, they would be lost.—This is a dangerous book, it advises vicious habits. It would have made a great success, perhaps, in the time of Crébillon, in the houses of kept mistresses, at a duchess's select supper-parties; but now that morals are purified, now that the hand of the people has razed the rotten edifice of aristocracy, and that,—etc., etc.—there must be in every work an idea—an idea—yes, a moral and religious idea which—an exalted and profound aim, answering to the needs of humanity; for it is a deplorable thing that young writers should sacrifice the most sacred things to success, and should expend their talent—a notable talent by the way—in lewd descriptions that would make a captain of dragoons blush."—(The virginity of the captain of dragoons is, after the discovery of America, the most delightful discovery that has been made for a long while.)—"The novel we are considering recalls Justine, the philosophic Thérèse, Félicia, Compère Matthieu, the Contes de Grécourt, the Priapées of the Marquis de Sade." The virtuous journalist is immensely erudite in the matter of filthy novels;—I am very curious to know why.

It may be obtained at Eugène Renduel's, Rue des Grands-Augustins, No. 22. A handsome volume in 8vo. with vignette. Price 7 francs 50 centimes.

*Eccò,—ecce*,—see it.

It is frightful to think that, through the fault of the newspapers, there are many honest manufacturers who have only these two recipes to live upon, they and the numerous families they employ.

Apparently I am the most monumentally immoral personage to be found in Europe or elsewhere; for I can see nothing more licentious in the novels and plays of the present day than in the novels and plays of an earlier time, and I find it difficult to understand why the ears of the gentlemen of the journals have suddenly become so Jansenically ticklish.

I do not believe that the most innocent newspaper man will dare to say that Pigault-Lebrun,

Crébillon Fils, Louvet, Voisenon, Marmontel, and all other writers of novels and tales do not surpass in immorality, since there is such a thing as immorality, the most dissolute and licentious productions of Messieurs Such-an-one and So-and-so, whom I do not name out of regard for their modesty.

One must be most notoriously false to his convictions not to agree to that.

Let not the objection be made that I have cited names little known or unfavorably known. If I have not mentioned the brilliant, imperishable names, it is not because they will not support my assertion with the weight of their great authority.

The novels and tales of Voltaire, aside from the question of merit, are most assuredly no more suitable to be given as prizes to little slips of boarding-school misses than are the immoral tales of our friend the lycanthropist, or even the moral tales of the insipid Marmontel.

What do we find in the comedies of the great Molière? the sacred institution of marriage—as the catechism and the newspapers call it—scoffed at and ridiculed in every scene.

The husband is old, ugly, and peevish; he wears his wig awry; his coat is out of fashion; he has a bill-headed cane, a nose smeared with snuff, short legs, and a paunch as fat as a budget.—He stammers, says nothing but foolish things, and does as many as he says; he sees nothing, he hears nothing; his wife is kissed before his face, and he has no idea what is going on; that state of things lasts until he is well and duly proved a cuckold in his own eyes and in the eyes of the whole audience, who are mightily edified and applaud in a way to bring the walls down.

They who applaud the loudest are they who are the most married.

In Molière, marriage is named George Dandin or Sganarelle.

Adultery is Damis or Clitandre; there is no name sweet and charming enough for it.

The adulterer is always young, handsome, well-made, and a marquis at the very least. He enters from the wings humming the very latest waltz; he takes one or two steps on the stage with the most deliberate, all-conquering air imaginable; he scratches his ear with the pink nail of his deftly spread little finger; he combs his lovely fair hair with his tortoise-shell comb, and arranges his ruffles, which are of great volume. His doublet and his hose are almost covered with bows and knots of ribbon; his neckband is from the best maker; his gloves smell sweeter than balsam and civet; his plumes cost a louis apiece.

How his eye sparkles and his cheek glows! how smiling his mouth! how white his teeth! how soft and well cared for his hand!

He speaks, naught issues from his lips save poesy, perfumed gallantries in the most refined style and with the most charming manner; he has read the latest novels and knows all about poetry, he is brave, and quick to draw his sword, he scatters gold with lavish hand.—And so Angélique, Agnès, Isabelle, can hardly refrain from leaping on his neck, well-bred and great ladies though they be; and so the husband is regularly betrayed in the fifth act, and is very lucky that he was not in the first.

That is how marriage is treated by Molière, one of the loftiest and most serious geniuses who ever lived.—Do you think there is anything stronger in the suits of *Indiana* and of *Valentine*?

Paternity is even less respected, if that be possible. Witness Orgon, Géronte, and all the rest of them.

How they are robbed by their sons, cheated by their valets! How their avarice, their obstinacy, their idiocy are laid bare, without mercy for their age!—What practical jokes! what mystifications.—How they are taken by the shoulder and pushed out of life, poor old fellows, who take a long time to die and refuse to give up their money! how much is said about the immortality of parents! what arguments against heredity, and how much more convincing they are than all this Saint-Simonian declamation!

A father is an ogre, an Argus, a jailer, a tyrant, something that at the best is good for nothing but to delay a marriage for three acts until the final reconciliation.—A father is the ridiculous husband perfected.—A son is never ridiculous in Molière; for Molière, like all authors at all possible epochs, paid his court to the young generation at the expense of the old.

And what of the Scapins, with their striped cloaks *à la Napolitaine*, their caps tilted over their ears, their plumes sweeping the layers of air,—are not they very pious, very chaste individuals, most worthy of canonization?—The galleys are filled with honest folk who have not done the fourth part of what they do. The knavery of Triplé is paltry knavery compared with theirs. And the Lisettes, the Martons, *tudieu!* what hussies!—The girls of the street are far from being as sharp, as quick at prurient retort as they. How well they understand how to deliver a note! what good watch they keep during assignations!—On my word, they are invaluable girls, serviceable and shrewd advisers.

It is a charming company that walks and fidgets through those comedies and imbroglions.—Duped guardians, cuckold husbands, lewd maids, keen-witted valets, young ladies mad with love, dissolute sons, adulterous wives; are not these quite as bad as the melancholy young beaux and poor, weak women, oppressed and impassioned, of the dramas and novels of the writers in vogue to-day?

And yet the denouements, minus the final blow of the dagger, minus the regulation cup of poison, are as happy as the time-honored ending of a fairy tale, and everybody, even the husband, is perfectly satisfied. In Molière, virtue is always in disgrace, always being pummelled; it is virtue

that wears horns and turns her back to Mascarille; morality barely shows its face once at the end of the play, in the somewhat commonplace person of the gendarme Loyal.

All this that we have said is not intended to knock a chip off Molière's pedestal; we are not mad enough to attempt to shake that bronze colossus with our weak arms; we desired simply to show the pious *feuilletonistes*, who are terrified by recent works and by those of the romantic school, that the old classics, whom they urge us every day to read and imitate, far surpass them in looseness and immorality.

To Molière we might easily add Marivaux and La Fontaine, those two strongly-contrasted exponents of the French mind, and Regnier and Rabelais and Marot, and many others. But it is not our purpose in this place to prepare, from the standpoint of morality, a course in literature for the benefit of the virgin minds of the *feuilleton*.

It seems to me that we should not raise such a hubbub for so small a matter. Luckily we are not living in the days of the fair Eve, and we cannot, in good conscience, be as primitive and patriarchal as people were in the days of the ark. We are not little girls preparing for our first communion; and when we play crambo, we do not answer *cream-pie*. We are passably knowing in our innocence, and our virginity has been on the town for a long while; those are things that one does not have twice, and, whatever we may do, we cannot recover them, for there is nothing in the world that runs faster than a fleeing virginity and a vanishing illusion.

After all, perhaps there is no great harm in that, and knowledge of everything is preferable to ignorance of everything. That is a question that I leave for those who know more than I, to discuss. The fact remains that the world has passed the age when one can feign modesty and chastity, and I consider it too old a greybeard to play the child and the virgin without making itself ridiculous.

Since its marriage to civilization, society has lost the right to be artless and bashful. There are certain blushes that are all right for the bridal bed, but can serve no further purpose the next day; for the young wife thinks no more of the maiden, it may be, or if she does think of her, it is a most improper thing and gravely endangers her husband's reputation.

When I chance to read one of the fine sermons that have taken the place of literary criticism in the public sheets, I sometimes feel great remorse and dire apprehension, having on my conscience some paltry equivocal stories, a little too highly spiced, such as a young man of spirit and animation may have to reproach himself for.

Beside these Bossuets of the Café de Paris, these Bourdaloues of the balcony at the Opéra, these Catos at so much a line, who berate the present age in such fine fashion, I esteem myself the most infamous villain that ever marred the face of the earth; and yet, God knows, the list of my sins, capital as well as venial, with the usual blank spaces and leads, would barely, even in the hands of the most skilful publisher, make one or two octavo volumes a day, which is a small matter for one who does not claim to be bound for paradise in the other world and to win the Monthyon prize or be rose-maiden in this.

And then, when I think that I have met under the table, and elsewhere, too, a considerable number of these dragons of virtue, I return to a better opinion of myself, and I consider that, whatever faults I may have, they have another which is, in my eyes, the greatest and worst of all:—I refer to hypocrisy.

By looking carefully one might perhaps find another little vice to add; but this is so hideous that I really hardly dare to name it. Come nearer and I will breathe its name into your ear:—it is envy.

Envy, and nothing else.

It is envy that crawls and wriggles through all these paternal homilies; however careful it may be to hide itself, you can see its flat little viper's head from time to time gleaming above the metaphors and rhetorical figures; you surprise it licking with its forked tongue its lips blue with venom, you hear it hissing softly in the shadow of an insidious epithet.

I am well aware that it is insufferably conceited to say that any one envies you, and that a dandy who boasts of a conquest is almost as nauseating.—I am not so boastful as to believe that I have enemies or envious detractors; that is a piece of good fortune that is not given to everybody, and I probably shall not enjoy it for a long time; so I will speak freely and without reservation as one who is perfectly disinterested in the matter.

An unquestionable fact, and easy of demonstration to those who may doubt it, is the natural antipathy of the critic to the poet—of him who does nothing to him who does something—of the drone to the bee—of the gelding to the stallion.

You do not become a critic until the fact is established to your own satisfaction that you cannot be a poet. Before descending to the pitiful rôle of watching cloaks and counting strokes like a billiard-marker or a tennis-court attendant, you have long courted the Muse, you have tried to seduce her; but you have not sufficient vigor for that; your breath has failed you and you have fallen back, pale and broken-winded, to the foot of the sacred mountain.

I can conceive that antipathy. It is painful to see another take his seat at the banquet to which you are not invited and lie with the woman who would have none of you. I pity with all my heart the poor eunuch who is compelled to assist at the delights of the Great Turk.

He is admitted to the most secret recesses of the Oda; he escorts the sultanas to the bath; he sees their lovely bodies gleaming in the silvery water of the great reservoirs, shedding streams of pearls and smoother than agate; the most hidden charms are disclosed to him unveiled. No one is



embarrassed by his presence.—He is a eunuch.—The sultan caresses his favorite before him and kisses her on her pomegranate mouth.—In very truth his is a terribly false position and he must be sadly embarrassed to keep himself in countenance.

It is the same with the critic who sees the poet walking in the garden of poesy with its nine fair odalisques, and disporting himself indolently in the shade of tall green laurels. It is very hard for him not to pick up stones in the road to throw at him and wound him over the wall, if he is skilful enough to do it.

The critic who has produced nothing of his own is a coward; he is like an abbé paying court to a layman's wife: the layman cannot pay him back in his own coin or fight with him.

I think that an account of the different methods of depreciating any sort of work, resorted to during the last month, would be at least as interesting as the story of Tiglath-Pileser, or of Gemmagog, who invented peaked shoes.

There would be enough matter to fill fifteen or sixteen folio volumes, but we will have pity on the reader and confine ourselves to a few lines—a favor for which we demand more than everlasting gratitude.—In a very remote age, lost in the darkness of time—it was fully three weeks ago—the romance of the Middle Ages flourished principally in Paris and the suburbs. The coat of arms was held in high esteem; *coiffures à la Hennin* were not despised and party-colored trousers were thought well of; the dagger was priceless; the peaked shoe was adored as a fetich.—There was nothing but ogive windows, turrets, colonnettes, stained glass, cathedrals, and fortified châteaux;—the characters were all *damoiselles* and *damoiseaux*, pages and varlets, beggars and swash-bucklers, gallant knights and ferocious castellans;—all of which were more innocent certainly than innocent games, and did absolutely no harm to anybody.

The critic did not wait for the second romance before beginning his work of depreciation: as soon as the first appeared, he enveloped himself in his robe of camel's hair, and sprinkled a bushel of ashes on his head; then, in his loud, wailing voice, he began to cry:

"More Middle Ages, nothing but the Middle Ages! who will deliver me from the Middle Ages, from the Middle Ages which are not the Middle Ages?—Paste-board and terra-cotta Middle Ages, which have nothing of the Middle Ages save the name!—Oh! these iron barons, in their iron armor, with iron hearts in their iron breasts! Oh! the cathedrals with their rose-work always in bloom and their stained glass in flower, with their lace-work of granite, with their open-work trefoils, their toothed gables, their chasubles of stone embroidered like a bride's veil, with their tapers, their psalms, their glittering priests, with their people on their knees, their rumbling organ, and their angels soaring aloft and flapping their wings under the arches!—how they have spoiled my Middle Ages, my refined, brightly-colored Middle Ages!—how they have blotted it from sight under a layer of coarse plaster!—what discordant colors!—Ah! ignorant daubers, who fancy you have created an effect by splashing red upon blue, white upon black, and green upon yellow, you have seen only the outer shell of the Middle Ages, you have not divined the true meaning of the Middle Ages, the blood does not circulate beneath the skin in which you have clothed your phantoms, there is no heart in your steel corselets, there are no legs in your tricot trousers, no stomach or breast behind your emblazoned skirts; they are clothes that have the shape of men and that is all.—So, down with the Middle Ages as they are presented to us by the *fabricators*"—the great word is out, the *fabricators*!—"The Middle Ages meet no need of the present day, we must have something else."

And the public, seeing how the *feuilletonistes* snarled at the Middle Ages, was seized with an ardent passion for the Middle Ages, which they claim to have killed at a single blow. The Middle Ages invaded everything, assisted by the obstruction of the newspapers:—dramas, melodramas, novels, tales, poetry—there were even Middle-Age vaudevilles, and Momus recited feudal mummeries.

Beside the romance of the Middle Ages flourished the carrion romance, a very pleasing variety, which nervous *petites-mâitresses* and blasé cooks consumed in great numbers.

The *feuilletonistes* speedily came flocking to the stench, like crows to the carrion, and they tore with the beaks of their pens and inhumanly put to death that poor species of novel, which asked nothing more than to be allowed to prosper and putrefy in peace on the greasy shelves of the book-stalls. What did they not say? what did they not write?—Literature of the morgue or the galleys, an executioner's nightmare, hallucination of a drunken butcher, or a convict-keeper with the jail-fever! They benignly gave us to understand that the authors were assassins and vampires, that they had contracted the vicious habit of killing their fathers and mothers, that they drank blood from human skulls, that they used the bones of the legs for forks and cut their bread with a guillotine.

And yet they knew better than any one, from having frequently breakfasted with them, that the authors of those charming slaughters were excellent young men of family, very easy-going and in the best society, white-gloved and fashionably near-sighted,—with a decided preference for beefsteak over human cutlets, and more accustomed to drink Bordeaux wine than the blood of young girls or new-born children.—From having seen and touched their manuscripts, they knew perfectly well that they were written with ink of great virtue upon English paper, and not with blood from the guillotine upon the skin of a Christian flayed alive.

But whatever they might say or do, the age was after carrion, and the charnel-house suited them better than the boudoir; the reader would bite at no hook that was not baited with a little body already turning blue.—A state of things easily conceived; put a rose at the end of your line and the spiders will have time to spin their webs in the crook of your elbow before you catch the

tinest minnow; put on a worm or a piece of rank cheese, and carp, barbel, perch, eels, will all leap three feet out of water to snap at it.—Men are not so different from fish as people generally seem to believe.

One would have said that the newspaper men had become Quakers, Brahmins, or Pythagoreans, or bulls, they had been suddenly seized with such a horror of red and of blood.—Never had they been known to be in such a soft and melting mood;—it was cream and buttermilk.—They admitted the existence of only two colors, sky-blue and apple-green. Pink was only tolerated, and if the public would have allowed them to do as they chose, they would have led it to the banks of the Lignon to feed on spinach beside the sheep of Amaryllis. They had changed their black frock-coats for the dove-colored jacket of Celadon or Silvander, and surrounded their goose-feathers with clusters of roses and ribbons after the style of a shepherd's crook. They let their hair float in the wind like a child's, and had made themselves virgins according to the recipe of Marion Delorme, and about as successfully as she.

They applied to literature the article in the Decalogue:

*Thou shalt not kill.*

The least little dramatic murder was no longer permissible, and the fifth act had become an impossibility.

They considered the poniard extravagant, poison monstrous, the axe horrible beyond words. They would have liked dramatic heroes to live to the age of Melchisedec; and yet it has been a recognized fact, from time immemorial, that the object of every tragedy is to have a poor devil of a great man, who cannot help himself, murdered in the last act, just as the object of every comedy is to join in matrimony two idiots of *jeunes premiers* of about sixty years each.

It was about this time that I threw into the fire—after having taken a duplicate, as almost always happens—two superb and magnificent Middle-Age dramas, one in verse, the other in prose, in which the heroes were quartered and boiled on the stage, which would have been very entertaining and decidedly unusual.

To conform to their ideas, I have since composed an antique tragedy in five acts called *Héliogabale*, the hero of which throws himself into the privy, an extremely novel situation and one that has the merit of introducing a bit of scenery not yet seen on the stage.—I have also written a modern drama, very much superior to *Antoni*,—*Arthur*, or *L'Homme Fatal*, where the providential idea arrives in the shape of a Strasbourg pâté de foie gras, which the hero eats to the last crumb after committing various rapes, and that, combined with his remorse, brings on a frightful attack of indigestion of which he dies.—A moral ending, if ever there was one, which proves that *God is just*, and that vice is always punished and virtue rewarded.

As for the monstrosity species, you know how they have dealt with that, how they have abused Han d'Islande the cannibal, Habibrah the obi, Quasimodo the bell-ringer, and Triboulet, who is only a hunch-back—all that family so strangely swarming—all those gigantic deformities whom my dear neighbor sends crawling and leaping through the virgin forests and the cathedrals of his romances. Neither the great strokes à la Michael Angelo, nor the curiosities worthy of Callot, nor the effects of light and shade after the fashion of Goya, could find favor before them; they sent him back to his odes when he wrote novels, to his novels when he wrote dramas: the ordinary tactics of journalists who always praise what you have done at the expense of what you are doing. A fortunate man, however, is he who is acknowledged to be superior, even by the *feuilletonistes*, in all his works,—except, of course, the particular one with whom they are dealing,—and who need only write a theological treatise or a manual of cooking to have his plays admired.

Concerning the romance of the heart, the ardent, impassioned romance, whose father is Werther the German, and its mother Manon Lescaut the French-woman, we had a few words to say, at the beginning of this preface, of the moral scurf that has fastened itself upon it in desperation, on the pretext of religion and good morals. The critical louse is like the body-louse that deserts the dead body for the living. From the corpse of the Middle Ages the critics have passed on to the living body of this age, whose skin is tough and hard and might well break their teeth.

We think, notwithstanding a deep respect for the modern apostles, that the authors of these so-called immoral novels, without being so thoroughly married as the virtuous journalist, generally have a mother, and that several of them have sisters and are provided with an abundance of female relations; but their mothers and sisters do not read novels, even immoral novels; they sew and embroider and look after the house-keeping.—Their stockings, as Monsieur Planard would say, are—entirely white: you can look at them on their legs—they are not *blue*, and excellent Chrysale, who hated learned women so, would suggest them as models to the skilled Philaminte.

As for these gentlemen's *wives*, as they have so many of them, however spotless their husbands may be, it seems to my simple mind that there are certain things they ought to know.—Indeed, it may well be that their husbands have never shown them anything. In that case I understand that they are bent upon keeping them in that useful state of blessed ignorance. God is great and Mohammed is his prophet!—Women are inquisitive creatures; may Heaven and morality grant that they gratify their curiosity in a more legitimate way than that adopted by their grandmother Eve, and do not go putting questions to the serpent!

As for their daughters, if they have been at boarding-school, I fail to see what they can learn from these books.

It is as absurd to say that a man is a drunkard because he describes an orgy, or a debauchee because he narrates a debauch, as to claim that a man is virtuous because he has written a book

on morals; we see the contrary every day. It is the character that speaks, not the author; his hero may be an atheist, that does not mean that he is an atheist; he represents brigands as acting and talking like brigands, but that does not make him a brigand. On that theory we should have to guillotine Shakespeare, Corneille, and all the writers of tragedy; they have committed more murders than Mandrin and Cartouche; we have not done it, however, and, indeed, I do not believe that we shall do it for a long time to come, however virtuous and moral criticism may become. It is one of the manias of these little shallow-brained scribblers always to substitute the author for the work, and to resort to personalities, in order to give some paltry scandalous interest to their miserable rhapsodies, which they are well aware that nobody would read if they contained only their individual opinions.

We can hardly imagine the tendency of all this wailing, or what good purpose all this indignation and snarling can serve—or who impels these Messieurs Geoffroy on a small scale to set themselves up as the Don Quixotes of morality, and, like genuine literary policemen, to lay hands upon and club, in the name of virtue, every idea that appears in a book with its mob-cap awry or its petticoats raised a little too high.—It is very strange.

Whatever they may say, the present age is immoral,—if the word means anything, which we much doubt,—and we require no other proof of it than the quantity of immoral books it produces and the success they meet with.—Books follow morals, morals do not follow books.—The Regency produced Crébillon, not Crébillon the Regency. Boucher's little shepherdesses were painted and immodest because the little marchionesses of the day were painted and immodest.—Pictures are painted after models, not models after pictures. Somebody or other has said somewhere or other that literature and the arts have a great influence on morals. Whoever he is, he is unquestionably a great fool.—It is as if some one should say: "Green peas make the springtime grow;" on the other hand, green peas grow because it is spring, and cherries because it is summer. The trees bear fruit, the fruit assuredly does not bear the trees—the law is everlasting and invariable in its variations; the centuries succeed one another and each bears its fruit, which differs from that of the preceding century; books are the fruit of morals.

Beside the moral journalists, under this shower of homilies, as if it were a summer shower in a park, there has arisen, between the boards of the Saint-Simonian stage, a school of little mushrooms of a curious new variety, of which we propose to give the natural history.

They are the utilitarian critics,—poor fellows whose noses were so short that they would not hold spectacles, and who could not see to the end of their noses.

When an author tossed upon their desk a volume of any sort,—novel or poetry,—these gentry would lean back nonchalantly in their chairs, balance them on their hind legs, sway back and forth, puffing themselves out with a knowing air, and say:

"What purpose does this book serve? How can it be applied to securing the moral and spiritual well-being of the most numerous and poorest class? What! not a word of the needs of society, nothing civilizing and progressive! How, instead of dealing synthetically with the great problems of humanity, and following, through the events of history, the phases of the regenerating, providential idea, can you waste time writing poetry and novels which lead to nothing, and which do nothing to help the generation forward in the pathway of the future? How can you concern yourself about form and style and rhythm, in presence of such grave interests?—What do we care for rhythm and style and form? that is all right in its place!" (Poor foxes, they are too green!)—"Society is suffering, it has a terrible gnawing at the vitals;" (translate: no one will subscribe to the utilitarian papers.) "It is for the poet to seek the cause of the trouble and cure it. He will find a way by sympathizing heart and soul with humanity;" (philanthropic poets! that would be something rare and charming.) "We await the coming of that poet, we pray for his coming with all our hearts. When he appears, his will be the acclamations of the multitude, his the palm-leaves, his the wreaths, his the Prytaneum."

Very fine; but as we desire the reader to stay awake to the end of this blessed preface, we will not continue this very close imitation of the utilitarian style, which, by its nature, is unusually soporific, and might advantageously replace laudanum and the discourses of the Academy.

No, fools, no, cretins and goitrous creatures that you are, a book does not make gelatine soup;—a novel is not a pair of seamless boots; a sonnet is not a syringe with a continuous stream; a drama is not a railroad,—all essentially civilizing things and tending to assist humanity along the pathway of progress.

By the bowels of all the popes, past, present, and to come, no, two hundred thousand times no.

You cannot make a nightcap out of a metonymy, or wear comparisons by way of slippers; you cannot use antithesis as an umbrella; unluckily we have not the secret of clapping a few variegated rhymes upon the stomach as we put on a waistcoat. I have a firm conviction that the ode is a garment too light for winter, and that one would be no more warmly clad with the strophe, the antistrophe, and the epode, than the wife of the cynic who was contented to have only her virtue as a chemise and went about as naked as your hand, as history tells us.

The famous Monsieur de la Calprenède once had a coat, and when some one asked what kind of cloth it was made of, he answered: *Silvandre*.—*Silvandre* was a play of his that had just been produced with success.

Such arguments make one raise his shoulders above his head, higher than the Duke of Gloucester's.

People who claim to be economists and who wish to rebuild society from top to bottom, seriously

put forward such trash.

A novel may be useful in two ways:—one material, the other spiritual, if we may use such an expression with reference to a novel.—Its material utility consists, first, of the few thousand francs that go into the author's pocket, and ballast him so that neither the devil nor the wind can whisk him away; to the publisher it is a noble race-horse who stamps and rears with his cabriolet of ebony and steel, as Figaro says; to the paper manufacturer, one more factory on some stream and often the means of spoiling a fine site; to the printers, divers hogsheads of logwood to put their windpipes in shape once a week; to the circulating libraries, piles of big sous covered with proletariat verdigris and a quantity of grease, which if it were carefully collected and utilized would render the whale-fishery useless.—The spiritual utility consists in this: that, while you are reading novels, you fall asleep, and you are not reading utilitarian, virtuous, and progressive newspapers, or other similar indigestible, stupefying drugs.

Let any one say after this that novels do not assist civilization.—I will say nothing of the tobacco agents, grocers, and dealers in fried potatoes, who have a very great interest in this branch of literature, the paper used therein being, as a general rule, of a superior quality to that used by the newspapers.

Verily it is enough to make one split one's sides with laughter to hear messieurs the republican or Saint-Simonian utilitarians hold forth.—In the first place, I should be glad to know the exact meaning of that great lubberly substantive with which they daily lard the empty void of their columns, and which serves them as a sort of shibboleth and sacramental term:—Utility; what is the word, and to what is it applied?

There are two kinds of utilities, and the meaning of the word is always relative. What is useful for one is not for another. You are a cobbler, I am a poet.—It is useful for me to have my first line rhyme with my second.—A dictionary of rhymes is of great utility to me; you have no use for it in cobbling an old pair of boots, and it is fair to say that a cobbler's knife would be of no great use to me in writing an ode.—Now, you will remark that a cobbler is much above a poet, and that we could get along better without the latter than without the former. Without undertaking to cry down the illustrious profession of cobbler, which I honor equally with the profession of constitutional monarch, I will humbly confess that I should prefer to have my shoe down at heel rather than to have my lines haltingly rhymed, and that I should be more willing to go without boots than without poems. As I rarely go out, and walk more readily on my head than on my feet, I wear out fewer shoes than a virtuous republican who does nothing but run from one government department to another trying to induce somebody to toss him an office.

I know that there are those who prefer windmills to churches, and the bread that feeds the body to that that feeds the soul. To them I have nothing to say. They deserve to be economists in this world and also in the other.

Is there anything absolutely useful on this earth and in this life that we live? In the first place, there is very little use in one being on the earth and living. I challenge the most erudite of the band to say of what use we are, unless it be to subscribe neither to the *Constitutionnel* nor to a journal of any sort.

Secondly, the utility of our existence being admitted *a priori*, what are the really useful things to maintain it? A plate of soup and a bit of bread twice a day are all that we need to fill the stomach, in the strict acceptation of the word. The man for whom a coffin six feet by two will be enough and more than enough after his death, does not need much more space during his life. A hollow cube, seven or eight feet broad, long and deep, with a hole to breathe through, a single cell in the hive, is all that he needs to lodge him and to keep the rain from falling on his back. A quilt, rolled properly about his body, will protect him from the cold as well as, yes, better than, Staub's most stylish and elegant frock-coat.

With that a man can exist, theoretically. They say that one can live on twenty-five sous a day; but to keep from dying is not living; and I cannot see wherein a city organized on utilitarian principles would be more agreeable to live in than Père La Chaise.

Nothing beautiful is indispensable to life.—If flowers should be suppressed, the world would not suffer materially; and yet who could wish that there were no flowers? I would rather give up potatoes than roses, and I do not believe there is more than one utilitarian in the world capable of digging up a bed of tulips to make room for cabbages.

What good purpose does female beauty serve? Provided that a woman is well-developed physically, in a condition to receive a man and to produce children, she will always be good enough for the economist.

What is the use of music? or painting? Who would be foolish enough to prefer Mozart to Monsieur Carrel, Michael Angelo to the inventor of white mustard?

Nothing is really beautiful but that which cannot be made use of; everything that is useful is ugly, for it is the expression of some need, and the needs of man are vile and disgusting, like his poor, weak nature.—The most useful part of a house is the privy.

I myself, with due respect to those gentlemen, am one of those to whom superfluities are necessities—and my liking for people and things is in inverse ratio to the services they render me. I prefer a Chinese vase, covered with dragons and mandarins, which is of no use to me at all, to a certain other vase, which is useful to me; and that one of my talents which I prize most highly is my inability to guess riddles and charades. I would very willingly renounce my privileges as a Frenchman and a citizen to see an authentic painting by Raphael, or a beautiful nude

woman: the Princess Borghese, for instance, when she posed for Canova, or Julia Grisi when she was in her bath. For my part I would gladly consent to the return of that cannibal of a Charles X., if he would bring me, from his castle in Bohemia, a hamper of Tokay or Johannisberg, and I would agree that the suffrage laws were broad enough, if some of the streets were more so and other things less so.—Although I am not a born *dilettante*, I prefer the noise of squeaking fiddles and bass drums to that of Monsieur le Président's bell. I would sell my trousers to buy a ring and my daily bread for sweetmeats.—The most becoming occupation for a polished man is, it seems to me, to do nothing, or to smoke his pipe or his cigar analytically. I also have a high regard for those who play at skittles and for those who write good poetry. You see that my principles are very far from being utilitarian, and that I shall never become editor of a virtuous newspaper unless I am converted, which would be droll enough.

Instead of awarding a Monthyon prize as a reward of virtue, I would prefer to give, like Sardanapalus, that great philosopher who has been so misunderstood, a handsome premium to the man who should invent a new form of pleasure; for enjoyment seems to me the true aim of life and the only useful thing in the world. God has so willed it, for it was He who made women, perfumes, light, lovely flowers, good wines, prancing horses, greyhounds, and Angora cats; nor did he say to his angels: "Be virtuous," but: "Love;" and he gave us a mouth, more sensitive than the rest of the skin, with which to kiss women, eyes uplifted to see the light, a subtle sense of smell to inhale the soul of flowers, well-knit thighs to press the sides of stallions and fly swifter than thought without railroad or steamboat, delicate hands with which to caress the long head of the greyhound, the velvety back of the cat, and the gleaming shoulders of creatures of doubtful virtue; in a word, he bestowed only upon us the threefold, glorious privilege of drinking without being thirsty, of striking a light, and of making love at all seasons, which distinguishes us from the brute much more than the custom of reading newspapers and drawing maps.

*Mon Dieu!* what an idiotic thing is this alleged perfectibility of the human race that is being dinned into our ears! One would say in truth that man is a machine susceptible of improvements, and that the more careful adjustment of a wheel, a counterpoise more conveniently placed, might make it work more smoothly and more handily. When they have succeeded in giving man a double stomach, so that he can chew his cud like an ox, and eyes in the back of his head, like Janus, so that he can see those who stick out their tongues at him behind his back, and contemplate his *unworthiness* in a less uncomfortable position than that of the Venus Callipyges at Athens, and in planting wings on his shoulder blades so that he will not be obliged to pay six sous to ride in an omnibus; when they have given him a new organ, well and good: then the word *perfectibility* will begin to mean something.

Since all these fine ameliorations, what has been done that was not done as well and better before the deluge?

Have we succeeded in drinking more than they drank in the days of ignorance and barbarism—old style? Alexander, the doubtful friend of the fair Hephæstion, was no small drinker, although there was no *Journal des Connaissances Utiles* in his day, and I am unable to conceive how any utilitarian, unless he should become oinopic and more puffed out than the younger Lepeintre or a hippopotamus, could drain the great beaker which he called Hercules' cup. The Maréchal de Bassompierre, who emptied his long boot to the health of the Thirteen Cantons, seems to me a singularly estimable personage in his way and very hard to improve upon. What economist will enlarge our stomachs so that they will hold as many beefsteaks as the late Milo of Crotona, who ate an ox? The bill of fare at Véfour's Café Anglais, or at any other culinary celebrity's that you choose, seems to me very ill-supplied and commonplace compared to the menu of Trimalcion's dinner.—At whose table in these days are a sow and her twelve shoats served on a single platter? Who has eaten muræna and lampreys fattened on man? Do you really think that Brillat-Savarin has improved upon Apicius? Could Vitellius's big tripe-man find at Chevet's the wherewithal to fill his famous Minerva's shield with pheasants' and peacocks' brains, tongues of flamingoes and scarus livers?—The oysters you eat at the Rocher de Cancale are such a great delicacy compared with the oysters of Lucrin, for which a lake was made expressly.—The little establishments in the suburbs kept by the marquises of the Regency were wretched little boxes, if we compare them with the villas of the Roman patricians at Baiæ, Capri, and Tibur. The Cyclopean splendor of the great voluptuaries who erected everlasting monuments for a day's pleasure should cause us to fall flat on our faces before the genius of antiquity and erase forever from our dictionaries the word *perfectibility*.

Has a new capital crime been invented? Unfortunately there are only seven of them as before, the number of the just man's backslidings for one day, which is very moderate.—Indeed, I do not think that after a century of progress, at the rate we are travelling, any lover would be capable of renewing the thirteenth labor of Hercules.—Can a man be agreeable to his divinity a single time oftener than in the days of Solomon? Many very illustrious scholars and very respectable ladies answer that question in the negative, and aver that amiability is on the wane. Very good! if that is so, why do you talk of progress?—I know that you will tell me that there is an Upper Chamber and a Lower Chamber, that you hope that everybody will soon be an elector and the number of representatives doubled or trebled. Do you think that there are not enough mistakes in grammar made in the national tribune as it is, and that the deputies are not numerous enough for the vile work they have to do? I can hardly understand the utility of quartering two or three hundred provincials in a wooden barrack, with a ceiling painted by Monsieur Fragonard, there to botch and bungle nobody knows how many absurd or atrocious little laws.—What difference does it make whether it is a sabre, a holy-water sprinkler, or an umbrella that governs us?—It is a club all the same, and I am amazed that progressive men should dispute as to the kind of club that is

to make their shoulders tingle, when it would be much more progressive and less expensive to break it and throw the pieces to all the devils.

The only one of you who has any common sense is a madman, a great genius, an imbecile, a divine poet far above Lamartine, Hugo, and Byron; it is Charles Fourier, the phalansterian, who is all that in his single person: he alone is logical and has the courage to carry his theory through to its inevitable consequence.—He asserts, without hesitation, that man will soon have a tail fifteen feet long with an eye at the end of it; that surely is progress and will permit us to do a thousand fine things we could not do before, such as killing elephants without striking a blow, balancing ourselves on trees without swings, as handily as the most expert ape, doing without sunshade or umbrella by raising the tail above the head like a plume, as squirrels do, who get along very well without umbrellas; and other prerogatives too numerous to mention. Several phalansterians claim that they already have a little tail that asks nothing better than to grow longer, if only God gives them length of days.

Charles Fourier has invented as many species of animals as George Cuvier, the great naturalist. He invented horses that will be thrice the size of elephants, dogs as large as tigers, fish capable of feeding more people than the three small fishes of the Saviour, which the incredulous Voltaireans believe were *poissons d'Avril*,<sup>[1]</sup> and I the text of a noble parable. He has built cities beside which Rome, Tyre, and Babylon are simply mole-hills; he has piled Babels one upon another and built spiral stairways ascending among the clouds to a greater height than all those in John Martinn's engravings; he has conceived I cannot say how many orders of architecture and new sauces; he has drawn a plan for a theatre which would seem immense even to Romans of the Empire, and prepared a dinner menu that Lucius or Nomentanus might have deemed sufficient for a dinner to their friends; he promises to create new forms of pleasure and to develop the organs and the senses; he is to make women fairer and more voluptuous, men more robust and sturdy; he guarantees you children and proposes to reduce the population of the world so that every one will be in easy circumstances; which is more reasonable than to urge paupers to make other paupers, with the idea of shooting them down in the streets when they breed too fast and sending them bullets instead of bread.

Progress is possible in no other way.—All the rest is bitter mockery, buffoonery without wit, which is not even calculated to deceive gullible fools.

The phalanstery is really a step in advance of the abbey of Thélème, and definitely relegates the earthly paradise to the ranks of those things that are altogether superannuated and old-fashioned. The Thousand and One Nights and Madame d'Aulnay's Tales alone can contend successfully with the phalanstery. What fertility! what invention! There is material there from which to supply marvels for three thousand cartloads of romantic or classic poems; and our versifiers, whether academicians or not, are paltry inventors compared to Monsieur Charles Fourier, the inventor of startling attractions.—This idea of making use of impulses which people have hitherto sought to repress, is most assuredly a lofty and powerful idea.

Ah! you say that we are making progress!—Suppose that a volcano should open its maw tomorrow at Montmartre, and should make a winding-sheet of ashes and a tomb of lava for Paris, as Vesuvius once did for Stabia, Pompeii, and Herculaneum, and that, some thousand years hence, the antiquaries of that day should make excavations and exhume the corpse of the dead city, tell me what monument would remain standing to bear witness to the splendor of the mighty entombed, the Gothic Notre-Dame?—They would form truly a fine idea of our artistic development when they cleared away the rubbish from the Tuileries, redecorated by Monsieur Fontaine! The statues on Pont Louis XV. would look splendid in the museums of those days. And were it not for the pictures of the ancient schools and the statues of antiquity or the Renaissance crowded together in the gallery of the Louvre, that long shapeless conduit; were it not for the ceiling by Ingres, which would show that Paris was not a Barbary camp or a village of Welches or Topinamboux, the things that would be unearthed from the ruins would be very interesting.—Short swords carried by National Guardsmen, firemen's helmets, coins struck from pyriform dies, that is the kind of thing they would find instead of the beautiful, curiously-carved weapons that the Middle Ages left in the recesses of their towers and ruined tombs, the medallions that fill the Etruscan vases and pave the cellars of all Roman buildings. As for our wretched veneered furniture, all the cheap boxes, naked and ugly and shabby, that we call commodes or secretaries, and all our shapeless, fragile utensils,—I trust that time would have been compassionate enough to destroy the last vestige of them.

Once, this whim of erecting a magnificent, pretentious monument took possession of us. In the first place we were obliged to borrow the plan from the old Romans; and even before it was finished, our Panthéon tottered on its legs like a child with the rickets and staggered like a drunken man, so that we had to give it crutches of stone, otherwise it would have measured its shameful length on the ground, in sight of all the world, and would have given the nations something to laugh at for more than a hundred francs.—We thought it better to set up an obelisk on one of our squares; we had to go and filch it at Luxor, and we were two years bringing it home. Old Egypt lined its roads with obelisks as we line ours with poplars; it carried bundles of them under its arm as the market-gardener carries bunches of asparagus, and carved a monolith from the sides of its mountains of granite more easily than we make tooth-picks or ear-picks. A few centuries ago Raphael was living and Michael Angelo; now we have Monsieur Paul Delaroche, all because we are progressing.—You boast of your Opéra; ten Opéras like yours could dance a saraband in a Roman circus. Monsieur Martin, himself, with his tame tiger and his poor gouty lion, sound asleep like a subscriber to the *Gazette*, makes a very poor showing beside the gladiator of antiquity. Take your benefit performances that last till two o'clock in the morning—

what do they amount to when you think of the games that lasted a hundred days, of the plays in which real ships really fought in real water; in which thousands of men conscientiously cut one another in pieces;—aye, turn pale O heroic Franconi!—in which, when the sea retired, the desert arrived with its roaring tigers and lions, awe-inspiring supernumeraries who did duty but once; in which the leading rôle was taken by some robust, athletic Dacian or Pannonian whom they would very often have found it embarrassing to produce at the end of the play, his sweetheart being a lovely and dainty Numidian lioness who had fasted for three days?—Does it not seem to you that the rope-dancing elephant was superior to Mademoiselle Georges? Do you suppose Mademoiselle Taglioni is a better dancer than Arbuscula, and Perrot better than Bathyllus? I am convinced that Roscius could have given points to Bocage, excellent actor though he is,—Galeria Coppiola played *ingénue* rôles when she was more than a hundred years old. It is fair to say that the oldest of our *jeunes premières* is but little more than sixty, and that Mademoiselle Mars shows no sign of progress in that direction: they had three or four thousand gods in whom they believed, and we have only one and we hardly believe in him; that is a strange kind of progress.—Was not Jupiter a better man than Don Juan and a much more successful seducer? Verily, I cannot see what we have discovered or even improved.

After the progressive journalists, as if to serve as a foil to them, come the blasé journalists, who are usually twenty or twenty-two years old, who have never left their quarter and have as yet lain only with their housekeeper. Everything bores them, tires them out; they are sated, blasé, used up, inaccessible. They know beforehand what you are going to say to them; they have seen, felt, heard, experienced everything that it is possible to see, feel, hear, and experience; the human heart has no corner so dark that they have not held a lantern to it. They say to you with marvellous self-possession: "The human heart is not like that; women are not made so; that character is falsely drawn;"—or else: "What's this! always love or hatred! always men and women! Can't you talk about something else? Why, man is worn threadbare, and woman, more so, since Monsieur de Balzac took a hand.

"Who will deliver us from men and women?"

"Do you think your fable is new, monsieur? it is new after the fashion of the Pont-Neuf:<sup>[2]</sup> nothing in the world could be more common; I read it somewhere or other;—when I was out at nurse or somewhere else; it's been dinned into my ears for ten years.—By the way, monsieur, understand that there's nothing I don't know, that everything is worn threadbare for me, and that even if your idea were as virginal as the Virgin Mary, I would swear, none the less, that I had seen it prostituting itself on street corners to the vilest scribblers and the most contemptible pedants."

Journalists of that stamp are responsible for Jocko, Le Monstre Vert, Les Lions de Mysore, and a thousand other charming conceits.

They are constantly complaining of being obliged to read books and see plays. Apropos of a paltry vaudeville, they will talk about flowering almond-trees, limes that perfume the air, the breezes of spring, the odor of the young foliage; they set up for lovers of nature after the style of young Werther, and yet they have never set foot outside of Paris and could not tell a cabbage from a beet.—If it is winter, they prate about the joys of the domestic fireside, and the crackling fire, and the andirons, and the slippers, and the reverie and the state between sleeping and waking; they never fail to quote Tibullus's famous line:

Quam juvat immites ventos audire cubantem,

by the aid of which they assume a knowing and at the same time ingenuous air, the most fascinating thing imaginable. They pose as men upon whom the work of men can no longer make any impression, whom the emotions aroused by the drama leave as cold and hard as the knife with which they cut their quills, but who exclaim, nevertheless, with Jean Jacques Rousseau: "Ah! there's the periwinkle!" They profess fierce antipathy to the colonels at the Gymnase, the American uncles, the cousins, male and female, the sensitive old grumblers, the romantic widows, and try to cure us of the vaudeville by proving every day by the *feuilletons* that all Frenchmen are not born wicked.—In truth, we see no great harm in that, but the contrary, and we are glad to acknowledge that the extinction of the vaudeville or the opera-comique in France—national style—would be one of the greatest benefactions that the press and Heaven could bestow.—But I should be very glad to know what species of literature these gentlemen would allow to be established in its place. To be sure, it could be no worse.

Others preach against false taste and translate Seneca the tragedian. Lastly, and to close the procession, a new battalion of critics has been formed, of a species never before seen.

Their formula for estimating a work is the most convenient, the most elastic, the most malleable, the most peremptory, the most superlative, and the most successful that a critic ever could have conceived. Zoilus would certainly have lost nothing thereby.

Hitherto, when it has seemed desirable to depreciate a work of any sort or to cast odium upon it in the eyes of the patriarchal and simple-minded subscriber, the ordinary method has been to make false or cunningly isolated quotations; to maim sentences and mutilate lines in such a way that the author himself would have considered himself the most ridiculous creature on earth; to bring accusations of imaginary plagiarisms; to place passages from his book side by side with passages from ancient or modern authors, which had not the least connection therewith; to accuse him, after the style of a cook and with innumerable solecisms, of not knowing his own language and of degrading the French of Racine and Voltaire; to assert in all seriousness that his book tended toward anthropophagy, and that readers would infallibly become cannibals or have hydrophobia in the course of the week; but all that was paltry, out of date, false and fossilized to

the last degree. By dint of having dragged along through *feuilletons* and *Variétés* articles, the charge of immorality became insufficient, and so unfit for service that the *Constitutionnel*, a bashful and progressive journal, as we know, was almost the only one that had the desperate courage to continue to use it.

So they invented the criticism of the future, the Prospective criticism. Can you imagine, at first thought, what a charming thing it is and what a prolific imagination it indicates? The recipe is simple and I can tell you what it is. The book that will be considered fine and will be praised is the book that has not yet appeared. The one that has just appeared is infallibly detestable. The one to appear to-morrow will be superb; but it is always to-day. It is the same with this sort of criticism as with the barber who had these words in huge letters for his sign:

SHAVING FREE HERE TO-MORROW.

All the poor devils who read the placard promised themselves for the next day the ineffable, sovereign sweetness of being barbered once in their lives without unloosing their purse-strings: and the hair on their chins easily grew half a foot during the night that preceded that blessed day; but when they had the napkin around their necks, the barber asked them if they had any money and bade them pay up, or he would treat them like nut-pickers or apple-gatherers of Le Perche; and he swore a mighty *sacre dieu* that he would cut their throats with his razor unless they paid him; and when the poor devils, whining and whimpering, talked about the sign and the sacrosanct inscription:—"Ha! ha! my little fatties!" said the barber, "you don't know so much after all, and you'd much better go back to school! The sign says: 'To-morrow!' I'm no such whimsical fool as to shave for nothing to-day; my confrères would say I was throwing away my trade.—Come another time, come the week that has two Sundays together, and you'll find everything all right. May I be called a niggardly fellow and a flat, if I don't shave you for nothing, on the word of an honest barber."

Authors who read a prospective article in which an existing work is attacked always flatter themselves that the book they are writing will be the book of the future. They try to accommodate themselves, as much as possible, to the ideas of the critic, and become socialists, progressives, moralizers, palingenetics, mystics, pantheists, buchezists, thinking in that way to escape the anathema; but the same thing happens to them that happened to the barber's customers:—to-day is not the eve of to-morrow. The to-morrow that we hear so much about will never shine upon the world; for the formula is too convenient to be abandoned so soon. Even while decrying the book of which they are jealous and which they would be glad to annihilate, they put on the gloves of the most generous impartiality. They apparently ask nothing better than to approve and praise it, and yet they never do it. This recipe is very superior to the one that we might call retrospective, which consists in vaunting ancient works only—works which no one reads and no one cares about—at the expense of modern books, which people do think about and which wound their self-esteem more directly.

We said, before beginning this review of messieurs the critics, that the material would fill fifteen or sixteen folio volumes, but that we would content ourselves with a few lines; I am beginning to fear that those lines will prove to be each two or three thousand fathoms long and will resemble those thick, bulky pamphlets that a cannon-ball would not make a hole through, which bear the perfidious title: "A word concerning the Revolution," a word concerning this or that. The history of the doings of the manifold loves of the goddess Madeleine de Maupin, would run great risk of being elbowed out of the first book, and you will understand that two whole volumes are not too much to sing worthily the adventures of that lovely Bradamante.—That is why, however much we may desire to continue the blazonry of the illustrious Aristarchuses of the age, we will content ourselves with the partial sketch we have drawn, adding a few reflections concerning the good-nature of our easy-going confrères in Apollo, who, as stupid as the Cassander of pantomime, stand still to receive the blows from Harlequin's lath and the clown's kicks in the stern, without budging any more than an idol.

They resemble a fencing-master, who should fold his arms behind his back during a bout, and receive all his opponent's thrusts in his unprotected breast without attempting a single parry.

It is like the trial of a cause in which the king's attorney only is allowed to speak, or a debate in which no reply is permitted.

The critic puts forward this or that theory. He makes a great dash and ostentatious display. Absurd, detestable, monstrous; it resembles nothing, it resembles everything. A drama is produced, the critic goes to see it; he finds that it bears no resemblance to the drama he had constructed in his head on the strength of the title; thereupon he substitutes, in his *feuilleton*, his own drama for the author's. He interlards it with his erudite phrases; he relieves himself of all the knowledge he has collected the day before in some library, and belabors people to whom he ought to go to school, and the least of whom could teach greater men than he.

Authors endure this with a magnanimity, a long-suffering which seems to me truly inconceivable. After all is said and done, who are these critics whose tone is so cutting, whose words are so peremptory, that one would say they were veritable sons of the gods? they are simply men who were our school-fellows, and who have evidently profited less by their studies than we, since they have produced nothing and can do nothing but befoul and spoil the work of others like genuine Stymphalian vampires.

Would it not be worth while to criticise the critics? for those disgruntled great men, who are so fond of playing the magnificent and the fastidious, are far from being infallible like the Holy Father. There would be matter enough to fill a daily newspaper of the largest size. Their errors,



historical or otherwise, their distorted quotations, their mistakes in grammar, their plagiarism, their drivel, their oft-repeated, ill-bred jests, their paucity of ideas, their lack of intelligence and tact, their ignorance of the simplest things which leads them to mistake the Piræus for a man and Monsieur Delaroché for a painter, would furnish authors with ample material for vengeance, without other labor than that of drawing a line under the passages and reproducing them word for word; for one does not receive a commission as a great writer with a commission as critic, and to reproach others for errors in language or taste is not enough to ensure one against making them himself; our critics prove it every day.—If Chateaubriand, Lamartine, and other men of that stamp should become critics, I could understand that people might go down on their knees and worship them; but that Messieurs Z. K. Y. V. Q. X., or any other letter of the alphabet between Alpha and Omega, should set themselves up as little Quintilians and scold you in the name of morality and good literature—that is what always disgusts me and sends me into an unparalleled rage. I would like to have a police ordinance issued prohibiting certain names from attacking certain others. To be sure, a cat may look at a king, and Saint-Peter's at Rome, giant that it is, cannot prevent the Transteverins from defiling its base in strange fashion; but I do not believe, nevertheless, that it would be a bad idea to inscribe upon certain monumental reputations:

NO FILTH DEPOSITED HERE.

Charles X. alone understood the question. By ordering the suppression of newspapers he conferred a great service upon the arts and civilization. Newspapers are in a certain sense courtiers or jobbers, who interpose between artists and public, between king and people. We know the fine things that resulted therefrom. This perpetual barking and snarling benumbs inspiration and causes such a feeling of distrust in the heart and mind, that no one dares place his confidence either in a poet or in a government; the result being that royalty and poesy, the two greatest things in the world, become impossible, to the great detriment of the people, who sacrifice their well-being to the paltry pleasure of reading every morning a few vile sheets printed on vile paper, besmeared with vile ink, and filled with vile stuff. There was no criticism of art under Julius II., and I never heard of any *feuilleton* on the subject of Daniel de Volterra, Sebastiano del Piombo, Michael Angelo, Raphael, Ghiberti della Porta, or Benvenuto Cellini; and yet I think that, for people who had no newspapers, who did not know the word *art* or the word *artistic*, they had a fair share of talent and acquitted themselves reasonably well at their trade. The reading of newspapers hinders the growth of genuine scholars and genuine artists; it is like daily dissipation that brings you, enervated and weak, to the bed of the Muses, those harsh, exacting damsels who will have none but fresh and lusty lovers. The newspaper kills the book, as the book has killed architecture, as artillery has killed physical courage and muscular strength. No one realizes the pleasures that the newspapers deprive us of. They strip everything of its virginity; they prevent us from having anything of our own, even from owning a book all by ourselves; they deprive us of the pleasure of being surprised at the theatre by telling us beforehand how every play ends; they deprive us of the pleasure of spreading idle gossip and tittle-tattle and slander, of inventing false news or peddling genuine news for a whole week through every salon in society. They drone ready-made opinions to us, do what we will, and warn us against things we might like; by their means, dealers in phosphorous matches, although they have poor memories, discuss literature as impertinently as provincial academicians; by their means we hear, all day long, in place of artless opinions or individual nonsense, ill-digested fragments of newspapers, which resemble omelets half cooked on one side and burned on the other,—and we are pitilessly stuffed with news three or four hours old, which children at the breast already know; they deaden our taste, they make us like those people who drink spiced brandy, and those who swallow lemons and grape-stalks, and lose the flavor of the most generous wines and cannot appreciate their delicate, perfumed bouquet. If Louis-Philippe should suppress all literary and political journals once for all, I should be infinitely grateful to him and I would dash off on the spot a fine, rambling dithyramb, in soaring verse with alternate rhymes; signed: "Your most humble and loyal subject," etc. Pray do not imagine that there would be no further interest in literature; in the days when there were no newspapers, a quatrain engrossed all Paris for a week, and a first performance for six months.

It is true that this step would result in the loss of advertisements and puffs at thirty sous a line, and notoriety would be less sudden and less overwhelming. But I have thought out a very ingenious way of replacing advertisements. If, between now and the day when this magnificent novel is placed on sale, my gracious sovereign shall have suppressed the newspapers, I shall most assuredly make use of it, and I anticipate wonders therefrom. When the great day arrives, twenty-four mounted criers, in the livery of Renduel, with his address on their backs and breasts, carrying banners in their hands with the title of the novel embroidered on both sides, each preceded by a drummer and kettle-drummer, will ride through the city, and, halting on all the squares and corners, will shout in a loud, distinct voice: "To-day, not yesterday or to-morrow, is placed on sale the admirable, the inimitable, the divine and more than divine novel by the most illustrious Théophile Gautier, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, which Europe, not to mention other parts of the world and Polynesia, has been awaiting so impatiently for a year and more. It is selling at the rate of five hundred a minute, and editions follow one another from half-hour to half-hour; the nineteenth is already on sale. A detachment of municipal guards is stationed at the door of the shop, holding back the crowd and preventing all confusion." Surely that would be worth as much as three lines in the *Débats* or the *Courrier Français*, between advertisements of elastic belts, hoop-skirts, nursing-bottles with indestructible teats, Regnault paste, and remedies for fluor albus.

May, 1834.

[1] April fools—literally, April fishes.

[2] New Bridge.

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## MADemoiselle DE MAUPIN

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### I

You complain, my dear friend, of the infrequency of my letters.—What would you have me write you except that I am well and that my affection for you never changes?—Those are facts that you know perfectly well, and that are so natural to my age and to the noble qualities that every one recognizes in you, that it is almost absurd to send a paltry sheet of paper a hundred leagues to say nothing more.—In vain do I cudgel my brains, I know of nothing that is worth the trouble of repeating; mine is the most monotonous life imaginable and nothing happens to break the monotony. To-day leads up to to-morrow as yesterday led up to to-day; and without claiming to be a prophet, I can boldly prophesy in the morning what will happen to me in the afternoon.

This is how I arrange my day:—I rise, that goes without saying, and that is the beginning of every day; I breakfast, I fence, I go out to walk, I come home, I dine, make a few calls or amuse myself reading: then I go to bed precisely as I did the day before; I go to sleep, and as my imagination is not excited by unfamiliar objects, it supplies me with none but threadbare, often repeated dreams, as monotonous as my actual life: all this is not very entertaining, as you see. However, I reconcile myself to this existence better than I should have done six months ago.—I am bored, to be sure, but in a tranquil, resigned fashion, which does not lack a certain agreeableness, which might well be compared to those gray, mild autumn days in which one finds a secret charm after the excessive heat of summer.

This sort of existence, although I have apparently accepted it, is hardly suited to me, however, or, at all events, it bears but little resemblance to the existence I dream of and consider myself well adapted for.—Perhaps I am mistaken and am in reality adapted for no other kind of life than this; but I can hardly believe it, for, if it were my real destiny, I should more readily have adapted myself to it and should not be so painfully bruised by its sharp corners in so many places.

You know what a powerful attraction strange adventures have for me, how I adore everything out of the common course, extravagant and dangerous, and with what avidity I devour novels and tales of travel; I doubt if there is on this earth a madder, more vagabond fancy than mine; and yet, by some curious fatality or other, I have never had an adventure, I have never made a journey. So far as I am concerned, the tour of the world means the tour of the town in which I live; I touch my horizon on every side; I am elbow to elbow with reality. My life is that of the shell on the sand-bank, of the ivy clinging to the tree, of the cricket on the hearth.—Verily, I am surprised that my feet have never taken root.

Cupid is represented with a bandage over his eyes; Destiny should be represented in the same condition.

I have for a valet a sort of rustic boor, loutish and stupid enough, who has travelled as much as the north wind, who has been to the devil, to every conceivable place, who has seen with his eyes all the things of which I conceive charming ideas, and cares as little about them as about a glass of water; he has been in the most extraordinary situations; he has had the most amazing adventures that a man can have. I make him talk sometimes, and I rage inwardly when I think that all those fine things have happened to a clown who is capable neither of sentiment nor reflection, and who is good for nothing but to do what he does, that is to say, brush clothes and clean boots.

It is clear that that knave's life should have been mine.—For his part, he considers me very fortunate, and his surprise is unbounded when he sees how melancholy I am.

All this is not very interesting, my poor friend, and hardly worth the trouble of writing, is it? But as you insist upon it that I must write to you, I must tell you what I think and what I feel, and must give you the history of my ideas, in default of events and acts.—It may be that there will be little order and little novelty in what I shall have to say to you; but you must blame nobody but yourself for it. You would have it.

You are the friend of my childhood, I was brought up with you; we lived our lives in common for a long, long while, and we are accustomed to exchange our most secret thoughts. I can tell you, therefore, without blushing, all the absurd things that pass through my unoccupied brain; I will not add a word, I will not cut out a word, I have no self-love with you. So I will be absolutely frank—even in petty, shameful things; not before you, certainly, will I cover my nakedness.

Beneath the shroud of indifferent, depressed ennui to which I have referred just now, there stirs sometimes a thought that is benumbed rather than dead, and I have not always the sad and gentle tranquillity that melancholy gives.—I have relapses and fall back into my old attacks of agitation. Nothing in the world is so fatiguing as those motiveless paroxysms, those aimless impulses.—On those days, although I have no more to do than on any others, I rise very early in the morning, before sunrise, I have such a feeling of being in a hurry, of not having all the time I

need; I dress in hot haste, as if the house were on fire, tossing on my clothes at random and bewailing a wasted minute.—Any one who happened to see me would think that I was going to keep an assignation or to hunt for money.—Not at all.—I have no idea where I shall go; but go I must, and I should think my salvation endangered if I remained at home.—It seems to me as if somebody were calling me outside, as if my destiny were passing through the street at the moment and the question of my life or death were on the point of being decided.

I go down with an air of surprise and alarm, clothes in disorder, hair uncombed: people turn to look and laugh when they meet me, and take me for a young rake who has passed the night at the ale-house or elsewhere. I am drunk to all intent, although I have drunk nothing, and I have the aspect of a drunken man even to the uncertain gait, now slow, now fast. I go from street to street like a dog that has lost his master, looking in every direction, ill at ease, on the alert, turning at the slightest sound, gliding into the centre of every group, heedless of the rebuffs of the people I jostle against, and scrutinizing everything with a clear-sightedness that I do not possess at other times.—Then all of a sudden it is made clear to me that I am mistaken, that that surely is not the place, that I must go on farther, to the other end of the town, Heaven knows where.—And I rush off as if the devil were after me.—I touch the ground only with the tips of my toes and I don't weigh an ounce.—Really I must be a strange sight with my terrified, frantic manner, my waving arms and the inarticulate cries I utter.—When I think it over in cold blood, I laugh at myself with all my heart, which doesn't prevent me, I beg you to believe, from doing it all over again on the first occasion.

If any one should ask me why I rush about so, I certainly should be much embarrassed to answer. I am in no hurry to arrive, as I am going nowhere. I am not afraid of being late, as I have no appointment.—No one is waiting for me—and I have no possible reason for hurrying so.

Is it because an opportunity to love, an adventure, a woman, an idea, a fortune, or anything else is missing in my life, and I am seeking it unconsciously, impelled by a vague instinct? is my existence struggling to complete itself? is it a longing to get away from myself and my surroundings, the tiresomeness of my life and the wish for something different? It is one of these, or perhaps all of them together.—At all events, it is a very unpleasant experience, a feverish irritation ordinarily succeeded by the most complete collapse.

I often have the idea that, if I had started an hour earlier, or if I had quickened my gait, I should have arrived in time; that, while I was passing through one street, the thing I was looking for passed through another, and that a block of carriages was enough to make me miss what I have been pursuing, regardless of everything else, for so long a time.—You cannot imagine the intense melancholy and profound despair into which I fall when I see that all this comes to nothing and that my youth is passing and no prospect opening before me; thereupon all my idle passions mutter in my heart and devour each other for lack of better food, like the wild beasts in a menagerie whom the keeper has forgotten to feed. Despite the stifled, unacknowledged disappointments of every day, there is something within me that resists and will not die. I have no hope, for, in order to hope, one must have a desire, a certain propensity to wish that things should turn out in one way rather than another. I desire nothing, for I desire everything. I do not hope, or rather I have ceased to hope;—this is too absurd—and it is absolutely one to me whether a thing is or is not.—I am waiting—for what? I don't know, but I am waiting.

It is a shuddering sort of expectation, overflowing with impatience, broken with somersaults and nervous movements, like the suspense of a lover waiting for his mistress.—Nothing comes;—I fly into a passion or begin to weep.—I am waiting for heaven to open and an angel to descend and make some revelation to me, for a revolution to break out and the people to give me a throne, for one of Raphaël's virgins to step out of its canvas and come and embrace me, for relations that I don't possess to die and leave me the wherewithal to set my fancy afloat upon a sea of gold, for a hippogriff to snatch me up and bear me away into unknown regions.—But whatever I am waiting for, it certainly is nothing commonplace and ordinary.

It has gone so far that, when I return home, I never fail to ask: "Has no one been here? is there no letter for me? nothing new?"—I know perfectly well that there is nothing, that there can be nothing. That makes no difference; I am always much surprised and much disappointed when I receive the regular reply:—"No, monsieur—nothing at all."

Sometimes—very rarely, however—the idea takes a more definite form.—It will be some lovely woman whom I don't know and who doesn't know me, whom I have met at church or at the theatre and who has not taken the slightest notice of me.—I rush all over the house, and until I have opened the door of the last room—I hardly dare confess it, it is so utterly absurd—I hope that she has come and is there.—It is not conceit on my part.—I am so far from being conceited that several women have taken a most affectionate interest in me—at least so others have told me—when I had supposed them to be entirely indifferent to me and never to have thought much about me.—That comes from another source.

When I am not stupefied by ennui and discouragement my mind awakes and recovers all its former vigor. I hope, I love, I desire, and my desires are so violent that I imagine they will force everything to come to them, as a powerful magnet attracts bits of iron although they are at a great distance.—That is why I wait for the things I desire, instead of going to them, and I often neglect opportunities that open most favorably before my hopes.—Another than I would write the most amorous note you can imagine to his heart's divinity, or would seek an opportunity to approach her.—But I ask the messenger for the reply to a letter I have not written, and pass my time constructing in my brain situations most marvellously adapted to exhibit me to the woman I love in the most unlooked-for and most favorable light.—I could make a book thicker and more

ingenious than the Stratagems of Polybius of all the stratagems I invent to make my way to her presence and reveal my passion to her. Generally it would be enough to say to one of my friends: "Present me to Madame So-and-So," and to indulge in a mythological compliment suitably punctuated with sighs.

After listening to all this, one would naturally think me a fit subject for the Petites-Maisons; I am a sensible fellow enough, however, and I haven't carried many mad ideas into execution. All this takes place in the cellar of my brain, and all these ridiculous ideas are very carefully buried in my lowest depths; no one notices anything on the outside, and I am reputed to be a calm, cold young man, by no means susceptible to female charms and indifferent to things affected by most young men of my age; all of which is as far from the truth as society's judgments usually are.

However, in spite of all the things that have happened to dishearten me, some of my longings have been gratified, and from the small amount of pleasure their gratification has afforded me, I have come to dread the realization of the others. You remember the childish ardor of my longing to have a horse of my own? my mother gave me one very recently; he is as black as ebony, with a little white star on his face, flowing mane and tail, glossy coat, slender legs, just exactly the horse I wanted. When they brought him to me, it gave me such a shock, that I was as pale as death, and unable to recover myself, for a good quarter of an hour; then I mounted him, and started off at a gallop without saying a word; I rode straight ahead through the fields for more than an hour, in a state of ecstasy hard to conceive; I did the same every day for more than a week, and, upon my word, I don't know why I didn't founder him, or at least break his wind.—Gradually my intense zeal slackened. I rode my horse at a trot, then at a walk, then I began to ride so indifferently that he would frequently stop without my noticing it: the pleasure was transformed to a habit much more quickly than I supposed.—As for Ferragus—that is the name I gave him—he is really the most beautiful creature you can imagine. The hair on his feet is like the down on a young eagle; he is as active as a goat and as gentle as a lamb. You will enjoy above all things taking a gallop on him when you come here; and, although my passion for equestrianism has grown decidedly cool, I am still very fond of him, for he has a very estimable equine character and I very much prefer him to many human beings. If you could hear his neigh of delight when I go to see him in his stable, and how intelligent his eyes are when he looks at me! I confess that I am touched by those marks of affection, and I put my arm around his neck and kiss him as affectionately, on my word, as if he were a lovely girl.

I had another longing also, more intense, more ardent, more constantly awake, more dearly cherished, upon which I had built a fascinating house of cards in my mind, a palace of chimeras, very often demolished, and reared again with desperate constancy;—it was to have a mistress—a mistress all my own—like the horse.—I cannot say whether the realization of that dream would have cooled my ardor as speedily as the realization of the other; I doubt it. But perhaps I am wrong, perhaps I should have grown weary as quickly.—It is a peculiarity of my disposition that I crave so frantically what I desire, although I never do anything to procure it, that if by chance, or by any other means, I attain the object of my desire, I am so afflicted with moral weakness and confused to such an extent, that I feel faint and ill, and have no strength left to enjoy it: so it is that the things that come to me without my having wished for them ordinarily afford me more pleasure than those I have most eagerly coveted.

I am twenty-two years old; I am not virgin.—Alas! nowadays nobody is so at that age,—either in body—or in heart—which is much worse.—Aside from those who afford pleasure to men for money, and who ought not to count any more than a bad dream, I have had, here and there, in some dark corner, divers virtuous, or almost virtuous women, neither lovely nor ugly, neither young nor old, such as fall in the way of a young man who has no settled attachment and whose heart is disengaged.—With a little good will and a considerable dose of romantic illusion, you can call that having a mistress, if you choose.—So far as I am concerned, it is impossible, and if I should have a thousand of that sort I should still consider my longing as far from accomplishment as ever.

I have had no mistress, therefore, and my sole desire is to have one.—It is a matter that disturbs me strangely; it isn't an effervescent temperament, a boiling of the blood, the first glow of virility. It is not woman that I want, it is a woman, a mistress; I want her, I will have her, and before long; if I don't succeed, I admit that I shall never get over it and that I shall retain an inward timidity, a secret discouragement that will have a serious influence on the rest of my life.—I shall consider myself lacking in certain respects, inharmonious, incomplete—deformed in mind or heart; for, after all, what I ask is no more than fair, and nature owes it to every man. So long as I fail to gain my end, I shall look upon myself as nothing more than a child, and I shall not have the confidence in myself that I ought to have.—A mistress for myself, that is the *toga virilis* for a young Roman.

I see so many men, despicable in every respect, with lovely women whose lackeys they are hardly worthy to be, that a blush rises to my cheeks for the women—and for myself.—It gives me a pitiable opinion of women to see them sully themselves with such blackguards who despise and deceive them, rather than bestow themselves upon some loyal, sincere young man who would deem himself very fortunate and would adore them on bended knees; myself, for example. To be sure, that sort of creature frequents salons, struts about in all weathers, and is always sprawling over the back of some easy-chair, while I stay at home, with my face against the window-pane, watching the river steam and the mist rise, while rearing silently in my heart the perfumed sanctuary, the marvellous temple in which I am to set up the future idol of my soul.—A chaste and poetical occupation which makes women feel as little kindly toward you as possible.

Women have very little liking for contemplative men and take strangely to those who put their ideas into action. After all, they are not wrong. Compelled by their education and social position

to hold their tongues and to wait, they naturally prefer those men who come to them and talk, for they relieve them from an unnatural and wearisome silence: I realize all that; but never as long as I live shall I be able to make up my mind, as I see many men do, to leave my seat, walk across a salon and say unexpectedly to a woman: "Your dress makes you look like an angel," or: "Your eyes are particularly bright to-night."

All this does not make it any less essential for me to have a mistress. I don't know who it will be, but I see no one among the women I know who can fill that dignified and important position properly. I find in them but very few of the qualities I must have. Those who are young enough haven't sufficient beauty or charm of mind; those who are young and beautiful are disgracefully and repulsively virtuous or lack the necessary freedom of action; and then there is always some husband or brother about, or a mother or an aunt, or I don't know what, who has big eyes and long ears, and whom one must cajole or throw out of the window.—Every rose has its grub, every woman has heaps of relations whom you must get rid of like the caterpillars on a tree, if you want to pluck the fruit of her beauty some day. There is not one of them, even to the third cousins in the provinces, whom no one has ever seen, who is not determined to maintain his or her dear cousin's immaculate purity in all its snowy whiteness. That is nauseating, and I shall never have the necessary patience to tear up all the rank weeds and lop off the thorns that fatally obstruct the approaches to a pretty woman.

I don't care much for mammas and I care still less for little girls. I must confess, too, that married women have very moderate attractions for me.—There is a confusion and mixture in the latter case that disgust me; I cannot endure the idea of going shares. The woman who has a husband and a lover is a prostitute to one of them, often to both, and then I could never consent to give place to another. My natural pride would be incapable of stooping to such degradation. Never will I go away because another man is coming. Though the woman should be compromised and ruined, though we should fight with knives, each with one foot on her body—I would remain.—Secret staircases, closets, wardrobes, and all the machinery of adultery would be poor expedients with me.

I am but little enamored of what is known as virgin purity, the innocence of the flower of life, purity of heart, and other charming things which sound most beautiful in verse; I call it all pure nonsense, ignorance, imbecility, or hypocrisy.—Virgin purity, which consists in sitting on the edge of a chair, with the arms pressed close against the body, the eye on the point of the corset, and in speaking only after permission from its grandparents, the innocence which has a monopoly of uncurled hair and white dresses, the purity of heart which wears the corsage high in the neck, because it has as yet no breast or shoulders, do not seem to me, in very truth, a marvellously tempting pleasure.

I am not at all anxious to teach little fools to say the alphabet of love.—I am not old enough or corrupt enough to take any great pleasure in that. I should have but ill-success, too, for I have never had the knack of teaching anybody, even the things that I knew best. I prefer women who can read freely, you get to the end of the chapter sooner; and in all things, but especially in love, what one must consider, is the end. In that respect I am much like those people who take a novel by the tail and read the conclusion first, being prepared then to go backward to the first page. That method of reading and loving has its charm. One relishes the details better when one's mind is at ease concerning the end, and reversing the natural order of things brings the unexpected to pass.

So young girls and married women are excluded from the category. Therefore we must select our divinity from among the widows.—Alas! I am very much afraid that although we have nothing left but them, we shall still fail to find what we want.

If I should fall in love with one of those pale narcissuses bathed in a warm dew of tears and stooping with melancholy grace over the brand-new marble gravestone of some husband happily and recently deceased, I should certainly be, and in a very short time, as unhappy as the defunct spouse in his lifetime. Widows, however young and charming they may be, have one terrible inconvenience that other women have not; the instant that everything does not go well with them and the slightest cloud floats across the sky of love, they say at once, with a high and mighty, contemptuous manner: "Oh! how you act to-day! You are exactly like monsieur: when we quarrelled he never said anything but that; it's very strange, you have the same tone and the same expression; when you are angry, you can't imagine how much you resemble my husband:—it's enough to make one shudder."—It's very pleasant to have such things thrown in your face point-blank! There are some who carry their impudence to the point of praising the departed like an epitaph and extolling his heart and his leg at the expense of your leg and your—heart.—With women who have only one or several lovers, one has, at all events, the inestimable advantage of never hearing of one's predecessor, which is no trifling consideration. Women have too great an affection for what is proper and legitimate not to be very careful to keep quiet under such circumstances, and all those matters are relegated as speedily as possible to the old records.—It is always understood that one is always a woman's first lover.

I do not consider that there is any serious answer to be made to such a well-founded aversion. It is not that I look upon widows as altogether unpleasing, when they are young and pretty and haven't put off their mourning. There are the little languishing airs, the little tricks of letting the arms fall, bending the neck and puffing up like a half-fledged turtle-dove; a multitude of charming mannerisms prettily veiled behind the transparent mask of *crêpe*, a coquetry of despair so skilfully managed, sighs so adroitly husbanded, tears that fall so in the nick of time and make the eyes so bright!—Certainly, after my wine, if not before, the liqueur I love best to drink is a lovely, clear, limpid tear trembling at the end of a dark or light eyelash.—How is a man to resist

that!—We don't resist it;—and then black is so becoming to women!—The fair skin, poetry aside, turns to ivory, snow, milk, alabaster, to everything pure and white on earth that madrigal-makers can use: the dark skin has only a dash of brown, full of animation and fire.—Mourning is good fortune for a woman, and the reason why I shall never marry is that I am afraid my wife would get rid of me in order to wear mourning for me.—There are women, however, who do not know how to make the most of their affliction and who weep in such a way as to make their noses red and to distort their features so that they look like the grotesque figures we see on fountains: that's a great stumbling-block. A woman must have many charms and much art to weep agreeably; lacking those, she runs the risk of not being consoled for a long time.—Nevertheless, great as the pleasure may be of making some Artemisia unfaithful to the shade of her Mausolus, I do not intend to choose definitely, from among the lamenting swarm, the one whom I will ask to give me her heart in exchange for mine.

I hear you say at that: "Whom will you take, then?—You won't have unmarried girls nor married women, nor widows.—You don't love mammas; I don't imagine that you love grandmammas any better.—Whom in the devil do you love?"—That is the key to the charade, and if I knew it I should not torment myself so. Thus far I have never loved any woman, but I have loved and I do love *love*. Although I have had no mistresses and the women I have had have aroused in me nothing but desire, I have felt and I know the sensation of love itself: I do not love this one or that one, one rather than another, but some one I have never seen, who must exist somewhere, and whom I shall find, God willing. I know what she looks like, and when I meet her I shall know her.

I have very often imagined the place she lives in, the dress she wears, the color of her eyes and her hair.—I can hear her voice; I should know her step among a thousand others, and if, by chance, any one should mention her name, I should turn to look; it is impossible that she should not have one of five or six names I have assigned to her in my head.

She is twenty-six years old—no more, neither less nor more.—She is not ignorant and she has not yet become *blasé*. It is a charming age at which to make love as it should be made, without puerile nonsense and without libertinage.—She is of medium height. I don't like a giant or a dwarf. I want to be able to carry my deity from the sofa to the bed without assistance; but it would be unpleasant to me to have to hunt for her there. She must be just tall enough to put her mouth to mine for a kiss by standing on tiptoe. That is the proper height. As for her size, she is rather plump than thin. I am a little of a Turk on that point, and it would be very disagreeable to me to find an angle where I was looking for a rounded outline; a woman's skin should be well filled out, her flesh hard and firm as the pulp of an almost ripe peach: the mistress I shall have is made in just that way. She is a blonde with black eyes, the fair skin of a blonde and the rich coloring of a brunette, something red and sparkling in her smile. The lower lip a little thick, the pupil of the eye swimming in a sea of aqueous humor, the throat well-rounded and small, the wrists slender, the hands long and plump, the gait undulating like a snake rearing on its tail, the hips full and flexible, the shoulders broad, the back of the neck covered with down;—a refined and yet healthy style of beauty, animated and graceful, poetic and human; a sketch by Giorgione executed by Rubens.

This is her costume! she wears a dress of scarlet or black velvet slashed with white satin or cloth of silver, an open corsage, a huge ruff *à la* Medici, a felt hat, capriciously dented like Helena Systeman's, and long white feathers crisp and curled, a gold chain or a stream of diamonds around her neck, and on all her fingers a number of large rings of various enamels.

I would not waive a single ring or bracelet. The dress must be of velvet or brocade; if I should allow her to descend to satin, it would be the utmost concession I would make. I would rather rumple a silk skirt than a cotton one, and pull pearls or feathers from a head than natural flowers or a simple knot of ribbon; I am aware that the lining of the cotton skirt is often at least as appetizing as that of the silk skirt; but I prefer the latter.—And so, in my dreams, I have taken for my mistress many queens, many empresses, many princesses, many sultanas, many famous courtesans, but never middle-class women or shepherdesses; and in my most vagabond desires, I have never taken advantage of any one on a carpet of turf or in a bed of Aumale serge. I consider that beauty is a diamond which should be mounted and set in solid gold. I cannot imagine a lovely woman who has not a carriage, horses, servants, and everything that one has with a hundred thousand francs a year: there is a certain harmony between beauty and wealth. One demands the other; a pretty foot calls for a pretty shoe, a pretty shoe calls for carpets and a carriage, and so on. A lovely woman with mean clothes in a wretched house is, to my mind, the most painful spectacle one can see, and I could never fall in love with her. Only the comely and the rich can fall in love without making themselves ridiculous or pitiable.—On that principle few people have the right to fall in love: I myself should be shut out first of all; however, that's my opinion.

It will be evening when we meet for the first time—during a lovely sunset;—the sky will have the bright orange-yellow and pale-green tints that we see in some pictures by the great masters of the old days: there will be a broad avenue of chestnuts in flower and venerable elms all covered with ringdoves,—lovely trees clothed in cool dark green, shadows full of mystery and moisture; here and there a statue or two, some marble vases, standing out in their snowy whiteness against the background of verdure, and a sheet of water in which the familiar swan disports itself,—and in the background a château of brick and stone as in the days of Henri IV., pointed, slate-covered roof, tall chimneys, weather-cocks on every gable, long, narrow windows.—At one of the windows, leaning in melancholy mood upon the balcony rail, stands the queen of my heart in the costume I described to you a moment ago; behind her is a little negro carrying her fan and her parrot.—You see that nothing is lacking and that it is all utterly absurd.—The fair one drops her glove;—I pick it up, kiss it and return it. We engage in conversation; I display all the wit that I do

not possess; I say some charming things; she answers me, I retort; it is a display of fireworks, a luminous shower of dazzling repartee.—In short, I am adorable—and adored.—The supper hour arrives, she invites me to join her;—I accept.—What a supper, my dear friend, and what a cook my imagination is!—The wine laughs in the crystal goblet, the white and gold pheasant smokes in a platter bearing her crest: the feast is prolonged far into the night and you can imagine that I don't finish up the night at home.—Isn't that a fine bit of imaginative work?—Nothing in the world could be simpler, and upon my word it's very surprising that it doesn't happen ten times rather than once.



*Chapter I — What a supper—The wine laughs in the crystal goblet, the white and gold pheasant smokes in a platter bearing her crest: the feast is prolonged far into the night and you can imagine that I don't finish up the night at home.*

Sometimes it is in a great forest.—The hunt sweeps by; the horn rings out, the pack gives tongue and crosses the path with the swiftness of lightning; the fair one in a riding habit is mounted on a Turkish horse, white as milk, spirited and swift beyond words. Although she is an excellent horsewoman, he paws and curvets and rears, and she has all the difficulty in the world in holding him; he takes the bit in his teeth and rushes straight toward a precipice with her. I fall from heaven for the express purpose of saving her, I stop the horse, I catch the swooning princess in my arms, I bring her to herself and escort her to her château. What well-born woman would refuse her heart to a man who has risked his life for her?—None;—and gratitude is a cross-cut that leads very quickly to love.

You will agree, at all events, that when I go into romance, I don't stop half-way, and that I am as mad as it is possible for a man to be. That is as it should be, for nothing in the world is more sickening than rational madness. You will agree also that, when I write letters, they are volumes rather than simple notes. I love whatever goes beyond ordinary bounds in everything.—That is why I love you. Don't laugh too much at all the nonsense I have scribbled; I lay aside my pen to carry some of it into execution; for I recur always to my refrain! I mean to have a mistress. I

cannot say whether it will be the lady of the park or the lady of the balcony, but I bid you farewell to go in quest of her. My mind is made up. Though she whom I seek should hide herself in the heart of the kingdom of Cathay or Samarcand, I shall find a way to dislodge her. I will let you know of the success or non-success of my undertaking. I hope that it will be success: give me your prayers, my dear friend. As for myself, I dress up in my best coat, and go out of the house determined not to return except with such a mistress as I have in my mind.—I have dreamed long enough; now to work.

P.S.—Tell me something about little D—; what has become of him? no one here knows anything about him; and give my compliments to your good brother and all the family.

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## II

Well, my friend, I have come home again, I have not been to Cathay or Cashmere or Samarcand;—but it is fair to say that I am no nearer having a mistress than ever.—And yet I took myself by the hand, I swore a mighty oath that I would go to the end of the world. I have not even been to the end of the town. I don't know what the matter is with me, but I have never been able to keep my word to anybody, even to myself: it must be that the devil takes a hand in it. If I say: "I will go there to-morrow," it is certain that I shall stay at home; if I propose to go to the wine-shop, I go to church; if I start to go to church, the roads get tangled under my feet like skeins of thread, and I find myself in an entirely different place. I fast when I have determined to have a debauch, and so it goes. Therefore I am inclined to believe that what prevents me from having a mistress is that I have determined to have one.

I must tell you about my expedition, step by step: it is well worth the honors of narration. I had passed at least two full hours at my toilet that day. I had had my hair combed and curled and my moustaches, such as they are, twisted and waxed a little; and as the excitement of longing imparted some slight animation to my ordinarily pale face, really I was not so bad. At last, after scrutinizing myself attentively in the mirror in different lights, to see if I was fine enough and if my bearing was sufficiently gallant, I went resolutely forth with head erect, chin well raised, eyes front, one hand on the hip, making the heels of my boots ring like an *anspessade*, elbowing the bourgeois, and with a flawlessly triumphant and all-conquering air.

I was like another Jason setting out to conquer the Golden Fleece.—But, alas! Jason was more fortunate than I: besides the conquest of the fleece, he made, at the same time, the conquest of a beautiful princess, and I—I have neither fleece nor princess.

I walked through the streets, eying all the women, and hurrying toward them and gazing at them at closer quarters when they seemed to me to be worth the trouble of examining.—Some assumed their high and mighty virtuous air and passed without raising their eyes.—Others were surprised at first, then smiled if they had white teeth.—Some turned after a little time, to look at me when they thought I was not looking at them, and blushed like cherries when they found themselves face to face with me.—It was a lovely day; there were quantities of people out walking.—And yet I must confess, notwithstanding all the respect I feel for that interesting half of the human race, which is called by common consent the fair sex, it is, as a whole, devilishly ugly: out of a hundred women there is hardly one who is passably good-looking. This one had a moustache; that one had a blue nose; others had red spots in place of eyebrows; one was not badly built, but she had a pimply face. The head of another was charming, but she could scratch her ear with her shoulder; a third would have put Praxiteles to shame with the graceful roundness of certain outlines, but she stumbled along on feet like Turkish stirrups. Another exhibited the most magnificent shoulders imaginable; in revenge, her hands resembled in shape and size those immense scarlet gloves that haberdashers use for signs.—Generally speaking, what tired-looking faces! how worn and streaked they were, withered by degrading petty passions and petty vices! What expressions of envy, of malevolent curiosity, of avarice, of brazen coquetry! and how much uglier is a woman who is not beautiful, than a man who is not handsome!

I saw nobody worth looking at—except a few grisettes;—but they have more cotton than silk to rumple, and they don't interest me.—In very truth, I believe that man, and when I say man I include woman, is the vilest animal on the face of the earth. That quadruped who walks on his hind feet seems to me extraordinarily presumptuous to claim the first place in creation as his undoubted right. A lion, a tiger, are finer animals than men, and in their species many individuals attain all the beauty that belongs to it. But such a thing rarely happens among human beings.—How many abortions for one Antinous! how many Goths for one Phyllis!

I am very much afraid, my dear friend, that I shall never be able to embrace my ideal, and yet there is nothing extraordinary or unnatural about it.—It is not the ideal of a third-form school-boy. I do not ask for ivory globes or alabaster pillars, or azure veins; I have not used in its composition either lilies, or snow, or roses, or jet, or ebony, or coral, or ambrosia, or pearls or diamonds; I have left the stars of heaven at rest, and I have not unhung the sun unseasonably. It is almost a bourgeois ideal, it is so simple, and it seems to me that with a bag or two of piastres I could find it all ready-made and realized in the first bazaar I might happen upon at Constantinople or Smyrna; it would probably cost me less than a blooded horse or dog; and to think that I shall not get what I want, for I have a feeling that I shall not! It is enough to drive a man mad, and I fly into the hottest sort of a rage against fate.



You are not such a mad fool as I, you are fortunate;—you have simply taken your life as it came, without tormenting yourself trying to shape it, and you have dealt with things as they turned up. You haven't sought for happiness, it has come in search of you; you love and are loved.—I don't envy you;—for Heaven's sake, don't think that! but I am not so happy as I ought to be when I think of your felicity, and I say to myself, with a sigh, that I would like to enjoy felicity of the same sort.

Perhaps my happiness passed by my side and I did not see it, blind that I was; perhaps a voice spoke, and the uproar of my internal tempests prevented me from hearing it.

Perhaps I have been loved in secret by some humble heart that I have neglected or broken; perhaps I have myself been the ideal of another, the pole-star of a suffering heart,—the dream of a night and the thought of a day.—If I had looked at my feet, perhaps I should have seen there some fair Magdalene with her box of ointment and her dishevelled hair. I walked along with my arms raised to heaven, longing to pluck the stars that fled from me, and scorning to pick the little daisy that opened its golden heart in the dewy grass. I have made a great mistake: I have asked love for something other than love, something that it could not give. I forgot that love was naked, I failed to grasp the meaning of that magnificent symbol.—I asked him for brocade dresses, feathers, diamonds, sublime intellect, learning, poesy, beauty, youth, supreme power—everything that is not love;—love can offer naught but love, and he who seeks to extort anything else from him is unworthy to be loved.

I have been in too much of a hurry, of course: my hour has not yet come; God who lent me my life will not take it back without letting me live. What's the use of giving a poet a lyre without strings, or man a life without love? God cannot be guilty of such inconsistency; and I have no doubt that when the allotted moment comes, He will place in my path the woman I am to love and by whom I am to be loved.—But why has love come to me before a mistress? Why am I thirsty when I have no fountain at which to quench my thirst? or why can I not fly, like the birds of the desert, to the spot where water is to be found? The world to me is a Sahara without wells or date-trees. I have not in my whole life a single shady nook to give me shelter from the sun: I suffer all the ardors of passion without its ineffable ecstasy and delight; I know its torments and have not its pleasures. I am jealous of something that does not exist; I am ill at ease for the shadow of a shade; I heave sighs that mean nothing; I have sleepless nights embellished by no adored vision; I shed tears that flow to the ground without being wiped away; I give the wind kisses that are not returned to me; I wear out my eyes trying to distinguish a vague, deceitful shape in the distance; I await what cannot come, and I count the hours with feverish anxiety as if I had an appointment.

Whoever you be, angel or demon, virgin or courtesan, shepherdess or princess, whether you come from north or south, you whom I do not know but whom I love! oh! do not force me to wait longer, or the flame will consume the altar, and you will find only a heap of cold ashes in place of my heart. Descend from the sphere where you now are; leave the crystal sky, O comforting spirit, and cast upon my heart the shadow of your great wings. Come, woman that I love, come, and let me clasp about you the arms that have been open so long. Ye golden doors of the palace where she dwells, turn on your hinges; raise yourself, latch of her humble cottage; untwine yourselves, ye branches of trees and thorns by the road-side; be broken, ye enchantments of the turret, ye spells of magicians; open, ranks of the common herd, and let her pass.

If you come too late, O my ideal! I shall not have the strength to love you:—my heart is like a dovecote full of doves. Every hour of the day some desire takes flight. The doves return to the dovecote, but my desires do not return to my heart.—The azure sky is whitened by their countless swarms; they wing their way through space, from world to world, from sky to sky, seeking some love to light upon and pass the night: haste, O my dream! or you will find naught in the empty nest save the shells of the birds that have flown.

My friend, my childhood's companion, you are the only one to whom I can say such things. Write me that you pity me and that you don't look upon me as a hypochondriac; comfort me, I never was in greater need of it; how greatly to be envied are they who have a passion they can satisfy! The drunkard finds no cruelty in any sort of a bottle; he falls from the wine-shop to the gutter and is happier on his dung-heap than a king on his throne. The sensual man resorts to courtesans in search of ready loves or shameless refinements of indecency: a painted cheek, a short skirt, an exposed bosom, an obscene jest, he is happy; his eye turns white, his lip is moist; he attains the height of his happiness, he enjoys the ecstasy of his vulgar lust. The gambler needs only a green cloth and a worn and greasy pack of cards to procure the poignant excitement, the nervous spasms and the diabolical joy of his ghastly passion. Such people can satisfy their cravings or find distraction;—to me it is impossible.

This idea has taken such thorough possession of me that I no longer care for the arts, and poetry has now no charm for me; the things that used to be my delight do not make the least impression on me. I begin to believe that I am wrong, I demand more of nature and society than they can give. What I seek does not exist and I ought not to complain because I cannot find it. However, if the woman we dream of does not come within the conditions of human nature, how is it that we love only her and not others, since we are men and our instinct should draw us irresistibly toward them? What puts this imaginary woman into our head? with what clay do we mould this invisible statue? where do we get the feathers we fasten to the back of this chimera? what mystic bird laid in a dark corner of our soul the unseen egg from which our dream was hatched? what is this abstract beauty that we feel but cannot define? why, before a woman who may be charming, do we sometimes say that she is beautiful,—whereas we find her very ugly? Where is the model, the type, the interior pattern that serves us as a point of comparison? for beauty is always comparative and can be appreciated only by contrast.—Was it in the sky that we saw her—in a

star—at a ball in the shadow of a mother, fresh bud of a leafless rose?—was it in Italy or in Spain? was it here or there, yesterday or long ago? was it the admired courtesan, the popular cantatrice, the prince's daughter? a proud and noble head bending under a heavy diadem of pearls and rubies? a young and childish face stooping over the nasturtiums and volubilis in the window?—Of what school was the picture from which that beauty looked forth, fair and beaming amid dark shadows? Was it Raphael who caressed the contour that has caught your fancy? Was it Cleomenes who polished the marble that you adore?—are you in love with a Madonna or a Diana?—is your ideal an angel, a sylph, or a woman?

Alas! it is a little of all of these and it is none of them.

That transparent tint, that charming, blooming freshness, that flesh wherein the blood and the life flow in abundance, that lovely fair hair falling over the shoulders like a cloak of gold, that sparkling laughter, those amorous dimples, that figure undulating like a flame, that strength, that suppleness, that glistening satin, those rounded outlines, those plump arms, that full, smooth back, that whole appearance of blooming health belongs to Rubens.—Raphael alone could have given that pale tinge of amber to such pure features. What other than he drew the curves of those long, fine black eyebrows, and spread out the lashes of those modestly lowered lids?—Do you think that Allegri had no part in your ideal? From him the lady of your thoughts stole the warm, ivory whiteness of complexion that fascinates you. She stood long before his canvas to catch the secret of the angelic smile that is always on her lips; she modelled her oval features upon those of a nymph or a saint. That line of the hip that undulates so voluptuously is taken from the sleeping Antiope.—Those plump, well-shaped hands might be claimed by Danaë or Magdalen. Dusty antiquity itself supplied much material for the composition of your young chimera; those strong and supple loins, about which you twine your arms so passionately, were carved by Praxiteles. The divinity left everything for the express purpose of putting the toes of her charming foot outside the ruins of Herculaneum, so that your idol should not be lame. Nature also has contributed its share. You have seen here and there, in the prismatic rays of desire, a beautiful eye behind a blind, an ivory forehead pressed against a window, a mouth smiling behind a fan.—You have divined the quality of the arm from the hand, of the knee from the ankle. What you saw was perfect; you assumed that the rest was like what you saw and you finished it out with bits of other beauties gathered elsewhere.—Not even ideal beauty, as realized by painters, is sufficient for you, and you must go and ask the poets for outlines even more gracefully rounded, shapes more ethereal, charms more divine, refinement more exquisite; you begged them to give breath and speech to your phantom, all their love, all their musings, all their joy and their sadness, their melancholy and their morbid fancies, all their memories and all their hopes, their knowledge and their passion, their mind and their heart; you took all these from them and you added, to cap the climax of the impossible, your own passion, your own mind, your dreams and your thoughts. The star lent its beams, the flower its perfume, the palette its colors, the poet his harmony, the marble its shape, and you, your longing.—How could a real woman, who eats and drinks, who goes to bed at night and gets up in the morning—however adorable and instinct with charm she may be—sustain comparison with such a creature! We cannot reasonably hope for such a thing, and yet we do hope for it and seek it.—What extraordinary blindness! it is sublime or absurd. How I pity and admire those who pursue the reality of their dream through everything and die content, if only they have once kissed their chimera on the lips! But what a frightful fate is that of the Columbuses who have not discovered their world, and of lovers who have not found their mistress.

Ah! if I were a poet, I would consecrate my verses to those whose existence is a failure, whose arrows have not reached the target, who have died with the word they had to say still unsaid and without pressing the hand that was destined for them; to all who have been unsuccessful or have passed by unnoticed, to genius without issue, stifled fire, the undiscovered pearl at the bottom of the sea, to all who have loved without being loved, to all who have suffered and not been pitied;—it would be a noble task.

How wise it was of Plato to wish to banish you from his republic, and what harm you have done us, O poets! Your ambrosia has made our absinthe more bitter than ever; and we have found our lives more arid and more devastated after plunging our eyes into the vistas leading to eternity that you open to us! What a terrible struggle your dreams have brought upon our realities! and how our hearts have been stamped upon and trampled under foot by those rude athletes!

We have seated ourselves like Adam at the foot of the walls of the terrestrial paradise, on the steps of the staircase that leads to the world you have created, seeing a light brighter than the sunlight gleam through the chinks of the door, hearing vaguely some few scattered notes of a seraphic harmony. Whenever one of the elect enters or comes out amid a flood of glory, we stretch our necks trying to see something through the open door. It is fairy-like architecture equalled nowhere save in Arabian tales. Great numbers of pillars, superimposed arches, fluted spiral columns, leaf-work marvellously carved, trefoils hollowed out of the stone, porphyry, jasper, lapis-lazuli and Heaven knows what! transparencies and dazzling reflections, a profusion of strange stones, sardonyx, chrysoberyl, aquamarines, rainbow-hued opals, azerodrach, jets of crystal, torches to make the stars turn pale, a gorgeous vapor filled with noise and vertigo—genuine Assyrian magnificence!

The door closes: you see no more—and you cast down your eyes, filled with burning tears, to the poor, bare, lifeless earth, to the ruined hovels, to the people in rags, to your own soul, an arid rock upon which nothing grows, to all the woes and misfortunes of reality. Ah! if we could only fly as far as that, if the steps of that fiery staircase did not burn our feet; but alas! none but angels can climb Jacob's ladder!

What a fate is that of the poor man at the rich man's door! what ghastly irony in a palace opposite a hovel, the ideal opposite the real, poetry opposite prose! what deep-rooted hatred must tighten the knots at the bottom of the poor wretches' hearts! what a gnashing of teeth there must be at night on their poor beds, when the wind brings to their ears the sighing notes of the lutes and viols of love! Poets, painters, sculptors, musicians, why have you lied to us? Poets, why did you tell us your dreams? Painters, why did you place upon your canvas the intangible phantom that ascended and descended between your heart and your brain with the throbbing of your blood, and say to us: "This is a woman." Sculptors, why did you procure marble from the bowels of Carrara to make it express for all time, in the eyes of all men, your most secret and most fleeting desire? Musicians, why did you listen to the song of the stars and the flowers during the night, and note it down? Why do you write such lovely ballads that the softest voice that says to us: "I love you!" seems to us as hoarse as the rasping of a saw or the cawing of a crow?—My curse on you, impostors!—and may the fire from heaven burn and destroy all pictures, poems, statues, and concerted pieces.—Ouf! there's a tirade of interminable length and a little out of the ordinary epistolary style.—What a harangue!

I just gave full swing to the lyric impulse, my dear friend, and I have been talking on stilts for a long, long time. All this is very far from our subject, which is, if I remember rightly, the glorious and triumphant history of the Chevalier d'Albert in pursuit of Daraïde, the loveliest princess in the world, as the old romances say. But in truth the story is so poor that I am compelled to have recourse to digressions and reflections. I hope that it will not always be so, and that, before long, the romance of my life will be more involved and complicated than a Spanish imbroglio.

After wandering about from street to street, I decided to call on one of my friends who was to present me at a house where, according to what he told me, I should see a world of pretty women—a collection of flesh and blood idealities—the wherewithal to satisfy a score of poets.—There are some there to suit all tastes:—aristocratic beauties with eagle glances, sea-green eyes, straight noses, chins haughtily elevated, queenly hands, and the gait of a goddess; silver lilies mounted upon golden stalks;—modest violets, pale of hue, sweet of perfume, with melting, downcast eyes, slender neck, transparent flesh;—animated, piquant beauties; devout beauties, beauties of all sorts;—for the house is a genuine seraglio, minus the eunuchs and the Kislar aga.—My friend tells me that he has already had five or six affairs there—quite as many as that;—that seemed to me a prodigious record and I am very much afraid that I shall not have the like success; De C— says yes, and that I shall succeed much better than I shall care to. According to him I have only one fault, which I am certain to correct as I grow older and go more into society—he says I think too much of woman and not enough of women.—It may well be that there's some truth in that.—He says that I will be perfectly lovable when I rid myself of that little failing. God grant it! It must be that women feel that I despise them; for a compliment, which they would consider adorable and delightful to the last degree in the mouth of another, in mine displeases them and makes them angry, as if it were the most savage epigram. That probably has something to do with the fault De C— refers to.

My heart beat a little faster as I went up the stairs, and I had barely recovered from my emotion when De C—, taking me by the elbow, brought me face to face with a woman of about thirty—not ill-looking—dressed with dissembled magnificence and extreme affectation of childlike simplicity—which did not prevent her being daubed with rouge like a carriage-wheel:—it was the lady of the house.

De C—, assuming the shrill, mocking voice which is so different from his ordinary voice, and which he uses in society when he wants to be fascinating, said to her, half aloud, with abundant demonstrations of ironical respect, in which the most profound contempt could plainly be detected:

"This is the young man of whom I spoke to you the other day—a man of very distinguished merit; he is of unexceptionable birth and I think that it cannot be otherwise than agreeable to you to receive him; that is why I have taken the liberty to present him to you."

"Assuredly, monsieur, you have done well," rejoined the lady, with a most outrageously affected manner. Then she turned to me, and after looking me over out of the corner of her eye, like a clever connoisseur, and in a way that made me blush to my ears, she said: "You may consider yourself invited once for all, and come as often as you have an evening to waste."

I bowed awkwardly enough, and stammered a few disconnected words which could not have given her a very exalted opinion of my talents; other persons came in and I was delivered from the ennui inseparable from an introduction. De C— led me to a window recess and began to lecture me vigorously.

"What the devil! you will get me into a scrape; I announced you as a perfect phoenix of wit, a man of unbridled imagination, a lyric poet, everything that is most transcendent and impassioned, and you stand there like a ninny without lisping a word. What a wretched imagination! I thought your vein was more fruitful; come, come, give your tongue the rein, chatter away through thick and thin; you don't need to say sensible, judicious things, on the contrary, they might injure your chances; talk, that's the main thing; talk fast, talk all the time; attract attention to yourself; throw aside all fear and all modesty; fix it firmly in your head that all who are here are fools, or almost that, and don't forget that an orator who wants to succeed cannot despise his audience enough.—What do you think of the mistress of the house?"

"I dislike her very much already; and although I talked with her hardly three minutes, I was as bored as if I were her husband."

"Aha! that's what you think of her, eh?"

"Why, yes."

"Is your repugnance for her altogether insurmountable?—So much the worse; it would have been decent for you to have her, if only for a month; it's good form, and a young man with a little money can't get into society except through her."

"Very good! I'll have her," I said piteously, "since it must be; but is it as necessary as you seem to think?"

"Alas! yes, it is absolutely indispensable, and I will tell you why. Madame de Thémynes is the fashion now; she has all the absurd foibles of the day in a superior way,—sometimes those of tomorrow, but never yesterday's: she is thoroughly posted. People will wear what she wears, and she never wears what any one else has worn. She is rich, too, and her carriages are in the best taste.—She has no wit, but much small-talk; she has very keen fancies and little passion. People amuse her but do not move her; she has a cold heart and a dissolute head. As for her soul—if she has one, which is doubtful—it is of the blackest, and there is no malice and baseness of which she is not capable; but she is extremely adroit and keeps up appearances, just what is necessary to prevent anything being proved against her. For instance, she will lie with a man, but she will never write him the simplest kind of a note. Thus her most intimate enemies can find nothing to say against her except that she applies too much rouge and that certain parts of her person are not, in fact, so well rounded as they seem to be—which is false."

"How do you know?"

"What a question!—how does one know that sort of thing except by finding out for himself?"

"Then you have had Madame de Thémynes?"

"Certainly I have! Why shouldn't I have had her? It would have been most unseemly of me not to have her.—She has done me some very great favors, and I am very grateful to her for them."

"I don't understand what kind of favors she can have done you."

"Are you really a fool?" said De C—, gazing at me with the most comical expression imaginable.—"Faith, I am much afraid of it; must I tell you everything? Madame de Thémynes is considered, and justly, to have special information in certain directions, and a young man whom she has taken and kept for some time can present himself boldly anywhere, and be sure that he won't be long without having an affair—more likely two than one.—Aside from that ineffable advantage, there is another hardly less great; and that is that, as soon as the female members of this circle see that you are Madame de Thémynes' official lover, even though they have not the slightest taste for you, they will consider it a pleasure and a duty to take you away from a fashionable woman like her; and, instead of the advances and manœuvres you would otherwise have to make, you will have an embarrassment of riches, and you will necessarily become the focus of all imaginable cajoleries and blandishments.

"However, if she arouses too strong a repugnance in you, don't take her. You are not exactly obliged to do it, although that would be courteous and proper. But make your choice quickly and attack the one who pleases you best or seems to offer the most facilities, for by delaying you will lose the benefit of novelty, and the advantage it gives you over all the men here for a few days. All these ladies have no conception of the passions that are born in private intercourse and develop gradually in respect and silence; they are all for lightning strokes and occult sympathies; a wonderfully well-conceived scheme to avoid the ennui of resistance and all the long and wearisome repetitions that sentiment mingles with the romance of love, and which serve only to defer the conclusion to no purpose.—These ladies are very saving of their time, and it seems so valuable to them that they would be in despair at the thought of leaving a single moment unemployed.—They have a craving to oblige the human race which one cannot praise too highly, and they love their neighbor as themselves—which is most meritorious and perfectly angelic; they are very charitable creatures who would not, for anything in the world, drive a man to die of despair.

"There must be three or four of them already who are *impressed* in your favor, and I advise you as a friend to press your advantage warmly in that direction, instead of amusing yourself prattling with me in a window-recess, which will not materially assist your prospects."

"But, my dear C—, I am altogether green in such matters, I haven't the necessary experience of society to distinguish at first glance a woman who is impressed from one who isn't; and I might make some strange blunders unless you will assist me with your experience."

"Upon my word, you are a primitive creature without a name, and I didn't suppose it was possible to be so pastoral and bucolic in the blessed age we live in!—What the devil are you doing with that pair of great black eyes of yours, which would produce a most stunning effect if you knew how to use them?"

"Just look over yonder, in the corner by the fire-place, at that little woman in pink playing with her fan: she has been staring at you for a quarter of an hour with most significant assiduity and fixity; no one in the world but she can be indecent in so superior a fashion and display such noble insolence. The women don't like her at all, for they despair of ever reaching that height of impudence, but, on the other hand, she is very popular with the men who find in her all the piquant flavor of the courtesan.—To be sure, her depravity is of a fascinating sort, she is full of wit and impulse and caprice.—She's an excellent mistress for a young man who has prejudices.—Within a week she will rid your conscience of all scruples and corrupt your heart to such an

extent that you will never make yourself ridiculous or indulge in elegiacs. She has incredibly positive ideas on every subject; she goes to the bottom of everything with astonishing rapidity and accuracy of insight. The little woman is the incarnation of algebra; she is precisely what a dreamer and an enthusiast needs. She will soon cure you of your misty idealism: therein she will render you a great service. She will do it with the greatest pleasure, however, for her instinct leads her to disenchant poets."

My curiosity being aroused by De C——'s description, I emerged from my retreat, and, gliding from group to group, approached the lady in question and observed her closely,—she may have been twenty-five or twenty-six years old. She was small, but well shaped, although a little inclined to be stout; she had round, white arms, well-formed hands and pretty feet, almost too small,—plump, polished shoulders, breast but little exposed, but what there was, very satisfactory and affording a favorable idea of the rest; her hair was extremely glossy and of a blue-black shade like a jay's wing; the corner of the eye was turned well up toward the temple, nose thin, nostrils very open, mouth moist and sensuous, a little crease on the lower lip and an almost imperceptible down at the corners. And with it all, vivacity, animation, health, and an indefinable suggestion of wantonness adroitly tempered by coquetry and tact, which made her a very desirable creature and more than justified the very lively passions she had inspired and continued to inspire every day.

I desired her; but yet I understood that that woman, agreeable as she might be, was not my ideal, or could make me say: "At last I have a mistress!"

I returned to De C—— and said: "I like her looks, and perhaps I may come to an understanding with her. But, before saying anything definite which will bind me, I would be very glad if you would have the kindness to point out those indulgent beauties who are so condescending as to be impressed with me, so that I may make my choice.—You will also oblige me, as you are acting as showman on this occasion, by adding a little descriptive notice and a list of their good and bad qualities; how I must attack them and the tone I must adopt with them in order not to seem too much like a provincial or a literary man."

"I most certainly will," said De C——. "Do you see that lovely, melancholy swan who manages her neck so gracefully and makes her sleeves move like wings? she is modesty itself, the most chaste and virginal creature in the world; she has a snow-white brow, a heart of ice, the expression of a madonna, the smile of an Agnes; she has a white dress and a soul of the same color; she wears nothing but orange-blossoms or water-lily leaves in her hair, and is attached to earth only by a thread. She has never had an evil thought and has no idea wherein man differs from woman. The Blessed Virgin is a Bacchante beside her, all of which does not prevent her having had more lovers than any woman I know, and that is certainly saying a good deal. Just cast your eye on that discreet person's throat; it is a little masterpiece, and really it is very difficult to show so much without showing more; tell me if, with all her reserve and all her prudery, she isn't ten times more indecent than that good lady at her left, who bravely displays two hemispheres which, if they were united, would form a life-size globe,—or the other one at her right, *décolletée* to the navel, who parades her nothingness with fascinating intrepidity?—That virginal creature, unless I am very much mistaken, has already figured out in her head how much love and passion your pallor and your black eyes may be taken to promise; and my reason for saying so is that she hasn't once looked in your direction, visibly at least; for she can manage her pupils with such art and roll them into the corner of her eyes so cleverly that nothing escapes her; one would think that she looked through the back of her head, for she knows perfectly well what is going on behind her.—She's a female Janus.—If you want to succeed with her, you must lay aside anything like a free-and-easy, victorious manner. You must talk to her without looking at her, without moving, in a contrite attitude and in a subdued, respectful voice; in that way you can say whatever you choose to her, provided that it is suitably glossed over, and she will allow you to take the greatest liberties, at first in words; afterward in deeds. Simply take care to roll your eyes tenderly when hers are cast down, and talk to her about the joys of platonic love and the communion of souls, while you employ with her the least platonic and least ideal pantomime imaginable! She is very sensual and very sensitive; kiss her as often as you choose, but don't forget, even in the most intimate intercourse, to call her *madame* at least three times per sentence: she fell out with me, because, when I was in her bed, I said something or other to her and called her *thou*. What the devil! a woman is not virtuous for nothing!"

"After what you tell me I have no great desire to try my luck. A prudish Messalina! an entirely novel and monstrous combination."

"Old as the world, my dear boy! it is seen every day and nothing is more common.—You are wrong not to try your hand with her.—She has one great charm, which is that with her you always seem to be committing a deadly sin, and the least kiss seems altogether damnable; while with others you think of it as nothing more than a venial sin, and often you don't think you're doing anything wrong at all.—That is why I kept her longer than any other mistress.—I should have her still if she had not left me herself; she's the only woman who ever got ahead of me, and I look upon her with a certain amount of respect on that account.—She has the most delicate little refinements of pleasure and the great art of appearing to be forced to grant what she grants very freely; which gives to each of her favors the fascination of rape. You will find in society ten of her lovers who will swear to you that she is one of the most virtuous creatures on earth.—She is precisely the contrary.—It is an interesting study to analyze that virtue of hers on a pillow. Being forewarned, you run no risk, and you won't make the blunder of falling in love with her in earnest."

"How old is this adorable creature?" I asked De C——, for it was impossible to decide, even after

examining her with the most careful attention.

"Ah! there you are! how old is she? that's a mystery and God only knows the clue. For my own part, and I pride myself on telling a woman's age almost to a minute, I have never succeeded in finding out hers. I can only estimate approximately that she is somewhere between eighteen and thirty-six.—I have seen her in full dress, in *déshabille*, in her linen, and I can tell you nothing in that connection: my knowledge is at fault; the age that you would generally take her to be is eighteen, and yet that can't be her age.—She is a combination of a virgin body and the soul of a harlot, and she must have had much time or much genius to corrupt herself so thoroughly and so speciously; she must have a heart of brass in a breast of steel; but she has neither; that makes me think that she is thirty-six, but in reality I know nothing about it."

"Hasn't she any intimate friend who could enlighten you on the subject?"

"No; she arrived here two years ago. She came from the provinces or from abroad, I don't know which—that is an admirable position for a woman who knows how to make the most of it. With such a face as she has, she can make herself any age she chooses and date only from the day she arrived here."

"That certainly is a most agreeable state of things, especially when some impertinent wrinkle doesn't give you the lie, and Time, the great destroyer, is kind enough to connive at that falsification of the certificate of baptism."

He pointed out several others, who, he said, would receive favorably whatever requests it might please me to prefer to them, and would treat me with peculiar philanthropy. But the woman in pink in the chimney-corner and the modest dove who was her antithesis were incomparably superior to all the others; and, if they had not all the qualities I require, they had some of them, at least in appearance.

I talked all the evening with them, especially with the last, and I took pains to cast my ideas in the most respectful mould;—although she hardly looked at me, I fancied sometimes that I could see her eyes gleaming behind the curtain of their lashes, and at some compliments that I ventured to address to her, decidedly broad but shrouded in the most modest gauze, I noticed just below the skin a tiny blush, held back and stifled, not unlike the effect produced by pouring a red liqueur into a glass that is half opaque.—Her replies were, in general, sedate and well-weighed, but keen and bright, and they implied much more than they expressed. The whole conversation was interspersed with pauses, unfinished phrases; veiled allusions, every syllable had its meaning, every pause its bearing; nothing could be more diplomatic or more charming.—And yet, however great my pleasure in it for the moment, I could not endure such a conversation very long. One must be forever on the alert and on his guard, and what I like best in conversation is ease, familiarity.—We talked first of music, which led us naturally to speak of the Opera, then of women, and then of love, a subject in which it is easier than in any other to find excuses for transition from general principles to special instances.—We vied with each other in amatory talk; you would have laughed to hear me. Verily, Amadis on poor La Roche was no better than a dull pedant beside me. It was generosity, abnegation, self-sacrifice enough to put the late Curtius of Rome to the blush.—Really I didn't believe myself capable of such transcendent humbug and bathos. Can you imagine anything more ridiculous, a more perfect scene for a comedy, than myself indulging in the quintessence of platonism? And then my sugary manner, my demure, hypocritical little ways! *tubleu!* I looked as if I could never touch anything, and any mother who had heard me argue wouldn't have hesitated to let me lie with her daughter, and any husband would have trusted his wife with me. It was the one evening in all my life when I seemed to be most virtuous and was least so. I thought it was more difficult than that to be a hypocrite and say things one doesn't believe. It must be very easy or else I must be strongly predisposed that way, to have succeeded so satisfactorily at the first trial.—Really I have some inspired moments.

As for the lady, she made many remarks, very shrewdly worded, which, notwithstanding the innocent air with which she made them, denoted a very extensive experience; you can't conceive the subtlety of her distinctions. The woman would split a hair in three pieces lengthwise, and make fools of all the angelic and seraphic pundits that ever were. Indeed, from her way of talking, it was impossible to believe that she has the shadow of a body.—It is all immaterial, vaporous, ideal enough to break your arms; and if De C— had not warned me beforehand of the creature's manœuvring, I should certainly have despaired of the success of my undertaking, and stood shamefacedly aside. How in the devil, when a woman tells you for two hours, with the most indifferent air you can imagine, that love lives only on privation and sacrifice and other fine things of that sort, can you decently hope to persuade her to get between two sheets with you some day to stir your blood and see if you are made alike?

In short, we parted the best of friends, mutually congratulating each other on the elevation and purity of our sentiments.

My conversation with the other was, as you will imagine, of a very different tenor. We laughed as much as we talked. We made fun, and very wittily too, of all the women there. When I say: "We made fun, and very wittily too," I am wrong; I ought to say: "She made fun;" a man never makes fun of a woman. I listened and approved, for it is impossible to draw with more telling strokes or to apply colors more brilliantly; it was the most interesting gallery of caricatures that I have ever seen. In spite of the exaggeration, you felt the truth underneath; De C— was quite right; that woman's mission is to destroy the illusions of poets. There is an atmosphere of prose about her in which a poetic idea cannot live. She is charming, sparkling with wit, and yet when you are with her you think only of base, vulgar things; as I talked to her I felt a crowd of desires, incongruous and impracticable in that place; I felt like ordering wine and getting tipsy, taking her on my knee

and kissing her neck—like lifting up her skirt to see if her garter was above or below the knee, like singing an obscene song at the top of my voice, smoking a pipe or smashing the windows: the devil knows what.—All the animal, all the brute rose in me; I would willingly have spat on Homer's Iliad and thrown myself on my knees before a ham.—I understand perfectly to-day the allegory of Circe changing the companions of Ulysses to swine. Circe was probably a wanton like my little woman in pink.

It is a shameful thing to say, but I felt a keen delight in the consciousness that the brute nature was gaining the upper hand; I did not resist it, I assisted it with all my strength, corruption is so natural to man and there is so much mud in the clay of which he is made.



*Chapter II — My conversation with the other was, as you will imagine, of a very different tenor. We laughed as much as we talked. We made fun, and very wittily too, of all the women there.*

And yet I was afraid for a minute of the gangrene that was gaining upon me, and I tried to leave my corrupter; but the floor seemed to have risen to my knees, and I was as if riveted to my place.

At last I made a determined effort and left her, and, it being then very late, I returned home in dire perplexity, very much disturbed in mind and with none too clear an idea what I ought to do.—I wavered between the prude and the wanton.—I found piquancy in the one, sensuousness in the other; and after a very close and very thorough examination of my conscience I discovered, not that I loved them both, but that I desired them both, one as much as the other, with sufficient eagerness to indulge in reverie and preoccupation.

According to all appearances, O friend! I shall have one of those two women, perhaps I shall have them both, and yet I confess that I am only half satisfied by possessing them; it isn't that they're not very pretty, but at sight of them nothing cried out within me, nothing throbbed, nothing said: "It is they;"—I did not recognize them.—And yet I don't imagine that I shall find any one much better off in the way of birth and beauty, and De C— advises me to try my hand with them. Most certainly I shall do it, and one or the other shall be my mistress before long or may

the devil fly away with me; but way down in my heart a still small voice reproaches me for lying to my love and for pausing thus at the first smile of a woman I do not love, instead of seeking untiringly through the world, in cloisters and all sorts of bad places, in palaces and taverns, the woman who was made for me and whom God destines for me, be she princess or serving-maid, nun or courtesan.

Then I say to myself that I am indulging in chimeras, and that it's very much the same after all, whether I lie with that woman or another, that the earth will not swerve a hair's breadth from its course, and that the seasons will not change their order on that account; that nothing in the world is more indifferent to me, and that I am very simple to torment myself about such trifles: that is what I say to myself.—But it's of no use for me to talk, I am not a whit more easy in my mind or more decided.

It may be because I live much alone and the smallest details take on too much importance in a life so monotonous as mine. I give too much heed to my living and thinking: I hear the throbbing of my arteries, the beating of my heart; by dint of close attention I disengage my most intangible ideas from the confused haze in which they float, and give them a body.—If I had more to do I should not notice all these trivial things and should not have time to look at my heart under a microscope, as I do all day long. The din of action would drive away this swarm of indolent thoughts that are flying about in my head and deafening me with the buzzing of their wings: instead of pursuing phantoms I should come to blows with realities; I should ask women for nothing beyond what they can give—pleasure—and I should not try to embrace some fanciful ideal decked out in hazy perfections.—This desperate tension of the eye of my heart toward an invisible object has impaired my sight. I am unable to see what is, from having stared at what is not, and my eye, so keen for the ideal, is terribly short-sighted for the real; so that I have known women whom everybody declared to be most ravishing creatures, but who seemed to me very far from that. I have greatly admired pictures generally considered to be daubs, and fantastic or unintelligible verses have given me more pleasure than the most courtly productions.—I should not be at all astonished if, after addressing so many sighs to the moon and looking at the stars with strained gaze, after perpetrating so many elegies and sentimental apostrophes, I should fall in love with some vile girl from the street, or some ugly old woman; that would be a great come-down!—Reality will perhaps take its revenge thus for the little care I have taken to pay court to it:—wouldn't it be a fine thing if I should conceive a romantic passion for a scullery wench or a low, dirty trollop? Can you imagine me playing a guitar under a kitchen window and supplanted by a lackey carrying an old toothless dowager's pet cur?—Or perhaps, finding nothing in this world worthy of my love, I shall end by adoring myself, like the late Narcissus of selfish memory. To protect myself from such a great disaster, I look at myself in every mirror and in all the streams I pass. To tell the truth, as a result of musing and mental wandering I am terribly afraid of being led into something monstrous and unnatural. That is a serious matter and I must be on my guard.—Adieu, my friend;—I am going at once to call on the pink lady, for fear of relapsing into my usual state of meditation. I do not think that we shall trouble ourselves very much about actualities, and if we do anything it surely won't be in a spiritual direction, although she is very spirituelle. I carefully roll up and put away in a drawer the pattern of my ideal mistress in order not to try it upon this one. I propose to enjoy tranquilly such good qualities and merits as she has. I propose to leave her in a dress adapted to her figure, and not to try to fit clothes to her that I have cut out, in case of emergency, for the lady of my thoughts.—Those are very prudent resolutions, but I don't know whether I shall keep to them.—Once more, adieu.

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### III

I am the titular lover of the pink lady; that is almost a profession, an office, and it gives a man a firm footing in society. I no longer look like a scholar seeking a mistress among a parcel of grandmothers and afraid to sing a love-song to a woman unless she's a hundred years old; I notice, since my installation, that I receive much more consideration, that all the women talk to me with jealous coquetry and go out of their way to smile on me.—The men, on the other hand, are colder, and in the few words we exchange there is a touch of hostility and constraint; they feel that they have in me an enemy already formidable, who may become much more so.—I have heard that many of them had bitterly criticised my way of carrying myself and said that my style of dress was too effeminate; that my hair was curled and anointed with more care than beseemed me; that that fact, taken in connection with my beardless face, gave me a most absurd girlish appearance; that I affected rich materials that smelt of the stage, and that I looked more like an actor than a man: a parcel of trite, sneering remarks, intended to justify themselves in being dirty and wearing wretched, ill-fitting clothes. But all this serves only to make me the whiter, and all the ladies consider that my hair is the finest in the world, and that the niceties of my toilet are in the best taste, and they seem strongly disposed to make up to me for all that I spend for their benefit, for they are not fools enough to believe that all that elegance has no other aim than my own private embellishment.

The lady of the house seemed at first a little offended at my choice, which she thought must inevitably fall upon herself, and for some days she was decidedly sour—to her rival only, for there was no change in her manner to me—her spleen manifesting itself in divers little "My dears," uttered in that dry, abrupt tone that women alone can master, and in certain uncomplimentary remarks concerning her costume, made in as loud a voice as possible, such as: "Your hair is done too high and not at all to correspond with your face," or: "Your waist bags under the arms; who in



the world made that dress?" or: "You have black rings under your eyes; it seems to me you are much changed;" and a thousand other trivial observations to which the other did not fail to retort with all desirable malignity when opportunity offered; and if the opportunity was too slow in offering she made one for her own use and returned, with interest, what she had received. But soon, another object having distracted the attention of the slighted princess, the little war of words ceased and everything resumed its usual order.

I said baldly that I was the pink lady's titular lover; that is not enough for so accurate a man as you are. You will undoubtedly ask me what her name is: as for that, I shall not tell you; but, if you choose, to shorten the story and in memory of the color of the dress in which I first saw her, we will call her Rosette; it's a pretty name; my little dog has the same name.

You would like to know from point to point, for you love exactness in all things, the story of our love-affairs with this fair Bradamante, and by what successive steps I passed from the general to the particular and from the condition of simple spectator to that of actor; how, after being one of the audience, I became the lover. I will gratify your desire with the very greatest pleasure. There is nothing unpleasant in our romance; it is all rose-colored, and no tears are shed except tears of pleasure; you will find no long descriptions or repetitions, and everything moves on toward the end with the haste and speed so urgently recommended by Horace;—it is a genuine French romance.—Do not imagine, however, that I carried the citadel at the first assault. The princess, although very humane to her subjects, is not as lavish of her favors at first, as you might think; she knows their value too well not to make you purchase them; she also knows too well how a judicious delay sharpens the appetite and what relish a semi-resistance adds to the pleasure, to abandon herself to you at first, however keen the inclination you have aroused in her.

To tell the whole story at length, I must go back a little. I gave you a very circumstantial account of our first interview. I had one or two, perhaps three others in the same house, and then she invited me to call on her; I did not make her repeat the invitation, as you can believe; I went there at discreet intervals at first, then a little more frequently, then still more so, and finally whenever the fancy seized me, and I must confess that it seized me at least three or four times a day.—The lady, after we had been parted a few hours, always received me as if I had just returned from the East Indies; which fact touched me as much as anything could and impelled me to show my gratitude in a marked manner by the most gallant and tenderest words you can imagine, to which she replied as best she could.

Rosette—as we have agreed to call her that—is a very bright woman and has a most admirable appreciation of man; although she postponed the end of the chapter for some time, I did not once lose my temper with her: which is really marvellous, for you know how I fly into a passion when I don't get what I want on the instant, and when a woman goes beyond the time I have mentally allowed her in which to surrender.—I have no idea how she did it at the first interview; she gave me to understand that I should have her, and I was surer of her than if I had had her written promise signed by her hand. You will say perhaps that her bold and free-and-easy manners left the field free to rash hopes. I do not think that that is the real motive: I have seen some women whose prodigious freedom of manner excluded the last vestige of doubt, who did not produce that effect upon me, and in whose presence I was conscious of a timidity and uneasiness that were, to say the least, misplaced.

The result is, generally speaking, that I am less amiable with the woman I long to possess than with those who are indifferent to me; it is because of the excitement of waiting for an opportunity and my uncertainty as to the success of my project; that makes me gloomy and casts me into a fit of musing which takes away much of my power of pleasing and my presence of mind. When I see the hours I had set aside for another purpose passing one by one, I am filled with anger in spite of myself, and I cannot keep from saying very sharp, harsh things, which sometimes go as far as brutality and put my affair back a hundred leagues.

With Rosette I had no such feeling; never, even at the moment when she resisted me most stubbornly, did I have the idea that she wanted to escape from my love. I calmly allowed her to display all her little coquetries, and I endured in patience the overlong delays to which it pleased her to subject my ardor; there was something smiling in her harshness that consoled you for it as much as possible, and in her most Hyrcanian cruelties you could distinguish a background of humanity that made it impossible for you to have any very serious fear.—Virtuous women, even when they are not really virtuous at all, have a crabbed, disdainful way which is perfectly unendurable to me. They have the air of being always ready to ring and order their footmen to put you out; and it seems to me, really, that a man who takes the trouble to pay court to a woman—and it isn't always as agreeable as you may think—doesn't deserve to be looked at in that way.

Dear Rosette has no such glances as that, not she; and I assure you that she doesn't lose anything by it; she is the only woman with whom I have ever been myself, and I am conceited enough to say that I have never been so agreeable. My wit has displayed itself freely; and, by the skill and fire of her retorts, she has led me to discover more than I had any idea that I possessed, and more perhaps than I really do possess.—To be sure, I haven't done much in the way of lyrics—that is hardly possible with her; it is not that she has no poetic side, notwithstanding what De C — said of her; but she is so full of life and strength and movement, she seems to be so well placed in her present surroundings, that one has no desire to leave them for a flight among the clouds. She fills one's real life so pleasantly and makes of it something so entertaining to herself and others, that reverie has nothing better to offer you.

A miraculous thing! I have known her nearly two months, and in those two months the only times I have been bored have been when I was not with her. You will agree that she can be no inferior

woman to produce such a result, for women usually produce exactly the opposite effect on me and are much more agreeable to me at a distance than near at hand.

Rosette has the best disposition in the world, with men I mean, for with women she's as wicked as a devil; she is bright, lively, alert, ready for anything, very original in her way of speaking, and has always some charming nonsense to tell you that you don't expect; she is a delightful companion, a jolly comrade with whom you sleep, rather than a mistress; and if I were a few years older and had fewer romantic ideas, I should be perfectly satisfied, indeed I should deem myself the most fortunate mortal on earth. But—but—that conjunction implies nothing good, and unfortunately that little devil of a restrictive word is the one most frequently employed in all human tongues;—but I am an imbecile, an idiot, a downright booby, never content with anything and always hunting mares' nests; and, instead of being altogether happy, I am only half so;—half, that is a good deal for this world, and yet I find it not enough.

In the eyes of the world I have a mistress whom several desire and envy me, and whom no one would disdain. My desire is gratified, therefore, in appearance, and I no longer have the right to pick a quarrel with fate. However, it seems to me that I have no mistress; I can convince myself that I have by arguing it out, but I do not feel it, and if anybody should ask me unexpectedly if I had one, I think I should answer no.—However, the possession of a woman who has beauty, youth, and wit, constitutes what, in all times and in all countries, has been and still is called having a mistress, and I think there is no other way. That doesn't prevent my having the strangest doubts in that connection, and it has gone so far that if several people should unite to convince me that I am not Rosette's favored lover, I should end by believing them in the face of the palpable evidence to the contrary.

Do not think from what I say that I do not love her or that she is displeasing to me in any way; on the contrary, I am very fond of her and I see in her what everybody else would see in her: a pretty, alluring creature. I simply do not feel that I possess her, that is all. And yet no woman ever gave me so much pleasure, and if I have ever known bliss, it has been in her arms.—A single one of her kisses, the most chaste of her caresses makes me shiver to the soles of my feet and sends all my blood back to my heart. Explain it all if you can. The facts, however, are as I tell them to you. But the human heart is full of such absurdities; and if we were obliged to reconcile all the contradictions it exhibits, we should have a heavy task on our hands.

How does it happen? Verily, I have no idea.

I see her all day, and all night too, if I choose. I bestow as many caresses on her as I please; I have her naked or dressed, in town or in the country. Her good humor is inexhaustible, and she enters heart and soul into my whims however eccentric they may be; one evening the fancy seized me to possess her in the middle of the salon, with all the candles lighted, the fire blazing on the hearth, the chairs arranged in a circle as if for a grand evening reception, she, in a *toilette de bal* with her bouquet and her fan, all her diamonds on her fingers and her neck, feathers in her hair—the most magnificent costume imaginable—and I dressed like a bear; she consented.—When everything was ready, the servants were greatly surprised to receive orders to close the doors and admit no one; they acted as if they had not the slightest comprehension of what it all meant, and went away with a dazed look that made us laugh heartily. They certainly thought that their mistress was stark mad; but what they thought or did not think mattered little to us.

That was the most burlesque evening of my whole life. Can you imagine the appearance I must have presented with my hat and feather under my paw, rings on every claw, a little silver-hilted sword and a sky-blue ribbon on its hilt? I approached the fair one, and, having made her a most graceful reverence, sat down beside her and besieged her in due form. The flattering madrigals, the exaggerated compliments I addressed to her, all the jargon suited to the occasion assumed a strange significance in passing through my bear's muzzle; for I had a superb head of painted cardboard which I was soon obliged to throw under the table, my deity was so adorable that evening, and I longed so to kiss her hand and something better than her hand. The skin soon followed the head; for not being accustomed to play the bear, I was stifled in it, more so than was necessary. Thereupon the ball-dress had a fine time as you can imagine; the feathers fell like snow around my beauty, the shoulders soon came out of the sleeves, the bosom from the corset, the feet from the shoes, the legs from the stockings; the unstrung necklaces rolled on the floor, and I believe that fresher dress was never more pitilessly rumpled and torn; the dress was of silver gauze and the lining of white satin. Rosette displayed on that occasion a heroism altogether unusual to her sex, which gave me a most exalted opinion of her. She looked on at the sack of her costume like an uninterested witness, and did not for a single instant show the slightest regret for her dress and her lace; on the contrary, she was wildly gay, and assisted with her own hands in tearing and breaking anything that wouldn't untie or unclasp quickly enough to suit my taste and hers.—Doesn't this strike you as worthy to be handed down in history beside the most brilliant deeds of the heroes of antiquity? The greatest proof of love a woman can give her lover is to refrain from saying to him: "Take care and not rumple me or spot my dress," especially if the dress be new.—A new dress is a greater source of security to a husband than is commonly supposed. It must be that Rosette adores me or else she is blessed with a philosophy superior to that of Epictetus.

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*Chapter III — Thereupon the ball-dress had a fine time as you can imagine; \*\*\* and I believe that fresher dress was never more pitilessly rumpled and torn; the dress was of silver gauze and the lining of white satin. Rosette displayed on that occasion a heroism altogether unusual to her sex.*

Nevertheless I think that I paid Rosette the full value of her dress and more, in coin which is none the less esteemed and valued because it does not pass current with tradesmen. Such unexampled heroism surely deserved such a recompense. However, like the generous creature she is, she repaid what I gave her. I had a wild, almost convulsive sort of pleasure, such as I did not believe myself capable of enjoying. The resounding kisses mingled with bursts of laughter, the shuddering, impatient caresses, all the piquant, tantalizing sensations, the pleasure imperfectly enjoyed because of the costume and the situation, but a hundred times keener than if there had been no obstacles, produced such an effect on my nerves that I was seized with paroxysms which I had some difficulty in overcoming.—You cannot conceive the proud, affectionate way in which Rosette gazed at me as she tried to soothe me, and the joyful yet anxious manner with which she lavished attentions upon me: her face glowed with the pleasure that she felt in producing such an effect upon me, while her eyes, swimming in sweet tears, bore witness to her alarm at my apparent illness and the interest she took in my health.—She had never seemed so beautiful to me as at that moment. There was something so maternal and so chaste in her glance that I entirely forgot the more than anacreontic scene that had just taken place, and threw myself on my knees at her feet, asking permission to kiss her hand; which permission she granted with extraordinary dignity and gravity.

That woman certainly isn't as depraved as De C—— claims and as she has often seemed to me to be; her corruption is in her mind and not in her heart.

I have cited this scene from among twenty others: it seems to me that after such an experience one can, without overweening conceit, believe himself a woman's lover.—And yet I have not that feeling.—I had no sooner returned home than that thought took possession of me and began to work upon me as usual.—I remembered perfectly all that I had said and heard, all that I had done and seen. The slightest gestures, the most insignificant attitudes, all the most trivial details stood

out clearly in my memory: I remembered everything, even to the slightest inflections of the voice, the most indescribable shades of enjoyment; but it did not seem to me that all those things had happened to me rather than to some one else. I was not sure that it was not all an illusion, a phantasmagoria, a dream, or that I had not read it somewhere or other, or even that it was not a story invented by myself as I had invented many others. I dreaded being the dupe of my own credulity or the plaything of some deception; and notwithstanding the evidence of my weariness and the material proofs that I had not slept at home, I could easily have believed that I had gone to bed at my usual hour and slept till morning.

I am very unfortunate in my inability to acquire the moral certainty of something of which I am physically certain. In ordinary cases the contrary is the case and the fact proves the idea. I would like well to prove the fact by the idea; I cannot do it; although it is a strange thing, it is so. It rests with myself, to a certain extent, to have a mistress; but I cannot force myself to believe that I have one, even though that is the fact. If I have not the necessary faith in me, even for a thing so palpable as that, it is just as impossible for me to believe in so simple a fact as for another to believe in the Trinity. Faith is not to be acquired, it is a pure gift, a special grace from Heaven.

No one ever longed as I do to live the life of others and to assimilate another nature to my own; no one ever had less success. Whatever I may do, other men are little more than phantoms to me and I do not feel their existence; but it is not the desire to understand their lives and share in them that I lack. It is the power or the want of real sympathy with anything on earth. The existence or non-existence of a person or thing does not interest me enough to affect me in a perceptible and convincing way. The sight of a man or a woman who appears before me in flesh and blood leaves on my mind no more definite trace than the fanciful vision of a dream: a pale world of shadows and of apparitions, false or true, hovers about me, murmuring low, and in the midst of them I feel as utterly alone as possible, for not one of them has any effect upon me for good or evil, and they seem to me to be of a nature altogether different from mine. If I speak to them and they make what seems a sensible reply, I am as surprised as if my dog or my cat should suddenly open his mouth and take part in the conversation: the sound of their voices always astonishes me and I could easily believe that they are only fleeting apparitions and I the mirror in which they are reflected. Inferior or superior, I certainly am not of their kind. There are moments when I recognize none but God above me, and others when I deem myself hardly the equal of the earthworm under its stone or the mollusk on its sand-bank; but whatever my frame of mind, exalted or humble, I have never been able to persuade myself that men were really my fellows. When any one calls me *monsieur*, or, in speaking of me, refers to me as *that man*, it always seems strange to me. My very name seems to me but an empty one and not my real name; and yet, no matter how low it may be uttered, amid the loudest noise, I turn suddenly with a convulsive and peevish eagerness which I have never been able to explain.—Is it the dread of finding in the man who knows my name, and to whom I am no longer simply one of the common herd, an antagonist or an enemy?

It is when I have been living with a woman that I feel most strongly how utterly my nature repels every sort of alliance and mixture. I am like a drop of oil in a glass of water. No matter how much you turn it and shake it, the oil will never mix with the water; it will separate into a hundred thousand little globules which will unite again and rise to the surface the instant it becomes calm: the drop of oil and the glass of water epitomize my history. Even lust—that diamond chain that binds all human beings together, that consuming fire that melts the stone and metal of the heart and causes them to fall in tears as material fire melts iron and granite—all powerful as it is, has never been able to subdue or move me. And yet my senses are very sharp; but my heart is a hostile sister to my body, and the ill-mated couple, like every possible couple, lawfully or unlawfully united, lives in a state of constant warfare.—A woman's arms, the strongest of all earthly bonds, so it is said, are to me very weak fetters, and I have never been farther from my mistress than when she was straining me to her heart.—I was stifled, that's the whole story.

How many times have I been angry with myself! What superhuman efforts have I made to be different! How I have exhorted myself to be affectionate, lover-like, passionate! how often I have taken my heart by the hair and dragged it to my lips in the middle of a kiss! Whatever I do, it always recoils, wiping the kiss away, as soon as I release my hold. What torture for that poor heart to look on at the orgies of my body and to be constantly compelled to sit through banquets at which it has nothing to eat!

It was when I was with Rosette that I determined, once for all, to ascertain if I am not hopelessly unsociable, and if I can take enough interest in another person's existence to believe in it. I exhausted the whole category of experiments, and I have not succeeded in solving my doubts to any great extent. With her my pleasure is so keen that my heart often finds itself diverted at least, if not touched, a state of things that impairs the accuracy of observations. After all, I have discovered that it didn't go below the skin and that my enjoyment was confined to the epidermis, the heart participating only through curiosity. I have pleasure because I am young and ardent; but the pleasures came from myself and not from another. Its source was in myself rather than in Rosette.

It is of no use for me to struggle, I cannot go out of myself for a single moment. I am still what I was, that is to say, a very tired, very tiresome creature, who disgusts me exceedingly. I have failed utterly to introduce into my brain the idea of another human being, into my heart, another's emotion, into my body, another's pain or pleasure. I am a prisoner in myself and all escape is impossible: the prisoner longs to escape, the walls ask nothing better than to crumble, and the doors to open before him; but some inexplicable fatality keeps every stone immovable in its place, every bolt in its groove; it is as impossible for me to admit any one to my quarters as to

go myself to others; I cannot make or receive calls, and I live in the most absolute solitude amid the multitude: my bed may not be widowed, but my heart always is.

Ah! to be unable to increase one's size by a single line, by a single atom; to be unable to admit others' blood into one's veins; to see always with one's own eyes, never clearer, never farther, never otherwise; to hear sounds with the same ears and the same sensation; to touch with the same fingers; to perceive changing objects with an unchangeable organ; to be doomed to the same tone of voice, the repetition of the same sounds, the same phrases, the same words, and not to be able to fly, to escape one's self, to take refuge in some corner where no one can follow; to be compelled to keep always to one's self, to dine and lie alone—to be the same man to twenty different women; to play, throughout the most complicated situations of the drama of your life, a part that is forced upon you, whose lines you know by heart; to think the same things, to have the same dreams:—what torture, what ennui!

I have longed for the horn of the Tangut brothers, for Fortunatus's hat, Abaris's bâton, Gygès's ring; I would have sold my soul to snatch the magic wand from a fairy's hand, but I have never longed so intensely for anything as to meet on the mountain, like Tiresias the soothsayer, those serpents who can change the sex of mortals, and what I most envy in the strange, monstrous gods of the Indies are their constant incarnations and innumerable transformations.

I began by longing to be another man; then, as I reflected that I could, by analogy, foresee almost exactly what I should feel and therefore not experience the change and the surprise I expected, I concluded that I would prefer to be a woman; that idea always occurred to me when I had a mistress who was not ugly; for an ugly woman is like a man to me, and in my moments of enjoyment I would gladly have changed my rôle, for it is very annoying to know nothing about the effect one produces and to judge of others' pleasure only by one's own. Such reflections and many others have often given me, at moments when it was most inappropriate, a meditative, dreamy air, which has caused me to be accused most unjustly of coldness and infidelity.

Rosette, who, very luckily, doesn't know all this, believes me to be the most amorous man on earth; she takes that impotent *frenzy* for a frenzy of passion, and she does her utmost to humor all the experimental caprices that pass through my brain.

I have done all that I possibly could to convince myself that she belongs to me. I have tried to go down into her heart, but I have always stopped on the first step of the staircase, at her flesh or her mouth. Despite the intimacy of our corporeal relations, I feel that we have nothing in common. Never has an idea of the same tenor as mine spread its wings in that youthful, smiling head; never has that heart, overflowing with life and fire, whose palpitations cause that firm, white breast to rise and fall, beaten in unison with my heart. My soul has never coalesced with hers. Cupid, the god with the hawk's wings, has not kissed Psyche on her fair ivory brow. No!—that woman is not my mistress.

If you know all that I have done to compel my heart to share the love of my body! with what frenzy I have glued my mouth to hers and wound my arms in her hair, and how tightly I have embraced her rounded, supple figure. Like Salmacis of old, enamored of the young Hermaphrodite, I have tried to melt her body and mine together; I have drunk her breath and her warm tears that bliss forced from the brimming chalice of her eyes. The more inextricably our bodies were intertwined, the closer our embrace, the less I loved her. My heart, sitting sadly by, looked on with a pitying air at that deplorable union to which it was not bidden, or veiled its face in disgust and wept silently behind the skirt of its cloak. All this is attributable perhaps to the fact that I do not really love Rosette, worthy to be loved though she be, and anxious as I am to love her.

To rid myself of the idea that I was myself, I transported myself to most unusual surroundings, where it was altogether unlikely that I should meet myself, and being unable to cast my individuality to the dogs, I tried to expatriate it so that it would no longer recognize itself. I have had but moderate success therein, for that devil of a myself follows me persistently; there is no way of getting rid of him; I haven't the resource of sending word to him, as I do to other uncomfortable callers, that I am not at home or that I have gone into the country.

I have had my mistress in the bath and I have played the Triton as best I could.—The sea was a huge marble tub. As for the Nereid, what she showed accused the water, transparent though it was, of not being sufficiently so for the exquisite beauty of what it concealed.—I have had her at night, by moonlight, in a gondola with music.

That would be very commonplace at Venice, but here it is anything but that.—In her carriage, with the horses going at a gallop, amid the rattling of the wheels, the leaping and jolting, sometimes by the light of lanterns, sometimes in the densest darkness.—That doesn't lack a certain stimulating interest and I advise you to try it: but I forget that you are a venerable patriarch, and that you don't indulge in such refinements.—I have climbed in at her window when I had the key to the door in my pocket.—I have made her come to my apartments in broad daylight, in fact, I have compromised her so thoroughly that no one—myself excepted, be it understood—now doubts that she is my mistress.

By reason of all these inventions which, if I were not so young, would resemble the expedients of a blasé old rake, Rosette adores me far and away above all others. She sees therein the ardor of a teasing passion that nothing can restrain, and that is always the same despite the changes of time and place. She sees therein the constantly renewed effect of her charms and the triumph of her beauty, and, in truth, I would that she were right, and it is neither my fault nor hers—I must be just—that she is not.

The only wrong I have done her consists in being myself. If I told her that, the child would reply at once that that is my greatest merit in her eyes; which would be more courteous than sensible.

Once—it was in the beginning of our liaison—I believed that I had gained my end, for a moment I believed that I loved her—I did love her.—O my friend, I have never lived except during that moment, and if it had lasted an hour I should have become a god. We had ridden out together in the saddle, I on my dear Ferragus, she on a snow-white mare that looks like a unicorn, her feet are so delicate and her body so slender. We rode along a broad avenue of elms of prodigious height; the sun poured down upon us, bright and warm, sifting through the serrated foliage; ultra-marine patches showed here and there amid the fleecy clouds, broad bands of pale blue lay along the horizon, changing to a most delicate apple-green when they encountered the golden rays of the setting sun. The appearance of the sky was unusual and fascinating; the breeze wafted to our nostrils an indefinable perfume of wild flowers delicious beyond words. From time to time a bird rose in front of us and flew singing along the avenue. The church-bell of an invisible village softly rang the Angelus, and the silvery notes, which came but faintly to our ears because of the distance, were inexpressibly sweet. Our horses were going at a foot pace, and they walked side by side in such perfect step that neither of them was an inch ahead of the other.—My heart dilated and my soul overflowed upon my body. I had never been so happy. I did not speak, nor did Rosette, and yet we never understood each other so perfectly. We were so close together that my leg touched her horse's side. I leaned toward her and put my arm about her waist; she made a similar movement and rested her head against my shoulder. Our mouths met; O such a chaste, delicious kiss! Our horses walked on, the reins lying on their necks. I felt Rosette's arms relax and her body yield more and more. I knew that my own strength was failing me, and I was near fainting.—Ah! I promise you that at that moment I cared but little whether I was myself or somebody else. We rode in that way to the end of the avenue, where the sound of footsteps caused us abruptly to resume our natural positions; some of our acquaintances, also in the saddle, rode up and spoke to us. If I had had my pistols, I believe I should have fired at them.

I glared at them with a fierce, lowering expression that must have seemed very strange to them. After all, I was wrong to be so angry with them, for they had unwittingly done me the service of cutting my pleasure short at the moment when, by its very intensity, it was certain to become pain or to sink under its violence. The science of stopping in time is not regarded with all the respect it deserves.—Sometimes, as you lie with a woman, you put your arm under her waist: at first it is a most blissful sensation to feel the pleasant warmth of her body, the soft, velvety flesh of her sides, the polished ivory of her hips, and to press your hand against her breast which throbs and quivers. The fair one falls asleep in that voluptuous, charming posture; the curve of her loins becomes less pronounced, the agitation of her bosom is calmed, her sides rise and fall with the freer, more regular respiration of sleep, her muscles relax, her face is hidden by her hair.—Meanwhile the weight upon your arm grows heavier, you begin to observe that she is a woman, not a sylph; but you would not remove your arm for anything on earth. There are many reasons for that: the first is that it is dangerous to wake a woman with whom one is lying; one must be prepared to substitute for the blissful dream she is probably dreaming, a more blissful reality; the second is that, if you ask her to raise herself so that you can take away your arm, you tell her indirectly that she is heavy and discommodes you—which is not polite—or else you give her to understand that you are feeble and overdone—an extremely humiliating admission for you and likely to lower you greatly in her mind; the third is that, as you have had pleasure in that position, you think that if you retain the position the pleasure may be renewed, wherein you are mistaken. The poor arm is caught under the mass that crushes it, the blood is checked, the nerves are distended and numbness pricks you with its countless needles: you are a sort of Milo of Crotona on a small scale, and the mattress and the back of your divinity are a sufficiently accurate representation of the two parts of the tree that have reunited. Day comes at last to deliver you from your martyrdom and you leap out of that instrument of torture more eagerly than ever husband descended from the nuptial scaffold.

That is the history of many passions. It is the history of all pleasures.

However that may be—despite the interruption or because of the interruption—never had such a blissful sensation fallen to my lot: I felt that I was really somebody else. Rosette's soul in its entirety had entered into my body. My soul had left me and filled her heart as hers had filled mine. They had met, no doubt, during that long equestrian kiss, as Rosette dubbed it afterward—to my annoyance by the way—and had penetrated and mingled as inextricably as the souls of two mortal creatures can upon a morsel of perishable clay.

Angels surely must kiss like that, and the real paradise is not in heaven but on the lips of the woman we love.

I have waited in vain for such a moment and have tried unsuccessfully to lead up to a repetition of it. We have often ridden together through the avenue of elms at sunset on lovely evenings; the trees had the same verdure, the birds sang the same song, but to us the sun seemed dull, the foliage withered: the song of the birds had a harsh, discordant sound, we were no longer in harmony with it all. We brought our horses to a walk and we tried the same kiss.—Alas! only our lips met and it was only the spectre of the former kiss.—The beautiful, the sublime, the divine, the only real kiss I have given and received in my whole life had flown away forever. Since that day I have always had an inexpressibly sad feeling on returning from the forest. Rosette, light-hearted madcap that she naturally is, cannot avoid the feeling and her reverie betrays itself by a sweet little pout, which is at least as attractive as a smile.

Scarcely anything but the fumes of wine and a great blaze of candles enable me to shake off these fits of depression. We both drink like men condemned to death, silently and glass after

glass, until we have swallowed the necessary amount; then we begin to laugh and mock most heartily at what we call our sentimentality.

We laugh—because we cannot weep. Ah! who will succeed in sowing a tear in my parched eye?

Why did I enjoy that evening so? It would be very hard for me to say. I was the same man, Rosette the same woman. It was not my first experience on horse-back, nor hers; we had already watched the sun set and the spectacle had touched us no more than a picture, which one admires or not according as the colors are more or less brilliant. There is more than one avenue of elms and chestnuts in the world, and that was not the first one we had ridden through; what then caused us to find such a sovereign fascination there, what metamorphosed the dead leaves into topazes, the green leaves into emeralds, gilded all those whirling atoms and changed into pearls all the drops of water scattered over the greensward, what imparted such sweet melody to the tones of a bell that was usually discordant and to the twittering of countless young birds?—There must have been a very penetrating flavor of poesy in the air, as even our horses seemed to catch the scent of it.

And yet nothing in the world could be more pastoral and more simple: a few trees, a few clouds, five or six clumps of wild thyme, a woman, and a sunbeam over all like a gold chevron on a coat of arms.—There was neither surprise nor bewilderment in my sensations. I knew perfectly well where I was. I had never been to that precise spot, but I remembered perfectly the shape of the trees and the position of the clouds, the white dove that flew across the sky I had seen flying in the same direction; the little silvery bell, which I then heard for the first time, had often tinkled in my ears, and its voice seemed to me like the voice of a friend; although I had never been there, I had many times passed through that avenue with princesses mounted on unicorns; my most voluptuous dreams rode there every evening and my desires had exchanged kisses absolutely like the one exchanged by myself and Rosette.—There was nothing new to me in that kiss; but it was as I had thought it would be. It was perhaps the only time in my life that I have not been disappointed and that the real has seemed to me as beautiful as the ideal.—If I could find a woman, a landscape, a building, anything that corresponded as closely to my desires as that moment corresponded to the moment I had dreamed of, I should have no reason to envy the gods, and I would gladly renounce my box in paradise.—But, in truth, I do not believe that any man of flesh and blood could have an hour of such exquisite enjoyment; two kisses like that would pump a whole life dry and leave a complete void in a heart and a body.—But no such consideration as that would stop me; for, not being able to prolong my life indefinitely, I am ready to die, and I should prefer to die of pleasure rather than of old age or ennui.

But that woman doesn't exist.—Yes, she does exist; it may be that only a wall separates us.—Perhaps I jostled her in the street yesterday or to-day.

In what does Rosette fall short of being that woman? In this, that I do not believe she is. By what fatality do I always have for mistresses, women that I do not love? Her neck is smooth enough to set off the most beautifully-wrought necklaces; her fingers are taper enough to do honor to the loveliest and richest rings; the ruby would blush with pleasure to gleam on the pink lobe of her delicate ear; the cestus of Venus would fit her waist; but Love alone has the secret of tying his mother's scarf.

All Rosette's merit is in herself, I have attributed nothing to her that she has not. I have not cast over her beauty the veil of perfection with which love envelops the loved one;—the veil of Isis is transparent beside that veil. Naught but satiety can raise the corner of it.

I do not love Rosette; at least my love for her, if I have any, does not resemble the ideal I have formed of love. It may be that my ideal is not a just one, I do not dare to say. Certain it is that it makes me insensible to the merits of other women, and I have desired no other with any consistency since I have had her. If she has any reason to be jealous, it is of phantoms only, about which she worries very little, and yet her most formidable rival is my imagination; that is something which, with all her shrewdness, she will probably never discover.

If women only knew!—How many infidelities the least fickle lover is guilty of to the most adored mistress!—It is to be presumed that they pay us back in full and more; but they do as we do and say nothing. A mistress is a necessary subject, who ordinarily disappears under flourishes and embroidery. Very often the kisses you give her are not for her; you embrace the idea of another woman in her person, and she profits not infrequently—if it can be called profiting—by the desires aroused by another. Ah! my poor Rosette, how many times you have served as a body to my dreams and given reality to your rivals; to how many infidelities have you unwittingly been accessory! If you could have imagined, at times when my arms clasped you so tightly, when my mouth was most closely united to yours, that your beauty and your love had nothing to do with my passion, that the thought of you was a hundred leagues from my mind; what if some one had told you that those eyes, veiled with amorous languor, were cast down simply in order not to look at you and not to banish the illusion that you served only to complete, and that, instead of being a mistress, you were simply an instrument of lust, a means of assuaging a desire impossible of realization!

O divine creatures, ye lovely virgins, slender and diaphanous, who lower your periwinkle eyes and clasp your lily hand in the pictures with golden backgrounds of the old German masters, ye stained-glass saints, ye missal martyrs who smile so sweetly amid the convolutions of the arabesques, and come forth so fresh and fair from the flower-bells!—O ye lovely courtesans lying all naked in your hair on beds strewn with roses, beneath great purple curtains, with your bracelets and necklaces of huge pearls, your fan and your mirrors, gleaming in the shadow in the fiery rays of the setting sun!—ye dark-skinned maidens of Titian, who display so wantonly your

undulating hips, your firm, round thighs, your polished breasts and your supple and muscular loins!—ye antique goddesses, who rear your white phantoms in the shady corners of gardens!—ye are a part of my seraglio; I have possessed you all in turn.—Sainte Ursule, I have kissed your hands on the fair hands of Rosette; I have toyed with the black hair of the Muranese and Rosette never had such a hard task to rearrange her hair: I have been with you more than Acteon was, O virgin Diana, and I have not been changed to a stag: it was I who replaced your handsome Endymion!—What a multitude of rivals whom she does not suspect and upon whom she cannot be revenged! yet they are not all painted or carved!

Women, when you notice that your lover is more affectionate than usual, that he presses you in his arms with unwonted emotion; when he rests his head upon your knees and raises it to look at you with moist and wandering eyes; when enjoyment serves only to augment his desire and he stifles your voice with his kisses as if he dreaded to hear it, be sure that he simply does not know that you are there; that he has, at that moment, an assignation with a chimera which you make palpable, and whose part you play.—Many chamber-maids have profited by the love that queens inspire.—Many women have profited by the love that goddesses inspire, and a commonplace reality has often served as the pedestal for an ideal idol. That is why poets habitually take dirty trollops for mistresses.—You can lie ten years with a woman without ever seeing her; that is the history of many great geniuses, whose ignoble or obscure connections have caused the world to wonder.

I have been unfaithful to Rosette in no other way than that. I have been false to her only for pictures and statues and she has been equally concerned in the treachery. I have not the slightest material sin upon my conscience with which to reproach myself. I am, in that respect, as white as the snow-capped Jungfrau, and yet, while not in love with anybody, I would like to be with some one. I do not seek the opportunity, but I shall not be sorry if it comes; if it should come, I might not use it, perhaps, for I have an innate conviction that it would be the same with another, and I prefer that it should be so with Rosette than with any other; for, take away the woman, I still have a jolly companion, witty, and very agreeably depraved; and that consideration is not one of the least of those that restrain me, for, in losing the mistress, I might be distressed to find that I had lost the friend.

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#### IV

Do you know that it will soon be five months, yes, fully five months, five eternities that I have been the titular Celadon of Madame Rosette? That is admirable to the last degree. I would not have believed myself to be so constant, nor would she, I will wager. We are in very truth a couple of plucked pigeons, for only turtle-doves are capable of such affection. How we have cooed! how we have pecked at each other! what pictures of clinging ivy! what a charming existence *à deux!* Nothing could be more touching, and our two poor little hearts might have been placed on a dial pierced by the same spit, and as though trembling in a gust of wind.

Five months' tête-à-tête, so to speak, for we see each other every day and almost every night—the door being always closed to visitors; doesn't it make your flesh creep simply to think of it? Well! to the glory of the incomparable Rosette be it said, I am not greatly bored, and those months will doubtless prove to be the most agreeable in my life. I do not think it would be possible to entertain more constantly and more successfully a man who has no passion in his heart, and God knows what pitiable idleness it is that is attributable to an empty heart! You cannot imagine that woman's expedients. She began by taking them from her mind, then from her heart, for she loves me to adoration.—With what skill she makes the most of the slightest spark and how well she knows how to fan it into a conflagration! how adroitly she guides the slightest impulses of the heart! how she transforms languor into tender reverie! and by what roundabout roads does she bring back to her the mind that is slipping away!—It is marvellous!—And I admire her as one of the greatest geniuses imaginable.

I have been to her house in very bad humor, sulky, looking for a quarrel. I have no idea how the witch did it, but in a very few minutes she had compelled me to say flattering things to her, although I hadn't the slightest desire to do it, to kiss her hands and laugh with all my heart, although I was horribly angry. Can you conceive of such tyranny as that?—However, adroit as she is, the tête-à-tête cannot last much longer, and in the course of the last fortnight I have frequently done what I never did before—open the books on the chimney and on the table and read a few lines during the pauses in the conversation. Rosette has noticed it, it has alarmed her so that she has had hard work to dissemble her feelings, and she has taken all the books out of her room. I confess that I regret them, although I dare not ask for them.—The other day—an alarming symptom!—some one called while we were together, and instead of flying into a rage as I used to do at the beginning, I was conscious of a sort of pleasure. I was almost affable: I kept up the conversation when Rosette tried to let it languish so that monsieur would take his leave, and when he had gone I ventured to say that he didn't lack wit and that he was a very agreeable fellow. Rosette reminded me that only two months before I had found the same man intensely stupid and the most annoying idiot on earth, to which I had no reply to make, for I did actually say it; and I was right, too, despite the apparent contradiction: for the first time he disturbed a charming tête-à-tête, and the second he came to the assistance of a conversation that was exhausted and running dry—on one side at least—and spared me for that day a tender scene that I was tired of acting.



That is the point at which we now are; it is a serious state of things, especially when one of the two is still in love and is clinging desperately to the remains of the other's love. I am in great perplexity. Although I am not in love with Rosette, I am very, very fond of her, and I should hate to do anything to cause her pain. I wish her to believe, as long as possible, that I love her.

In gratitude for all the hours to which she has lent wings, in gratitude for the love she has given me for pleasure, I wish it.—I shall deceive her; but is not pleasurable deceit preferable to painful truth?—for I shall never have the heart to tell her that I do not love her. The empty shadow of love on which she is feeding seems to her so adorable and so dear, she embraces the pale spectre with such rapture and effusion that I do not dare cause it to vanish; and, yet I am afraid that she will discover at last that it is only a phantom. This morning we had an interview which I propose to repeat in dramatic form for greater accuracy, and which makes me fear that I cannot prolong our liaison very long.

The scene is Rosette's bed. A sunbeam streams through the curtains: it is ten o'clock. Rosette has one arm under my neck and lies perfectly still for fear of waking me. From time to time she rises a little on her elbow and leans over my face, holding her breath. I see all this through my eyelashes, for I have been awake an hour. Rosette's night-dress has a neck ruffle of Malines lace which is all torn: it has been a stormy night; her hair protrudes in disorder from under her little cap. She is as pretty as a woman can be, when one doesn't love her and is lying in bed with her.

ROSETTE (*seeing that I am awake*).

Oh! sleepyhead!

I (*yawning*).

Ah-h-h!

ROSETTE.

Don't yawn like that or I won't kiss you for a week.

I.

Oh!

ROSETTE.

It seems, monsieur, that you don't care much whether I kiss you or not.

I.

Yes, I do.

ROSETTE.

How indifferently you say it!—All right; you can depend upon it that I won't touch you with the end of my lips for a week to come.—To-day is Tuesday: not till next Tuesday.

I.

Nonsense!

ROSETTE.

What's that? nonsense?

I.

Yes, nonsense! you'll kiss me before night, or I shall die.

ROSETTE.

You die! What a silly fellow!—I have spoiled you, monsieur.

I.

I shall live.—I am not silly and you have not spoiled me—quite the contrary. In the first place I demand the instant suppression of *monsieur*; I know you well enough for you to call me by my name and speak in the language of intimates.

ROSETTE.

I have spoiled you, D'Albert.

I.

Very good.—Now put your mouth over here.

ROSETTE.

No, next Tuesday.

I.

Well, well! has it come to this, that we exchange caresses, calendar in hand? We are both a little too young for that.—Come, your mouth, my child, or I shall get a crick in my neck.

ROSETTE.

No.

I.

Ah! you want me to force you, mignonne; *pardieu!* then I will force you. The thing is feasible, although perhaps it has never been done.

ROSETTE.

Impertinent!

I.

Notice, my lovely one, that I was courteous enough to say *perhaps*; that was very good of me.—But we are getting away from the subject. Put down your head. Hoity-toity! what is all this, my favorite sultana? and what means the sulky expression on your face? It is a pleasure to kiss a smile and not a pout.

ROSETTE. (*stooping to kiss me*).

How do you expect me to laugh? you say such harsh things to me!

I.

My purpose is to say very tender things to you. Why should I say harsh things?

ROSETTE.

I don't know; but you do say them.

I.

You mistake meaningless jests for harshness.

ROSETTE.

Meaningless! You call it meaningless, do you? everything has a meaning in love. I tell you I would rather have you beat me than laugh as you do.

I.

Then you would like to see me weep?

ROSETTE.

You always go from one extreme to the other. No one asks you to weep, but to talk reasonably and drop that tone of persiflage that becomes you so ill.

I.

It is impossible for me to talk reasonably and not joke; I'll beat you, if that's what you want!

ROSETTE.

Do it.

I (*giving her a little tap or two on the shoulder*).

I would rather cut off my own head than mar your adorable little body and make blue stripes on that lovely white back.—However much a woman may enjoy being beaten, my goddess, I swear that you shan't be.

ROSETTE.

You don't love me any more.

I.

That doesn't follow very logically from what precedes; it's almost as logical as to say: "It rains, so don't give me my umbrella;" or: "It's cold, open the window."

ROSETTE.

You don't love me, you have never loved me.

I.

Aha! the plot thickens; you don't love me any more and you have never loved me. That is rather contradictory; how can I cease to do a thing which I never began to do?—You see, my little queen, you don't know what you are saying and you are perfectly ridiculous.

ROSETTE.

I longed so to have you love me that I helped to deceive myself. It is easy to believe what one desires; but now I see that I am mistaken. You made a mistake yourself; you mistook liking for love and desire for passion. It's something that happens every day. I bear you no ill will for it: it wasn't your fault that you weren't in love with me; my own lack of charm is all that I have to blame. I ought to have been prettier, more playful, more of a flirt; I ought to have tried to rise to your level, O my poet! instead of trying to pull you down to mine: I was afraid of losing you among the clouds, and I dreaded lest your head should steal your heart from me. I imprisoned you in my love and I thought that, if I gave myself to you utterly, you would keep a little something of me—

I.

Move away a little, Rosette; your leg burns me—you're like a hot coal.

ROSETTE.

If I annoy you, I'll get up.—Ah! stony heart, drops of water pierce the stone, but my tears have no effect on you. (*She weeps*).

I.

If you weep like that, you will certainly make a bathtub of our bed.—A bathtub, did I say? an ocean.—Can you swim, Rosette?

ROSETTE.

Villain!

I.

Oho! now I am a villain! You flatter me, Rosette, I haven't that honor. I am a blithesome bourgeois, alas! and I have never committed the least crime; I have done a foolish thing, perhaps, in loving you to distraction; that is all.—Are you absolutely determined to make me repent that?—I have loved you and I love you now as much as I can. Since I have been your lover I have always walked in your shadow: I have given you all my time, my days and my nights. I have indulged in no high-flown phrases with you because I don't care for them except when they are written; but I have given you a thousand proofs of my affection. I won't speak of the most scrupulous fidelity, for that goes without saying; but I have lost a pound and three-quarters since you have been my mistress. What more do you want? Here I am in your bed; I was here yesterday, I shall be here to-morrow. Is that the way a man acts with a woman he doesn't love? I do whatever you want; you say: "Go," and I go; "stay," and I stay; I am the most admirable lover in the world, it seems to me.

ROSETTE.

That is just what I complain of—you are the most perfect lover in the world.

I.

What have you to reproach me for?

ROSETTE.

Nothing; and I would prefer to have some reason to complain of you.

I.

This is an extraordinary quarrel.

ROSETTE.

It's much worse than that.—You don't love me.—I can do nothing about it, nor can you.—What remedy have I for that? Certainly I would prefer to have something to forgive you for.—I would scold you; you would apologize as best you could and we should make up.

I.

That would be all clear gain for you. The greater the crime, the more imposing the reparation.

ROSETTE.

You know very well, monsieur, that I am not yet reduced to that, and that if I chose, at this moment, although you don't love me and we are quarrelling—

I.

Yes, I agree that it is purely the result of your kindness of heart.—Be a little kind now; that would be better than syllogizing over our heads as we are doing.

ROSETTE.

You want to cut short a conversation that embarrasses you; but by your leave, my good friend, we will be content with talking.

I.

That's a cheap repast.—I assure you that you are making a mistake, for you are distractingly pretty, and I have sensations.

ROSETTE.

Which you can describe some other time.

I.

Aha! my adorable, you have become a little Hyrcanian tigress, have you? your cruelty to-day is beyond words!—Have you been taken with the fever to set yourself up as a vestal? It would be an amusing whim.

ROSETTE.

Why not? stranger whims have been known; but this much is sure, I shall be a

vestal so far as you are concerned.—Understand, monsieur, that I give myself only to people who love me or who I think love me.—You are in neither position.—Allow me to rise.

I.

If you rise, I shall rise too.—You will have the trouble of going back to bed, that's all.

ROSETTE.

Let me go!

I.

*Pardieu*, no!

Rosette (*struggling*).

Oh! you shall let me go!

I.

I venture, madame, to assure you of the contrary.

ROSETTE (*seeing that she is not the stronger*).

All right! I will stay! you squeeze my arms so tight!—What do you want of me?

I.

I think you know.—I would not allow myself to put in words what I allow myself to do; I have too much respect for decency.

ROSETTE (*already beyond the power to defend herself*).

On condition that you will love me dearly—I surrender.

I.

It's a little late to strike your flag, when the enemy is already in the citadel.

ROSETTE (*half swooning, throwing her arms around my neck*).

Unconditionally. I rely on your generosity.

I.

You do well.

At this point, my dear friend, I think it would not be amiss to place a line of asterisks, for the rest of the dialogue could hardly be translated except by onomatopœia.

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The sunbeam has had time, since the opening of the scene, to make the tour of the bedroom. A pleasant, penetrating odor of linden-trees comes up from the garden. It is as beautiful a day as can be imagined; the sky is as blue as an Englishwoman's eye. We rise, and, after breakfasting with a good appetite, we take a long drive in the country. The clear air, the beauty of the landscape and the aspect of nature in her joyous mood instilled enough sentimentality and tenderness into my soul to make Rosette agree that, after all, I have something in the shape of a heart like other men.

Have you never noticed how the shade of the woods, the plashing of fountains, the singing of birds, a bright and laughing landscape, the odor of the leaves and flowers, all the paraphernalia of eclogues and descriptive poems which we have agreed to despise, none the less retain a secret influence over us, however depraved we may be, which it is impossible for us to resist? I will tell you in confidence, under seal of the most profound secrecy, that I surprised myself very recently in a most provincial state of emotion in connection with a nightingale's song. It was in D——'s garden; the sky, although it was night, was almost as bright as at noonday; it was so measureless and so transparent that one's glance easily penetrated to God. It seemed to me as if I could see the folds of the angels' robes on the white windings of the Milky Way. The moon had risen, but a great tree hid it completely; it riddled the dark foliage with a million little luminous holes and showered more spangles about than ever glittered upon a marchioness's fan. A silence laden with faint sounds and sighs filled the garden—perhaps this resembles pathos, but it is not my fault;—although I saw nothing save the bluish gleam of the moon, it seemed to me as if I were surrounded by a whole population of phantoms, unknown yet adored, and I had no feeling of loneliness, although there was no one but myself on the terrace.—I was not thinking, I was not dreaming, I was blended with my surroundings and I felt myself shiver with the foliage, glisten with the water, gleam with the moonbeams, bloom with the flowers; I was no more myself than the tree, the streamlet, or the four-o'clock. I was all of them at once, and I do not think it possible to be more thoroughly removed from one's self than I was at that moment. Suddenly, as if something extraordinary had happened, the leaf ceased to flutter at the end of the branch, the drop of water from the fountain remained suspended in the air and did not fall. The silvery thread, starting from the edge of the moon, stopped on the way; my heart alone beat with such resonance that it seemed to fill the whole vast space with clamor.—My heart ceased to beat and there was such a profound silence that you could have heard the grass grow, and a word spoken

in an undertone two hundred leagues away. And then the nightingale, who probably was awaiting that moment to begin his song, emitted from his little throat a note so shrill and piercing that I heard it with my breast no less than with my ears. The sound spread quickly through the crystalline expanse, until that moment as still as death, and created a harmonious atmosphere, wherein the other notes that followed it flew to and fro, flapping their wings.—I understood what he said as perfectly as if I had known the secret of the bird language. The story of the loves I have not found was what the nightingale sang. Never was a truer story told or told with greater fulness. He did not omit the smallest detail, the most imperceptible shade. He told me what I had not been able to tell myself, he explained what I had not been able to understand; he gave voice to my reverie and compelled the phantom, hitherto dumb, to reply. I knew that I was beloved, and a thrill most languorously drawn out informed me that I should soon be happy. It seemed to me that I could see the white arms of my beloved extended toward me through the trills and quavers of his song and beneath the shower of notes, in a moonbeam.

She rose slowly before me with the perfume of the heart of a hundred-petalled rose.—I will not try to describe her beauty. It is one of those things that words decline to attempt. How describe the indescribable? how paint that which has neither form nor color? how note down a voice without quality and speechless?—I have never had so much love in my heart; I would have pressed nature to my bosom, I embraced the empty void as if my arms were clasped about a virgin form; I kissed the air that blew upon my lips, I swam in the magnetic fluids that exhaled from my glowing body. Ah! if Rosette had been there, what adorable rhapsodies I would have indulged in! But women never know enough to arrive at the opportune moment.—The nightingale ceased to sing; the moon, who could keep awake no longer, pulled her cap of clouds over her eyes, and I left the garden; for the cool night air was beginning to make itself felt.

As I was cold, I naturally thought that I should be warmer in Rosette's bed than my own, and I went to lie with her.—I let myself in with my pass-key, for everybody in the house was asleep.—Rosette herself had fallen asleep, and I had the satisfaction of seeing that it was over a volume uncut, of my latest poems. She had both arms under her head, her mouth half open and smiling, one leg stretched out and the other partly curled up, in an attitude instinct with ease and grace; she was so lovely that I mortally regretted that I was no longer in love with her.

As I looked at her I reflected that I was as stupid as an ostrich. I had what I had so long desired, a mistress as entirely my own as my horse and my sword, young, pretty, amorous and clever; with no stern-principled mother, no father with a decoration, no cross-grained aunt, no swaggering brother, and with the priceless advantage of a husband duly sealed and nailed up in a fine oaken casket lined with lead, the whole covered over with a large block of hewn granite, which is not to be despised; for, after all, it is a very doubtful pleasure to be caught in the act in the middle of a blissful paroxysm, and to complete one's sensations on the pavement, after describing an arc of 40 to 45 degrees, according to the floor on which you happen to be;—a mistress as free as the mountain air and rich enough to indulge in the most exquisite refinements and luxuries, and, moreover, free from anything like moral ideas, never talking about her virtue as she tries a new posture, nor of her reputation, any more than if she had never had one; with no intimate female friends, and despising all women almost as much as if she were a man, entertaining a very low opinion of platonic affection and making no secret of it, and always playing with her heart in the game; a woman who, if her lines had fallen in another sphere, would indubitably have become the most admirable courtesan on earth and dimmed the glory of the Aspasia and Imperia!

Now, that woman, so made, was mine. I did what I chose with her; I had the key to her room and her drawer; I broke the seals of her letters; I had taken away her name and given her another. She was my chattel, my property. Her youth, her beauty, her love, all belonged to me; I used them, I abused them. I made her go to bed in the daytime and sit up at night, if the whim seized me, and she obeyed simply, without any affectation of making a sacrifice, and without assuming the air of a resigned victim.—She was attentive, caressing, and—a most extraordinary thing!—absolutely faithful; that is to say, if in the days when I was lamenting that I had no mistress, six months ago, any one had given me a glimpse of such happiness, even in the distant future, I should have gone mad with joy and tossed my hat up to knock at the gates of heaven, in token of my delight. And now that I have that happiness, I am cold; I am hardly conscious that I have it, I am *not* conscious of it, and my present position makes so little impression upon me that I often doubt if I have changed my position at all. If I should leave Rosette, I am convinced in my inmost soul that, at the end of a month, perhaps less, I should have so thoroughly and carefully forgotten her, that I shouldn't know whether I had ever known her or not! Would she do the same? I think not.

I reflected, as I say, upon all these things, and impelled by a sort of repentant feeling, I deposited on the fair sleeper's brow that most chaste and melancholy kiss that ever young man bestowed upon young woman—just on the stroke of midnight. She moved slightly, the smile about her mouth became a little more pronounced, but she did not wake. I undressed slowly, and, creeping under the clothes, stretched myself out by her side like a snake. The coolness of my body startled her; she opened her eyes, and, without speaking, put her mouth to mine and twined herself about me so completely that I was warmed in less than no time at all. All the poetry of the evening changed to prose, but to poetic prose at all events. That night was one of the sweetest sleepless nights I ever passed. I can hope for no more such.

We still have pleasurable moments, but they must be led up to and prepared for by some outside incident like this, and in the beginning I did not need to have my imagination excited by gazing at the moon and listening to the nightingale, in order to have all the pleasure one can have when one is not really in love. There are as yet no broken threads in our woof, but there are knots here

and there, and the chain is not nearly so smooth as it was.

Rosette, who is still in love, does what she can to avert all these inconveniences. Unfortunately there are two things in the world that cannot be guided: love and ennui.—For my own part I make superhuman efforts to conquer the drowsiness that steals over me in spite of myself, and like the provincials who fall asleep at ten o'clock in Parisian salons, I keep my eyes as wide open as possible and hold up my eyelids with my fingers!—nothing serves the purpose and I take conjugal liberties that are most unpalatable.

The dear child, who found the rural expedition so successful the other day, took me off to her country estate yesterday.

It would not be out of place, perhaps, to give you a little description of the aforesaid estate, which is very attractive; it will lighten up all this metaphysics a little, and then, too, we must have a background for the characters, and figures will not stand out in relief against an empty void, or against the vague shade of brown with which painters fill up the field of their canvas.

The approach is very picturesque.—Driving through a broad avenue, lined with venerable trees, you come to a star, the centre of which is marked by a stone obelisk surmounted by a sphere of gilded copper: five roads form the points of the star. Then the land suddenly descends. The road plunges down into a narrow valley, with a small stream flowing at the bottom, which is crossed by a bridge of a single span; then, ascends the opposite slope, where the village lies, whose slated church-tower can be seen among the thatched roofs and the rounded tops of the apple-trees. The view is not very extensive, for it is limited on both sides by the crest of the hill, but it is bright and pleasant and rests the eye.—Beside the bridge there is a mill and a tower-shaped structure built of red stone: almost incessant barking and the sight of a brach-hound or two and some young terriers with crooked legs warming themselves in the sun before the door, would inform you that it was the head-keeper's abode, if the buzzards and martens nailed to the shutters could leave you for a moment in doubt. At that point an avenue of sorb-trees begins; the red berries attract clouds of birds; as there is little passing, there is only a band of white in the middle of the road; all the rest is covered with short, fine moss, and, in the double rut made by carriage wheels, little grasshoppers, as green as emeralds, buzz and hop about.

After driving some little distance along this avenue you come to a painted iron fence, with gilt trimmings, and bristling with spikes and *chevaux de frise*. Thence the road leads to the château—which is still invisible, for it is buried in verdure like a bird in its nest—but its progress is leisurely and it frequently turns aside to visit a brook and a fountain, a dainty summer-house or a point from which a fine view can be had, crossing and recrossing the stream over Chinese or rustic bridges. The inequality of the land and the dams built for the purposes of the mill cause several waterfalls some four or five feet in height, and you can imagine nothing more delightful than to hear the splashing of all these cascades close beside you, but generally out of sight, for the osiers and elders that line the bank form an almost impenetrable curtain. But all that part of the park is, so to speak, only the antechamber of the other part: unfortunately, a public highway passes through the estate and cuts it in two, a drawback for which a very ingenious remedy has been devised. Two high crenelated walls, provided with barbicans and loopholes in imitation of a ruined fortress, stand on each side of the road; connected with a tower on the château side, completely covered by gigantic ivy plants, is a genuine drawbridge which is lowered every morning, by iron chains, upon the opposite bastion. You drive through a lovely ogive archway inside the tower, and thence into the second enclosure, where the trees, which have not been cut for more than a century, are of extraordinary height, with gnarled trunks swathed in parasitic plants—the handsomest and most curious trees I have ever seen. Some have leaves only at the very top like broad umbrellas; others taper toward the top like plumes; others, on the contrary, have a large tuft of foliage near the bottom, from which the naked trunk rises toward the sky like a second tree planted in the first; you would say it was the foreground of a landscape painting or flies painted for a scene on the stage, the trees are so curiously misshapen;—ivies that reach from one to another and hug them so tight as to choke them, mingle their dark hearts with the green leaves and seem like their shadow. Nothing can be more picturesque. The stream widens at that spot, so as to form a little lake, and it is so shallow that you can see, through the transparent water, the lovely aquatic plants that carpet its bed. There are nymphæas and lotuses swimming nonchalantly in the purest crystal with the reflection of the clouds and the weeping-willows that lean over the bank: the château is on the other side, and yonder little skiff, painted apple-green and bright red, will save you a long detour to the bridge. The château is a collection of buildings built at different periods with gables of unequal heights and a multitude of little turrets. One ell is of brick with stone trimmings; another portion is in the rustic style, with quantities of excrescences and vermiculated work. Another ell is entirely modern; it has a flat Italian roof with vases and a tile balustrade, and a canvas porch in the shape of a tent. The windows are all of different sizes and do not correspond; there are some of all styles, even the trefoil and ogive, for the chapel is Gothic. Certain parts are trellised, like Chinese houses, with trellises painted different colors, covered with climbing honeysuckle, jasmin, nasturtiums, and virgin's bower, whose tendrils look familiarly in at the chamber windows and seem to put out their hands to you as they say good-morning.

Despite this lack of regularity, or rather because of it, it is a fascinating structure; at least, one does not see it all at a single glance; there is an opportunity for choice and one is always on the lookout for something one has not seen.

This château, with which I was not familiar, for it is twenty leagues from town, pleased me immensely at first sight, and I was extremely grateful to Rosette for conceiving the admirable idea of selecting such a nest for our love.

We arrived just at nightfall; and, as we were tired, after eating a hearty supper there was nothing we were so anxious to do as to go to bed—in separate rooms, mind you, for we intended to sleep in good earnest.

I was dreaming some rose-colored dream, full of flowers and sweet perfumes and birds, when I felt a warm breath on my forehead and a kiss descend upon it with quivering wings. A slight smacking of the lips and a pleasant moisture on the spot breathed upon led me to think that I was not dreaming: I opened my eyes and the first thing I saw was Rosette's cool, white neck, as she leaned over the bed to kiss me. I threw my arms around her waist and returned her kiss more passionately than I had done for a long while.

She went and drew the curtain and opened the window, then returned and sat on the edge of my bed, holding my hand in hers and playing with my rings. Her costume was marked by the most coquettish simplicity. She was without corsets or skirt, and had absolutely nothing on save a lawn *peignoir* as white as milk, very ample and full; her hair was held in place on top of her head by a little white rose of the sort that has only three or four petals; her ivory feet were encased in embroidered slippers of brilliant, diversified colors, as small as they possibly could be, although they were too large for her, and without quarterings like those of the young Roman dames. I regretted, when I saw her so, that I was already her lover and hadn't the prospect still before me.



Chapter IV — She went and drew the curtain and opened the window, then returned and sat on the edge of my bed, holding my hand in hers and playing with my rings. Her costume was marked by the most coquettish simplicity.

The dream I was dreaming at the moment that she waked me in such pleasant fashion was not very far removed from the reality.—My chamber looked on the little lake I described just now. The window was surrounded by jasmin, which shook its stars over my floor in a silvery shower: large, exotic flowers swayed in the wind under my balcony as if to waft incense up to me; a vague, sweet perfume, composed of a thousand different perfumes, penetrated to my bed, from which I could see the water gleaming and flashing with millions of spangles; the birds chattered

and warbled and whistled and chirped; it was a confusion of harmonious sounds like the hum and buzz of a fête.—Opposite, on a hill-side lying in the sunlight, was a smooth field of a golden green, with fat cattle feeding here and there, under the care of a small boy.—Higher up the hill and farther away were great patches of forest of a darker green, above which the bluish smoke of charcoal-kilns rose in spiral columns.

Every detail of the picture was calm and fresh and smiling, and wherever I turned my eyes, I saw only what was young and fair. My chamber was hung with chintz, with mats on the floor, and blue Japanese jars with rounded bodies and tapering necks, filled with strange flowers, artistically arranged on étagères and on the dark-blue marble chimney-piece; the fire-place also was filled with flowers. Panels above the doors, representing rural or pastoral scenes, brightly-colored and daintily executed, sofas and divans in every nook and corner—and a lovely young woman, all in white, whose flesh gave a delicate pink tinge to the transparent dress where it came in contact with it: one can conceive nothing better calculated to give pleasure to the soul as well as to the eyes.

And so my gratified, careless glance wandered, with equal pleasure, from a magnificent jar thickly strewn with dragons and mandarins, to Rosette's slipper, and thence to the corner of her shoulder that glistened under the lawn; it rested on the fluttering stars of the jasmin and the white hairs of the willows on the bank, crossed the water and sauntered over the hill-side, then returned to the chamber to fix itself on the rose-colored ribbons of some shepherdess's long corset.

Through the openings in the foliage the sky showed millions of blue eyes; the water rippled gently and I gave myself up to the enjoyment of the moment, plunged in blissful tranquillity, saying nothing, with my hand still in Rosette's tiny hands.

It is of no use to talk: happiness is white and pink; it can hardly be represented otherwise. Delicate colors belong to it as of right. It has on its palette only sea-green, sky-blue and light yellow: its pictures are all light like those of the Chinese painters. Flowers, bright light, perfumes, a soft and velvety skin touching yours, a veiled melody coming from you know not where,—with those one can be perfectly happy; there is no way of being happy otherwise. I myself, who have a horror of the commonplace, who dream only of strange adventures, violent passions, frenzied bliss, unusual and difficult situations, I must be happy like an animal in that way, and, whatever I may do, I can find no other.

I beg you to believe that I made none of these reflections at the time; they have come to me since as I sat here writing to you; at that moment I thought of nothing but enjoying myself—the only occupation of a reasonable man.

I will not describe the life we lead here, it is easily imagined. There are walks under the great trees, violets and strawberries, kisses and little blue flowers, luncheons on the grass, readings and books forgotten under the trees; water parties with the end of a scarf or a white hand dipping in the stream, long ballads and long laughter repeated by the echoes of the bank;—the most Arcadian life imaginable!

Rosette overwhelms me with caresses and little attentions; more amorous than the dove in May, she twines about me and envelops me in her folds; she tries to let me breathe no other atmosphere than her breath and see no other horizon than her eyes; she maintains a very strict blockade and allows nothing to go in or out without permission; she has built a little guard-house beside my heart, from which she keeps watch on it night and day.—She says delightful things to me; she makes very complimentary speeches; she sits on my knee and acts in my presence exactly like a submissive slave before her lord and master; all of which suits me very well, for I like such little humble ways and I have a leaning toward Oriental despotism; she doesn't do the smallest thing without asking my opinion, and seems to have completely laid aside her own fancy and her will; she tries to divine my thought and anticipate it; she crushes me with her wit, her affection and her submission; she is perfect enough to throw out of the window.—How in the devil can I leave a woman so adorable without seeming to be a monster? It would be enough to discredit my heart forever.

Oh! how I would like to catch her tripping, to find some grievance against her! how impatiently I await an opportunity for a quarrel! but there is no danger that the hussy will give me one! When I speak sharply to her, in a harsh tone, to bring about a quarrel, she answers me so sweetly, in such a silvery voice, with her eyes swimming in tears, and such a sad, loving expression, that I seem to myself to be more than a tiger, or at least a crocodile, and, inwardly raging, I am forced to ask her pardon.

She is literally murdering me with love; she puts me to the question and every day she draws closer the planks between which I am caught. She probably wants to drive me to tell her that I detest her, that she bores me to death, and that, if she doesn't leave me in peace, I will slash her face with my hunting crop. Pardieu! she will succeed, and if she continues to be as amiable, it will be before long or may the devil carry me off!

Notwithstanding all this fine show, Rosette is surfeited with me as I am with her; but as she has done some notoriously foolish things for me, she doesn't want to take to herself the discredit of a rupture in the eyes of the excellent corporation of sensible women. Every great passion claims to be everlasting, and it is very convenient to assume the credit of that everlastingness without suffering its disadvantages.—Rosette reasons thus:—"Here is a young man who has hardly a vestige of fondness left for me, and, as he is simple-minded and easy-going, he doesn't dare show it openly and doesn't know which way to turn: it is plain that I bore him, but he will wear his life



out in the toils rather than take it on himself to leave me. As he is a poet after a fashion, he has his head full of fine phrases about love and passion, and considers himself bound in conscience to be a Tristan or an Amadis. Now, as nothing in the world is more insupportable than the caresses of a person one is beginning not to love—and to cease to love a woman is to hate her intensely—I propose to lavish them on him in a way to sicken him, and the result will be either that he will send me to the devil or will begin to love me again as he did on the first day, which he will take very good care not to do."

No reasoning could be better.—Isn't it charming to play the part of the abandoned Ariadne?—People pity you and admire you, and there are no imprecations strong enough for the infamous wretch who has been so inhuman as to abandon such an adorable creature; you assume an air of grieved resignation, you put your hand under your chin and your elbow on your knee so as to show off the pretty blue veins in your wrist. You wear your hair more dishevelled, and your dresses for some little time are of soberer hue. You avoid mentioning the ingrate's name, but you make roundabout allusions to him, at the same time heaving beautifully modulated little sighs.

A woman so good, so beautiful, so passionate, who has made such great sacrifices, who has done nothing worthy of blame, a chosen vessel, a pearl of love, a spotless mirror, a drop of milk, a white rose, an ideal essence to perfume a life;—a woman whom you should have adored on your knees, and who will have to be cut in little pieces after her death, to make relics:—such a woman to be abandoned iniquitously, villainously, fraudulently! Why a pirate would do no worse! To give her her death-blow!—for she certainly will die of it.—One must have a paving-stone in his breast, instead of a heart, to act so.

O men! men!

I say this to myself, but perhaps it's not true.

However great actresses women naturally are, I find it hard to believe that they carry it as far as that; and, when all is said, are all Rosette's demonstrations simply the exact expression of her sentiments for me?—However it may be, the continuation of the tête-à-tête is impossible, and the fair chatelaine has at last issued invitations to her acquaintances in the neighborhood. We are busily engaged making preparations to receive the worthy provincials.—Adieu, my dear fellow.

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## V

I was mistaken.—My evil heart, incapable of love, seized upon that reason to deliver itself from the burden of a gratitude it did not wish to bear; I joyfully grasped that idea to excuse myself to my own conscience; I clung fast to it, but nothing could be farther from the truth. Rosette was not playing a part, and if ever woman was true, she is the woman.—Ah! well! I am almost angry with her for the sincerity of her passion, which is an additional bond and makes a rupture more difficult or less excusable; I would prefer her to be false and fickle.

What an extraordinary position! You long to go, but you stay; you long to say: "I hate you," but you say: "I love you;"—your past urges you forward and prevents you from turning back or stopping. You are faithful and you regret it. An indefinable sense of shame prevents your abandoning yourself altogether to other acquaintances and leads you to compromise with yourself. You give to one all you can steal from the other and at the same time keep up appearances; the opportunities for meeting which formerly came about so naturally are very hard to find to-day.—You begin to remember that you have business of importance.—Such a perplexing situation as that is very painful, but it is much less so than my present situation.—When it is a new friendship that steals you from the old, it is easier to extricate yourself. Hope smiles sweetly upon you from the threshold of the house that contains your new-born love.—A fairer and rosier illusion hovers on its white wings over the scarce-closed tomb of its sister who has died; another flower, blooming more radiantly and of sweeter perfume, upon whose petals trembles a celestial tear, has suddenly sprung forth from among the withered calyxes of the old bouquet;—lovely, azure-hued perspectives open before you; avenues of fresh and unpretentious beeches stretch away to the horizon; there are gardens with white statues here and there, or a bench against an ivy-covered wall, lawns dotted with marguerites, narrow balconies, on whose rails you lean and gaze at the moon, and shadows cut by fleeting rays of light;—salons from which the daylight is excluded by heavy curtains;—all the darkness and isolation that the passion craves which dares not avow itself. It is as if your youth had come again. You have, moreover, a complete change of haunts and habits and persons; you feel a sort of remorse, to be sure; but the desire that flutters and hums about your head, like a bee in spring, prevents your hearing its voice; the void in your heart is filled and your memories are effaced by present impressions,—But in my case it is different: I love no one and it is from weariness and disgust with myself rather than with her that I wish I were able to break with Rosette.

My former ideas, which had become a little indistinct in my mind, are coming to the front again, more foolish than ever.—I am, as formerly, tortured by the longing to have a mistress, and, as formerly, even in Rosette's arms I doubt whether I have ever had one.—I see once more the lovely lady at her window, in her park of the time of Louis XIII., and the huntress on her white horse gallops along the forest path.—My ideal beauty smiles upon me from her hammock of clouds, I fancy that I recognize her voice in the song of the birds, in the rustling of the foliage; it seems to me that some one is calling me from every direction, and that the daughters of the air brush my face with the fringe of their invisible scarfs. As in the days of my agitation, I imagine

that, if I should set out instantly and go somewhere very far away at great speed, I should reach some place where things that concern me are taking place and where my destiny is being decided.—I feel that somebody is impatiently awaiting my coming in some corner of the earth, I don't know where. Some suffering soul who cannot come to me is calling eagerly to me and dreaming of me; that is the reason of my uneasiness and of my inability to remain in one place; I am being violently drawn away from my centre. Mine is not one of those natures to which others flock, one of those fixed stars about which other radiant bodies gravitate; I must needs wander through the expanse of heaven like an erratic meteor, until I have fallen in with the planet whose satellite I am to be, the Saturn about whom I am to pass my ring. Oh! when will that union take place? Until then I cannot hope for rest or peace of mind, but I shall be like the bewildered, vacillating needle of a compass, seeking its pole.

I allowed my wing to be caught in the deceitful snare, hoping to leave only a feather there and to retain the power to fly away when it seemed good to me: nothing could be more difficult; I find myself covered by an invisible net, harder to break than the one forged by Vulcan, and the mesh is so fine and close that there are no openings through which I can escape. The net is large and roomy, however, and I can move about in it with an appearance of freedom; it is hardly perceptible except when you try to break it; but then it resists and becomes as firm as a wall of brass.

How much time I have lost, O my ideal! without the slightest effort to realize thee! How basely I have yielded to the temptation of a night's pleasure! and how little I deserve to meet thee!

Sometimes I think of forming another liaison; but I have no one in view; more frequently I make up my mind that, if I succeed in bringing about a rupture, I will never again involve myself in such bonds, and yet there is nothing to justify that resolution, for the present connection has been, to all appearance, a very happy one and I have no reason in the world for complaining of Rosette.—She has always been kind to me, and has behaved as well as any one could; she has been exemplarily faithful to me and has not given an opening for suspicion; the most alert and most anxious jealousy could have had no word of blame for her and must have slept in security.—A jealous man could have been jealous only of the past; in that direction, it is true, there was ample ground for jealousy. But luckily, jealousy of that sort is a very rare article, and one has quite enough to do to look after the present without going back to fumble under the ashes of extinct passion for phials of poison and cups of gall.—What woman could a man love, if he thought of all that?—You may have a sort of vague idea that a woman has had several lovers before you; but you say to yourself—a man's pride has so many tortuous folds and counterfolds!—that you are the first she has really loved, and that it was through a combination of fatal circumstances that she became connected with men unworthy of her, or else through a vague craving of a heart that sought to satisfy itself and changed because it had not met its affinity.

Perhaps one can really love none but a virgin—a virgin in body and in mind—a fragile bud that has never been caressed as yet by any zephyr and whose carefully hidden breast has neither received the drop of rain nor the pearl of dew; a chaste flower that displays its white robe for you alone, a beautiful lily with a silver urn at which no desire has slaked its thirst and which has been gilded only by your sun, swayed by no breath but yours, watered by no hand but yours.—The glare of the noonday sun is less agreeable than the divine pallor of the dawn, and all the ardor of an experienced heart that knows what life is, yields the palm to the celestial ignorance of a youthful heart just awaking to love.—Ah! what a bitter, degrading thought it is that you are wiping away another's kisses, that there may not be a single spot upon that brow, those lips, that bosom, those shoulders, that whole body which is yours now, that has not been reddened and branded by other lips; that those divine murmurs which come to the relief of the tongue that can find no more words of love, have been heard before; that those excited senses did not learn their ecstasy and their delirium from you, and that away, away down in one of those recesses of the heart which are never visited, there lives an inexorable memory which compares the joys of an earlier day to the joys of to-day!

Although my natural nonchalance leads me to prefer the high roads to unbroken paths, and the public watering-trough to the mountain spring, I absolutely must try to love some virginal creature as spotless as the snow, as timid as the sensitive plant, who can only blush and look down; it may be that, from that limpid stream, which no diver has as yet investigated, I shall fish up a pearl of the fairest water, worthy to be a pendant to Cleopatra's; but, in order to do that, I should have to cast off the bond that binds me to Rosette,—for I am not likely to realize that longing with her,—and to tell the truth, I do not feel strong enough to do it.

And then, too, if I must make the confession, there is at the bottom of my heart a secret, shameful motive, which dares not show itself in broad daylight, but which I must tell you of, since I have promised to conceal nothing from you, and a confession, to be deserving of credit, must be complete;—the motive I speak of has much to do with all this uncertainty.—If I break with Rosette, some time must necessarily pass before her place is filled, however easy of access the class of women may be among whom I shall seek her successor; and I have fallen into a habit of enjoying myself with her which it will be hard for me to break off. To be sure I have the resource of courtesans; I liked them well enough in the old days and I did not hesitate to resort to them under such circumstances;—but to-day they disgust me beyond measure and make me ill.—So I must not think of them, and I am so softened by indulgence, the poison has penetrated so deep into my bones that I cannot bear the idea of being one or two months without a woman.—That is pure egoism of the basest kind; but it is my opinion that the most virtuous men, if they would be perfectly frank, would have to make nearly a similar confession.

That is the true secret of my captivity and, if it weren't for that, Rosette and I would long ago

have fallen out for good and all. Indeed it is such a deathly bore to pay court to a woman, that I haven't the heart to attempt it. To begin again the charming idiocies I have already said so many times, to play the adorable once more, to write notes and reply to them; to escort the charmer, in the evening, to some place two leagues away; to catch cold in your feet and your head standing in front of the window watching a beloved shadow; to sit upon a sofa calculating how many thicknesses of tissue separate you from your goddess; to carry bouquets and go the round of the ball-rooms to reach the point where I now am, is a vast deal of trouble!—It's about as well to remain in one's rut.—What is the use of leaving it, only to fall into another exactly like it, after much unnecessary agitation and untold trouble? If I were in love, the thing would go of itself and it would all seem perfectly delightful to me; but I am not, although I have the most earnest desire to be; for, after all, there is nothing but love in the world; and if pleasure, which is only its shadow, has so many allurements for us, what must the reality be? In what an ocean of ineffable bliss, in what seas of pure, unalloyed delight must they swim whose hearts Love has pierced with one of his gold-tipped arrows, and who burn with the delicious warmth of a mutual flame!

Beside Rosette I feel that insipid tranquillity, that sort of slothful well-being which results from the satisfaction of the senses, but nothing more; and that is not enough. Often that voluptuous indolence turns to torpor, and that tranquillity to ennui; thereupon I fall into aimless meditation and dull, spiritless reveries that weary and harass me;—it is a state of things that I must put an end to at any price.

Oh! if I could only be like some of my friends, who kiss an old glove with ecstasy; who are made perfectly happy by a clasp of the hand; who would not exchange for a sultana's jewel-case a few wretched flowers half-withered by the heat of the ball-room; who cover with tears and sew into their shirt, where it will rest against the heart, a note written in an inelegant style and so stupid that you would think it was copied from the *Parfait Secrétaire*; who adore women with large feet and apologize for them on the ground that they have noble souls! If I could follow tremblingly the vanishing folds of a dress, or wait for a door to open in order to see a cherished white apparition pass in a blaze of light; if a word spoken beneath the breath would make me change color; if I had the virtue to go without my dinner so as to arrive sooner at a rendezvous; if I were capable of killing a rival or fighting a duel with a husband; if by a special dispensation of Providence, I were endowed with the power of considering ugly women clever, and those who are ugly and stupid as well, pleasant and agreeable; if I could make up my mind to dance the minuet and to listen to sonatas played by young ladies on the harpsichord or harp; if my capacity should rise to the height of learning ombre and *reversis*; in short, if I were a man and not a poet—I certainly should be much happier than I am; I should be less bored myself and should bore others less.

I have never asked but one thing of women—beauty; I am very willing to go without intellect and soul.—In my eyes a beautiful woman is always intellectual;—she knows enough to be beautiful, and I know no other knowledge as valuable as that.—It takes many sparkling sentences and keen shafts of wit to equal the value of the flash of a lovely eye. I prefer a pretty mouth to a pretty speech, and a well-modeled shoulder to a virtue, even one of the theological sort; I would give fifty souls for a dainty foot, and all poetry and all the poets for the hand of Joanna of Aragon, or the brow of Foligno's virgin.—Above all things I adore a beautiful figure; to my mind beauty is manifest Divinity, palpable happiness, heaven come down to earth.—There are certain undulations of outline, certain turns of the lip, a certain droop of the eyelids, certain inclinations of the head, certain elongations of the profile which enchant me beyond all expression and fix my attention for whole hours.

Beauty, the only thing that cannot be acquired, inaccessible forever to those who haven't it at first; an ephemeral and fragile flower that grows without being sown, a pure gift from heaven!—O beauty, the most radiant diadem with which chance can crown the human brow—thou art admirable and precious like everything that is beyond man's reach, like the azure of the firmament, like the gold of the star, like the perfume of the seraphic lily!—Man may change his stool for a throne, may conquer the world; many have done it; but who could fail to kneel before thee, thou pure personification of God's thoughts?

I ask only beauty, it is true; but I must have beauty so perfect that I probably shall never find it. I have seen here and there women who were admirably beautiful in some respects but only mediocre in others, and I have loved them for what was best in them, ignoring the rest; it is a difficult task, however, and painful, to suppress thus the half of one's mistress, and to amputate mentally the ugly or commonplace portions of her anatomy, limiting one's glances to what points of beauty she may have.—Beauty is harmony, and a woman who is equally ugly in all parts is often less disagreeable to look at than one who is unevenly beautiful. Nothing offends my sight so much as an unfinished masterpiece, or beauty in which something is lacking; a grease-spot is less offensive upon coarse sackcloth than upon rich silk.

Rosette is not ill-favored; she might be considered beautiful, but she is far from realizing the ideal of my dreams; she is a statue, several portions of which have been completed. The others are not so sharply cut from the block; there are some parts brought out with much skill and charm, and others more carelessly and hurriedly. To ordinary eyes the statue seems entirely completed and perfectly beautiful; but a more careful observer soon discovers places where the work is not close enough, and outlines which need to be touched and retouched many times by the workman's nail before attaining the purity that belongs to them;—it is for love to polish the marble and complete it, which is equivalent to saying that I shall not be the one to do it.

However, I do not confine beauty to this or that particular form or contour.—The manner, the gesture, the gait, the breath, the coloring, the voice, the perfume, everything that is a part of life enters into the composition of beauty in my estimation; everything that sings or shines or

perfumes the air is rightfully a part of beauty.—I love rich brocades, gorgeous stuffs with their ample and stately folds; I love great flowers and jars of perfume, transparent running water and the gleaming surface of fine weapons, blooded horses and the great white dogs that we see in Paul Veronese's pictures. I am a genuine heathen in that respect, and I do not adore misshapen gods;—although I am not at heart exactly what is called irreligious, there are few who are in fact worse Christians than myself. I do not understand the mortification of the flesh that forms the essence of Christianity, I consider it a sacrilegious act to lay hands upon God's work, and I do not believe that the flesh is wicked, since He Himself moulded it with His own fingers and in His own image. I think but little of the long sober-hued frocks from which only a head and two hands emerge, or of the pictures in which everything is drowned in shadow except some one radiant brow. I want the sun to shine everywhere, to have as much light and as little shadow as possible, the bright colors to gleam, the lines to undulate, the nude body to exhibit itself proudly and the flesh not to lie hidden, since it, as well as the spirit, is a never-ending hymn to the praise of God.

I can understand perfectly the wild enthusiasm of the Greeks for beauty; and for my part I can see nothing absurd in the law that compelled the judges to listen to the arguments of the lawyers in some dark place, lest their noble bearing, the grace of their gestures and attitudes should prejudice the judges in their favor and throw undue weight into the scales.

I would buy nothing of an ugly shopwoman; I give alms more freely to beggars whose rags and emaciation have a touch of the picturesque. There is a little fever-ridden Italian, as green as an unripe lemon, with great black and white eyes that take up half of his face;—you would say he was an unframed Murillo or Espagnolet exposed for sale on the sidewalk by a second-hand dealer:—he always gets two sous more than the others. I would never whip a handsome horse or a handsome dog, and I would not care for a friend or a servant who is not pleasant to look at.—It is downright torture to me to look at ugly things or ugly people.—Bad taste in architecture, a piece of furniture of ugly shape, prevent my enjoying myself in a house, however comfortable and attractive it may otherwise be. The best wine seems to me almost sour in an ungraceful glass, and I confess that I would prefer the most unsubstantial broth on one of Bernard of Palissy's enamelled plates to the most toothsome game on an earthen platter.—The exterior of things has always exerted a powerful influence upon me, and that is why I avoid the society of old men; they irritate me and affect me disagreeably because they are wrinkled and deformed, although some of them have some special beauty; and in the pity that I feel for them there is much disgust;—of all earthly ruins, the ruin of man is assuredly the saddest to contemplate.

If I were a painter—and I have always regretted that I am not—I should people my canvases with none but goddesses, madonnas, nymphs, cherubim, and loves. To devote one's brush to painting portraits, unless of beautiful people, seems to me a crime against the majesty of the art; and, far from seeking to duplicate those mean or ugly faces, those insignificant or vulgar heads, I should incline toward ordering the originals to be cut off. The ferocity of Caligula, if diverted in that direction, would seem to me almost praiseworthy.

The only thing on earth that I have desired with any constancy, is to be beautiful.—By beautiful, I mean as beautiful as Paris or Apollo. To have no deformity, to have features almost regular, that is to say, to have the nose in the centre of the face and neither flat nor hooked, eyes that are neither red nor bloodshot, a mouth of suitable dimensions, is not to be beautiful: on that theory I should be, and I consider myself as far removed from my ideal of virile beauty as if I were one of the puppets that strike the hour on church-bells; if I had a mountain on each shoulder, the crooked legs of a terrier and the muzzle of a monkey, I should resemble it as closely. Often and often I sit and look at myself in the mirror, for hours at a time, with incredible fixity and close scrutiny, to see if my face has not improved in some degree; I wait for the outlines to make a movement and straighten out or take on a more graceful and purer curve, for my eye to brighten and swim in a more sparkling fluid, for the hollow that separates my forehead from my nose to fill up, and for my profile thus to become as simple and regular as the Greek profile; and I am always greatly surprised that it does not happen. I am always in hopes that some spring or autumn I shall cast off my present shape as a serpent casts his old skin.—To think that I need so little to be handsome and that I never shall be! What! half a hair's breadth, the hundredth or the thousandth part of a hair's breadth more or less in one place or another, a little less flesh on this bone, a little more on that—a painter or sculptor would have it all arranged in half an hour. What was it that made the atoms of which I am composed crystallize in this way or that? Why need that outline bulge out here and sink in there, and why was it necessary that I should be thus and not otherwise?—Upon my word if I had chance by the throat, I believe I would strangle him.—Because it pleased a vile mass of I don't know what to fall from I don't know where and coagulate stupidly into the awkward creature that I visibly am, I shall be miserable forever! Isn't it the most absurd and pitiful thing in the world? How is it that my soul, although eagerly longing to do so, cannot let the poor carcass that it now holds erect, fall prostrate, and enter into and animate one of those statues whose exquisite beauty saddens and ravishes it? There are two or three people whom it would give me the greatest pleasure to assassinate, taking care, however, not to bruise or mar them, if I knew the word by which souls are made to pass from one to another.—It has always seemed to me that, in order to do what I wish—and I don't know what I do wish—I needed very great and perfect beauty, and I fancy that if I had had it, my life, which is so entangled and harassed, would have been just the same.

We see so many lovely faces in pictures!—why is not one of them mine?—so many charming faces disappearing under the dust and decay of time in the recesses of old galleries! Would it not be better for them to leave their frames and bloom anew on my shoulders? Would Raphaël's reputation suffer greatly if one of the angels whom he drew in swarms flying about in the deep

blue of his pictures, should turn his mask over to me for thirty years? There are so many parts of his frescoes, and among them some of the most beautiful, that have scaled off and fallen because of their age! No one would notice. What have the silent beauties to do that hang around those walls, and at whom men scarcely cast an absent-minded glance? and why has not God or chance the wit to do what a man does with a few hairs stuck in the end of a stick and pigments of different colors mixed together on a board?

My first sensation before one of those marvellous faces whose painted glance seems to look through you and into infinite space beyond, is profound amazement and admiration not unmixed with terror: tears fill my eyes, my heart beats fast; then, when I have become a little accustomed to it and have penetrated farther into the secret of its beauty, I mentally draw a comparison between it and myself; deep down in my soul jealousy writhes in knots more intricate than a viper's, and it is with the utmost difficulty that I refrain from throwing myself upon the canvas and tearing it in pieces.

To be beautiful, that is to say, to have in yourself such a charm that every one smiles upon you and welcomes you; that every one is prepossessed in your favor and inclined to be of your opinion, even before you have spoken; that you have only to pass through a street or show yourself on a balcony to raise up friends or mistresses for yourself in the crowd. To have no need to be lovable in order to be loved, to be exempt from all the expenditure of wit and complaisance which ugliness makes incumbent upon you, and to be excused from having the thousand and one moral qualities that one must have to supplement physical beauty—what a superb, magnificent gift!

And he who should combine supreme strength with supreme beauty, who, beneath Antinous's skin, should have the muscles of Hercules,—what more could he desire? I am sure that with those two things and the mind that I now have I should be emperor of the world within three years!—Another thing that I have longed for almost as much as beauty and strength is the gift of transporting myself from one place to another with the swiftness of thought. Angelic beauty, the strength of the tiger and the wings of the eagle, and I should begin to conclude that the world is not so badly organized as I used to think.—A beautiful mask to charm and fascinate the prey, wings to pounce down upon it and carry it off, nails to tear it to pieces;—so long as I have not those I shall be unhappy.

All the passions and all the tastes I have had have been simply disguised forms of those three desires. I have loved weapons, horses, women: weapons to replace the muscles I had not; horses to serve as wings; women, so that I might possess in some one the beauty that I lacked myself. I sought in preference the most ingeniously deadly weapons, and those whose wounds were incurable. I have never had occasion to use any of the crises or yataghans, yet I like to have them around me; I take them from their scabbards with an indescribable sense of security and power, I lay about me in every direction with the greatest energy, and if by chance I see the reflection of my face in a mirror, I am astonished at its ferocious expression.—As for my horses, I override them so that they must either founder or say why.—If I hadn't given up riding Ferragus he would have died long ago, and it would be a pity, for he's a fine beast. What Arabian steed ever had limbs so fleet as my desire? In women I have not looked below the exterior, and as those whom I have seen thus far are a long way from fulfilling my ideal of beauty, I have fallen back upon pictures and statues; which, after all, is a pitiful expedient when one's senses are so inflammable as mine. However, there is something grand and noble about loving a statue, for it is a perfectly disinterested love, you have to dread neither satiety nor distaste with your triumph, and you cannot reasonably hope for a second miracle like the story of Pygmalion.—The impossible always had a charm for me.

Is it not strange that I, who am still in the fairest months of youth, who have not even used the simplest things, much less abused anything, have reached such a degree of satiety that I am tempted only by what is unusual or difficult of accomplishment?—That satiety follows enjoyment is a natural law and easily understood. Nothing is more easily explained than that a man who has eaten heartily of every dish at a banquet should no longer be hungry and should try to stimulate his benumbed palate by the thousand stings of condiments or dry wines; but that a man who has just taken his seat at the table and has hardly tasted the first course, should already be assailed with that superb disgust, should be unable to touch without vomiting any except highly-seasoned dishes, and should like only gamey meats, cheese with blue streaks running through it, truffles and wine that smells of the flint, is a phenomenon that can result only from a peculiar constitution; it is as if a child of six months should deem his nurse's milk insipid and refuse to suck anything but brandy. I am as exhausted as if I had performed all the prodigious feats of Sardanapalus and yet my life has been apparently very chaste and peaceful; it is a mistake to think that possession is the only road leading to satiety. We arrive there also through desire, and abstinence is more exhausting than excess.—Such a desire as mine is more fatiguing than possession. Its glance envelops and penetrates the object which it longs to have and which gleams above it, more swiftly and more deeply than if it were in contact with it. What more could use teach it? what experience can equal that constant, passionate contemplation?

I have gone through so much, although I have travelled very little, that only the steepest peaks tempt me now. I am attacked by the disease that fastens upon nations and powerful men in their old age—the impossible. Anything that I can do has not the slightest attraction for me. Tiberius, Caligula, Nero, ye great Romans of the Empire, whom posterity has so ill understood, and whom the pack of ranters pursues with its yelping, I suffer with your disease and I pity you with all the pity I have left in my heart! I, too, would like to bridge the sea and pave its waves; I have dreamed of burning cities to illuminate my fêtes; I have longed to be a woman to learn new forms

of pleasure. Thy golden palace, O Nero, is only a filthy stable beside the palace I have built; my wardrobe is better furnished than thine, Heliogabalus, and much more magnificent.—My circuses are noisier and bloodier than yours, my perfumes more acrid and more penetrating, my slaves more numerous and of better figure; I also have nude courtesans harnessed to my chariot, I have walked over men's bodies with as disdainful heel as you. Colossi of the ancient world, there beats behind my feeble ribs a heart as great as yours, and if I had been in your places I would have done all that you have done and perhaps more. How many Babels have I piled one upon another to reach the sky, to cudgel the stars and spit upon all creation! Why am I not God—as I cannot be man?

Oh! I believe that I shall need a hundred thousand centuries of nothingness to rest from the fatigue of these twenty years of life.—God in heaven, what stone will You roll down upon me? into what darkness will You plunge me? from what Lethe will You make me drink? beneath what mountain will You entomb the Titan? Am I destined to breathe a volcano through my mouth and to cause earthquakes when I turn from side to side?

When I think of this, that I was born of a gentle, resigned mother, simple in her tastes and manners, I am surprised that I did not burst her womb when she was carrying me. How does it happen that none of her calm, pure thoughts passed into my body with the blood she transmitted to me? and why must it be that I am the son of her flesh only, not of her mind? The dove begat a tiger who would like to have all creation fall a prey to his claws.

I grew up amid the most chaste and tranquil surroundings. It is difficult to imagine an existence in a setting so pure as mine. My years were passed in the shadow of my mother's easy-chair, with my little sisters and the house-dog. I saw about me only the kindly, placid faces of old servants who had grown gray in our service and were in a certain sense hereditary, of grave, sententious relations or friends, dressed in black, who placed their gloves one after another in their hat brims; a few aunts of uncertain age, plump and neat and sedate, with dazzling linen, gray skirts, thread mitts, and hands upon their waist-bands like people of a religious turn of mind; furniture severely simple to the point of melancholy, bare oak wainscoting, leather hangings—a gloomy, sober-hued interior such as some Flemish masters have painted. The garden was damp and dark; the box that marked the divisions, the ivy that covered the walls, and a few firs with bare branches were entrusted with the duty of representing verdure there and had but ill success; the brick house, with its very high roof, although roomy and in good condition, had something dull and drowsy about it. Certainly nothing could be better adapted to prepare one for a secluded, austere, melancholy life than such a place of abode. It seemed as if all the children brought up in such a house must inevitably end by becoming priests or nuns: ah well! in that atmosphere of purity and repose, amid that gloom and meditation, I rotted away little by little, without any outward sign, like a medlar on the straw. In the bosom of that upright, pious, saintly family I reached a horrible depth of depravity.—It was not contact with the world, for I had never seen it; nor the fire of passion, for I was benumbed in the icy sweat that oozed from those stout walls.—The worm did not crawl from the heart of another fruit to my heart. It came to life of itself where my pulp was thickest and gnawed and furrowed it in every direction: but nothing appeared outside and warned me that I was tainted at the core. I had neither spot nor worm-hole; but I was all hollow inside and nothing remained but a thin bright-colored pellicle, which the slightest blow would have broken.—Is it not an inexplicable thing that a child born of virtuous parents, brought up with care and judgment, kept at a distance from everything bad, should become perverted all by himself to such an extent, and reach the point I have reached? I am sure that, even if you should go back to the sixth generation, you would not find among my ancestors a single atom like those of which I am made. I do not belong to my own family; I am not an offshoot of that noble trunk, but a poisonous toadstool planted among its mossy roots on some dark, stormy night; and yet no one ever had more aspirations, more impulses towards the beautiful than I, no one ever tried more obstinately to spread his wings; but every attempt has made my fall the greater and the things that should have saved me have been my ruin.

Solitude has a worse effect upon me than society, although I desire the first more than the second. Whatever takes me out of myself is salutary; society bores me, but it tears me by force from the vain reverie whose winding staircase I ascend and descend, with bent head and folded arms. And so, since one tête-à-tête came to an end and there have been people here with whom I am compelled to put some constraint upon myself, I am less subject to my black moods and am less tormented by those immeasurable longings that pounce upon my heart like a swarm of vultures, as soon as I am left for a moment without occupation. There are some very pretty women and one or two young men who are very pleasant and jovial; but of all this swarm of provincials, the one who has the most charm for me is a young cavalier who arrived two or three days ago. He took my fancy at the very first, and I became fond of him simply from seeing him alight from his horse. It is impossible to be more graceful; he is not very tall, but slender and well set-up; there is something supple and undulating in his gait and his movements, which is pleasing beyond expression; many women would envy him his hand and foot. His only defect is that he is too beautiful and has too delicate features for a man. He is blessed with a pair of the loveliest and blackest eyes in the world, which have an expression impossible to define and a glance that it is not easy to sustain; but, as he is very young and has no sign of a beard, the softness and perfection of the lower part of his face temper somewhat the vivacity of those eagle eyes; his glossy, brown hair falls over his neck in great curls and gives his head a character of its own.—Here then at last is one of the types of beauty I have dreamed of, made flesh, and actually before my eyes! What a pity that it's a man, or what a pity that I am not a woman! This Adonis, who, in addition to his lovely face, has a very keen intellect of very wide range, still enjoys the privilege of having at the service of his bright remarks and his jests, a voice of a silvery and penetrating

quality which it is difficult to hear without emotion.—He is really perfect.—It seems that he shares my taste for beautiful things, for his clothes are very rich and well chosen, his horse very spirited and a thoroughbred; and, in order that everything might be complete and well assorted, he had behind him, riding a pony, a page of some fourteen or fifteen years, fair-haired, pink-cheeked, pretty as a seraph, who was half asleep, and so exhausted by his long ride that his master was obliged to lift him from his saddle and carry him to his room in his arms.

Rosette welcomed him very warmly and I think she has formed a plan to use him to arouse my jealousy and thus kindle the tiny flame that is sleeping under the ashes of my passion. However redoubtable such a rival may be, I am little inclined to be jealous of him, and I am so attracted to him that I would gladly abandon my love to secure his friendship.



*Chapter V — A page of some fourteen or fifteen years, fair-haired, pink-cheeked, pretty as a seraph, who was half asleep, and so exhausted by his long ride that his master was obliged to lift him from his saddle and carry him to his room in his arms.*

## VI

At this point, with the permission of the indulgent reader, we propose to abandon for some little time to his meditations, the worthy personage who has thus far occupied the stage all by himself and has spoken in his own behalf, and to adopt the ordinary form of the novel, reserving the right, however, to resume the dramatic form hereafter, if occasion should arise, and to draw still farther upon the species of epistolary confession that the aforesaid young man addressed to his friend, being fully persuaded that, however penetrating and sagacious we may be, we certainly cannot know so much about him as he knows about himself.

The little page was so overdone that he slept in his master's arms, and his little head, with its hair all in disorder, rolled from side to side as if he were dead. It was some distance from the

stoop to the apartment set aside for the new arrival, and the servant who escorted him offered to take his turn at carrying the child; but the young gentleman, to whom the burden seemed no more than a feather-weight, thanked him and declined to relinquish it; he laid him gently on the couch, taking the utmost care to avoid waking him; a mother could have done no better. When the servant had retired and the door was closed, he knelt beside him and tried to remove his boots; but his little feet were so swollen and painful that the operation was a difficult one, and the pretty sleeper uttered from time to time vague, inarticulate exclamations, like a person who is on the point of waking; thereupon the young gentleman would stop and wait until he was sound asleep again. The boots yielded at last and the most important point was gained; the stockings made little resistance.—This operation at an end, the master took the child's feet and placed them side by side on the velvet covering of the sofa; surely they were the two loveliest feet in the world, no larger than that, white as new ivory, and reddened a little by the pressure of the boots in which they had been imprisoned seventeen hours—feet that were too small for a woman and looked as if they had never walked; the part of the leg that could be seen was round, plump, smooth, transparent, delicately veined, and of the most exquisitely graceful shape—a leg worthy of the foot.



*Chapter VI — The pretty sleeper uttered from time to time vague, inarticulate exclamations, like a person who is on the point of waking; thereupon the young gentleman would stop and wait until he was sound asleep again. The boots yielded at last and the most important point was gained; the stockings made little resistance.*

The young man, still on his knees, gazed at the two little feet with amorous, admiring intentness; he stooped, raised the left one and kissed it, then the right one and kissed that; then, from kiss to kiss, he ascended the leg to the place where the clothes began.—The page raised his long lashes slightly and cast an affectionate, sleepy glance at his master, in which there was no trace of surprise.—"My belt hurts me," he said, passing his finger under the ribbon; and he fell asleep again.—The master loosened the belt, placed a cushion beneath the page's head, and finding that his feet, which had been burning hot, were a little cold, he wrapped them carefully in his cloak,



drew an arm-chair close to the sofa and sat down. Two hours passed thus, the young man watching the sleeping child and following the shadow of his dreams on his brow. The only sounds to be heard in the room were his regular breathing and the ticking of the clock.

It was certainly a very lovely picture. In the contrast between the two types of beauty there was an opportunity for effect, of which a skilful painter might have made good use.—The master was as beautiful as a woman—the page as lovely as a young girl. The round, rosy face, set in its frame of hair, resembled a peach among its leaves; it had the same fresh and velvety look, although the fatigue of the journey had lessened somewhat its usual brilliancy; the half-open mouth disclosed two rows of small teeth of a milky whiteness, and beneath the full, gleaming temples a network of blue veins crossed and recrossed; his eyelashes, like the golden threads around the heads of virgins in missals, reached almost to the middle of his cheeks; his long, silky hair resembled both gold and silver—gold in the shadow, silver in the light; his neck was at the same time plump and slender, and gave no sign of the sex indicated by his clothes; two or three buttons of his doublet were unbuttoned to enable him to breathe more freely and as the fine shirt of Dutch lawn beneath was open, a glimpse was afforded of an inch or two of firm rounded flesh of admirable whiteness, and the beginning of a certain curved line difficult to account for on a young boy's breast; upon looking closely one might have discovered also that his hips were a little too fully developed.—The reader will form what opinion he chooses; these are simple conjectures that we put forward; we have no better information on the subject than he, but we hope to learn something more in a short time, and we promise to keep him fully informed of our discoveries.—Let the reader, if his sight is keener than ours, bury his eyes under the lace of that shirt and decide conscientiously whether the contour is too swelling or not; but we warn him that the curtains are drawn and that there is a sort of half-light in the room, ill-adapted to that sort of investigation.

The young gentleman was pale, but his was a golden pallor, full of strength and vitality; his eyes swam in a crystalline blue fluid; his straight, thin nose imparted a wonderful air of pride and energy to his profile, and the flesh was of so fine a texture that it allowed the light to pass through it on the edge; his mouth wore the sweetest smile at certain moments, but ordinarily it was arched at the corners, curving in rather than out, as in some of the faces we see in the pictures of the old Italian masters; a detail that gave a charmingly disdainful expression to his face, a *smorfia* alluring beyond words, an air of childish sulkiness and ill humor, very unusual and very fascinating.

What were the bonds that united the master to the page and the page to the master? Assuredly there was something more between them than any conceivable affection between master and servant. Were they friends or brothers?—In that case, why this masquerading?—It would have been difficult for any one witnessing the scene we have just described to believe that those two individuals were just what they seemed to be and nothing more.

"Dear angel, how he sleeps!" murmured the young man; "I don't believe he ever travelled so far in his life. Twenty leagues in the saddle, and he so delicate! I'm afraid that he will be sick with fatigue. But no, it will amount to nothing; to-morrow there will be no sign of it; he will have recovered his brilliant color and will be fresher than a rose after the rain.—How handsome he is like that! If I weren't afraid of waking him I would eat him up with kisses. What a fascinating dimple he has in his chin! what fine, white skin!—Sleep soundly, sweet treasure.—Ah! I am downright jealous of your mother, and I wish I had brought you into the world.—He can't be sick? No, his breathing is regular and he doesn't stir.—But I believe some one knocked."

In fact, some one had knocked twice, as gently as possible, on the panel of the door.

The young man rose, but, fearing that he might be mistaken, waited for a repetition of the knocking before opening the door.—Two more taps followed, a little more pronounced, and a soft female voice said, in a very low tone:—"It is I, Théodore."

Théodore opened the door, but with less eagerness than a young man naturally exhibits about admitting a woman whose voice is soft and who knocks mysteriously at his door at nightfall.—The open door gave passage to—whom do you suppose?—to the mistress of the perplexed D'Albert, to the Princess Rosette in person, rosier than her name, and her bosom as deeply moved as ever woman was upon entering a handsome youth's room in the evening.

"Théodore!" said Rosette.

Théodore lifted his finger and placed it on his lips so as to represent a statue of silence, and, pointing to the sleeping child, led her into the adjoining room.

"Théodore," continued Rosette, who seemed to take strange pleasure in repeating the name, and at the same time to be collecting her thoughts,—*"Théodore,"* she continued, retaining the hand the young man had offered her to lead her to her chair, "so you have returned at last? What have you been doing all the time? where have you been?—Do you know that it is six months since I saw you! Ah! Théodore, that is not right; we owe some consideration, some pity to those who love us, even if we do not love them."

THÉODORE.

What have I been doing.—I have no idea.—I have gone away and come home, I have waked and slept, I have sung and wept, I have been hungry and thirsty, I have been too warm and too cold, I have been bored, I have less money and am six months older—I have lived, that's the whole of it.—And how about yourself, what have you been doing?

ROSETTE.

I have loved you.

THÉODORE.

Have you done nothing but that?

ROSETTE.

Absolutely nothing.—I have made a bad use of my time, haven't I?

THÉODORE.

You might have made a better use of it, my poor Rosette; for example, you might have loved some one who could return your love.

ROSETTE.

I am unselfish in love as in everything.—I don't lend love at interest; it is a pure gift on my part.

THÉODORE.

That is a very rare virtue and one that can exist only in a noble heart. I have often wished that I could love you, especially as you desire it; but there is an insurmountable obstacle between us which I cannot tell you.—Have you had any other lover since I left you?

ROSETTE.

I have had one whom I still have.

THÉODORE.

What sort of a man is he?

ROSETTE.

A poet.

THÉODORE.

The devil! who is this poet, and what has he written?

ROSETTE.

I haven't a very clear idea—a volume that nobody knows anything about, and that I tried to read one evening.

THÉODORE.

So you have an unpublished poet for a lover?—That must be interesting.—Is he out at elbows, does he wear dirty linen and rumpled stockings?

ROSETTE.

No; he dresses very well, washes his hands and has no ink-spots on the end of his nose. He's a friend of C—; I met him at Madame de Thémines',—you know, that tall woman, who plays the child and puts on such innocent airs.

THÉODORE.

And might one know the name of this eminent personage?

ROSETTE.

Oh! *Mon Dieu*, yes! he is the Chevalier d'Albert.

THÉODORE.

Chevalier d'Albert! I think that was the young man who was on the balcony when I alighted from my horse.

ROSETTE.

Precisely.

THÉODORE.

And who examined me so closely.

ROSETTE.

Himself.

THÉODORE.

He's a very good-looking fellow.—And he has not made you forget me?

ROSETTE.

No. Unfortunately you are not one of those whom one forgets.

THÉODORE.

He loves you dearly no doubt?

ROSETTE.

I am not so sure of that.—There are moments when you would think he loved me very dearly; but at heart he doesn't love me, and he is not far from hating me, for he is angry with me because he can't love me.—He did as many others before him have done; he developed a very keen taste for passion, and was greatly surprised and disappointed when his desire was surfeited.—It is a mistake to think that two people must mutually adore each other because they have lain together.

THÉODORE.

And what do you propose to do with this lover who is not a lover?

ROSETTE.

What we do with bygone quarters of the moon or with last year's fashions.—He hasn't courage enough to leave me the first, and although he does not love me in the true sense of the word, he is bound to me by the habit of enjoyment, and those are the habits it is hardest to break. If I don't assist him, he is quite capable of conscientiously submitting to be bored with me till the last judgment and beyond; for he has within him the germ of all noble qualities; and the flowers of his soul ask naught but an opportunity to bloom in the sunshine of everlasting love.—Really I am very sorry that I did not prove to be the sunbeam for him. Of all my lovers whom I have not loved, I love him the most; and, if I were not as kind-hearted as I am, I would not give him back his liberty, but I would still keep him.—But that is what I will not do; I am finishing with him at this moment.

THÉODORE.

How long will it last?

ROSETTE.

A fortnight, three weeks, but at all events not so long as if you had not come.—I know that I shall never be your mistress.—There is, you say, an unknown reason for that, to which I would bow if it were possible for you to disclose it to me. Thus I am forbidden to entertain any hope in that direction, and yet I cannot make up my mind to be another man's mistress when you are here; it seems to me like a profanation, and as if I should not have the right to love you.

THÉODORE.

Keep this lover for love of me.

ROSETTE.

If it will give you pleasure I will do it.—Ah! if you could have been mine, how different my life might have been from what it has been!—The world has a very false idea of me, and I should have lived and died without any one suspecting what I am—except you, Théodore, the only one who has understood me and been cruel to me.—I have never wanted any one but you for a lover, and I have never had you. O Théodore, if you had loved me, I should have been virtuous and chaste, I should have been worthy of you; instead of that, I shall leave behind me—if any one remembers me—the reputation of a dissolute woman, a sort of courtesan, who differed from her of the gutter only in rank and fortune.—I was born with the highest aspirations; but nothing depraves one so much as being unloved.—Many people despise me who have no idea what I have had to suffer before reaching my present position.—Being sure that I shall never belong to the man I would prefer above all others, I have allowed myself to float with the current, I have not taken the trouble to defend a body that could not be yours.—As for my heart, no one has had it and no one ever will. It is yours, although you have broken it;—and I am different from the majority of women who believe themselves virtuous provided they have not passed from one bed to another, in this respect—although I have prostituted my flesh, I have been faithful in heart and soul to the thought of you.—At all events I shall have made some few people happy, I shall have caused white-robed illusions to dance about some pillows. I have innocently deceived more than one noble heart. I have been so miserable at being spurned by you, that I have always been horrified at the thought of compelling any one else to undergo such torture. That is the sole worthy motive of adventures which are commonly attributed to a spirit of libertinage pure and simple!—I, a libertine! O society!—If you knew, Théodore, how intensely painful it is to feel that your life is a failure, that you have let slip your chance of happiness, to see that everybody misunderstands you and that it is impossible to make people change their opinion of you, that your most estimable qualities are tortured into defects, your purest essences into deadly poisons, that nothing except the evil in you has transpired; to have found doors always open to your vices and always closed to your virtues, and to have been unable to bring to perfection, amid such a wilderness of hemlock and aconite, a single lily or a single rose! you know nothing of that, Théodore.

THÉODORE.

Alas! alas! Rosette, what you have just said includes the history of the whole world; the best part of us is that which remains within us and which we cannot display.—It is the same with poets.—Their noblest poem is the one they have not written; they carry more poems to the grave than they leave in their library.

ROSETTE.

I shall carry my poem to the grave with me.

THÉODORE.

And I mine.—Who has not written one at some time in his life? who is so fortunate, or so unfortunate, as not to have composed his in his head or in his heart?—Even headsmen may have composed poems, all moist with tears of the tenderest sensibility; poets perhaps have composed some that would be suited to headsmen, so bloody and monstrous they are.

ROSETTE.

Yes.—White roses can fitly be placed on my grave. I have had ten lovers, but I am a virgin, and I shall die a virgin. Many virgins, on whose graves there is a constant snow of jasmine and orange blossoms, were veritable Messalinas.

THÉODORE.

I know what a noble creature you are, Rosette.

ROSETTE.

You only in all the world have seen what I am; for you have seen me under the influence of a love that is perfectly genuine and very deep-rooted, as it is hopeless; and no one who has not seen a woman in love can say what she is; that is the one thing that consoles me in my bitterness of spirit.

THÉODORE.

And what does this young man think of you, who is your lover to-day in the eyes of the world?

ROSETTE.

The mind of a lover is a gulf deeper than the Bay of Portugal, and it is very difficult to say what there is in the depths of a man; if the lead were attached to a line a hundred fathoms long and every fathom unreeled, it would still sink without meeting anything to stop it. Yet I have touched bottom several times with this man, and the lead has sometimes brought up mud, sometimes lovely shells, but most frequently mud and fragments of coral mixed together.—As to his opinion of me, it has varied greatly; he began where others leave off, he despised me; young men with vivid imaginations are likely to do that. There is always a tremendous fall in the first step they take, and the passage from their chimera to reality cannot be made without a shock.—He despised me and I entertained him; now he esteems me and I bore him. In the early days of our liaison he saw only the commonplace side of me, and I think that the certainty of meeting with no resistance had much to do with his determination. He seemed in great haste to have an affair, and I thought at first that it was a case of a full heart seeking only an opportunity to overflow, one of those vague passions that a man has in the May of youth and that impel him, in default of women, to throw his arms around the trunks of trees, and to kiss the flowers and grass in the fields.—But it wasn't that;—he simply passed through me to reach something else. I was a means to him, and not an end.—Beneath the fresh exterior of his twenty years, beneath the first down of adolescence, he concealed profound corruption. He was tainted to the core; he was a fruit containing nothing but ashes. In that young and lusty body was a heart as old as Saturn—a heart as incurably wretched as heart ever was.—I confess, Théodore, that I was frightened and that I was almost taken with vertigo as I looked into the black depths of that existence. Your sorrows and mine are nothing compared to those. If I had loved him more I should have killed him. Something irresistibly attracts and summons him—something that is not of this world or in this world, and he cannot rest day or night; and like the heliotrope in a cellar, he twists about to turn toward the sun which he cannot see.—He is one of those men whose mind was not completely dipped in the waters of Lethe before being attached to his body, but retains memories of the eternal beauty of the heaven from which it comes—memories that work upon it and torment it—and remembers that it once had wings and now has feet only.—If I were God, I would deprive of poetry for two eternities, the angel guilty of such negligence.—Instead of being under the necessity of building a castle of bright-colored cards in which to shelter a fair, youthful fancy for a single spring, it was necessary to erect a tower higher than the eight temples of Belus piled one upon another. I had not the strength, I pretended not to have understood him, and I let him flutter about on his wings in search of a peak from which he could take flight into boundless space.—He thinks I have noticed nothing of all this, because I have fallen in with all his caprices without seeming to suspect their object. Being unable to cure him, I determined—and I hope that I shall receive credit for it some day before God—to give him at least the happiness of believing that he was passionately loved.—He aroused in me so much pity and interest that I was easily able to assume a tone and manner sufficiently affectionate to deceive him. I have played my part like a consummate actress; I have been playful and melancholy, sensible and voluptuous; I have feigned anxiety and jealousy; I have shed false tears, and I have summoned flocks

of ready-made smiles to my lips. I have arrayed this counterfeit of love in the richest stuffs; I have taken him to drive through the avenues of my parks; I have requested all my birds to sing as he passed, and all my dahlias and daturas to bend their heads in salutation; I have sent him across my lake on the silvery back of my darling swan; I have concealed myself inside the manikin and bestowed my voice, my wit, my youth and beauty upon it and given it such a seductive appearance that the reality fell far short of my deception. When the time comes to shatter this hollow statue, I shall do it in such a way that he will think the wrong is all on my side and so will have no remorse. I shall be the one to make the pinhole through which the air with which the balloon is filled will make its escape.—Is not that sanctified prostitution and honorable deception? I have in a glass jar some tears that I have collected just as they were about to fall.—They are my jewel-case and my diamonds, and I shall present them to the angel who comes for me to lead me before God.

THÉODORE.

They are the loveliest that can glisten on a woman's neck. A queen's jewels are less precious than they. For my own part, I believe that the ointment Magdalen poured on Christ's feet was made of the tears of those she had comforted, and I believe, too, that the Milky Way is strewn with such tears, and not, as has been said, with drops of Juno's milk.—Who will do for you what you have done for him?

ROSETTE.

No one, alas! since you cannot.

THÉODORE.

O dear heart! would that I could!—But do not lose hope. You are lovely and still very young. You have many avenues of lindens and flowering acacias to pass through before reaching the damp road lined with box and leafless trees, which leads from the tomb of porphyry in which your happy dead years will be buried, to the tomb of rough and moss-covered stone where they will hasten to bestow the remains of what once was you, and the wrinkled, tottering spectres of the days of your old age. You still have much of the mountain of life to climb and it will be long before you reach the zone where the snow begins. You are now only at the level of aromatic plants, of limpid cascades over which the iris suspends its tri-colored arches, of stately green oaks and sweet-smelling larches. Mount a little higher and from that point, with the broader horizon spread out before you, perhaps you will see the blue smoke rising above the roof beneath which he who will love you sleeps. You must not, in the very beginning, despair of life, for vistas open in our destiny which we had ceased to expect. Man, in his life, has often made me think of a pilgrim toiling up the winding stairway of a Gothic tower. The long granite serpent winds upward in the darkness, every coil a stair. After a few circumvolutions the little light that came from the door dies out. The shadow of the houses, which are not yet passed, does not allow the loopholes to admit the sun: the walls are black and moisture oozes from them; you seem rather to be going down into a dungeon from which you are never to come forth, than ascending to the turret which, from below, seemed to you so slender and graceful, covered with lace-work and embroidery as if it were about starting for the ball.—You hesitate whether you ought to go higher, the damp shadows weigh so heavily upon your forehead.—A few more turns of the staircase and more frequent openings cast their golden trefoils on the opposite wall. You begin to see the notched gables of the houses, the carving of the entablatures, the strange forms of the chimneys; a few steps more and your eye overlooks the whole city; it is a forest of steeples, of spires and towers, bristling upon all sides, toothed and slashed and hollowed, stamped as with dies, and allowing the light to shine through their numberless apertures. The domes and cupolas raise their rounded forms like a giant's breasts or the skulls of Titans. The islets formed by houses and palaces appear through shadowy or luminous openings. A few steps more and you will be on the platform; and then you will see, beyond the walls of the city, the green fields, the blue hillsides and the white sails on the changing ribbon of the stream. A dazzling light bursts upon you, and the swallows fly hither and thither, close at hand, with their joyous twitter. The distant sounds reach your eyes like a soothing murmur or the hum of a swarm of bees; all the bells scatter their necklaces of pearls of sound through the air; the breezes bring you the odors of the neighboring forest and of the mountain flowers: it is all light and melody and perfume. If your feet had been weary or discouragement had seized upon you, and you had remained on a lower step or had turned back and gone down again, that spectacle would have been lost to you.—Sometimes, however, the tower has only a single opening, in the centre or at the top.—The tower of your life is built so.—In that case you must have more obstinate courage, perseverance armed with sharper nails, to cling, in the darkness, to the protruding stones, and to reach the opening, resplendent with light, through which the eye embraces the surrounding country; or it may be that the loopholes have been filled up, or no one has thought to cut them, and then you must go on to the summit; but the higher one goes without looking out, the more extended the horizon seems, and the greater the surprise and pleasure.

ROSETTE.

O Théodore, God grant that I may soon reach the point where the window is! For a long, long time I have been following the winding staircase in the most profound darkness; but I am afraid the opening has never been cut and I must climb to the very top; and suppose this staircase with the countless stairs should end at a walled-up doorway, or an arch closed by blocks of stone?

THÉODORE.

Do not say that, Rosette, do not think it.—What architect would build a stairway that led nowhere? Why imagine that the placid Architect of the world was stupider and less far-sighted than an ordinary architect? God makes no mistakes and forgets nothing. It is incredible that He should have amused Himself by playing a trick upon you and shutting you up in a long stone tunnel without exit or opening. Why should you suppose that He would haggle with such poor ants as we are over our paltry momentary happiness and the imperceptible grain of millet that falls to each of us in this immeasurable universe?—In order to do that He must be as savage as a tiger or a judge; and if we were so obnoxious to Him, He would simply have to bid a comet turn aside a little from its path and annihilate us all with a hair of its tail. How the devil can you think that God diverts Himself by spitting us all on a gold pin as the Emperor Domitian did with flies?—God isn't a concierge or a church-warden, and although He is old, He is not yet in His dotage. All such petty malice is beneath Him and He is not foolish enough to show off His smartness to us and play tricks on us.—Courage, Rosette, courage! If you are out of breath, stop a bit and take breath and then continue your upward course; perhaps you have only a score more steps to climb to reach the embrasure from which you will see your happiness.

ROSETTE.

Never! oh never! and if I reach the top of the tower, it will only be to hurl myself from it.

THÉODORE.

Banish these gloomy thoughts that flutter about you like bats, and cast the opaque shadow of their wings on your fair brow, my poor afflicted one. If you want me to love you, be happy, and do not weep. (*He draws her gently to his side and kisses her on the eyes*).

ROSETTE.

What a misfortune for me that I ever knew you! and yet, if I could live my life over, I would still prefer to have known you.—Your harshness has been sweeter to me than the passion of other men; and, although you have made me suffer intensely, all the pleasure I have ever had has come to me from you; through you I have caught a glimpse of what I might have been. You have been a flash of light in my darkness, and you have illuminated many dark places in my soul; you have opened new perspectives in my life.—I owe it to you that I know what love is,—unhappy love, it is true; but there is a melancholy and profound fascination in loving without being loved, and it is pleasant to remember those who forget us. It is a joy simply to be able to love, even when one loves alone, and many die without having had it, and often they who love are not the most to be pitied.

THÉODORE.

They suffer and feel their wounds, but at all events they live. They have some interest in life; they have a star about which they gravitate, a pole toward which they ardently extend their hands. They have something to long for; they can say to themselves: "If I reach that point, if I obtain that, I shall be happy."—They suffer frightful agony, but when they die, they can at least say to themselves: "I am dying for him."—To die thus is to be born again. The really unhappy, the only ones who are irreparably so, are they whose wild embrace takes in the whole universe, they who want everything and nothing, and who would be embarrassed and speechless if an angel or fairy should descend to earth and say suddenly to them: "Express one wish and it shall be gratified."

ROSETTE.

If a fairy should come I know what I would ask her.

THÉODORE.

You know, Rosette, and therein you are happier than I, for I do not know. There are in my heart many vague longings, which become confounded with one another and give birth to others which eventually consume them. My desires are a cloud of birds that fly aimlessly this way and that; yours is an eagle that has its eyes on the sun and is prevented by lack of air from soaring upward on its outspread wings. Ah! if I could only know what I want; if the idea that haunts me would stand out clear and well-defined from the mist that envelops it; if the lucky or unlucky star would appear in the depths of my sky; if the light I am to follow would shine out through the darkness, a deceitful will-o'-the-wisp or a friendly beacon; if my

column of fire would go on before me, even though it were through a desert without manna and without springs of water; if I knew where I am going, even though my path ends at a precipice!—I would prefer the wild flights of accursed huntsmen through bogs and thickets, to this absurd and monotonous stamping and pawing. To live thus is to follow a trade like that of the horses with bandages over their eyes, who turn the wheel of a well, and travel thousands of leagues without seeing anything or changing their position.—I have been turning a long while, and the bucket ought to be at the top.

ROSETTE.

You resemble D'Albert in many ways, and, when you speak, it seems to me sometimes as if he were speaking.—I have no doubt that, when you know him better, you will become much attached to him; you cannot fail to suit each other.—He is tormented as you are, by these same aimless impulses; he is head over ears in love but does not know with what; he would like to ascend to Heaven, for the earth seems to him like a stool hardly fit for one of his feet to rest upon, and he has more pride than Lucifer before his fall.

THÉODORE.

I was afraid at first that he was one of those poets, of whom there are so many, who have driven poetry off the face of the earth, one of those stringers of false pearls who see nothing in the world but the last syllables of words, and who, when they have made *ombre* rhyme with *sombre*, *flame* with *âme*, and *Dieu* with *lieu*, fold their arms and legs conscientiously and permit the spheres to accomplish their revolutions.

ROSETTE.

He is not one of that kind. His verses are beneath him and do not contain his thought. You would form a very mistaken idea of his nature from what he has written; his real poem is himself, and I don't know if he will ever produce another. He has, in the depths of his mind, a seraglio of choice ideas which he surrounds with a triple wall, and of which he is more jealous than ever sultan was of his odalisques.—He puts in his poetry only those ideas that he holds in light esteem, or with which he has become disgusted; he makes his verse the door through which he expels them and the world receives only those for which he has no further use.

THÉODORE.

I can understand his jealousy and his modesty.—Just as many men do not care for the love they have had until they no longer have it, or for their mistresses until they are dead.

ROSETTE.

It is so hard for one to have anything to one's self in this world! every candle attracts so many moths, every treasure attracts so many thieves!—I love the silent men who carry their ideas to the grave and do not choose to abandon them to the filthy kisses and shameless handling of the vulgar crowd. Those lovers please me best who do not carve their mistress's name on the bark of any tree, who confide it to no echo, and who, while they sleep, are haunted by the fear that they may utter it in a dream. I am one of that number; I have not divulged my thoughts and no one shall know my love.—But it is almost eleven o'clock, my dear Théodore, and I am preventing your taking rest that you must sadly need. When I am obliged to leave you I always have a feeling of oppression at my heart, and it seems to me as if it were the last time I should ever see you. I postpone it as long as I can; but I always have to go at last. Good-night, for I am afraid D'Albert may be looking for me; good-night, my dear friend.

Théodore put his arm around her waist and thus escorted her to the door; there he stopped and followed her a long time with his glance; the corridor was lighted at intervals by small windows with narrow panes, through which the moon shone, making alternate light and dark patches of fantastic shape. At each window Rosette's pure, white form gleamed like a silvery phantom; then it vanished to appear, even more brilliant, a little farther away; at last it disappeared altogether.

Théodore stood for some moments motionless, with folded arms, as if buried in profound meditation; then he passed his hand over his forehead and threw back his hair with a jerk of his head, returned to his room, and went to bed after kissing the brow of the page, who was still asleep.

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## VII

As soon as the daylight entered Rosette's room, D'Albert made his appearance, with an eagerness that was not usual with him.

"Here you are," said Rosette, "I would say very early, if you could ever arrive early.—To reward you for your gallantry I present you my hand to kiss."

And she drew from beneath the sheet of Flemish linen trimmed with lace the prettiest little hand that was ever seen at the end of a plump, well-shaped arm.

D'Albert kissed it with compunction:—"And the other, little sister, are we not to kiss that too?"

"*Mon Dieu*, yes! nothing is easier. I am in my Sunday humor to-day; here."—And she extended her other hand with which she tapped him lightly on the lips.—"Am I not the most obliging woman on earth?"

"You are grace itself, and temples of white marble should be erected to you in thickets of myrtle.—Really, I am very much afraid that the same thing will happen to you that happened to Psyche, and that Venus will be jealous of you," said D'Albert, taking the fair one's hands in one of his and raising them together to his lips.

"How you say all that without taking breath! any one would think it was something you had learned by heart," said Rosette, with a delicious little pout.

"No; you deserve to have the phrase turned expressly for you, and you were made to pluck the virgin bloom from compliments," rejoined D'Albert.

"Oho! whatever is the matter with you to-day? are you ill that you are so gallant? I fear you are dying. Do you know that when one's character suddenly changes, and without any apparent reason, it is an evil omen? Now it is a well-known fact, to all the women who have taken the pains to love you, that you are usually as morose as a man can be, and it is no less certain that at this moment you are as charming as a man can be, and inexplicably amiable.—Really, I think you are pale, my poor D'Albert: give me your arm and let me feel your pulse;" and she pushed back his sleeve and counted the pulsations with mock gravity.—"No, you are perfectly well and you haven't the slightest symptom of fever. In that case I must be furiously pretty this morning! Go and find my mirror so that I can see how far your gallantry is justified."

D'Albert brought a small mirror from the toilet-table and placed it on the bed.

"In truth," said Rosette, "you are not altogether wrong. Why don't you write a sonnet on my eyes, *Monsieur le Poète*. You have no excuse for not doing it. Just see how unfortunate I am! to have eyes like these and a poet like this, and to be left without sonnets just as if I were one-eyed and had a water-carrier for a lover! You don't love me, monsieur; you have never written so much as an acrostic sonnet for me.—And my mouth, what do you think of that? I have kissed you with that mouth and perhaps I will kiss you with it again, my dark-browed beauty; and upon my word, it is a favor that you hardly deserve—I am not speaking of to-day, for to-day you deserve anything;—but, to talk about something beside myself, you are incomparably fresh and comely this morning, you look like a brother of Aurora, and, although it is hardly daylight, you are already arrayed in your best clothes as if for a ball. Can it be that you have designs upon me? and do you meditate dealing an unexpected and final blow to my virtue? do you propose to make a conquest of me? But I forget that you have already done that, and that it's ancient history."

"Don't joke like that, Rosette; you know that I love you."

"Why, that depends. I don't know it; and you?"

"I know it perfectly well, and from such symptoms that, if you should have the kindness to forbid me your door, I should try to prove it to you, and I venture to flatter myself that I should do it most triumphantly."

"Not that way: however anxious I may be to be convinced, my door will remain open; I am too pretty to be shut up behind closed doors; the sun shines for one and all, and my beauty shall be like the sun to-day, if you approve."

"Upon my honor I strongly disapprove; but act as if I approved as strongly. I am your very humble slave, and I lay my wishes at your feet."

"That is as jolly as can be; continue to entertain such sentiments and leave your key in your door to-night."

"Monsieur le Chevalier Théodore de Sérannes,"—said a huge negro, putting his round, good-humored face between the wings of the folding-door, "desires to pay his respects to you and begs that you will deign to receive him."

"Admit Monsieur le Chevalier," said Rosette, pulling the sheet up to her chin.

Théodore went first to Rosette's bed and made a very low and graceful courtesy, which she returned with a friendly nod; then he turned to D'Albert, whom he also saluted in an off-hand, courteous manner.

"What were you talking about?" said Théodore. "It may be that I interrupted an interesting conversation: go on, I beg, and tell me in a few words what it is all about."

"Oh, no!" Rosette replied with a mischievous smile; "we were talking business."





Chapter VII — "Admit Monsieur le Chevalier," said Rosette, pulling the sheet up to her chin.

*Théodore went first to Rosette's bed and made a very low and graceful courtesy, which she returned with a friendly nod; then he turned to D'Albert, whom he also saluted in an off-hand, courteous manner.*

Théodore seated himself at the foot of Rosette's bed, for D'Albert had taken his place at her pillow, by right of having arrived first. The conversation wandered for some time from subject to subject, very bright and gay and animated, and that is why we do not report it; we should be afraid that it would lose too much in being transcribed. The manner, the tone, the vivacity of speech and gesture, the countless ways of uttering a word, the effervescent wit, like the foam of champagne which sparkles and evaporates at once, are details that it is impossible to note down and reproduce. We leave that hiatus for the reader to fill, and he will certainly acquit himself of the task better than we could do. Let him imagine here five or six pages filled with whatever is most capricious, most refined, most curiously original, most ingenious and most sparkling in the way of conversation.

We are well aware that we are resorting to an artifice which reminds one a little of that resorted to by Timanthes, who, in despair of ever being able to reproduce Agamemnon's face, threw some drapery over his head; but we prefer to be timid rather than imprudent.

It would not perhaps be amiss to inquire into the motives that had led D'Albert to rise so early, and what spur had impelled him to call upon Rosette at as unseasonable an hour as if he had still been in love.—It would appear as if it were a slight attack of secret, unconfessed jealousy. To be sure he cared but little for Rosette, indeed he would have been very glad to be rid of her,—but he preferred to leave her voluntarily and not to be left by her, a thing which always inflicts a deep wound on a man's pride, although his first flame may be utterly extinct.—Théodore was such a well-favored cavalier that it was difficult to view his appearance on the scene while a liaison was in progress without apprehending what had in fact happened many times, that is to say, that all eyes would turn in his direction and the hearts follow the eyes; and, strangely enough, although he had taken away many women, no lover had harbored the enduring resentment that men usually feel for those who have supplanted them. There was in his whole behavior such winning

charm, such unaffected grace, a something so gentle and so dignified, that even men were touched by it. D'Albert, who had come to Rosette's room, intending to speak very sharply to Théodore, if he should meet him there, was greatly surprised to find that he did not feel the slightest sensation of anger in his presence, and that he was inclined to receive with warmth the advances he made. In half an hour's time, you would have said that they had been friends from boyhood, and yet D'Albert felt in his inmost heart, that if Rosette was destined ever to love, she would love that man, and he had every reason to be jealous, for the future at least, for he did not suspect anything at present. What would he have thought, had he seen the fair creature in a white *peignoir* gliding like a night-moth on a moonbeam into the handsome youth's room, and coming out three or four hours later with mysterious precautions? He might well, in very truth, have deemed himself more unfortunate than he really was, for it is a thing rarely seen that a pretty, lovelorn young woman comes forth from the bedroom of a no less attractive young man, exactly the same as when she went in.

Rosette listened to Théodore with much attention and as one listens to a person one loves; but what he said was so entertaining and upon so many different subjects, that her attention was perfectly natural and easily explained. And so D'Albert took no offence at it. Théodore's manner toward Rosette was courteous and friendly, but nothing more.

"What shall we do to-day, Théodore?" said Rosette, "suppose we go for a row on the river? what do you think? or shall we hunt?"

"To hunt is less depressing than to glide over the water side by side with some tired swan and thrust the water-lily leaves aside to right and left,—don't you think so, D'Albert?"

"I think perhaps I should enjoy gliding down the river in the skiff quite as much as racing madly in the trail of some poor beast; but wherever you go, I will go; what we have to do now is to allow Madame Rosette to rise and don a suitable costume."

Rosette made a sign of assent and rang for her maid to come and dress her. The two young men left the room arm in arm, and it was easy to guess, from seeing them on such good terms, that one was the titular lover and the other the loved lover of the same person.

Soon everybody was ready. D'Albert and Théodore were already mounted in the first court-yard, when Rosette, in a riding-habit, appeared at the top of the steps. She had assumed with the costume, a sprightly, resolute air that was immensely becoming to her; she leaped into the saddle with her ordinary agility and gave her horse a smart blow with her crop, so that he darted away like an arrow. D'Albert spurred after her and soon overtook her. Théodore allowed them some little start, being sure of catching them up whenever he chose. He seemed to be waiting for something and turned back frequently toward the château.

"Théodore! Théodore! come on! are you riding a wooden horse?" cried Rosette.

Théodore urged his horse to a gallop and diminished the distance between him and Rosette, but did not join her.

He continued to look back at the château, which they were beginning to lose sight of; a little cloud of dust, in the centre of which something that they could not as yet distinguish was moving very rapidly, appeared at the end of the road. In a few moments the cloud reached Théodore's side, and, opening like the classic clouds of the Iliad, disclosed the fresh and rosy face of the mysterious page.

"Come, Théodore, come!" cried Rosette again; "give your tortoise the spur and join us."

Théodore gave his horse the rein, and in a second, the animal, who was pawing and rearing impatiently, had passed D'Albert and Rosette by several lengths.

"Who loves me follows me," said Théodore, leaping a fence four feet high. "Well, well, *Monsieur le Poète*," he said, when he was on the other side, "you don't jump? but they say your steed has wings."

"Faith, I prefer to ride around; I have only one head to break after all; if I had several I would try," D'Albert replied with a smile.

"No one loves me then, as no one follows me," said Théodore, bringing the arched corners of his mouth even lower than usual. The little page looked up at him reproachfully with his great blue eyes, and drove his heels into his horse's sides.

The horse gave a tremendous leap.

"Yes! some one," said the child from the other side of the fence.

Rosette cast a strange glance at the boy and blushed up to her eyes; then, with a furious blow of the crop on the mare's neck, she leaped the barrier of green apple wood that barred the path.

"Do you think that I don't love you, Théodore?"

The child darted an oblique, stealthy glance at her and rode up to Théodore.

D'Albert was in the middle of the path—and saw nothing of all this; for, from time immemorial, it has been the privilege of fathers, husbands and lovers to see nothing.

"Isnabel," said Théodore, "you are mad, and so are you, Rosette! You didn't take enough start for your jump, Isnabel, and you, Rosette, just missed catching your dress on the posts.—You might have killed yourself."

"What difference would it make?" rejoined Rosette, in such a melancholy, despairing tone that

Isnabel forgave her for having leaped the barrier.

They rode on for some distance and reached the crossroads where the huntsmen and the pack were to meet them. Six arched paths, cut through the dense forest, met at a little stone tower with six sides, on each of which was carved the name of the road that ended there. The trees rose so high that they seemed to be trying to spin the woolly, fleecy clouds that a brisk breeze carried hither and thither over their towering tops; tall, thick grass and impenetrable thickets provided hiding-places and strongholds for the game, and the hunt promised to be a successful one. It was a true forest of an earlier age, with oaks more than a hundred years old, such trees as we never see, now that we no longer plant trees and have not the patience to wait for those that are planted to grow;—a hereditary forest, planted by great-grandfathers for fathers, by fathers for grandsons, with paths of enormous width, the obelisk surmounted by a ball, the rock-work fountain, the inevitable pool, and the keepers with powdered wigs, yellow leather breeches and sky-blue coats;—one of those dense, dark forests in which the white, glossy coats of Wouvermans' great horses stand out in bold relief, and the flaring mouths of the hunting horns *à la Dampierre* that Parrocel loves to paint on the backs of his huntsmen.—A multitude of dogs' tails, shaped like crescents or reaping-hooks, waved frantically about in a dusty cloud. The signal was given, the dogs, straining at their leashes, were uncoupled, and the hunt began.—We shall not undertake to describe with precision the detours and doublings of the stag through the forest;—we do not even feel sure whether it was a stag seven years old, and, despite our investigations on that point, we have not been able to satisfy ourselves—which is really distressing.—Nevertheless we can but think that in such a forest, so venerable, so dark, so seignorial, there could be none but seven-year stags, and we do not see why the one after which the four principal characters in this romance were galloping on horses of different colors, and *non passibus æquis*, should not have been such a one.

The stag ran, like the true stag that he was, and some fifty dogs or more that followed at his heels were no slight spur to his natural swiftness of foot. The pace was so fleet that only an occasional bark could be heard.

Théodore, being the best mounted and the best rider, kept on the heels of the pack with incredible zeal. D'Albert was close behind him. Rosette and the little page Isnabel followed, falling farther and farther behind.

The interval was soon so great that they could not hope to join their companions.

"Suppose we stop for a moment and let our horses take breath," said Rosette. "The hunt is going toward the pond and I know a crossroad by which we can reach there as soon as they do."

Isnabel drew in his little mountain pony, who put down his head, shook his forelock down over his eyes and began to paw the gravel with his hoofs.

The little creature presented a most striking contrast to Rosette's mare; he was as black as night, she as white as white satin; his mane and tail were bristly and unkempt; her mane was tied with blue ribbons and her tail combed and curled. She looked like a unicorn, he like a spaniel.

There was the same marked difference between the riders as between their steeds.—Rosette's hair was as black as Isnabel's was fair; her eyebrows were very clearly marked and very prominent; those of the page were hardly darker than his skin and resembled the down on a peach.—The coloring of the one was as brilliant and enduring as the light at noonday; the other had the transparent blushing hue of early dawn.

"Suppose we try now to overtake the hunt?" said Isnabel; "the horses have had time to recover their breath."

"Come on!" replied the pretty Amazon, and they galloped away through a narrow transverse path leading to the pool; the two horses ran neck and neck and filled the whole path.

On Isnabel's side, a gnarled and twisted tree stretched out a huge branch like an arm, and seemed to shake its fist at the riders.—The child did not see it.

"Look out!" cried Rosette, "lean forward on your saddle! you will be unhorsed."

The warning came too late; the branch struck Isnabel in the middle of the body. The violence of the blow caused him to lose his stirrups, and, as his horse galloped on and the branch was too stout to bend, he was brushed from his saddle and thrown rudely back.

The child fainted on the spot.—Rosette, terribly frightened, leaped from her horse and knelt beside the page, who gave no sign of life.

His cap had fallen off and his lovely, rippling fair hair lay spread about over the gravel in every direction.—His little open palms looked as if they were made of wax, they were so devoid of color. Rosette knelt beside him and tried to restore him to consciousness.—She had no salts or flask with her and her embarrassment was great. At last she discovered a deep rut in which the rain-water had collected and clarified; she dipped her fingers in it, to the great alarm of a little toad that was the naiad of that stream, and shook a few drops on the young page's blue-veined temples.—He did not seem to feel them, and the pearls of water rolled down his white cheeks as a sylph's tears roll down the leaf of a lily. Rosette, thinking that his clothes might distress him, unbuckled his belt, unbuttoned his doublet and opened his shirt to give his lungs freer play.—Thereupon Rosette saw something that would have been the most agreeable of surprises to a man, but that seemed very far from affording her any pleasure—for her brows contracted and her upper lip trembled slightly;—she saw a snowy white breast, which was as yet undeveloped, but which made the fairest promises and already fulfilled many of them; a smooth and rounded

breast, as white as ivory, and in the language of the Ronsardists, delicious to look at, more delicious to kiss.



*Chapter VII — Rosette, thinking that his clothes might distress him, unbuckled his belt, unbuttoned his doublet and opened his shirt to give his lungs freer play.—Thereupon Rosette saw something that would have been the most agreeable of surprises to a man, but that seemed very far from affording her any pleasure—*

"A woman!" she exclaimed, "a woman! ah! Théodore!"

Isnabel—for we will continue to call him by that name, although it was not his—began to show some signs of life and languidly raised his long eyelashes; he was not wounded in any way, he was simply stunned.—He soon sat up and, with Rosette's assistance, was able to stand and remount his horse, which had stopped as soon as he felt that his rider was gone.

They rode slowly to the pool, where they found the remainder of the hunting party. Rosette in a few words told Théodore what had happened.—He changed color several times during her recital, and throughout the rest of the ride he kept his horse close beside Isnabel's.

They returned to the château betimes; the day that had begun so joyously, had a decidedly melancholy ending.

Rosette was in a meditative mood and D'Albert seemed as deeply engrossed in his reflections. The reader will soon learn what had given rise to them.

## VIII

No, my dear Silvio, I have not forgotten you; I am not one of those who go through life without a backward glance; my past follows me and encroaches upon my present, and almost upon my future; your friendship is one of the sunlit spots that stand out most clearly on the blue horizon of

my later years; often, from the peak on which I stand, I turn to gaze upon it with a feeling of ineffable melancholy.

Oh! what lovely weather it was!—how angelically pure we were!—Our feet hardly touched the ground, we had wings on our shoulders, as it were, our desires carried us away and the fair halo of youth around our foreheads trembled in the breeze of spring.

Do you remember the little island covered with poplars at the spot where the river forms a little arm?—To reach it we had to cross a long, very narrow plank that bent in the middle, with a strange sensation; an excellent bridge for goats and little used, in fact, except by them: it was a delightful spot.—Short, thick grass where the forget-me-not opened its pretty little blue twinkling eye, a path, as yellow as nankeen, that served as a belt for the green robe of the islet and encircled its waist, the constantly moving shadow of aspens and poplars, were not the least charms of that paradise;—there were great pieces of linen that the women stretched out to whiten in the dew;—one would have said they were square patches of snow.—And the little dark, sun-burned girl whose great wild eyes sparkled so brightly under her long locks, and who ran after the goats, threatening them with her osier switch when they were on the point of walking on the linen she was watching—do you remember her?—And the sulphur-colored butterflies, with their irregular, hesitating flight, and the kingfisher we tried so many times to catch, that had its nest in the clump of alders; and the banks sloping to the river, with the steps roughly hewn in the rock, with their posts and stakes, all green at the bottom and almost always closed by a hedge of plants and branches? How smooth and clear the water was! how the golden gravel glistened at the bottom! and how pleasant it was to sit on the bank and dabble our toes in the stream! The water-lily, with its golden flowers unfolding gracefully, seemed like green hairs floating on the gleaming back of some nymph in the bath.—The sky gazed at its reflection in that mirror with azure smiles and transparent rifts of pearl-gray of most bewitching beauty, and at every hour in the day there were turquoise blues, golden yellows, fleecy whites and flickering shades in inexhaustible variety.—How I loved those flocks of ducks with the emerald necks that sailed incessantly from bank to bank and caused an occasional wrinkle on that glassy surface!

And how well adapted we were to be the figures in that landscape!—how attached we became to those sweet, restful scenes, and how easily we harmonized ourselves with them! Springtime without, youth within, the sun on the turf, a smile on the lips, snow-white blossoms on all the bushes, fair illusions blooming in our minds, a modest flush upon our cheeks and on the eglantine, poetry singing in our hearts, invisible birds humming among the trees, bright light, cooing doves, perfumes, a thousand confused murmurs, the beating of the heart, the water stirring a pebble, a wisp of grass or a thought springing up, a drop of water rolling down the side of a flower, a tear flowing from beneath an eyelid, a sigh of love, the rustling of a leaf;—what evenings we have passed there, walking slowly, so near the edge that we often had one foot in the water and the other on land!

Alas!—that lasted a very short time, in my case at least; for you, while acquiring the knowledge of a man, were able to retain the innocence of a child.—The seed of corruption that was within me developed very rapidly, and the gangrene pitilessly devoured all that was pure and saintlike about me. The only good that remained was my friendship for you.

I am accustomed to conceal nothing from you—neither acts nor thoughts. I have laid bare before you the most secret fibres of my heart; however strange, absurd, eccentric the movements of my mind, I must needs describe them to you; but, in truth, my sensations for some time past have been so strange that I hardly dare confess them to myself. I told you at some time that I was afraid that by dint of seeking the beautiful and straining every nerve to attain it, I should fall into the impossible or the horrible.—I have almost reached that point; when, then, shall I get clear of all these currents that cross and recross one another and drag me to right and left; when will the deck of my vessel cease to tremble under my feet and to be swept by the waves of every storm? where shall I find a haven in which I can cast anchor, and an immovable rock out of reach of the waves, whereon I can dry myself and wring the spray from my hair?

You know how ardently I have sought physical beauty, what importance I attach to physical form, and what affection I have conceived for the visible world; it must be because I am too corrupt and too *blasé* to believe in moral beauty, and to pursue it with any constancy.—I have completely lost the power to distinguish between good and evil, and, by force of depravity, I have almost reverted to the ignorance of the savage and the child. In fact, nothing seems praiseworthy or blameworthy to me, and the most extraordinary actions surprise me but little. My conscience is a deaf mute. Adultery seems to me the most innocent thing in the world; I find it quite natural that a girl should prostitute her person; it seems to me that I would betray my friends without the slightest remorse, and I should not have the slightest scruple in kicking over a precipice people who annoyed me, if I were walking on the brink with them.—I could witness the most atrocious scenes with indifference, and there is something that is not unpleasant to me in the sufferings and woes of humanity.—I have the same sensation of acrimonious, bitter joy when some great disaster falls on the world, that one feels when one takes revenge for an old insult.

O world, what hast thou done to me that I should hate thee so? Who has so filled me with gall against thee? what did I expect from thee that I should bear thee such rancor for having deceived me? what high hope didst thou disappoint? what eaglet's wings didst thou clip?—What doors shouldst thou have opened that have remained closed, and which of us two has failed the other?

Nothing touches me, nothing moves me;—I no longer feel, when I hear the story of a heroic action, the sublime shudder that used to run over me from head to foot.—Indeed, it all seems to me a little foolish.—No accent is deep enough to tighten the relaxed fibres of my heart and make

them vibrate:—I look upon the tears of my fellow-mortals with the same eye that I look upon the rain, unless they are of a particularly beautiful water and the light is reflected prettily in them and they are flowing down a lovely cheek.—Dumb animals are almost the only creatures for which I have a slight remnant of compassion. I would allow a peasant or a servant to be soundly whipped, but I could not stand by and see the same treatment inflicted on a horse or dog in my presence; and yet I am not evil-minded, I have never injured anybody on earth and I probably never shall; but that is due rather to my nonchalance and my sovereign contempt for all those people whom I do not like, which does not permit me to interest myself even to the extent of injuring them.—I abhor the whole world in bulk, and there are only one or two in the whole lot whom I deem worthy to be hated specially.—To hate a person is to be as much disturbed about him as if you loved him;—it is to set him apart, to distinguish him from the common herd; it is to be in a state of violent excitement because of him; it is to think of him by day and dream of him by night; it is to bite at your pillow and gnash your teeth as you think that he exists; what more do you do for any one you love? Would you take the same amount of trouble to please a mistress that you take to ruin an enemy?—I doubt it!—in order to hate one person intensely, one must be in love with some other person. Every great hatred serves as a counterpoise to a great love: and whom could I hate, when I love nobody?

My hatred is, like my love, a confused, general sentiment that seeks to apply itself to some object and cannot; I have within me a treasure of hatred and love which I don't know what to do with, and which weighs horribly upon me. If I can find no place to bestow one or the other or both of them, I shall burst and break apart, like a bag filled too full of money, which rips at the seams and spills its contents.—Oh! if I could detest some one, if one of the stupid men with whom I live would insult me in such a way as to make my old viper's blood boil in my frozen veins, and force me out of this dull drowsiness in which I am stagnating; if thou, old witch with the palsied head, wouldst bite me in the cheek with thy rat's teeth and infect me with thy venom and thy madness; if some one's death could be my life;—if the last heart-beat of an enemy writhing under my foot could send a delicious thrill through my hair, and the odor of his blood smell sweeter to my thirsty nostrils than the aroma of flowers, oh! how gladly would I renounce love, and how happy I would deem myself!

Deadly embraces, tiger-bites, the hug of a boa-constrictor, an elephant's foot placed upon a breast that is crushed and flattened beneath it, the poisoned tail of the scorpion, the milky juice of the Euphorbia, the curved kris of the Javanese, blades that gleam at night and extinguish their gleam in blood—I call upon you now, it is you who shall replace for me the leafless roses, the moist kisses and the warm embrace of love!

I love nothing, as I have said, but alas! I am afraid of loving something.—It would be a hundred thousand times better to hate than to have such a love!—I have found the type of beauty that I have so long dreamed of.—I have found the body of my phantom; I have seen it, it has spoken to me, I have touched its hand, it exists; it is not a chimera. I knew that I could not be mistaken and that my presentiments never lied.—Yes, Silvio, I am living beside the dream of my life;—my chamber is here, its chamber is there; I can see from here the curtain trembling at its window, and the light of its lamp. Its shadow has just passed across the curtain: in an hour we shall sup together.

Those lovely Turkish eyelashes, that clear, profound gaze, that warm hue of pale amber, that long glossy black hair, that nose, of proud and delicate shape, those joints and extremities, supple and slender after the manner of Palmegiani, the graceful curves and the pure oval contour that give such an air of aristocratic refinement to a face—all that I longed for and would have been overjoyed to find distributed among five or six persons, I have found united in a single person!

The thing that I adore most fervently among all earthly things is a lovely hand.—If you could see the hand of my dream! such perfection! such dazzling whiteness! such soft skin! such penetrating moisture! the ends of the fingers so admirably tapered! the half-moon of the nails so clearly marked! such polish and such brilliant color! you would say they were the inner petals of a rose;—Anne of Austria's hands, so vaunted and famous, were no more than the hands of a turkey-keeper or scullery-maid compared with these.—And then what grace, what art in the slightest movements of the hand! how gracefully the little finger bends and stays a little apart from its tall brothers!—The thought of that hand drives me mad and makes my lips quiver and burn.—I close my eyes to avoid looking at it; but with its delicate fingers it seizes my eyelashes and raises the lids, causing countless visions of ivory and snow to pass before me.

Ah! doubtless it is Satan's claw gloved in that satin skin; it is some mocking demon making sport of me; there is witchcraft in it.—It is too monstrously impossible.

That hand—I propose to go to Italy, to see the pictures of the great masters, to study, compare, draw, become a painter in short, in order to be able to reproduce it as it is, as I see it, as I feel it; it will perhaps serve the purpose of ridding me of this sort of obsession.

I longed for beauty; I did not know what I asked for.—It is like trying to look at the sun without eyelids, it is like trying to handle flames.—I suffer horribly.—To be unable to assimilate this perfection, to be unable to pass into it and to cause it to pass into me, to have no means of reproducing it and of making it feel!—When I see anything beautiful, I want to touch it with my whole self, everywhere and at the same time. I want to sing of it and paint it, to carve it and write of it, to be loved by it as I love it; I want what cannot be and never can be.

Your letter made me ill—very ill—forgive me for saying it.—All the pure, tranquil happiness that you enjoy, the walks in the reddening woods,—the long conversations, so affectionate and tender, that end with a chaste kiss on the forehead; the serene, isolated life; the days that pass so quickly

that night seems to come before its time, make the constant internal agitation in which I live seem even more tempestuous.—So you are to be married in two months; all the obstacles are removed, you are sure now of belonging to each other forever. Your present felicity is augmented by all the happiness in store for you. You are happy and you are certain of being happier soon.—What a destiny is yours!—Your beloved is beautiful, but what you have loved in her is not the mortal, palpable beauty, material beauty, but the invisible, immortal beauty, the beauty that does not grow old, the beauty of the soul.—She is full of charm and innocence; she loves you as such souls know how to love.—You never looked to see if the golden shade of her hair resembled the golden hair painted by Rubens or Giorgione; but it pleased you because it was her hair. I will wager, happy lover that you are, that you have no idea whether your mistress is of the Grecian or Asiatic type, English or Italian.—O Silvio! how rare are the hearts that are content with pure and simple love and desire neither a hermitage in the forest nor a garden on an island in Lago Maggiore.

If I had the courage to tear myself away from here, I would go and pass a month with you; perhaps I should become purified in the air that you breathe, perhaps the shade of your avenues would bring a little coolness to my burning brow; but no, it is a paradise in which I must not set foot.—Hardly ought I to be allowed to gaze from afar, over the wall, at the two fair angels who are walking there, hand in hand, eyes fixed upon eyes. The devil can enter Eden only in the shape of a serpent, and, dear Adam, for all the happiness on earth, I would not be the serpent of your Eve.

What frightful upheaval has taken place in my soul of late! who has transformed my blood and changed it to venom? O monstrous thought, that puttest forth thy pale green twigs and umbels of hemlock in the glacial shadow of my heart, what poisoned wind deposited there the seed from which thou didst spring? This, then, was what was in store for me, this is the end of all the roads that I so desperately attempted!—O fate, how thou dost mock at me!—All those upward flights of the eagle toward the sun, those pure flames aspiring to reach the sky, that divine melancholy, that profound, restrained passion, that worship of beauty, that refined and curious fancy, that unquenchable and ever-rising flood from the interior fountain, that ecstasy borne upon wings always spread, that reverie blooming brighter than the hawthorn in May—all the poesy of my youth, all those beautiful and rare gifts were destined to serve no other purpose than to place me beneath the lowest of mankind.

I longed to love.—I went about like a madman, calling and invoking love;—I writhed in frenzy because of my feeling of helplessness; I set my blood on fire, I dragged my body about in the gutters of debauchery;—I strained to my arid heart until I almost stifled her, a woman, young and beautiful, who loved me.—I ran after the passion that avoided me. I prostituted myself, and I acted like a virgin who should venture into an evil place, hoping to find a lover among those whom depravity led thither, instead of waiting patiently, in dignified, silent retirement, until the angel whom God has set aside for me should appear in a radiant penumbra, a heavenly flower in her hand. All these years that I have wasted in puerile agitation, in running hither and thither, in seeking to force nature and time, I should have passed in silence and meditation, in trying to make myself worthy to be loved;—that would have been wisely done;—but I had scales over my eyes and I marched straight to the precipice. I already have one foot suspended over the void, and I believe that I shall soon lift the other. It is useless for me to resist, I feel that I must roll to the bottom of this new abyss that has opened within me.

Yes, it was thus that I imagined love. I feel now what I had dreamed.—Yes, there are the delightful yet terrible sleepless nights when the roses were thistles and the thistles roses; there are the sweet misery and the miserable joy, the ineffable trouble that encompasses you in a golden cloud and makes objects waver before your eyes as drunkenness does, the ringing in the ears in which you always hear the last syllable of the loved one's name, the pallor, the flushes, the sudden shivering, the burning and freezing perspiration;—all those are there; the poets do not lie.

When I am about to enter the salon where we usually meet, my heart beats so violently that you can see it through my clothes and I am obliged to hold it back with both hands for fear it will escape me.—If I see my dream at the end of a path and in the park, the distance vanishes at once and I have no idea what becomes of the road: it must be that the devil takes me or that I have wings.—Nothing can distract my thoughts: if I read, her image comes between the book and my eyes;—I mount my horse, I gallop over the country, and it always seems to me that I feel its long hair mingling with mine in the wind, hear its hurried respiration, and feel its warm breath upon my cheek. The image possesses me and follows me everywhere, and I never see it more clearly than when it is not before my eyes.

You pitied me for not being in love—pity me now because I am in love; and above all because I love what I love. What a misfortune, what a crushing blow upon my already blasted life!—what an insensate, guilty, hateful passion has taken possession of me!—It is a shameful thing for which I shall never cease to blush. It is the most deplorable of all my aberrations, I cannot imagine it, I cannot understand it, everything within me is in confusion and bewilderment; I have no idea who I am nor who others are, I doubt whether I am a man or a woman, I have a horror of myself, I feel strange, inexplicable impulses, and there are moments when it seems to me that my reason is going, and when the idea of my existence abandons me altogether. For a long time I have been unable to believe in anything; I have listened to myself and watched myself closely. I have tried to disentangle the skein that has become entangled in my soul. At last, through all the veils in which it was enveloped, I have discovered the ghastly truth—Silvio, I love—Oh! no, I can never tell you—I love a man!

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