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## HUMAN FOLLIES.

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[2]

*(La Bêtise Humaine.)*

BY

JULES NORIAC.

*Translated from the SIXTEENTH Paris Edition.*

BY

GEORGE MARLOW.



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## HUMAN FOLLIES.

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### CHAPTER I.

When Eusebe Martin had attained his twenty-first year, his father, who was a man of sense, thus addressed him:—

“Eusebe, you are no longer a child: it is time to begin your education. You were but eight years old when you lost your mother, my beloved wife. This was a great misfortune, no doubt; for her

heart would have been to you a treasure of affection. However, if we were permitted to believe in compensations in this world, I should think that you had been recompensed for this loss, great as it was. Your mother, had she lived, would have spoiled you, and to-day you would not have been half the man you are.

"Remember that I have been to you a father full of solicitude. Since the day of your mother's death, I have left you as free as the bird that at this moment is singing on the linden-tree at the door. I have clothed you according to the season,—in summer in linen, in winter in wool. My table has always been abundantly supplied. As I never told you that you ate too much, you have never shown a desire to overload your stomach. I have accustomed you to running in the fields and to working with the peasants, which has rendered you strong and vigorous." [6]

"Morally, I owed you nothing more. Nevertheless, I have taught you to read and to write. I cannot tell you how thankful I am that you have not a thick head: instead of six months, you would have wearied me two long years,—perhaps more. What use have you made of the little learning I have given you? I have never taken the pains to inquire. I have left my library entirely at your disposal, because I knew that if it contained no good books it also contained no bad ones. Have the books you have read tended to form or deform your judgment? Little do I care; for, since no one can know where falsehood is to be found and where truth is hidden, my reflections would, probably, have been at war with reason."

"Books generally tire me," interrupted Eusebe. "Up to the present time I have read nothing but the adventures of a sailor named Robinson Crusoe, and of one Telemachus, son of Ulysses." [7]

"So much the better," replied M. Martin; "or, perhaps, so much the worse. I would rather see you an enthusiastic admirer of Robinson, than of Paul and Virginia, or Faublas. But perhaps I am wrong; for, after all, Paul and Virginia are all tenderness, Faublas all love, and Robinson is egotism personified. However, nothing proves that egotism, which is a fault, is not alone worth as much as tenderness and love, which are considered good qualities.

"Now, my son, listen to me. You owe me your existence, for which, if I do not merit your thanks, I should not incur your displeasure. I but fulfilled a natural law. I have provided for your wants: the laws of society made it my duty. I have just paid a sum of money which exempts you from military service. You will, however, be at liberty to become a soldier at any time you may think proper. To-day I have received from my notary your mother's fortune. Here it is: it is yours. In this belt there are forty-eight pieces of paper of the Bank of France, and one hundred pieces of gold. Each one of these pieces of paper is worth fifty pieces of gold: each piece of gold is worth twenty of those white pieces which I give you on Sunday, when you go to play with the vagabond boys of the village on the church square. In short, you possess fifty thousand francs,—that is, more twenty-sous pieces than we gather apples in ten years. Compared with some, you are rich; with others, you are poor. Do not trouble yourself either about those who are above or about those who are below you. The interest of this money will enable you to live until, after having become acquainted with the world, you decide to choose a vocation. If, however, you do not see fit to take the trouble of investing it, you have only to limit your expenses to ten francs per day, when your patrimony will last five thousand days,—that is, about fourteen years. In all probability, at the expiration of this time I shall be dead, and you will naturally be the possessor of our domain, the Capelette, the revenues of which are three thousand francs a year, in bad times as well as in good." [8]

"You are about to set out for Paris, the city *par excellence* of civilization. Never will you have so good a theatre for studying the world. Profit by it. Go, Eusebe, and do not take the goods of others: you would have no excuse, since you have enough of your own. Never disguise the truth. The play is not worth the candle. Never strike the weak, and be equally careful not to defend them: you would make yourself two enemies. Try to have neither enemies nor friends: there is little to choose between them. And now, good-bye, my boy: here is the coach." [9]

The young man threw his arms around his father's neck and embraced him affectionately. M. Martin was moved by this unexpected outburst of feeling. In a trembling voice, he said,—

"Farewell, my son! farewell!"

The young man started. His father, having placed himself at the window a moment afterwards, looked at him as he hurried towards the road.

"Eusebe!" cried he: "come here a moment, and tell me what put it into your head to embrace me, and who taught you to make this demonstration of affection."

"Father," replied the young man, "ten years ago M. Jaucourt, the curate, who died last year, seeing me divide a piece of bread with a poor idiot, embraced me as I just embraced you when you divided your fortune with me."

At this moment the diligence passed. With one bound, Eusebe seated himself beside the postilion.

M. Martin closed the window, and, as he with a large plaid handkerchief wiped away a tear that was ready to fall, said,— [10]

"Plague on the curates! they are always sticking their noses where they have no business!" [11]

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## CHAPTER II.

M. Martin was neither a wicked man nor a fool, but he was a confirmed skeptic. For forty years (he was now sixty) he had been disappointed in all the events of his life.

When it became necessary for him to marry, he had to choose between two of his cousins, who were equally accomplished and equally beautiful. He preferred the one who pleased him least, because she was of a more robust constitution than her sister. Nine years afterwards she died, while the delicate sister was still living.

Martin was half ruined by a friend of his youth, for whom he would have given his life.

One day, when he was from home, one of his outbuildings caught fire, and the flames would have communicated to his dwelling but for a man, who, at the risk of his life, succeeded in arresting them. This man was his only enemy!

Well informed for a man of his condition, and endowed with a fair share of sense, he was looked up to by his neighbors with a certain degree of deference. He studied hard in order to strengthen a reputation of which he was proud; but in so doing he was not slow to discover that he knew nothing.

[12]

His first visit to Paris was still fresh in his memory. It was in September, 1832. One morning he went to breathe the fresh air in the garden of the Tuileries, when a man of a noble and friendly mien, wearing a gray hat, commenced conversation with him.

"You are a stranger in Paris?"

"I am from Limousin," replied Martin.

"You are a manufacturer, perhaps?"

"No: I am a farmer."

"I am not acquainted with your section of the country, but I have heard it highly spoken of."

"We have, indeed, a beautiful country," replied the countryman,—*"rich and picturesque, industrious and patriotic: we are in want of but one thing,—a river."*

"But you have the Vienna."

"The Vienna is not navigable."

"Could it not be made so?"

"It is the dream of the entire population of Limousin."

"Monsieur, what is your name?"

[13]

"Martin."

"Very well, Monsieur Martin: when you return home, tell your neighbors that in less than three years their river will be navigable."

"Who are you," asked Martin, "who speak with so much authority?"

A bland smile lighted up the features of the man with the gray hat, as he replied, with simplicity, —

"I am the King of the French."

It seemed as if the crowd which had gathered around the two promenaders had only waited for this announcement. Cries of *"Vive le Roi!"* many times repeated, burst forth. The people surrounded the king, who smiled at some, offered his hand to others, and had a kind word for all.

"There is a great king and a great people," thought Martin, who returned to the Capelette to narrate his royal adventure and acquaint the whole department with the king's promises.

Seventeen years wore away. Martin, tired of the monotony of the country, and living alone with his son, who was still a child, resolved to go once more to Paris. Scarcely had he arrived at a hotel, when he hurried to dress himself in his best, saying that, although the king had not kept his promise, he owed him the first visit. "I shall see him in his garden," said he: "he will be less embarrassed than if I were to call at his palace."

[14]

He found the entrances to the Tuileries blocked up, and motley crowds, who were loud in their cries, surrounded the palace. "What excellent people!—what love for their sovereign!" thought honest Martin.

Multitudes of ragged boys were running through the streets, singing,—

"Mourir pour la patrie,  
C'est le sort le plus beau,  
Le plus digne d'envie:  
C'est le sort \* \* \* \*"

"What youths! What noble youths!" cried honest Martin, with tears in his eyes.

Seeing that he could not approach the garden from the side of the Rue de Rivoli, he went round to the Place de la Concorde. Just as he arrived at the quay, a small half-hidden gate in the wall opened before him, from which issued an old man, wearing a blue blouse, leaning on the arm of another man scarcely less aged than himself.

"Monsieur Martin," said he, "help me, I pray you, to get into this cab."

"Who are you? I do not recollect you," said the astonished rustic.

"An hour ago I was King of the French," replied the old man.

[15]

"Ah! sire," cried Martin, preoccupied by the one idea, "the Vienna is not yet navigable."

"It is true: I failed to keep my promise, and I am cruelly punished."

The cab drove rapidly away, while Martin remained fixed to the spot, unable to comprehend the meaning of this royal apparition. He was, however, soon roused from his reverie by a noisy crowd that issued from the little gate.

"The brigand has escaped us," cried they.

"We will have him before he gets far."

"So much the better."

"Unfortunate king! deluded people!" murmured the countryman; and he took the road to the Capelette, where he lived in solitude. His mind became more and more wavering. Having no one with whom to engage in discussion, he had contracted the habit of controverting his ideas himself, and the consequence was, that he had become a skeptic in every thing. This was the reason why he had brought up his son as he had done, or, rather, the reason why he had not brought him up at all.

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### CHAPTER III.

[16]

On the evening of the day on which he left home, Eusebe arrived at the railroad-depot. He approached the ticket-office, and said to the agent,—

"I want to go to Paris."

"Which class car do you wish, sir?"

"The best."

"Fifty-four francs," replied the agent.

Eusebe handed him three louis, and received six francs in return.

"There," thought Eusebe, "is a clever fellow: it did not take him a minute to tell how much was coming to me."

"And now," he asked, "could you tell me, sir, where I will find the carriage?"

"The train, you mean."

"I don't know. Is that the name of the vehicle that is to transport me to Paris?" asked Eusebe, timidly.

"Vehicle!" cried the man. "What do you call a vehicle? Your jesting is ill timed, sir. Here is your car: another time try to be a little more polite." [17]

"This man," said Eusebe to himself, "is not so clever, after all: he is a fool,—an ignoramus!"

Eusebe's journey was without incident. Alone in a first-class *coupé*, he made himself a couch, on the floor, of the cushions, and, placing his valise under his head for a pillow, he slept quietly until daylight.

When he awoke, he had passed Orleans. His eyes, half open, glanced at the country, and a cry of admiration escaped him.

"Oh, what splendid farms! what beautiful fields!" cried he: "how admirably the land is cultivated! what care, what labor, is bestowed on it! My father was right: civilization has not penetrated into the departments of the interior. Fifteen hours ago, I left the Capelette. What a difference! Why is the soil so fertile here and so sterile with us? The soil is the same, but the cultivation is not. Here there are no immense forests, no uncultivated fields: the country is as populous as our cities. Laborers abound, and agricultural implements are brought to the highest state of perfection. What abundance! what riches! Everybody seems to be happy and contented. How beautiful and grand all this is!" [18]

At the moment he made these reflections, the train began to slacken its speed. They approached a station. Eusebe watched attentively the groups of people who were waiting behind a barrier for the train to pass, in order that they might, in their turn, pass also. The noise of the locomotive frightened a cart-horse tied to a post near by. The poor animal, trembling with fear, snorted and reared up on his hind legs, when a man, armed with a whip, came out of an inn and began to strike the beast with all his might. The more he struck, the more the horse reared and pranced. Finally, breaking his halter, the animal sprang furiously against the barrier, which he struck with his head and fell dead. The man cursed like a carter, which he was.

"Surely," said Eusebe to himself, "this is a very bad business. The fault is the man's, and not the beast's. If the man had not left the horse, the horse would not have been frightened. If the horse had not been frightened, the man would not have struck him; and if the man had not struck the horse, the animal would not be dead. This man is perhaps a savage, recently arrived among civilized people. That, however, I think scarcely probable, since he speaks with tolerable correctness. Is my father right in saying that extremes touch, and that the last word of civilization is perhaps the first of barbarism?" [19]

Eusebe had arrived at this point in his reflections, when two travellers entered the *coupé* he occupied. Although it was still early in September, the two new-comers wore fur caps and overshoes and thick woollen cloaks, while their faces were half concealed by immense woollen comforters.

"Upon my word," said one of them, "the winter is already setting in: this northwest wind is any thing but agreeable. What do you say to taking a puff? It will give us an appetite."

On hearing these words, Eusebe was a prey to the most lively curiosity. The singular costume of his travelling-companions made him suspect he had in them two subjects for study, coming from some distant clime. To judge from their furs, they must have first seen the light at Moscow. On hearing them talk about "taking a puff," he expected to see something new and extraordinary, and prepared himself to be all eyes and ears, in order to become acquainted with the customs of the strangers whom chance had thrown in his way.

To the great disappointment of the young man, the traveller took some cigars out of his pocket and lighted one, after having offered them to his companion and then to Eusebe, who had refused. [20]

"You do not smoke, young man?"

"No, sir."

"Bah! How old are you, then?"

"Twenty-one."

"Twenty-one years old, and you do not smoke! Where the devil do you come from, my young friend?"

"I come from the Capelette, a domain near Saint-Brice, in Limousin; I am going to Paris to see the world; and I cannot be your friend, since I never met you until this morning."

"Do not get angry, young man. It was not my intention to be rude."

"I know that," said Eusebe. "On the contrary, you offered me your rolls of tobacco, for which I am obliged."

"Ah! you are from Monsieur de Pourceaugnac's neighborhood," said the other, who until now had remained silent.

"I do not know the gentleman," replied Eusebe: "my father and I live a very retired life."

"Naïve, upon my word!" cried the smoker. "He ought to be framed. What, young man! you do not know the gayest of Molière's heroes?" [21]

"I have never been away from the Capelette, sir, and my condition does not allow me to become acquainted with heroes. I do not even know where Molière is situated."

The two travellers burst into a hearty laugh.

"Gentlemen," said Eusebe, when the hilarity of his neighbors had ceased, "you amuse yourselves at my expense, because I am ignorant, which, I think, is any thing but kind of you. You indiscreetly questioned me; I answered: I might have remained silent. Recollect, I beg of you, that you meddled with my affairs, and that I have not concerned myself about yours. I have not asked you whence you come, where you are going, or who you are. When you laughed at me, I might have thrown you out of the window; but I did not do it, and you ought to be thankful."

"Out of the window! Not so fast, my dear sir."

"I could certainly have done it," said Eusebe, with simplicity.

"Pardon me," said the second traveller. "We do not wish to make ourselves disagreeable. You are too quick to take offence. I am in the habit of travelling a great deal. During the last ten years, my friend and I have been almost always *en route*. Whenever we find ourselves in company, we ask how *it happens*, where our companions come from, and where they are going. That helps to while away the time, and injures no one." [22]

"And is that all you travel for?" asked Eusebe.

"What an idea! We are travelling clerks: we represent two of the first houses in Paris."

"However great my simplicity may be," replied Eusebe, "I think there are no first houses in Paris, and, what is more, that there can be none, since the first on arriving from the north are the last when one comes from the south."

They arrived at Paris, and Martin, junior, got out of the car.

With his valise in his hand, Eusebe stepped out of the depot, when a cabman cried out to him,—

"Here you are, sir! Where shall I drive you to, sir?"

"I don't know," replied Eusebe.

"It's not me that'll tell you, then."

"I have not asked you."

"Eh! do you hear that? Here is a gentleman that don't know where he is going."

"Mind your own business."

"Bah! you lubber! you haven't a sou." [23]

The provincial was about to reply, when the cabman, to whom a traveller had just made a sign, hurried away.

"These people do not seem to be very familiar with the laws of hospitality," thought Eusebe: [24]  
"they call you to insult you. What does all this mean?"

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## CHAPTER IV.

Paris is the dream of all provincialists. Rich and poor want to come here, at least once,—the first to enjoy life, the second to try to make their fortunes. No one can imagine the disappointment of these visitors, since each one has had his own peculiar ideas of the metropolis. For some, Paris is an immense succession of palaces; for others, the houses are built of gold and precious stones.

Paris never comes up to the ideas strangers have formed of it. In order to love and admire this great city, one must become acquainted with it. The inhabitants of the South, particularly, are greatly disappointed on arriving at the capital. Their imagination, more lively than that of the people of the North, embellishes the metropolis in a thousand different ways. As if to punish them for their imaginary castles, accident has always made them enter the city at its homeliest point. Before the railroad was built, the people of the South arrived at the Barrière d'Enfer. To them [25]  
Paris presented a sorry aspect; to those who arrive now it presents no aspect at all.

Eusebe, on leaving the depot, walked straight ahead, valise in hand.

He saw the Seine, which he thought narrow. Then he came to a bridge, which he thought shabby. But all at once his face brightened up with an expression of delight: he was opposite the garden of the Museum.

"At last," said he, "here is something worth looking at. What a beautiful, what an immense, garden! How admirably it is cultivated! It is unfortunate that a sentinel is placed at the gate to keep people from entering: it is ridiculous. But it is said there are a great many thieves in this immense city."

Eusebe approached the soldier who guarded the entrance to the garden, and said,—

"Be so kind as to tell me the name of this magnificent enclosure."

"Enclosure!" repeated the soldier: "don't know."

"I ask you the name of this enclosure."

"Enclosure! Not known to the regiment."

"I beg your pardon," said Eusebe, mildly: "I simply want to know the name of this garden that [26]  
you guard so well."

"Ah! ah!" replied the son of Mars. "Should express yourself *categorically*, young man. That is called the Garden of Plants." (Jardin des Plantes.)

"Thank you," said Eusebe; but, as he turned to go, he made this reflection, which seemed to him sensible:—

"Garden of Plants: that is not a name. All gardens have plants; gardens give birth to plants, and a garden without plants would not be a garden. This soldier has evidently deceived me."

Seeing an old man sitting on a bench enjoying the autumn sun, Eusebe, approaching him, took off his hat respectfully, and said,—

"I am a stranger, sir. Excuse me for troubling you, but I should like to know the name of this superb park."

"I am glad, sir," said the old man, kindly, "that I am able to tell you. The grounds that you see yonder are the garden of the king."

"Of the emperor, you mean to say." [27]

"I mean to say what I say; and believe me, sir, it is not very becoming in a youth of your age to amuse himself at the expense of an old man like me. If it was for that you stopped, you would have done better to have kept on your way."

Eusebe, not knowing what to reply, passed on, thinking himself really unfortunate. Since he left the Capelette, he had fallen from Charybdis into Scylla. The railroad agent had bullied him; the two travellers had laughed at him; the cabman had insulted him; the soldier had deceived him; and the old man had abused him. He began to think he would have to undergo a great deal in becoming acquainted with the world, and that the Parisians were not so highly civilized as they were generally supposed to be.

At this moment he was interrupted in his reflections by the cries of a woman. The people gathered around her, and he followed their example.

"What is the matter with this woman?" he asked of his neighbor.

"Her husband," replied the spectator, "was a native of Auvergnat, a tradesman, who rented this shop six months ago. Business has not been good with him. His wife is a shrew, and his landlord an unfeeling Jew, who wanted to make him leave the premises. The poor man was unable to endure so many misfortunes, and has just hung himself. From where I stand you could see him [28]

hanging at the end of a cord. They have gone to inform the authorities.”

Eusebe stretched out his arms, thrust the crowd aside, and, with one bound, entered the shop, knife in hand.

“Stop!” cried the spectators. “Stop, young man! You will get into trouble. Wait for the officers. The law forbids you to touch persons who hang themselves. You will wish you had let him alone.”

Without listening to any of these remonstrances, the young man had cut the cord and placed the poor shopkeeper on a chair. With a motion of the hand he had kept back the crowd, that intercepted the air, and, on his knees before the Auvergnat, he watched anxiously for some signs of returning life.

All at once a murmur was heard in the crowd.

“Here comes the commissary! Here is M. Bézieux. Make way for the commissary.”

The magistrate advanced quietly. There was a pleasing benevolence in his expression, as his mild but piercing eyes ran over the group. The representative of the law arrived slowly, and without any appearance of being annoyed, to verify the sinister event that had just been announced to him. [29]

“Where is the suicide?” demanded the magistrate.

For an instant the group was still, appearing to hesitate between anxiety to speak and silence. The bad instincts, however, soon got the ascendancy, and, pointing to Eusebe, three or four persons cried out,—

“It was this young man who cut the cord: it was impossible for us to stop him.”

“He did perfectly right,” said the magistrate. “Although younger than any one of you, he greatly surpasses you all in good sense. You ought to know that the idea is absurd that it is dangerous to assist an individual who attempts to commit suicide, or has been assassinated, before the arrival of the officers of justice. The magistrates come simply to take cognizance of the fact. It is the duty of every good citizen to save the lives of his fellow-men by every means in his power. The stupid tradition which makes the vulgar suppose one ought not to assist a man in danger, is not, however, without foundation. It unfortunately happened in the Middle Ages, and even before and after that period, that some individuals, who, at the risk of their lives, ventured to assist persons attacked by assassins, were arrested under the supposition that they were themselves the murderers, and as such they were executed; but in the enlightened age in which we live, with the means for ascertaining the truth at our command, justice cannot be mistaken.” [30]

“I would not trust to it,—not I,” murmured a ragpicker, who had been a calm spectator of the drama of which the shop had been the scene. “I don’t pretend to say that justice can be mistaken, but I would not trust to it: I, for my part, prefer keeping on the safe side. There are a great many strange things now-a-days.”

“Sir,” said the commissary to Eusebe, who was anxiously watching the convulsive movements of the Auvergnat, “your conduct in this affair merits the highest commendation.”

“Not at all,” replied the young man, timidly.

“I beg your pardon,” rejoined the magistrate, who had misinterpreted Eusebe’s reply: “a man, whoever he may be, is still a man, and as such is a member of the great family which we call humanity.”

“Certainly, sir; you are perfectly right,” said the young man, who sought in vain for *profundity* in the good-natured officer’s reply. He then added, “This man, sir, was driven to this unnatural deed by poverty. I wish to assist him.” [31]

“This desire does you honor.”

“Here,” continued Eusebe, “is a paper of the Bank of France, which is worth fifty louis, and each louis, as you doubtless know, is worth twenty twenty-sous pieces. Be so kind as to give it to him, if he will promise not to make another attempt to commit suicide until his money is gone. It is probable that by that time Providence, who has preserved him to-day, will make provision for his future welfare.”

The magistrate looked at Eusebe attentively. His dress, which was more than plain, his manner of expressing himself, his timidity, his gestures, and even the belt that contained his treasure, puzzled the functionary in a manner which he did not try to conceal. This honorable magistrate, who by years of experience in his profession had learned to form a tolerably correct opinion of men at a glance, was at a loss to know what to think of the singular being he had before him. The clerk, who imagined what was passing in the brain of the commissary, was as much perplexed as his superior. Nevertheless, as a murmur of applause and some words in favor of the young stranger ran through the circle, the worthy functionary thought the time propitious for ventilating his ideas in a short discourse. Addressing himself now to the crowd, and now to Eusebe, he was thus delivered:— [32]

“If it is beautiful and rare to find presence of mind and reason united in youth, it is certainly not less honorable to add to these qualities philanthropy. Not only did you wish to save this man (and you have saved him), but you now desire to assure the existence he owes you. This I call sublime. Such acts, sir, do so great honor to their author that our thanks would be out of place: he finds his reward in his heart. What recompense is to be compared to the consciousness of having been a benefactor? Allow me, sir, to ask your name, in order that I may send it in to the



Administration, which knows how to appreciate such disinterestedness."

"My name is Eusebe Martin."

"Are you a relation of M. Martin, of the Tribunal of Commerce?"

"I think not. I have just arrived from Limousin. I know no one in Paris."

[33]

"You are quite young."

"Twenty-one."

"I am glad of it; for were you not of age I could not accept your gift."

"I don't know," said Eusebe.

The commissary looked at the clerk with astonishment.

"You have a trade?"

"No. I came to Paris to admire civilization and study life."

"Study life!" said the clerk, who was inclined to be humorous. "He is not a physician."

The magistrate was lost in conjectures.

"What is your father's business?" he inquired.

"My father, sir, lives at the Capelette. His chief employment is to seek where truth and falsehood are to be found."

"Be so kind as to accompany me," said the functionary, dryly, making a sign to the crowd to stand aside and let them pass.

Eusebe bowed without replying, and walked along beside the commissary, which allowed him to hear the clerk say to his superior,—

"The poor fellow is stark mad."

To which the magistrate replied,—

"That is very evident."

[34]

Eusebe felt the blood mount to his cheeks, not from fear, but from shame. He thought they took him for a fool because he was so ignorant.

This unexpected departure was interpreted in different ways by the curious, who had not heard the dialogue.

"They are going to give him the *cross*," (of the Legion of Honor,) said a naïve policeman.

"The cross! Oh, very likely, since it is the police that gives the cross now-a-days!" replied a wag, in a white blouse.

"Why not?"

"Because it is not in their power."

"They have power enough to put you where the dogs won't bite you, you blackguard!"

"Hear! hear!"

"Did you hear?" said a woman with a handkerchief over her head; "did you hear? He began by saying the young man did right in cutting the rope, and still he has arrested him all the same."

"Just as though he was obliged to go!"

A quarter of an hour later, a physician hurried through the crowd, crying,—

"Where is the patient?"

The unfortunate shopkeeper was in one corner, studying how he could possess himself of the thousand francs without letting his wife know it, while she had followed the commissary, hoping to get the money without the knowledge of her husband.

[35]

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## CHAPTER V.

[36]

At the door of the commissary's office, the clerk politely begged Eusebe to enter first, introducing him into a room divided into two parts by a screen of green lustring. The dilapidated walls were covered with black designs executed by offenders, who had whiled away the tedium of waiting by cultivating the fine arts. The rays of the sun, struggling to enter at a window that looked into the court, shone feebly on an old black desk, upon which a quantity of stamped papers, that seemed to have the jaundice, were lying. Two clerks, whose appearance was in keeping with the place, were scribbling away mechanically. Eusebe, who thought the adjective *shabby* the proper word with which to qualify the *ensemble*, said to the clerk,—

"Is this, sir, what is called the formidable *appareil* of the courts of justice?"

The magistrate's drudge smiled, and, regarding the young provincialist with a look of benevolence mingled with compassion, replied,—

[37]

"No, sir: the courts of justice are held at the Palace: this may be considered as being one of the laboratories that supply them with materials."

"I don't understand you," said the youth.

"No matter," replied the clerk. "It is to be hoped you will understand better by-and-by. Here comes the commissary. Be seated, and answer the questions he asks you."

"You told me that your name was Eusebe Martin," said the commissary.

"Yes, sir."

"How did you leave your father's house?"

"By taking the Pénicault coach as far as Vierzon."

The commissary and his clerk exchanged significant glances. "Write the replies," said M. Bézieux to the clerk.

"Have you a passport?"

"I don't know what it is."

"Write this reply also."

"What did you say you came to Paris for?"

"I told you I came to Paris to study civilization."

"To what purpose?"

"Why, to be—civilized."

"Ah! very well. Have you, besides this thousand francs, the means of existence?"

[38]

"By limiting my expenses to ten francs per day, with what I have, I shall be able to live five thousand days,—about fourteen years. Here is my money—"

"Very well. Do you know any one in Paris?"

"Yes, four persons: a coachman who insulted me, a soldier who amused himself at my expense, an old man who abused me, and the shopkeeper whose life I saved."

"That is sufficient," said the magistrate. "Your age, the incoherence of your replies, and the large sum of money in your possession make it my duty to detain you until I have more ample information. You need not give yourself any uneasiness, for you will be well treated, and very soon, I trust, you will be set at liberty and restored to your family."

"I am in no hurry. You can take your own time."

For the last half-minute the commissary had been making a fruitless search in all his pockets.

"I have lost my handkerchief," said he to his clerk. "When you go home, call at the house where we have been, and see if it is not there."

"That will be useless," said Eusebe: "I saw a child take it out of your pocket and run away."

[39]

"And you did not tell me!" cried M. Bézieux.

"Unless it be an affair of more than ordinary importance, I trouble myself as little as possible about other people's business. Allow me to offer you another."

Without waiting for a reply, the young man opened his valise and took out a handkerchief, which he politely handed to the commissary, who refused it.

"Thank you," said he: "I will send for one. What is this paper that has just fallen out of your valise?"

"My *port d'armes*."

"Your license to hunt! You have a license to hunt? Why did you not tell me so before? Let me see it."

"Because you did not ask me for it."

M. Bézieux read and reread the paper, and examined the description closely. As Eusebe had two black spots on his left cheek, it was not difficult to discover that the license was his.

"My young friend," said the magistrate, "a thousand pardons for my questions. It was my duty to do as I have done. You are *en règle*: I have nothing more to say to you. You are at liberty to go. With your inexperience, you will, sooner or later, certainly be duped. Should you get into trouble, remember that you have in me a friend."

[40]

"Sir," said Eusebe, "you are very kind, and I am greatly obliged." He took his valise, and, bowing, retired slowly. On the stairs he stopped an instant, then, in a loud voice, as though some one were listening, he said,—

"This is certainly a very singular—a most incomprehensible—affair! This man, who calls himself a minister of justice, sees me do two good deeds and arrests me, saying that I am either a fool or a madman, and it is only on seeing my license to hunt that he is convinced of his error. Now, the license ought, on the contrary, to have confirmed him in his opinion, and made him believe that I was really insane; for I did a very stupid thing the day I gave the Mayor of Moustier twenty-five francs for the permission to kill birds that were none of his."

[41]

## CHAPTER VI.

Eusebe, absorbed in his reflections, walked nearly two hours, gazing to the right and left, without seeing any thing. Finally, he found himself, by accident, on the Place de la Bastille. Great was his astonishment when his eyes rested on the July Column. He could not imagine the utility of this immense tower of bronze. He would gladly have asked some questions of the passers-by, but his former experience deterred him. He approached the column and examined the inscriptions minutely.

"This is very singular," thought he. "Here is a monument erected to the memory of citizens who died for liberty. Is it possible that in 1830, at so recent a period, there were in France, the centre of civilization, persons who were opposed to liberty? This would seem to me improbable, if it were not engraved here. Are there, too, those who are so abandoned as to think of depriving us of our liberty, the greatest of blessings? This was a remarkable event, about which I shall know more so soon as I am able to read the historians of that period." [42]

Hunger put a stop to Eusebe's reflections on the liberties of the people. He walked on, glancing eagerly about, and hoping to see a signboard swinging in the wind and bearing that fallacious legend, "Here they give something to eat and drink," such as he had seen on the rural roads. He had commenced to despair of finding what he sought, however, when the magic word "dinner" greeted his eyes. On closer inspection of the establishment where this promise was held out, he read,—

### RESTAURANT BROCHONS.

*Dîners à 2 francs; déjeuners à 1 franc 25.*

Eusebe fairly sprang towards the door, but entered the place in a humble manner, and took a seat at the table nearest to the window, so that he might satisfy at the same time his stomach and his curiosity.

"What will you have, monsieur?" inquired a waiter.

"Whatever you please," replied Eusebe. "Having been raised in the country, I am not difficult to please." [43]

"After the soup, will monsieur have a beefsteak?"

"As it pleases you."

"Oh, it is all the same to me. Would you prefer a kidney?"

"I have no preference."

"A calf's liver?"

"It is a matter of indifference to me."

"To me also. We have, besides, cutlets, collops, fricasseed chicken, rabbits, partridges, roast chicken, mutton——"

Eusebe caught the word cutlets, as the waiter ran rapidly through the bill of fare, and eagerly interrupted him with,—

"Give me a cutlet."

"How will you have it?" And the waiter again went into a catalogue of which Eusebe understood only the word "broiled."

"I will have it broiled," he exclaimed.

"Cutlet broiled! One!" exclaimed the waiter to the cook.

"Here is a queer servant," said the young provincial, *solus*. Having obtained the cutlet, he devoted himself to it with an appetite sharpened by abstinence and exercise. After the dish had been finished, the waiter again began to run over his bill of fare; but Eusebe interrupted him with,— [44]

"Give me another cutlet."

"Would you not prefer fish of some kind,—salmon, river trout, or——"

"I prefer another cutlet."

"Very well, monsieur. *Chef*, another cutlet—one!"

"The *chef* of this establishment is certainly deaf," thought Eusebe; "and that is a disagreeable infirmity both for himself and for other people."

After the second cutlet, Eusebe demanded a third, and then a piece of cheese. While he was eating his last piece of bread and drinking a glass of water, there was a sudden commotion in the room, and several persons ran to the windows. The provincial thought something extraordinary was in progress, and was all eyes and ears for the time. He could see nothing, at first, but the usual throng of vehicles and pedestrians. Then a tightly closed wagon, escorted by four gendarmes, attracted his attention. The wagon passed on; the persons in the restaurant returned to their seats, and the conversation became animated.

"It is unfortunate, beyond doubt," said a large man with a white cravat, "but we cannot punish too severely those who are trying to bring about anarchy and disorder." [45]

"Poor fellows!" said a young woman: "they have sisters and mothers who weep for them."

"Yes, and mistresses too," added a man whose features were marked by the ravages of the smallpox.

The young woman turned towards the speaker, and, after looking at him fixedly, responded,—

"Yes, monsieur, they have mistresses."

"Poor fellows! they may never see their country again."

"Life is long."

"While they live there is hope."

Eusebe was exceedingly curious. He did not comprehend a word of this conversation, and dared not question anybody. His neighbor, however, a man of rough and swarthy aspect, came to his relief, saying,—

"These people indulge in very absurd reflections."

"I know not what they have said," responded the provincial.

"They alluded to the men who have just passed: they are condemned to transportation." [46]

"May I venture to ask what they mean by transportation?"

"Sending men into exile."

"For what reason?"

"Because they wished to fight for liberty," whispered the swarthy man, who then took his hat, and, casting a glance of defiance at the throng, departed.

Eusebe followed. As he passed out of the door, he heard the waiter exclaim,—

"There goes a verdant one."

Eusebe thought this was intended as an insult, but he was not sure of the sense of the term verdant, and, therefore, gave himself no trouble about it. He took a seat on one of the benches of the Boulevard du Temple, and seemed absorbed in reflection. What he thought, it is impossible for us to say; but when he arose, he might have been heard to murmur,—

"They raise monuments to the memory of citizens who have died for liberty, and they banish others who wish to fight for it. This does not appear consistent,—unless there are two kinds of liberty, one good and the other bad." [47]

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## CHAPTER VII.

Night had come on, which, however, did not disturb Eusebe. He had heard that in Paris night was turned into day,—that Paris was more brilliant at midnight than at noon,—and many other absurdities. While observing the rapid illumination of myriads of gas-lamps, he had begun to think that his provincial anticipations were about to be realized. But when the poor youth, who had spent two hours in hunting a restaurant, wished to find a shelter, he perceived that gaslight fell far short of sunshine. Notwithstanding all the attention he devoted to the multitude of signs, he could nowhere discover the word *auberge*.

His anxiety was great. He noticed a clock, the hands of which marked the hour of half-past ten. He had never before remained out of bed so late.

He had a strong inclination to ask the pedestrians who passed him where he could find a bed; but his mishaps of the morning were vividly remembered. At length he realized that there was no other course to take, and decided to question the first female who passed him. [48]

"A woman," thought Eusebe, "will be milder and more accessible than a man." And as, at this moment, a lady emerged from a neighboring mansion, the provincial ventured to say,—

"Permit me, madame, as a stranger who is very much embarrassed, to ask you for some information."

The lady passed on without condescending to make any reply.

"I have an awkward address," said the provincial. "That person is certainly a great and haughty lady. I had better speak to this one, who has the air of a working-woman."

"Madame," said Eusebe to a female who brushed past him, "a little information, I pray you."

"This is a well-chosen hour for asking questions, truly. What do you want?"

"Inform me, if you please, of a place where I can sleep to-night."

"Pass on your way, you insolent scamp! For whom do you take me, you low-bred fellow? Cease to disturb me, or I will have you arrested."

This cut was too much for the poor Limousin. He felt as if his legs would give way under him. He sank upon a stone step, and, in a despairing tone, asked himself what would become of him. [49]

He was endowed with a strong, healthy constitution. No ordinary peril could frighten him; but this solitude in the midst of a crowd gave him strange sensations: he felt his heart swell, while the tears started.

"Are you sick, monsieur?" inquired a man who was engaged in closing a store.

"No," responded Eusebe, "but I am not much better off."

"Are you hungry?"

"No."

"Do you want money?"

"No."

"Then what is the matter?"

Eusebe arose, revived by the sympathetic curiosity of the man, and replied,—

"I arrived in Paris, this morning, from my native province, and already a coachman has insulted me, a soldier has mocked me, an old man has deceived me, a commissary of police has desired to arrest me, as he thought me crazy, because I had saved a man's life, a waiter in a restaurant has called me *green*, a great lady has refused to answer me, and a working-woman has heaped epithets upon me because I asked her to direct me to an *auberge*. Really, I might inquire whether I am crazy, or whether, instead of coming into a civilized region, I have not fallen among a horde of savages." [50]

The merchant—for such the man evidently was—rejoined,—

"There is, perhaps, some truth in the latter supposition. Come in and take a seat for a moment, and I will aid you."

"Generous man! Blessings on you! God, I am sure, will take account of your good action; and if ever you or your son should visit distant shores, he will prepare for you shelter in a hospitable tent." [51]

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## CHAPTER VIII.

"I am not married," said the merchant, "and, therefore, have no son. If I had one, I would not let him travel. For myself, I will never go farther than Versailles, where I am going to retire. I shall be sure to find a hospitable tent there, for I have an income of ten thousand francs. Finally, I am not a generous man: I am a dealer in porcelain."

"It is not a dull trade," observed Eusebe, sententiously.

"I invited you to come in," continued the merchant, "because I knew by your accent that you were a compatriot. I am from Rochechouart. My name is Lansade."

Eusebe thereupon gave an account of his journey, and detailed the motives for the undertaking,—which, however, the merchant did not comprehend.

"What I can see clearly in all this is, that M. Martin, your father,—I know him well,—wishes you to see the world. It is quite natural. A young man ought to know something of life." [52]

"Such is, indeed, his wish."

"But," continued Lansade, "he should have given you letters of introduction to some friends, who would take pleasure in piloting you through Paris."

"My father has no friends."

"As times go, that is perhaps as well. But one must have acquaintances: one cannot live like a bear."

"My father lives like a philosopher."

"It is the same thing," said Lansade. "Now, since your good star has conducted you to my door, I wish to be useful to you. First, take these cards, which have my address. Do not lose them. I will close my store, and then conduct you to Madame Morin, a lady who rents chambers. She is a fine woman, who will take care of you. I am not sorry to take her a tenant. I shall thereby render service to two persons."

"You are very good, monsieur," said Eusebe: "I cannot tell you how much I am obliged to you."

"It is not worth mentioning. As soon as I have closed my store, we will set out." [53]

"Shall I assist you?" inquired Eusebe.

"I have only three shutters to put up. For twenty-five years I have put them up at night and taken them down in the morning. You may presume that I have learned my task."

So saying, the merchant set about closing his shop. Eusebe was quite another man: his anxiety had vanished. After waiting a few moments, he went to the door. Lansade had made no progress. He stood looking at the shutters, and seemed puzzled.

"Well, this is a nice piece of business!" exclaimed the merchant. "Ah, Pierichou, to-morrow you

shall hear from me."

"What is the matter?" asked Eusebe.

"My porter is a lazy rascal whom I rescued from misery. Two weeks ago, I decided to have the front of my store painted. The painter forgot to number the shutters. Then I told Pierichou to number them with ink. The scamp has numbered them with Spanish white; and now one of the figures is effaced."

"Well, what is the consequence?"

[54]

"The consequence is, that I don't know how to put them up. If I put the first in the second place, they cannot be fastened."

"Excuse me, monsieur, but will you permit me to suggest——"

"What?"

"There is but one number effaced."

"That is quite enough."

"See which numbers remain, and you will know the one you want."

"Precisely so. Thank you."

The merchant closed his store, and, taking the arm of the young provincial, conducted him towards the residence of Madame Morin.

"Madame Morin," said Lansade, on the way, "is an excellent woman. She has been frivolous and fond of pleasure in her time, but I do not attach any importance to that. I am a Voltairian, like your father. I am a philosopher, also, in my way. Between you and me, I may add that there are few now-a-days of my worth: besides, I have amassed a nice little fortune."

They reached the house. Lansade presented Eusebe, who was cordially welcomed by Madame Morin, and then the merchant retired.

"Before you retire to rest," said the landlady to Eusebe, "give me your papers, so that I may give you a proper description on my book."

[55]

"What papers?" asked the young man, astonished.

"Not for my own satisfaction,—because it is sufficient for me to know that M. Lansade brought you here,—but for the police."

At the word "police," Eusebe recalled the scene at the office of the commissary, and hastened to give to Madame Morin his *port d'armes*. She then wrote in her book,—

"Chamber No. 17.—M. Eusebe Martin, born at the Capelette, department of the Upper Vienne, aged twenty-one years, by profession a hunter."

[56]

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## CHAPTER IX.

The chamber which Madame Morin had assigned to Eusebe had been much used. It was in the fourth story. The furniture consisted of a mahogany bedstead, a chest of drawers fancifully ornamented, a bureau, a table, a *causeuse*, two arm-chairs, two ordinary chairs,—covered with damask which had been red, like the color of the curtains at the window,—a clock, and three pictures,—to wit, a steel engraving of Diana, a colored picture of a Calabrian brigand, and a lithograph, designated as the "Entrance to the Port of Buenos Ayres."

The finest room at La Capelette was the saloon, or parlor. The floor had never been waxed. Great curtains of white and yellow calico hung at the windows. A walnut table, some chairs covered with velvet, and an alabaster clock were the only ornaments of the room, where, moreover, no strangers were received.

In making a comparison, the provincial found his new quarters splendid.

[57]

"Behold," thought he, "what they call comfortable! It is one of the benefits of civilization; but it produces effeminacy in the strongest man, and it is better to know how to bear up under adversity."

After this sage reflection, inspired by the counsels addressed by Mentor to Telemachus, Eusebe retired to bed. If his fatigue had been less, he would have very soon comprehended the difference between the mattress of his bed and the soft turf of the isle of Calypso.

The youth closed his eyes and thought of his father, who by this time was sound asleep. He saw himself departing from La Capelette. All the little incidents of his journey recurred to his mind. He rejoiced that he had met with Lansade. He was glad that he had found Madame Morin such an excellent woman, and vowed an eternal remembrance of her kindness. Then he wondered why madame had written in her book that he was a hunter by profession. He thought, also, of the trouble experienced by the porcelain-merchant in closing his store, and of his not knowing, after a practice of thirty years, which shutter ought to go up first. This led him to think of the sagacity of the savages, who, in the midst of a forest, tell by the curve of a blade of grass what enemy they have to fear. He endeavored to discover on which side was the superiority; and he fell into a sound sleep without having solved the question.

[58]

On the following morning, at five o'clock, Eusebe awoke, and was somewhat surprised at not seeing the projecting beams on the ceiling, his gun hanging on the wall, and his three favorite ornaments on the mantel. A second, however, sufficed for him to recollect where he was. He leaped from his couch, and threw open the window.

"Behold Paris," he exclaimed, "the city *par excellence*,—the crown of the world,—the city of a thousand palaces,—the—"

He paused. A profound silence reigned around him. The steps of a belated scavenger alone disturbed the quiet of the sleeping city. The eyes of the provincial were strained to see the thousand palaces: he saw little more than a throng of brick chimneys. The prospect was not enchanting. He closed the window, and proceeded to dress himself.

Five o'clock sounded. Eusebe made the sign of the cross, and waited to hear the three strokes of the *angelus*, to which he had been accustomed at that hour; but he listened in vain. [60]

"This is the hour," said he, "when my father rises to walk in the fields and commune with nature. Pierre carries the horses. Big Katy goes to the town to sell milk. Monsieur the Curé of Moustier prepares for mass. Here everybody is asleep. Is it progress that delays, or routine that advances?"

Not being able to resist the desire to see the city, the young man descended the stairs, found the street-door open, and went out.

This would be the moment to give a rapid description of the Boulevards of Paris at six o'clock in the morning, and to depict the surprises and misconceptions of the young provincial; but, unhappily, descriptions give too little information to those who read and too much trouble to those who write. Then, if they rest the reader, we must admit that they encourage the bad habit of going to sleep over a volume.

Eusebe Martin was neither astonished nor mistaken. He had dreamed, in his country home, of a city built of gold and paved with rubies and emeralds. He saw only a mass of stones and mud. He walked for some time without raising his eyes, and then, looking about him, without giving serious attention to any thing, he decided that the best thing he could do was to go and consult his Voltairian friend, the merchant, who would not fail to give him good advice. [61]

Lansade received the young man with open arms, and detained him to breakfast. As soon as they were seated at the table, the porcelain-dealer began to question him earnestly.

"You see, my young friend, I did not wish, last evening, to be intrusive, or to aggravate your annoyances, by inquiring into the precise object that brought you to Paris. But I hope that now, since you seek counsel of me, you will tell me truly what are your intentions, and what is your aim."

"I have already told you that I have come to visit the capital of the civilized world, to see life, study civilization, and, if possible, to distinguish the true from the false; and, finally, I have come here in obedience to my father's wishes."

"Verily," responded Lansade, "I do not comprehend a word of what you tell me. To see life there is but one way, and that is, to live. To study civilization you had no need to come so far: it is everywhere. Do you believe Limoges is peopled by savages? They traffic there as well as elsewhere, and perhaps better. Civilization, you see, is commerce, and nothing else. Work is truth." [62]

Eusebe responded,—

"Then I will work." [63]

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## CHAPTER XI.

The porcelain-merchant warmly applauded the resolution announced by Eusebe.

"But what will you do?" he inquired of the provincial.

Eusebe confessed that he would have some difficulty in answering that question. Lansade resumed:—

"You had better reflect. Spend a few days in diverting your mind with the sights of Paris. Endeavor to make acquaintances. On my part, I will look about for something that may be agreeable to you."

A young man, with a smiling countenance, at this moment entered the store, and exclaimed,—

"Good-morning, Monsieur Lansade! Here are your two vases. How do you like them? Are they sufficiently finished?"

"Very good, indeed," replied Lansade, after carefully examining the paintings on the vases, which were ornamented in the old style. "Very good, Monsieur Buck. When you choose to take pains, [64]

you do your work better than anybody else. Here are twenty-five francs. Write me a receipt."

"A pound sterling. The price is certainly not excessive, Monsieur Lansade; and yet you insist upon a receipt to complete the transaction. Well, give me pen and paper. If ever I become a celebrated painter,—which I certainly shall,—you will have an autograph which will be worth its weight in gold."

"So much the better for us both, Monsieur Buck."

Paul Buck was an excellent and worthy young man, who dreamed of glory. The son of a German painter on porcelain, he thoroughly understood that decorative art, and might have earned the means of living handsomely if he had only been industrious. Unhappily, he regarded his profession with contempt. He aspired to be a great painter, and only decorated vases in order to procure the necessaries of life. Lansade, who held Paul in high esteem on account of his frankness and honesty of disposition, introduced him to Eusebe.

Buck was a physiognomist. The countenance of Eusebe pleased him, and he invited the provincial to pay him a visit.

"You wish to study the comedy of human life? I will give you a box gratis."

[65]

Eusebe expressed his gratitude, and, in the simple warmth of his heart, vowed to the painter eternal friendship.

"Friendship!" said the painter. "If you have brought it from the provinces, I will accept it most willingly; but at Paris we have no more friendship. The secret was lost long ago. If we cannot be friends, we will be two *bons camarades*."

"Can you tell me the difference," inquired Eusebe, "between friendship and good-fellowship?"

"Nothing can be clearer," replied the artist, as he drew from his pocket two pieces of colored glass. "Look at these. This piece was manufactured about three hundred years ago, by a process known to the artists of the Middle Ages. The color is made a part of the glass itself. If you break it, you find the red within as well as without. Now look at the other piece. That was made only a week ago. At the first glance, it appears like the other. But break it, and you find that the red has not penetrated beyond the surface. Do you see?"

"Well, this illustrates the difference between friendship and boon-companionship. Friendship permeates the heart of man; good-fellowship only gives it a superficial tint."

[66]

"I comprehend," said Eusebe.

"To-day, the manner by which color may be rendered permanent and friendship lasting is ranked among the lost arts," continued the painter. "He who discovers the first will become rich; he who finds the second will be happy."

"If you will consent," stammered Eusebe, "we will seek them together."

"Agreed: it will not kill us," responded Paul; and they separated.

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## CHAPTER XII.

[67]

The son of the respectable philosopher M. Martin had now been at Paris for two weeks. He spent the day in various ways, but in the evening he was invariably found at one of the places of amusement.

In order to become acquainted with the different features of the French stage, he had resolved to visit all the theatres of the French capital, commencing with the most distant.

In the first place, he visited the "Délassements Comiques." On that occasion the attraction consisted of a "Review of the Year," an allegorical spectacle in fourteen tableaux. Eusebe was unable to comprehend the drift of the piece, and returned to his lodgings in a melancholy mood.

On the following evening the provincial went to the "Folies Dramatiques," where they gave another "review." He could not comprehend this effort at all, and retired before the close of the piece. His mind was more hopelessly puzzled than it had been on the previous evening.

On the third evening he went to the "Variétés," where there was another "review." This time the provincial thought his brain was turned.

[68]

"Ah," said Eusebe, "I am the most ignorant being in the world, or else all the comedians and those who listen to them are fools. Why do they paint their faces like Indians? Why do they wear costumes which do not belong to any nation? Why do the public laugh so loudly at seeing them deceive a foolish old man? Why do they applaud when the comedians make use of words with a double meaning? Why do they sing *à propos* of nothing? How do they manage to speak my mother-tongue so that I cannot understand it? I will go no more."

On the following evening, however, he resumed his visits, saying that perhaps the theatres were not all alike!

He passed five hours at the "Gaieté," listening to the history of a lost child. On the ensuing evening he went to the "Ambigu," to witness the representation of a drama based upon the history of a foundling. Subsequently, at the "Porte Saint-Martin," he had the immense satisfaction



of seeing in a single piece a child lost and found, then lost again, and, finally, recovered.

At the "Français," at the "Odéon," at the "Gymnase," at the "Vaudeville," and at the "Palais Royal," the provincial saw the same piece in fifteen different forms: a young man wished to wed a young woman, and, notwithstanding a thousand obstacles, he succeeded in accomplishing his object. [69]

"When I have seen two dozen of them married," said Eusebe, "I will save my money." [70]

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## CHAPTER XIII.

Eusebe imparted his reflections to his new friend, Paul Buck, the painter. The artist smiled, and said,—

"Eusebe,—my friend Eusebe,—what pleasure your society affords me! Since I made your acquaintance, I have sought to understand the sympathy I feel for you, and I have hitherto been unable to comprehend the cause. Those who say such sentiments arise without cause are fools. I like you, and now I know why. You were born an artist; and it is, perhaps, for the best that your father, whom they accuse of having neglected to cultivate your intellect, did not spoil your nature by routine culture. You know nothing, barbarian that you are; but you have good instincts, since you have not fallen, as I feared you would, into admiration of the *rengaines* of the modern theatre."

"Tell me, pray, what you mean by *rengaines*." [71]

"The *rengaines*, my dear fellow, are all the familiar commonplaces and vulgar and hackneyed sentiments. The narrow and plodding spirits have formed a museum, which they open, at a specified hour, to human stupidity. The crowd have visited the museum for centuries, and departed every evening, perfectly satisfied, without seeming to be aware that the spectacle always amounts to the same thing."

"I believe I comprehend you. You do not wish me to share the opinion of the crowd."

"I should pity you if you did. Observe: I am fortunate in having a feeling of the good, the true, and the just. The sentiment of the beautiful—which is the same thing—is born in some men: it cannot be acquired. Happy are those who possess it! They may be hooted and scorned; but they will live in a world of enchantment to which they alone have access. Their lives will be totally unlike the existence of those who rail at them; and, while the latter may be cast down by the petty trials of every-day life, the privileged ones soar into those regions where they revel in the perfection of the ideal,—the true."

"Are you one of those favored ones, Paul Buck?"

"I am."

"Well, then, by the affection you say you bear me, and by the love of my father, whose wisdom you admire, tell me where the true may be found." [72]

"In art:—nowhere else," responded Paul Buck. And, lighting his pipe, he turned the conversation to other topics.

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## CHAPTER XIV.

Eusebe understood that he did not understand. The provincial felt humiliated because he could not catch the sense of certain phrases and words which were, doubtless, clear enough to Paul Buck. The painter, who cared more for a listener than for an adept who understood him, did not take the trouble to explain the theories he promulgated.

As a consequence, Eusebe grew uneasy of the conversation; and, as Buck perceived this, he conducted his friend to a café, where artists, "models," and other people fond of lounging and chat, were wont to congregate.

But there Eusebe found the language used to be still more incomprehensible than that of Paul. The conversation consisted of dissertations on the æsthetic in art, intermingled with cant phrases and philosophical reflections.

To this resort the provincial accompanied his friend two or three times. He would undoubtedly have finished by understanding the peculiar language of the artistic assemblage, if chance had not given him another occupation and preserved him from this great danger. He escaped Scylla to be sacrificed at Capua. [74]

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## CHAPTER XV.

[75]

The occupation of Eusebe consisted in going to the theatre every evening, an amusement which he now thought as sublime as he formerly thought it despicable. *Voici pourquoi.*

Faithful to his programme, he had visited the "Opéra Comique." The evening on which accident conducted him to the Rue Favart, the bills announced "The Black Domino." Our hero was entirely ignorant of the meaning of the word "domino;" but he courageously entered, saying to himself that since he had seen a dozen persons assassinated at the "Gaieté" and at the "Porte Saint-Martin," and double that number married at the "Gymnase" and at the "Français," nothing worse could possibly happen to him.

Installed in an orchestra-chair, he looked around at the spectators with profound surprise.

"What!" said he to himself; "these are the same faces, the same men, the same women, I have seen elsewhere!"

And he was right. At Paris there are two thousand persons who go to the theatres every evening for nothing,—artists, literary men, or employés of certain branches of the government, besides a large number of persons who are neither the one nor the other, but who know an *artiste* of the circus, who has introduced them to an actor of the "Vaudeville," who knows a musician of the "Variétés," who is intimate with the secretary of the "Porte Saint-Martin," who is the friend of M'lle X. of the Grand Opera, who is the mistress of Binet the vaudevillist. Then there are the wives of journalists, the mistresses of journalists, the friends of journalists, the comrades of journalists, the porters of journalists, and the washerwomen of authors. [76]

Eusebe was lost in a thousand conjectures. He was asking himself how he should ever succeed in getting accustomed to the habits and tastes of a people whom he saw only at a distance, when his neighbor at the right, a lean, sallow individual, nudged him with his elbow, saying,—

"Ah! there is Mdme. de Cornacé."

"Where?" asked Eusebe.

"There, in the private box to the right,—the lady with curls *à l'anglaise*, wearing a low-necked dress." [77]

"I do not know her."

"Indeed!"

"Pardon me if I am indiscreet," said Eusebe; "but——"

"No indiscretion," replied his neighbor. "All Paris knows her. Her mother was a dealer in butter at the *Halle*. She was very handsome, and when she married M. de Cornacé, who was a ruined nobleman, she brought him a dowry of one hundred and fifty thousand francs. To-day they have three millions, thanks to an intimacy that exists between Mdme. de Cornacé and Froment, the banker. You see she is a woman of the times."

"How so?"

"How? Why, that is not difficult to comprehend."

"I do not understand you, sir."

"When one does not understand French, one ought not to enter into conversation," replied the neighbor, angrily, turning his back to Eusebe.

Our hero was on the point of assuring his interlocutor that it was not his intention to be inquisitive, when the conductor gave the signal to begin the overture. The son of M. Martin had never heard any music but that of the vaudeville. From the first measures executed by the orchestra, he experienced certain strange sensations, for which, however, he did not pause to account. Enchanted by the melody, he found himself isolated in the middle of the crowd, and a prey to emotions that were unknown to him, and really inexpressible. [78]

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## CHAPTER XVI.

[79]

There is nothing that penetrates the heart, and prepares it for love, like music.

The curtain had risen, and *Horace* had recounted to *Juliano* his adventure with the beautiful unknown, without exciting the slightest interest on the part of Eusebe. The heroes of Scribe talked of love, a something unknown to the provincial, who would have been wholly ignorant of the word, had he not met with it in pronouncing his prayers.

The entrance of the two masked women made a strange impression on him. His heart beat violently, the blood rushed to his temples, a cold, trembling sensation pervaded his whole frame, and when the woman who personated *Angèle* removed her black velvet mask, he experienced one of those indescribable sensations of delight which nature accords to those only who have not sinned against her.

Trembling, and his eyes intently fixed on the lips of the cantatrice, Eusebe Martin forgot the universe: he felt his blood coursing rapidly through his veins, and his heart expand within his breast. [80]

He remained in his seat between the acts. One thought alone occupied him: should he see the

beautiful creature again who had produced such a magic effect on him? He closed his eyes, in order the better to see her in imagination.

Meanwhile the curtain rose for the second time. During the first three scenes *Angèle* did not appear. Her absence was the first real disappointment Eusebe had ever experienced. Up to that time his life had been as calm and monotonous as the surface of a lake.

All at once his heart leaped with joy: she had just entered. Pale and agitated, he did not breathe freely until the good *Jacinthe* had promised that she would do all in her power to conceal *Angèle*.

"Excellent woman!" cried Eusebe.

His neighbor at the right could not help smiling, while the lean gentleman on his left gave vent to his feelings by grumbling.

Eusebe paid no attention to these demonstrations. His chin resting on his hands, which he had placed on the back of the chair in front of him, he watched intently the impossible action of the piece. He had already forgotten that what he saw was only fiction. His joy or grief augmented or diminished with the development of the plot. If *Angèle* succeeded in extricating herself from one of her thousand difficulties, he breathed again. On the contrary, when a new disaster befell the poor abess, the heart of Eusebe bled for her, and his eyes filled with tears. Twenty times was he on the point of springing upon the stage and saying, "I will defend you: don't be afraid." Fortunately, *Angèle* succeeded without his assistance in escaping the snares M. Scribe had prepared for her.

[81]

What would the audience have said, what would the police have done, if Eusebe had executed his design? Nothing, probably. The public are amused by madmen, and the police interfere only in cases with which they are familiar. By remaining in his seat, our poor provincial caused himself to be put out-of-doors.

The curtain rose for the third time. *Angèle* had just arrived at the convent, and sang the famous rondeau—

"Ah! what a night!"

She detailed pathetically the perils she had encountered during the frightful night,—recounted her adventures with the drunken soldiers, the thief, who had robbed her of her golden cross, and the student, who was content to steal only a kiss.

[82]

The neighbor at the left, a fat man, with a good-natured physiognomy, leaned towards Eusebe and said,—

"How confoundedly stupid! She has succeeded in escaping unperceived,—a miracle!—and now, instead of going to her cell and changing her costume, she remains there like a fool to sing. I would give a trifle if they would come and take her by surprise."

"You are a wretch!" cried Eusebe. "I am half inclined to strangle you."

"You are extremely insolent, sir!"

"You are a coward!"

"Chut! chut!" "Silence!" "Out with him!" suggested several voices.

The fat gentleman grasped at the young man's collar; but Eusebe foiled his design by planting a heavy blow full in his face, which inconvenienced him not a little, but not sufficiently to prevent his calling for assistance. A policeman soon made his appearance, and Eusebe was very unceremoniously shown into the street.

At any other time he would have submitted without a word; but when he thought that the angelic creature with whom he was so charmed had disappeared forever, he thrust the public functionary aside and hurried away like a maniac.

[83]

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## CHAPTER XVII.

[84]

Eusebe returned directly to his lodgings. For a long time he sat in his room, his elbows resting on the table, and his face buried in his hands. His heart had taken possession of his head, and he did not try to account for what was passing within him. Although he had no light, he closed his eyes, and the cantatrice appeared before him, encircled by a resplendent halo.

He threw himself on his bed without undressing, but sleep he could not. One by one he took off his garments, throwing some one way and some another. He listened to the clock every time it struck even the fractions of the hour, and every quarter seemed to him a century. He breathed heavily, and a cold perspiration covered his brow, while he rolled about on his couch, grating his teeth, and occasionally muttering,—

"Mon Dieu! will the day never dawn?"

And then he found relief in tears.

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The day at last dawned; but Eusebe, pale and his eyes sunken, slept soundly. At a late hour, a noise in the street awoke him. He rose up, and, looking wildly around the room, thought he had been dreaming. But the incidents of the previous evening, and the sleepless hours of the night, were soon clear to his recollection.

"No, it was not a dream," said he. "I was never at the same time so happy and so miserable: this woman, I see her still. Why does she exert such an influence over me? Last night I tried to banish her from my thoughts; but I was wrong, for I am never so happy as when I am thinking of her. I will see her again this evening, and to-morrow, and—forever."

The day wore slowly away. The doors of the theatre were scarcely opened, when Eusebe was installed in the first row of the orchestra-chairs, where he awaited the commencement of the play. But the patience of the poor provincial was destined to go unrecompensed. That evening they played "Zampa; or, The Marble Bride;" and it was in vain that he watched for the angelic creature who was the subject of his thoughts. He returned home sadly disappointed, but determined to retrace his steps on the following evening. [86]

The next day he was sure of realizing his hopes. Twenty times he stopped to read the large posters of the theatre. He had bought the programme, and long before the doors of the theatre opened, seated in a neighboring café, he read it for the hundredth time:—

### THE BLACK DOMINO.

Comic Opera, In Three Acts.

SCRIBE, AUBER.

Mademoiselle ADÉONNE will continue her *débuts* in the *rôle* of ANGELE.

"What a pretty name!" said Eusebe to himself. "Adéonne! How euphonious! how it resembles her! Adéonne! She is the only one on earth who is worthy to bear it."

At length the hour arrived. He entered the theatre and was soon intoxicated with the pleasure of gazing at her whom he loved. This time he took a lively interest in the piece. He followed, step by step, this singular and improbable story, the product of the imagination of the most skilful dramatist of modern times. From the theatre he returned slowly to his lodgings. [87]

"I am like *Horace de Massarena*," said he, as he entered his chamber. "The love of the hero of the piece enabled him to discover his own. I love her, while he is only playing comedy; I love her truly and sincerely, and am happy in the thought that I shall see her often. When I see her I forget all else: it is impossible to describe my feelings. How fortunate that man is who sings with her! If I could only sing! But I cannot, and I am not sure that, near her, I should be able to content myself with being a simple actor. I would not confine myself to the words of the author, to a studied lesson of love: she would not believe me, I am sure. It seems to me that I would find something else to say to her, or I would remain silent. I would throw myself at her feet; I would not take my eyes off of her; I would prove my devotion in a thousand ways!"

For three weeks, Eusebe did not miss a night at the Comic Opera. He was happy, but confided his secret to no one. This love, egotistic and true,—true because it was egotistic, and egotistic because it was true,—would perhaps have been of short duration, but for the intermeddling of this meddling world. [88]

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### CHAPTER XIX.

Paul Buck came one morning to see his friend.

"I come," said he, "to have you go with me to see the house Lansade has just bought at Versailles."

"What do you want to see it for?" asked Eusebe.

"What do I want to see it for? Why, to see it! Is that not reason enough?"

"I don't want to see it."

"Nor I; but that would displease Lansade."

"Ah!"

"The fact is, we cannot well avoid going."

"Why?"

"Because he is our friend. He is a bore, I grant you, but he is nevertheless a sterling good fellow: he has done me many a good turn, and you have told me yourself that but for his kind offices you do not know what would have become of you in this great city."

"True," replied Eusebe.

"And, consequently, you ought to avail yourself of every opportunity to make yourself agreeable to him." [90]

"Without doubt. But—I cannot go: an affair of importance renders it necessary for me to be at Paris this evening at seven o'clock."

"Nothing is easier: we will return by the six o'clock train."

"Very well: I will go."

Arm in arm, the two friends directed their steps towards the Western depot.

Eusebe was silent and thoughtful, and so was Paul Buck. Eusebe was thinking of Adéonne, and Paul thought of what his friend could be thinking of.

In the car they met a merchant, named Bonnaud, an intimate friend of Lansade. It was necessary to break the silence and engage in one of those trivial conversations so tedious to persons preoccupied by a single idea. Fortunately, the merchant was loquacious, and the two friends were content to let him do most of the talking.

"When we reflect," cried Bonnaud, "that formerly it took three hours and a half, and sometimes five, to go to Versailles, and that now thirty-five minutes suffice for the whole trip, it is almost incredible! It took me, in 1829,—the year of the cold winter,—five days and nights to come from Bordeaux, which is to-day a journey of only thirteen hours! It is astounding!" [91]

"Nothing more so," replied Paul, complacently assenting.

"And to think," continued Bonnaud, "that there are in the world so many ignorant and insincere people——"

"There are a great many," interrupted Buck.

"What?"

"Ignorant and insincere people, as you just remarked."

"True; ignorant and insincere people, who pretend—what do I say? who deny—that this is an age of progress."

"What! there are individuals so stupid, so benighted, as to maintain such absurdities!" returned the painter, rising angrily: "that is not possible!"

"Yes, my dear sir, there are such people,—more of them than you may imagine: I know many such."

"Well, my best wishes to them, but their intellects are sadly obscured."

Eusebe, who was ignorant of what the artists call "*faire poser un bourgeois*" (to make a fool of one), looked at his friend with astonishment. The merchant, however, continued, with an air of importance:— [92]

"Since devastating wars have ceased to ravage our glorious country, the arts, the other victorious weapon of France, have secured to her conquests of far greater importance, to say nothing of steam, which would have given the world to the great Napoleon; and then the astonishing discoveries of chemistry! But, leaving all that out of the question, what is so grand and surprising as to see the events that agitate the universe heralded from point to point by numerous metal threads bordering the roads and traversing the land? The electric telegraph would suffice to illustrate our age! And then photography!——"

"No more, I beg of you!" interrupted Paul Buck. "I will say nothing of the electric wires, although they disfigure the landscape; but not a word of photography before breakfast, I insist: it would bring bad luck."

"I respect every thing, even the most absurd superstition. It is my inflexible tolerance for opinions of every description which has rendered me hostile to those who would mar the grandeur of our age and check our progress towards a perfect civilization." [93]

The painter, who could hardly restrain an inclination to laugh, bit his lips, and turned to look out at the door. Then Bonnaud, who was determined to have an interlocutor at all hazards, addressed himself to Eusebe:—

"Are you not of my opinion, Monsieur Martin?"

The young provincial was absorbed and abstracted, and only caught the last words of the garrulous merchant. Seeing that it was absolutely necessary to make some sort of response, Eusebe repeated, mechanically, some of the phrases which constituted the staple of his father's philosophical observations:—

"In the first place, before responding, it is necessary to clear up certain points which have been left involved in obscurity. Who can tell where to find the false and where the true, since the greatest minds have differed concerning them? Who can tell where progress commences, and where it ends? Who will venture to affirm that in an extreme degree of civilization the people are more or less happy, when men of profound and enlightened judgment have confessed that the last word of civilization is the first of barbarism?" [94]

Bonnaud was stupefied. He had nothing to say. Like all persons who have no opinions of their own about men and things, and who, from ignorance or lack of judgment, accept those of others, the merchant was not tenacious of the views he had expressed. At length he recovered his balance so far as to murmur,—

“Certainly. Concerning every thing there is a pro and a con.”

Paul, thinking that Eusebe had penetrated his intention to quiz the merchant, continued to gratify his humor:—

“Assuredly: M. Martin is right. He has told the precise truth, and I can prove it. He belongs to a race who have been at the head of civilization, and who have fallen back into their primitive condition. When were they happiest? I cannot tell; nor can you. You must admit that it would be impertinent to the last degree to assert that the residents of Versailles are to-day happier than were those of Salente under the wise and far-sighted administration of Idomeneus.”

“I do not say so,” rejoined Bonnaud. “But their condition must depend, in a great measure, upon the character of their prefects.”

They had now reached the end of their journey, and the young men alighted, laughing immoderately at the simplicity of their companion, who, for his part, looked to the right and the left, as if trying to discover what excited their mirth. [95]

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## CHAPTER XX. [96]

The house that Lansade had purchased for his retirement was one of those ordinary country mansions which are so dear to the *petits bourgeois* of Paris. Situated on the summit of a small eminence, it could be seen at a considerable distance. This modest elevation had been preferred by the merchant to sites of a more commanding description, and which could have been obtained at a more advantageous price. The fortunate purchaser was persuaded that all persons who journeyed from Paris to Versailles, and from Versailles to Paris, would eagerly inquire,—

“To whom does that pretty piece of property belong? Who resides in that charming cottage on the hill yonder?”

And then some well-informed traveller would respond,—

“It is the chateau of M. Lansade, a very rich merchant, who has retired from business.”

This idea seemed to fascinate Lansade, and he was never weary of trying to improve the aspect of his house. [97]

The “retired merchant” was seated in front of his mansion, watching for the arrival of his guests, in order to enjoy their astonishment at the sight of his splendid establishment. As soon as he caught sight of them, he shouted,—

“Hurry, my young friends; breakfast is waiting. I had ceased to look for you, upon my word. I was about to go to the table. What do you think of my little establishment?”

The painter and Bonnaud went into ecstasies, the first for politeness, and the second in honest admiration. Eusebe was silent. After considerable trifling chat, the party seated themselves at the table.

Those who reside in the suburbs of Paris are wholly ignorant of the charms of a rural repast: they live as they would live in the city. Those who live on the borders of the Seine eat no other fish than those purchased in the market of Paris. Let any one who does not credit this singularity go to Asnières or to Chaton, and he will be convinced.

Lansade pressed his guests to satisfy their appetite, and made earnest inquiries as to the quality of the dishes.

“How do you find that capon?” [98]

“Delicious,” answered Buck, who was obliged to keep up the conversation while Bonnaud ate and Eusebe mused. “Delicious! Your poultry-yard is, then, already populated?”

“Not at all. But I have a friend in the market of the Vallée. When I wish to obtain game or poultry, I can always procure the best. I have only to write three days previous. Will you try the *matelotte*?”

“Directly. You are in a convenient place for fresh fish.”

“Yes, the river is quite near; but the fishermen prefer to send their fish to Paris: they may get a lower price there, but they are sure of a sale. As to fruits, however, the case is different: none can be procured in the whole *commune*.”

“That is a trifling misfortune.”

“Monsieur Martin, what is the matter with you? You appear sad!”

“No.”

“You do not eat?”

“Pardon me, my dear Lansade.”

“It is true,” said Bonnaud: “monsieur is quite abstracted.”

“Eusebe,” cried Buck, “these gentlemen speak truly. You have something concealed from us. Are you unhappy? Are you home-sick, my boy? are you anxious to behold your native meadows? Do these maples awaken in you a desire to see once more your tall chestnuts? and the good things [99]

spread before us by our friend Lansade, do they remind you of your own rural repasts in the paternal mansion?"

"No."

"Then perhaps you have left, seated on the banks of the Vienna, a young shepherdess, who sadly awaits your return?"

Lansade laughed rather boisterously. He and his mercantile friend had drunk very little, but nevertheless more than usual.

"Well," continued Buck, "let Eusebe swear to us that he is not in love, and I will leave him in peace."

"I never swear."

"Then admit that you are in love, my melancholy friend."

"It is true," replied Eusebe.

This confession was made with some reluctance, because delicate souls always dislike to allow a third person to intrude between them and the object of their affection. But Eusebe did not know how to lie, and did not wish to learn. As he felt his heart swelling and his eyes moistening, he arose and went out. He seated himself in a chair in the garden; and there Paul soon rejoined him. [100]

"I gave you pain, my gentle savage," said the painter. "Pardon me, I beg of you. I am sorry, above all, that I was not more guarded before those vulgar fellows. You are angry with me?"

"No: I even intended to tell you every thing,—but at another time. I know not whether it was because of the presence of our friends, or because I was not prepared, but your persistence provoked me."

"Ah! I am grieved. I do not like to meddle with the palette of a comrade: each to his own color. But, since we have touched upon the subject, tell me all. I can serve you, perhaps. I also have loved."

"Is that true?" said Eusebe, rising.

"At least ten times; perhaps more."

Eusebe sank back upon the seat, saying, sadly,—

"It is useless. You will not comprehend me."

Paul insisted. His friend finished by yielding to his importunities, and related all that had occurred to him, and all he had felt. Buck, notwithstanding his frivolity, became grave and serious as he listened to the details of this affair of the heart. [101]

"Poor fellow!" said he. "It is unlucky that your first love should be inspired by a comédienne, and, above all, by this one."

"Why?"

"For many reasons. You must see her no more."

"Impossible!"

"Ay, I know what you would say. If you could not see her any more, you would die."

"I might not die; but I could not live."

The voice of Lansade was now heard:—

"Come, messieurs: the coffee is getting cold." [102]

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## CHAPTER XXI.

Paul preceded Eusebe in entering the house, and apprized the two merchants of the revelation his friend had just made.

Then occurred a lamentable, but quite common, manifestation of human perversity. These two business-men, who would not for all the world have done a decidedly bad action,—these two plain store-keepers, who even spoke with respect of the woman at the street-stand who had but one lover,—and the artist who had often observed, in passing unfortunate girls in the street, "These unfortunate creatures are more to be pitied than blamed,"—these three men, in fine, who in the whole course of their lives had not failed in showing respect for the gentler sex, indulged in invectives against Adéonne, with whom neither of them had any personal acquaintance.

"Monsieur Martin," said Lansade, "I pity you with all my heart. I was quite right when I said that your father should have recommended you to the care and guidance of some rational person. In that case this would not have occurred. Understand me. I am not an enemy of pleasure. I have been young, and I am not too far advanced to remember the amusements of my youthful days. I should not have been displeased to see you enamored of a respectable maiden. But a comédienne!—an actress! Really, I hardly know how to express the grief this affair causes me." [103]

"You are right, my good Lansade," said Paul Buck. "It grieves me, also, that Eusebe should have been so unfortunate as to be victimized by one of these *filles de marbre*, these women without

heart, without honor, accustomed to excesses, despising all the pleasures of the world, because they have completely exhausted their sensations."

Bonnaud was not the man to allow such an opportunity for airing his eloquence to escape him. He immediately began to deliver a tirade against women in general and actresses in particular.

"Ah! Lansade will tell you," said he, "that I, too, have been an admirer of beauty in my time, and that I was not unsuccessful. I had plenty of money; but never, never was I caught by a comédienne. No, indeed: I was not so stupid."

"One moment," said Eusebe: "do you know M'lle Adéonne?"

[104]

"Only too well," replied Paul Buck, earnestly. "Like others of her class, this woman has neither youth, beauty, nor talent. She owes every thing to the *claqueurs* and her perfumer. This creature, my friend, is deception personified."

"I do not understand you," murmured Eusebe.

"I never take an indirect road to reach an object," said Lansade. "I will make you comprehend. Your Adéonne, like others of her class, seeks in the morning to whom she will sell herself in the evening, and in the evening she is only troubled about the price of her affections. Innocent as you may be, you would not be the son of M. Martin if your heart did not swell with indignation at the idea of one of God's creatures selling herself for gold. Do you comprehend now?"

Eusebe did not venture to respond. Paul resumed:—

"Adéonne is, they say, charming; but, you see, to woo persons of that description, it is necessary to be without heart and to have plenty of money."

"You astonish me," muttered Eusebe. "I do not question what you have told me; and I thank you for having opened my eyes to the truth."

"Bravo!" cried Lansade. "Here's to the health of your good father. Let us change the subject."

[105]

Eusebe took advantage of a moment when Lansade was engaged in showing his grounds to Paul and Bonnaud, to escape from the house and fly towards Paris as if pursued by an enemy. Absorbed in thought, he reached the theatre and entered. From the first he fixed his attention upon the beautiful Adéonne, and lost sight of the audience entirely.

If actresses only knew of the raging passions they kindle in the hearts of youthful spectators, they would, perhaps, have a higher estimate of their own attractions.

Eusebe returned to his lodgings filled with strange dreams and fired with strange impulses. He sat, musing, long after the candle had burned down into the socket. Suddenly he arose, as if he had at last reached a decision, and exclaimed,—

"She sells herself! I will be her purchaser."

[106]

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## CHAPTER XXII.

If a woman has been reading this story, she will probably throw it aside at this place, with the contemptuous remark that Eusebe is an absurd rustic, destitute of interest, without heart, and all that, because the poor youth did not break his glass at the breakfast at Viroflay, and exclaim,—

"You are three cowards! You insult a woman, a charming creature, who has done you no wrong, and whom I love. You have lied! You are unworthy, all three of you, to kiss the toe of her boot. You shall give me satisfaction!"

I ask pardon of the lady, but there would be no sense in the remark.

If Eusebe had used, with passionate vehemence, all these and other fine phrases, he would simply have shown himself familiar with the literature of the Boulevard (yellow-covered literature).

The language of truth and nature no longer exists. Society, lamentable to say, has adopted the favorite style of the stage. I know that the theatre professes to copy the world as it is; but it has exaggerated every thing, under the specious pretext that the simple truth will not amuse. Swelling words, violent gestures, absurd mannerisms, empty phrases, and unnatural dialogue are cherished upon the stage, and thence communicated to society. Life has become but a transcript of a drama at the "Porte Saint-Martin" or a poor copy of a comedy at the "Odéon."

[107]

Under the pressure of a great sorrow, the true man is always, no matter what his temperament, gloomy and bowed down. Speak not of griefs that are expressed by gesticulations, or of sorrows which are worked off in loud complaints. They are false and affected.

Our age, which has been called the age of photography, is so oppressed with mimicry that everybody mourns in the same style for the father, mother, or brother whom death has removed. Do not break forth in indignant denial, but strive to recollect. Whoever has seen one funeral has seen all. The sons weep in the same manner, wipe away their tears *à la mode*, walk with the same step, and lean in the same manner upon the same friend of the family. The husbands have their peculiar mode of grief. The mothers alone weep without busying themselves with what occurs on the way. Some sob a little too violently; but this happens only when the lost child was *not* the favorite.

[108]



I do not wish to be understood as representing that society is so positively bad,—only that it is governed by conventional comedy. Nothing is done without an accompaniment of ready-made phrases. When two men engage in a duel, they salute each other, as it is done at the theatre. If a husband finds himself the victim of a deception, he bears himself in the same style and uses the same language he has seen and heard at the theatre. Do not take your daughters to the theatre. They will never believe themselves truly loved unless they are wooed in the style of the actor Lafontaine.

Eusebe had not learned to love, to suffer, and to avenge himself according to the rules which society has borrowed from the theatre; and this is why he did not break his glass and indulge in stormy exclamations at the breakfast given at Viroflay.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

[109]

It was broad day. Eusebe had been awake for a long time, impatiently awaiting a convenient hour to visit the operatic *artiste*. He thought of going to a splendid store he had noticed on the Boulevards, and of purchasing at that establishment an elegant and fashionable suit. But, upon reflection, he concluded to present himself in the habiliments which he already possessed.

“Of what use would that be,” thought the provincial, “since this woman loves nothing, and sells herself to the first comer? The toilet will be unavailing: it is money that is necessary.”

It had been sufficient for these unthinking persons to pronounce the word “money” before the poor rustic, to make him as calculating as a miser.

As soon as he could with any degree of propriety call at the theatre, Eusebe did so, for the purpose of ascertaining the address of Adéonne. The hour of noon had sounded, when the provincial, with a hesitating voice, said to a young and pretty *femme de chambre*, who opened the door at the singer’s residence,—

[110]

“I desire to speak to M’lle Adéonne.”

“If monsieur will wait,” said the girl, showing him into a small parlor, “I will go and ask madame if she can receive monsieur. Will monsieur give me his name?”

“It is useless,” replied the visitor: “your mistress does not know me. Tell her I come to see her concerning some very important business.”

The *salon* of Adéonne was a very ordinary apartment. Curtains of blue brocatelle and white muslin hung at the windows. The furniture included a piano and a centre-table. In a splendid frame, covered with a bulging glass, were the crowns that an idolizing public had lavished upon the cantatrice.

The provincial looked around him in gaping wonder. He had never seen so much magnificence concentrated in the same small space. He hardly dared to put his boots upon the flowers in the carpet. With his hat in his hand, he stood as immovable as a statue. At length his eyes, which had wandered over every thing, rested on a pastel, representing Adéonne in a *rôle* in *Val d’Andore*. The white cap, the Pyrenean costume, in which the painter had clothed the *artiste*, produced a strange effect upon Eusebe.

[111]

During those sleepless nights when he had shaped his fortune in dreams, his dearest fancy was to behold Adéonne become his intimate companion, seated beside him under the great chestnut-trees of the Capelette, or strolling along the road in the evening, leaning upon his arm. The illusion had sometimes become so powerful that he had seemed to hear the sweet voice of the singer trilling the favorite *chanson* of the country:—

“Baisse-toi, montagne,  
Lève-toi, vallée,  
Que je puisse voir  
Ma mie Jeannette.”

From the song to the national costume there was only the flash of a desire. Without being absolutely the same, the costume in which *Rose de Mai* was clothed had a strong similitude to that of *ma mie Jeannette*. The provincial forgot Adéonne. Entirely absorbed in the dreams which he had cherished for the last two months, his mind wandered in the sweet fields of reverie. It seemed to him that he had always known her whose image filled his heart.

A curtain was softly raised, and Adéonne advanced without Eusebe, who was lost in contemplation, noticing her. She scrutinized the stranger for a few seconds, but it seemed as if her survey did not terminate in fixing her idea of his social position. One moment she wondered if the peculiar rapt expression of the young man was not a piece of acting. But the sparkle of his eye, the pallor of his brow, and the quick beating of his heart revealed to the actress, accustomed to witnessing acting and to acting herself, a sentiment profound and sincere.

[112]

“You wish to see me, monsieur,” said she. “What do you require of me?”

Eusebe started as if he had been suddenly roused from slumber, and, in his turn, he looked at Adéonne.

The cantatrice wore a dress of black satin. A collar and ruffles of Holland lace were the only addition to this simple costume. Her luxuriant hair fell, carelessly looped, upon her neck like a

river of gold. Her eyes were large and dark, and her complexion white even to pallor, and without a rosy tint. Her lips were pale and bloodless. She was no longer the brilliant *artiste* whom Eusebe had so often seen at the theatre. She was beautiful, but more like a statue than a woman. Eusebe seemed to want words to express the object of his visit. Adéonne was too much of a woman not to comprehend the effect she produced. She felt somewhat flattered, and said, in a softer tone,— [113]

“May I ask, monsieur, the object of your visit?”

“Madame,” said Eusebe, stammering and becoming red and pale by turns, “madame, I wish to purchase you.”

The peculiar accent and costume of the young man led Adéonne to suppose Eusebe to be a foreigner. She understood him to propose an engagement in the line of her profession.

“I thank you, monsieur, but an engagement of three years binds me to the theatre in which I am now performing, and I have decided not to sing in the provinces, much less in a foreign country. I am too good a patriot for that. I am, however, not the less grateful for the offers you have come to make. For what city did you wish to engage me?”

“I have evidently not expressed myself clearly, madame, since I see you do not comprehend me. I do not come to engage you. I come to purchase you.” [114]

“For whom?” asked the *artiste*, with disgust.

“For myself.”

“If this is done for a wager, monsieur, I find it to be in more than questionable taste. If it be a jest, I think it very gross and insulting.”

“It is neither the one nor the other,” said Eusebe, terrified by the indignation of the cantatrice.

“Begone, monsieur!” exclaimed Adéonne, imperiously. “Begone, or I will have you driven from the house. You have come to insult a woman, under her own roof, who has never done you wrong. It is cowardly!”

“Madame,” cried Eusebe, falling upon his knees, “madame, pity me. I am not so censurable as I may seem, I assure you. Insult you! Oh, if you only knew!—I will tell you as soon as these tears cease to stifle me. Insult you! It is impossible. I do not know how I ought to speak. You see I am but a poor rustic,—yes, only a rustic. When you have heard me, you will pardon me,—I know you will. You can drive me away afterwards, if you please. Give me but a minute: I will not abuse the privilege. Listen, and then it will not be necessary to drive me away, for I shall go of my own accord. You can see that I am not wicked. Others have found me good and mild. But I am from the country, and there people do not act as they do in the city. I have come to learn. My father sent me here for that. For only three months have I been in Paris. About one month had elapsed when I first saw you. It was on Wednesday: I did not expect to see you when I went to the theatre. I saw you remove your mask; and if you only knew what I have felt and suffered since then. I cannot tell you. It seemed to me that I had never seen but one woman. I was at once very happy and very miserable. At night I closed my eyes only to behold you in the dark. When day came again, you disappeared, and I slept only to forget that I saw you no more. It was not my fault. I went to the theatre without dreaming of the consequences. How could I? I did wrong to return every evening; but I could not help it. Do not drive me away yet.” [115]

“Continue,” murmured Adéonne.

“You may imagine that I was happy,—very happy. When I had looked at you all the evening, I returned home, only to indulge in dreams the most charming you can conceive. You were born, like me, at Capelette. When I saw this portrait in which you appear as a peasant, I believed that my dreams were to be realized. I fancied that I arose early in the morning to behold you sleeping. Then I went to gather flowers to strew the path where you loved to walk. I said to my father, ‘Father, you wish to know where the true is to be found. The true is happiness.’ My father called you his daughter, and thanked you for having brought joy to his household. In the evening we went to the banks of the river. You sang; and I was happy. All this seemed like reality, and I felt myself living with you and for you. I thought I passed entire days by your side. One day, we were seated on the rock of La Jouve, whence a young maiden threw herself into the river because the one she loved had ceased to love her in return. I had a gun with me, and was about to fire at a bird, when you said, ‘Do not kill it,’ and laid your hand gently upon my shoulder. I spared the bird, and kissed the spot where your hand had touched me. You see, I recall all this, yet know that it was only a dream. [116]

“One day, I was in the country with three friends. They succeeded in wringing my secret from me. Then they censured and mocked me. They said—they are cowards! Do not force me to repeat what they said. If you will not pardon me, I will kill them.” [117]

“Tell me all. My pardon is granted on that condition.”

“Well, they told me—ah! it is too bad! I repeat it only to be assured of pardon—for it burns my lips—they told me that you were a worthless woman, without heart, without soul, a creature cursed of God, selling yourself to all who would buy. After having suffered for three days and three nights, I have taken my money and have come to make the purchase. Pardon me now; for I have told you all.”

“You wish to buy me,” said Adéonne, whose countenance had reflected no emotion whatever during this strange recital: “are you, then, so rich?”

“I have here all that I possess,—forty-eight thousand francs.”

"And you think that for this sum I will give myself to you for eternity?" said the cantatrice, smiling.

"No; but for a moment I have had the foolish hope that for this money, and through pity, you would permit me to look at you, to touch your hand, to hear your voice, and then, at sunset, I would depart so happy as to bless your memory forever." [118]

"What? Only for a day?"

"Three hours,—two,—one."

"On your word?"

"I have never lied."

"Be seated," said Adéonne, coldly. Then the cantatrice summoned her *femme de chambre*, to whom she said,—

"Jenny, I am not at home to anybody." [119]

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

The order given by Adéonne to her *femme de chambre* had been so scrupulously observed that up to ten o'clock on the ensuing morning nobody had succeeded in gaining admittance to the boudoir of the comédienne.

Silence and obscurity reigned in the apartment. Long after the sun had risen, one might have supposed that the night continued, but for the gleams of light that came through the slight apertures between the curtains of the windows.

At length, Adéonne, in the same attire she had worn on the previous evening, opened, with extreme caution, the door which led from her chamber to the saloon. She paused at each creak of the lock. Closing the door with the same care, she traversed, with the lightness of a sylph, the two rooms which separated her boudoir from the dining-room. She advanced so noiselessly that her *femme de chambre*, who was writing to her lover,—a dragoon of the third regiment,—did not hear her approach.

"What are you doing there, Jenny?" inquired Adéonne, in a low voice. [120]

"Madame may see for herself," replied the girl, quite embarrassed. "I am writing to my cousin."

"To your lover. What does he do?"

"He is a soldier. We are going to be married."

"Why does he not come to see you?"

"Madame has ordered me not to receive anybody."

"I will permit you now."

"Madame is very kind."

"Soldiers are always honest fellows," added the cantatrice, as a reason for making the concession.

"Madame may be sure that he comes with the best motives."

"That is a matter of indifference to me. Get breakfast immediately, and without noise."

Adéonne returned to her boudoir, and applied herself to arranging her somewhat disordered tresses. When she had succeeded in giving them the desired contour, she remained pensive, her face supported by her fair hand. Two or three times she arose as if to go to her chamber. Once her delicate fingers even touched the door-knob; but she returned and seated herself again, as though she could not decide how to proceed. A slight rustle caused her to start. She listened attentively. Her bosom heaved with sudden agitation, and a deadly pallor spread over her countenance. Eusebe partially opened the door, and, upon perceiving Adéonne, remained motionless. [121]

"I thought I had been dreaming," said the provincial.

Adéonne threw herself upon his neck, and held him long in her embrace.

"Come, tell me that you love me, my dear Eusebe," she murmured, leading him to the divan; "or, no—tell me nothing. Let me look at you. Yes: it is, indeed, you. How handsome you are! Say that you will love me always!"

"I will," replied Eusebe. "I would say many things, if I only knew how; but I cannot find words. I am so ignorant! But I love you very dearly. I am happy beyond expression."

"Listen, my good angel," she said. "We will never separate. Shall it not be so? You have nothing to do: you have told me so already. We will never separate. If you would not remain here, I will follow wherever you wish to go. If you desire it, I will quit the theatre,—every thing."

"I do not wish you to make any sacrifice for me. That is not necessary to my happiness." [122]

"No sacrifice! I have never clung to any thing, for I have never had any thing to love: now I must

cling to you, for I love you. I have never had but one dream, and that was to be loved as you love me. I believed that I should never be thus blessed. I was wrong: was I not?"

"Like you, I have a full heart," replied Eusebe. "I have no words to express all I feel."

"This love, too, will render me good, as well as happy," said Adéonne. "I have told my maid that she could receive her lover: this was prompted by the new feelings kindled in my heart. Thus good often results from intentions that are evil. If your friends had not told you that I was a worthless creature, you would not have ventured to visit me. If you had not come, I should never have loved anybody. Do not you believe in a good and overruling Providence, my dear Eusebe?"

"When I was a child, my mother taught me to pray. Later in life, my father told me that if any man believed in God, he would do many things of which he would not otherwise be capable."

"Your father, it would seem, is a queer man. But no matter. I love him because he is your father. He wishes you to be instructed: he is right. I will teach you life as it is. I know it thoroughly. I have been so unfortunate! We women are wiser than you men: we know every thing without the process of learning. When I think of your anxiety to distinguish the false from the true, I could laugh, if I did not love you so dearly. There is nothing true, my dear Eusebe, but love!" [123] [124]

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## CHAPTER XXV.

Eusebe had ample time to meditate upon the aphorism so boldly announced by Adéonne. For a whole year they lived and loved together.

The young provincial had forgotten the great world, which, on its part, troubled itself but little about him.

The comédienne loved with all the fire of a passionate nature. But she experienced another sentiment in harmony with love. The docile character of Eusebe, and his complete ignorance of life, rendered Adéonne the arbiter of his destiny, and she, whose past career had been worse than a blank, was proud to have an acknowledged *protégé*.

She did not, however, abuse the ascendancy she had obtained. More than once, upon her knees before Eusebe, she had said,—

"Oh, how good you are not to wish to be the master!"

When women who live outside of social laws reach the age of twenty, they regard humanity with a shrug of the shoulder; they despise men, because their weaknesses are well known to them. These women often shed bitter tears, not because they feel their degradation or their servitude, but because they have not masters more deserving of respect. [125]

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## CHAPTER XXVI.

Eusebe had deposited his will on the *étagère* of his mistress. Adéonne regulated his life as the wind blows the leaves that fall upon a tranquil stream. She made him dress according to her taste, gave him the books she loved to read, and conversed with him about every thing that could interest him in the slightest degree. Eusebe seemed to belong entirely to the cantatrice. This ascendancy never troubled his thoughts. He was happy; and, as he was only twenty-two years old, he believed in the eternity of this happiness, as devoted but not pious souls have faith in the eternity of pain.

This felicity might have endured a long time; for Eusebe, simple and artless, like the majority of those who have been brought up in the country, never inquired into Adéonne's past life, and jealousy was to him unknown. The infidelity of the cantatrice was alone to be feared. But Adéonne loved with that sincere *furia* which is characteristic of women who reach maturity before they love at all. There was, therefore, seemingly nothing that threatened to disturb the limpidity of these two existences that appeared to flow in one. [127]

It was a companion of the *artiste* who, in this instance, was the grain of sand which changed the current of destiny.

Marie Bachu was a sort of "double" of Adéonne at the theatre and in the affections of Fontournay, the former lover of the cantatrice. On one occasion, thanks to the influence of Fontournay, Marie obtained what she called a *création*, a new part in an old work which had been revised and improved. Adéonne complained to the *régisseur-général* of the theatre, and declared that under no pretext whatever would she resign her legitimate rights. Marie Bachu begged, supplicated, and stormed; but her adversary was inexorable.

"Think you," said Marie, "that I must be forever content with that which you reject?"

"Well," retorted Adéonne, with a wicked allusion to Fontournay, "you have been trying to accustom yourself to that for a year past: you ought to have succeeded by this time."

The *régisseur*, who comprehended the force of the retort, burst into a laugh. This hilarity rendered the two women still more determined in their enmity. While the vanity of Adéonne was [128]

flattered, the anger of Marie was rendered still fiercer. Marie rejoined,—

“If I have your leavings, it is not your fault.”

“True,” said Adéonne: “I ordinarily give old things which I can no longer use to my *femme de chambre*.”

“You ought to speak more respectfully of a man who lifted you out of misery.”

“That would be contrary to all the ideas acquired through him.”

“Say, rather, that you are still irritated at his desertion.”

“*Ma belle*,” said Adéonne, calmly, but with trembling lips, “do not jest. You know very well that I turned your Fontournay out-of-doors. You also know that for six months I was so plainly weary of his company that he thought it a great favor to get a pleasant look from me. You know this: everybody knows it: so you must sing another tune. However, I bear no malice. You desire this *rôle*. Take it; I will resign my claim to it; but, for Heaven’s sake, do not weary me any more with your ridiculous friend. Leave me to possess mine in peace. He is as noble as yours is vile, as young as yours is old, and as handsome as yours is ugly.” [129]

“*Mes enfants*,” interrupted the *régisseur*, “do not devour each other entirely: it would be a pity.” He then drew Adéonne aside.

“Handsome, eh!” murmured Marie Bachu, so that she could be heard. “That is doubtless the reason why we never see him.”

On returning home, Adéonne said to Eusebe,—

“This evening, my dear, I wish you to accompany me to the theatre.” [130]

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## CHAPTER XXVII.

Theatrical performers, and operatic *artistes* above all, dine at a comparatively early hour. At five o’clock, Adéonne made Eusebe kneel down before her, while she arranged his hair with the care of a mother who dresses the hair of her son.

“These locks are soft and silky, Eusebe,” said she: “do you know that they are finer than my own?”

“That only proves that they will not last.”

“They harmonize well with the hue of your complexion, which people call olive,—I know not why.”

“Because olives are green.”

“You are foolish. I do not want them to mock him whom I love. My dear, we are going into society. I hope you will be careful how you talk, or they may take you for a character in a forgotten vaudeville. Now let me tie your cravat. There! you are charming. Let us go.”

The loving couple left the house arm in arm. For about an hour the cantatrice promenaded with Eusebe on the Boulevards, where pedestrians frequently turned to scrutinize this handsome but somewhat curiously assorted pair. [131]

“All the ladies are looking at you,” said Adéonne. “I was sure they would think you handsome.”

“I also was sure of it,” responded Eusebe, with simplicity, “since you loved me.”

The cantatrice looked at her lover with profound tenderness.

“If you were ugly, I would love you all the same; for no one but you can say such agreeable things.”

“What have I said?”

“You have given expression to the most delightful flattery.”

“I was not conscious of it.”

“Fortunately, it was only a compliment.”

“And the difference?” [132]

“The difference? There are two kinds of compliments,—those which are sought for, and those that are offered gratuitously; those which spring from the heart, and those which come merely from the lips. The one class are used but once for the being beloved; the others are employed at all times and by everybody,—they are current coin, of which men have a full supply.”

“I comprehend. The poorest may seem to be the richest.”

“Hold,” said Adéonne, on reaching the Rue Favart. “Do you see that little window, the third of the first story, above the *entresol*? That is the window of my *loge*.”

“I know it.”

“Behold, my dear Eusebe, the palace of your beloved,” said Adéonne, opening the door of her *loge*. Her smile was checked, and her countenance wore a troubled expression, as she added, “This is the laboratory in which we *artistes* prepare our beauty, our hearts, our bodies, to please the public, who think, after all, that we have neither beauty nor heart. It is a sad thought! I had

resolved never to reveal to you the mysteries of our profession, but they said that you were not handsome. Come, let me embrace you: I have not loved you here yet."

Eusebe looked at Adéonne with surprise. He comprehended neither the incoherence of her words nor the cause of her agitation. At length he said,—

"Something strange affects you,—something that I do not comprehend."

"Leave this place, then. I did wrong to bring you here. It was vanity, I fear, that prompted me. I scent misfortune in the very air. We were so happy at home. Go, then, Eusebe, go, if you love me." [133]

"I will do whatever you desire."

"I knew you would. I love you so dearly!—if you only knew how dearly! Jenny will make tea for you. You will read until my return. I will be home early."

A boldly trilled *roulade* was heard just as Eusebe kissed the hand of Adéonne and bade her adieu. The cantatrice suddenly detained him, and said,—

"Since *you* are there, Eusebe must remain. I have need of you, dearest. My heart sings false." [134]

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

The "Opéra Comique" and the "Gymnase Dramatique" possess *foyers* of which the prudery has become proverbial. The life of the vocalist is one of protracted labor, rewarded, however, in a very liberal style. The comparative prudence of lyric *artistes* can be easily explained. They have little leisure, and a great deal of money to spend. This is why cantatrices more frequently contract honorable alliances with men of position than other women of the theatrical world. A faulty construction adds to the dullness of the evenings spent at the "Opéra Comique." The *foyer des artistes* is small, gloomy, and inconvenient. The visitors are often forced to talk to themselves,—which is a wearisome occupation. Still, notwithstanding the seeming dullness of this narrow place, it is very rare that the evening passes without some incident of an interesting character occurring there, owing to the peculiarities of the company assembled.

In this atmosphere, so novel to him, Eusebe learned more in one month than he could have learned elsewhere in ten years. [135]

Astonishment, doubt, and disenchantment succeeded each other with desolating rapidity. The first of Eusebe's sentiments which yielded to a forced dissection was his love for Adéonne. In proportion as the affection of the cantatrice was increased by the success of her lover, whose manly beauty was only equalled by the freshness of his simplicity, that of the young man diminished before stern realities, the existence of which he had never before suspected.

Adéonne prepared her face for the stage by the use of rouge, powder, &c. Eusebe did not comprehend that the glare of the footlights rendered this necessary.

The cantatrice covered her hands, arms, and shoulders with powder. Eusebe said that she deceived the public; and when she put carmine on her nails and vermilion on her lips, he shrugged his shoulders.

"I like you better without all this plaster," remarked the provincial.

"My dear Eusebe," responded the singer, "I also would prefer to dispense with it; but it is necessary—"

"I assure you that without this paint you are a hundred times handsomer."

"That I do not deny; but we cannot do without it."

"Why?"

"Because—"

"You can give me no good reason. If you love me, go on the stage, one evening, with your pretty face just as nature made it. You will see the result."

"You do not understand the necessities of the stage."

"That is to say that you refuse to grant the first favor I have ever asked of you."

"Absolutely. Embrace me, and be silent."

"Thank you: I do not wish to daub my lips."

Adéonne went upon the stage with a heavy heart, murmuring,—

"His love is vanishing."

Eusebe, on his part, was very angry, and insisted that Adéonne had refused to make a very small sacrifice to please him.

When lovers begin to count the sacrifices refused, and when friends take account of money loaned each other, love and friendship fly to regions where hearts are made of more generous stuff.

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As Eusebe had seen Adéonne from the auditorium, he had thought that the world did not contain an *artiste* more marvellously gifted as a vocalist and comédienne. The hearty applause of the public had confirmed him in this opinion. But his attendance at the rehearsals resulted in an entire change of the estimate he had formed. He had heard Adéonne say, "I am learning my part;" "I am studying my principal cavatina." In his simplicity, the provincial thought that was sufficient. The first time, therefore, he attended a rehearsal, he was disenchanted.

The musician who played the accompaniment for Adéonne upon the piano labored furiously, and occasionally burst forth in angry exclamations, as follows:—

"Bah! You have no ear. You have no idea of that piece."

"Monsieur," said Eusebe, "I do not exactly catch the sense of your words, but it seems to me that you are a little severe with madame." [138]

"I would like to see you in my place, monsieur, forced to go through the same routine for four months, and at the fifth, when you think you have finished, discover that your care and labor have been wasted."

"Now, my dear Bruin," said Adéonne, "do not be ferocious: we will be very docile."

"I am not ferocious. But why the devil does monsieur meddle with matters that do not concern him?"

"Do not pay any attention to him. He is not a musician," responded the cantatrice.

After the lesson, Adéonne took Eusebe aside.

"My dear," said she, "you do not understand theatrical affairs. We are going to rehearse on the stage. I beg you will not make any observation: you would only render yourself ridiculous, and me also. Go into the auditorium, and be silent."

"I will be silent," responded Eusebe, who seated himself in the most obscure corner of the auditorium, which seemed to him a vast tomb.

"To your places!" cried the *régisseur*. "Attention! Adéonne Pepita enters. Not there:—from this side. You are to go there."

Adéonne commenced:—

"Enfin le jour reluit, Lelio va venir;  
Rien ne saurait le retenir, je pense.  
Le ciel en ce moment commence à s'éclaircir,  
Mon cœur joyeux renaît à l'espérance."

[139]

*Régisseur*.—"No, no: it is not so."

*Adéonne*.—"But——"

*Régisseur*.—"But there are no buts. You say, '*Enfin le jour reluit.*' You must not look at the auditorium: your eyes ought to be turned towards the horizon. You continue, '*Lelio va venir.*' It is requisite that here the most complete satisfaction should sparkle in your look."

*Adéonne*.—"It will sparkle at night."

*Régisseur*.—"I know all about that. You *artistes* always say so, and at the representation nothing sparkles. As you proceed, you should look at the skies, instead of your gaiters, as you do."

*Adéonne*.—"I cannot recognize the skies of yonder canvas."

*Régisseur*.—"That is no reason. But proceed."

And so on, through a rehearsal full of vexation for the fastidious *régisseur* and wearisome practice for Adéonne and the other performers.

Eusebe was present every day at these tedious but, to him, instructive rehearsals. His native sagacity, the experience he had already acquired, and his frequent contact with the artistic world, led him at last to one painful truth. Adéonne was not a great *artiste*: he had made of her a divinity; she was only an ordinary woman, who could not even place herself properly on the stage without special instructions. [140]

A woman may be loved for three things:—for her superior intellect,—a love serious, but rare; for her beauty,—a love vulgar and brief; for the qualities of her heart,—a love lasting, but monotonous.

The superiority of Adéonne had vanished. Her beauty remained; but her lover was accustomed to that. She could still boast of her heart; but she had either too much or too little of that to retain her hold upon the affections of Eusebe.

An absurd fashion that prevails behind the scenes gave the finishing stroke to the provincial's faltering passion for Adéonne. Eusebe, being mild and modest in his manners, soon won the

general favor of the people connected with the theatre, who had a pleasant word for him whenever he made his appearance there. Thus, the second *régisseur* never failed to say,—

“Good-evening, monsieur: allow me to congratulate you. You sang like an angel the other evening.”

Some one else would say,—

“Ah, Monsieur Martin, you ought to be satisfied. They say that your *rôle* in the new piece is charming.”

“Monsieur Martin,” said another, “I speak as a friend. Marie Bachu is striving to injure you in the esteem of the director. She wants the *rôle* in the new production of Meyerbeer. You know that she is capable of any thing. Distrust her.” [142]

An old man, a member of the company, however, did more to irritate Eusebe than all the rest.

“M. Eusebe,” said he, “remember that I speak from experience. Without talent, voice and youth go for nothing. You must not slumber. If you knew the public as well as I do, you would not laugh at my prognostications. One fine day a new performer will appear, and the public will no longer look at you. The management will follow the whims of the public.”

The corpulent Fontournay,—the discarded lover of Adéonne,—who affected an easy indifference in love-affairs, and would not for any consideration have the world think that he cherished ill feeling towards his fortunate successor, showered compliments upon Eusebe, after the style of the following:—

“My dear sir, your toilet is always superb: it cannot be surpassed.”

“M. Martin,” said the first *régisseur*, “you are late: I shall be compelled to fine you.”

During his novitiate at the theatre, Eusebe had smiled at this absurd manner of addressing him, as if he and Adéonne were identical. But, as he acquired more experience, such remarks irritated him. One evening, on returning from the theatre with Adéonne, he said,— [143]

“Why are you not an unknown woman,—an unnoticed *médiocrité*? Assuredly, I would be happier. My individuality is confounded with yours; and, though I have no vanity, this practice is extremely humiliating.”

“I do not comprehend you. Explain.”

“I say,” continued Eusebe, “that my nothingness oppresses me. By your side, I am like the husband of a reigning queen. They do not address a word to me, except to speak of you. This very evening, that fat man you call Fontournay told me that *I* had a pretty toilet. If a stranger asks who I am, they do not say, ‘That is M. Martin:’ they answer, ‘That is the lover of Adéonne.’”

“And does that displease you?”

“It does not displease me: it makes me sad.”

“Oh, what a child you are! Of whom do you wish them to speak? They presume that you love me, and, therefore, speak of me to you. What is more natural? As to that foolish Fontournay, I forbid your speaking to him at all.” [144]

“But it is not he alone who addresses me in this manner. Everybody does the same, from the *régisseur* to the machinist. If this goes on, it will be necessary for me to put on an old shawl and bonnet, and pass for the mother of the actress, like Madame Baudry. I will become Madame Adéonne *la mère*.”

Adéonne was silent. She did not understand the sensitive nature of Eusebe, and could not prolong the discussion. She finally adopted the course usually taken by women when they are embarrassed: she became sad and tender. At length she replied, in a bitter tone,—

“A shawl and a bonnet will not suffice for that: nothing can replace the mother one has lost.”

Eusebe, hearing this cry of the heart, repented of his harshness. Hardly had he entered the apartment of Adéonne, when he threw himself upon his knees before her.

“Forgive me, my darling. I have done wrong, and shown a want of heart, in awakening a sad remembrance.”

“No, no,” said Adéonne, untying the ribands of her bonnet: “I said that as I might have said any thing else. My mother never had any claim upon my remembrance.”

On the following morning, at breakfast, Adéonne saw that Eusebe was sad and gloomy.

“My darling,” said she, “we tire of every thing,—even of happiness. I think it is time for you to seek some diversion.” [145]

“I think so too,” responded Eusebe. “This evening I will go and dine with Clamens.” [146]

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

Daniel Clamens was a Jew, with a weakness for literature. He was an intelligent fellow, who knew how to manage his affairs with tact, so that, though he possessed neither fortune nor talent, he generally commanded the means of subsistence.



Clamens had three brothers,—one a composer, another a sculptor, and a third a painter: he himself was a dramatist. Of the four, Daniel had the least talent. He had never achieved any remarkable success. Still, he was very well known,—owing, in a great measure, to the reputation of his brothers. Eusebe had made the acquaintance of Clamens at the theatre, and was quite intimate with him. Daniel was anxious to get Adéonne to personate a character in one of his productions, and had cultivated her provincial lover with that object in view. He had often invited Eusebe to dine with him, but the invitation had never been accepted. When the dramatist saw the lover of Adéonne actually enter, he uttered an exclamation of joy.

“And do I behold you at last? You do not know how anxious I have been to see you. Now that you have come, there shall be no peace until you promise to come again.” [147]

“I promise,” answered Eusebe. “I will come often. I have need of some diversion.”

“You say that, but you will not do it. For the rest, I understand that you keep your nest. You ought to be very happy.”

“I was.”

“Bah! that has not ended?”

“Not quite.”

“Has there been a quarrel?” inquired Daniel, quite anxiously.

“Oh, not at all. Quite the reverse. But it seems that we grow weary of happiness, as of every thing else, and I have need of some diversion.”

“Ah! you frightened and amazed me at the same time. Adéonne is so charming.”

“Very charming, indeed,—so charming that for her I have neglected to follow the counsels of my father,—had even forgotten the object of my life.”

“Fortunately, you are young. What career do you design to pursue?” [148]

“I know not. I wished to study life before deciding; but I have now been two years at Paris, and I am no more advanced than when I left my native province. My ignorance and my nothingness are humiliating. I am ashamed of being of no importance in society, because I feel that I can be of none.”

“Life, my dear sir, is not a difficult thing to learn. The trick is to know its secrets. When one has penetrated them, one has learned every thing.”

“Alas!” said Eusebe, “if I have not been sufficiently skilful to learn life, how could I penetrate its secrets?”

“With the gimlet of friendship.”

“A painter, with whom I formerly associated, told me that friendship no longer existed.”

“My brother the painter is also of that opinion. I have always thought that skepticism is developed by the mixing of colors. Distrust, my dear friend, people who deny the sentiments: such persons look upon the world through the impure medium of their own natures.”

“You do not like your brother, then?”

“I adore him,” responded the dramatist; “but I do not share his principles. To prove to you that friendship does exist, I offer you mine. You wish to know the world,—to study life. Come, and I will give you the clew. I will be your guide,—your adviser. We will devote ourselves to social anatomy, and dissect humanity. I will show you the manner of holding the scalpel.” [149]

“Let us begin,” said Eusebe, eagerly.

“One moment,” said his friend. “Before we commence, it is requisite that I should give you a piece of advice. If you wish to see all, hear all, and study all, it will be necessary, before setting out, to pad your elbows, bridle your tongue, and put cotton in your left ear, so that what enters at the right cannot get out again. And now,” continued Clamens, with a majestic gesture, “follow me, as is said in ‘William Tell.’”

“Where are you going?” asked Eusebe.

“My friend,” responded the *cicerone*, “the best way to arrive *anywhere* is not to know where you are going.” [150]

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

“Hold!” said Clamens. “Do you see this expanse of asphaltum, which extends from where we stand to the Chaussée d’Antin?”

“Yes,” replied Eusebe: “it is the Boulevard des Italiens.”

“Just so. Well, all humanity is represented in this narrow space, which is hardly more extensive than your father’s garden. Take a seat, and observe, and in one hour you will know Paris as well as if you had made it; and Paris is the universe. The other cities of the world, such as Bordeaux, Lyons, London, Berlin, Rome, and St. Petersburg, are rivers for which Paris is the sea. Every variety of the human species flows hither, to roll and writhe, like furious waves, in that sublime [151]

tempest which we call life. You wish to investigate this billowy mass. You will find nothing there but froth and foam, or you will drown yourself for want of that life-preserver which is called experience."

"Better to drown oneself at once than to die of weariness on a rock whence nothing but a void is visible; but, indeed, it seems to me we are employing very large words to speak of very small things."

"Ah," rejoined Clamens, "there is nothing insignificant in this world. A drop of water may save a man; three may kill him; a hundred will fill a gutter; a thousand will form a rivulet. Multiply ten times these numbers by themselves, and you will have a torrent which may inundate France. Men are like drops of water. Look at them separately, and you see nothing terrible; but when, by a mysterious free-masonry, they assemble and arrange themselves according to their vices, their merits, their passions, or their aspirations, they can convulse society to its very centre."

"What is one to do in the midst of such a tumult?" inquired Eusebe.

"Laugh," responded the poet; "laugh, so that you may not weep; turn to account the vices of one class and the virtues of another, and close your eyes to what the morrow may bring forth."

"Admitting the justness of this theory," said Eusebe, "it seems to me very difficult to gain a sufficient knowledge of men to enable one to profit by their merits or weaknesses." [152]

"One knows everybody else better than one knows one's self. Do you see that gentleman who is walking before us? He is dressed like a prince, dines at the best tables, and denies himself nothing. Four years ago, he arrived at Paris in *sabots*. Now he is in debt for his boots,—which explains the whole mystery. That fellow would refuse the pension of a Councillor of State: he gains more by borrowing."

"I understand, then, that he has a confirmed vice. But what advantage can you draw from his peculiar defect?"

"I borrow money of him."

Eusebe was inclined to think that Clamens was quizzing him, as Paul Buck had quizzed Bonnaud on the railroad; but the poet did not give him time to determine whether this suspicion was justifiable.

"I borrow money of him," continued Clamens, "and he loans it because he appreciates better than anybody else the necessity of having it. Adroit himself in chasing up twenty-franc pieces, he thinks he has in me a promising pupil. Then his loans to me serve as an excuse to his conscience. If he strips others, he considers that I strip him, and, therefore, concludes that, instead of practising the trade of a sharper, he is only making an application of the *lex talionis*. The man is not exactly a dangerous character; but he has ten thousand *confrères*, who prey upon forty thousand fools, and their mode of life operates to the detriment of a hundred thousand poor devils, who perish from hunger or find their way to the galleys. I suppose that the term 'usurer' represents to your mind a miserly old man in a brown overcoat and a black silk cap?" [153]

"There is in my native province," replied Eusebe, "an old man named Gardet, who is said to be very grinding on the poor who borrow money from him; and it is a fact that this creature is attired nearly as you say, with the exception of the black silk cap. In a number of books that I have read during the past two years, the usurer is always described as dressed in that style."

"It is an error. Now-a-days, the evil-doer is young. That is one of the most curious characteristics of our age. The young men gamble at the Bourse, while the old devote their attention to trade. The young men keep the women; the old conceal themselves in their closets. It is a sad thing to contemplate; but such is nevertheless the case. *Revenons à nos moutons*. Those two young dandies before us, who balance their canes with such an air, count hardly fifty years between them; yet they are the most unmerciful Jews in Paris." [154]

"But," interrupted Eusebe, "I thought you were a Jew."

"I am an Israelite," responded Clamens, rather hastily,— "which is not at all the same thing. Such as you see them, that fashionable youth and his dazzling friend have ruined many people. At this moment, they are not merely promenading, as you might perhaps suppose: they are seeking custom. Have you need of money?"

"My friend," said Eusebe, "you know that I am quite a barbarian, and ignorant of many features of Parisian life. Do me the favor, then,—if I do not try your patience,—to define more exactly the profession of these men."

"That is easy enough. These fellows have comprehended the fact that the want of money is the complaint of almost everybody, and they have undertaken to supply the needful by founding a loan-and-trust company,—which would be quite philanthropic if the premium were not cent. per cent. For example: they loan on security five hundred francs for six months; at the expiration of that time they receive one thousand for their five hundred." [155]

"Why a thousand?"

"For the interest of the money advanced for six months."

"If they make that much, they ought to lend the money for a year: they would then have no need to give any at all."

"An original idea! I must communicate it to them."

"You know these persons, then?"

"They are my friends."

"You astonish me!"

"Let us understand each other. I am not *procureur-impérial*. Their conduct does not concern me. Let them continue to dupe fools: that is an affair between their consciences and human stupidity. For myself, I have always found them very agreeable: they have often proved serviceable in lending me money."

"At cent. per cent.?"

"At nothing per cent."

"Then they are not such usurers as you wish to represent."

"They go further in that direction than I care to say; but not with me. Why? The day is approaching when their fortunes will be made. They will abandon their business, keep their carriages, maintain mistresses, marry heiresses, and endeavor to make a figure in society. But there is one thing they cannot purchase,—social esteem. They count upon me to help them in that particular and set them in a favorable light before the public." [156]

"Sad! sad!" murmured Eusebe.

"No matter: such is the world."

"Well, then I would rather not make its acquaintance," rejoined Eusebe.

"You are wrong. You ought to learn many curious things which it is important that you should know. The first thing to do is to learn the vices of the times, so as to be able to avoid them."

"I would prefer knowing what they are to scrutinizing them too closely," responded the provincial. "A thousand thanks to you, my dear Clamens, for wishing to be my guide. But I feel that I am too feeble to seek an object by paths so perilous. You know the mud of all the ruts, the briars of all the bushes: you will reach your object, no doubt. But what could I do, simple and artless as I am, pursuing such dangerous ways? Let each one take his own road. You may advance, confident of the future; I will return to the joys I already know." [157]

"What do you call your joys?"

"The woman I love, and the poets of whom I spoke to you last evening."

"Alas! my friend," said Clamens, "such joys will not last. Woman is a bell that will not always ring. As to the poets, their charms will not prove so enduring as those of your mistress,—since we have but three. The most bitter sadness characterizes these three great geniuses. The first died out of heart: he will dishearten you. The second lived in exile, where every thing was mournful. The third, disgusted with the ingratitude of his contemporaries, imposed silence upon the harmonious orchestra of his soul, to sit down, in despair, by the wayside, and play the clarionet." [158]

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

The two friends walked on a long time in silence. Clamens, rather disappointed by the provincial's obstinate peculiarities, said to himself, "Eusebe is a simpleton." On his part, the provincial reflected, "Daniel is a sage." And, as they were both profoundly in error, each remained convinced that he had hit upon the truth. At the moment of separation, Daniel said to his refractory pupil,—

"I will see you again, my friend. At a later day you will regret that you have not heeded my counsel. Do not forget, however, that I am always ready to resume my course of instruction."

"Thank you," responded Eusebe. "Your goodness touches me nearly, and—" The remainder of the sentence was lost in a sudden murmur.

Dropping the hand of his friend, young Martin passed rapidly on to where a group of young men were seated before the door of the Café Tortoni.

"What is the matter?" asked Daniel, who followed him.

"Do you not hear?" said Eusebe, apparently agitated. [159]

"Yes," said one of the young men; "Adéonne is a fascinating creature. During the week that I have enjoyed her acquaintance, I have been able to comprehend the desperate love that has inspired that old fool Fontournay."

"Did you say, monsieur," demanded Eusebe, pale and trembling, "that you have lived with Adéonne for a week?"

"I have said what I pleased," haughtily responded the young man. "I do not know that I am accountable to you for what I say."

"I ask nothing of you," rejoined Eusebe. "I only wish you to repeat your words, in order that I may tell you that you lie. If you do not repeat your words, it is of no consequence. I say that you have lied."

And, taking Clamens by the arm, the indignant provincial moved away.

"This is a bad business," said the poet.

"Why?"

"You will soon see."

At this moment a young man of irreproachable elegance advanced to the lover of Adéonne.

"Monsieur," said he to Eusebe, saluting him with exquisite politeness, "my friend the Count de la Soulaye deputed me to remind you that you have given him the lie in public, and have omitted to leave your card." [160]

Eusebe was about to reply, when Clamens stepped before him. "Monsieur," said the poet, "oblige me by giving my address to M. de la Soulaye. My friend M. Eusebe Martin, of the Capelette, in the fury of anger, has forgotten to leave his card. Here is mine. Until to-morrow at noon we shall be at your disposal."

"I thank you," said the young man, exchanging cards with the dramatist; and then, bowing politely, he rejoined his friends.

"And now," said Eusebe, "will you tell me, my good Clamens, what this exchange of cards signifies?"

"Alas! It means that you will fight M. de la Soulaye to-morrow."

"I fight? How?"

"With swords, sabres, or pistols, as he may see fit. He has the choice of weapons, since you gave the insult."

"For Heaven's sake, my friend, do not mock me!"

"Nothing can be more serious. Unfortunately, I am not joking," replied Clamens, sadly. "I foresaw that you would do something of which you knew not the consequences. Now that the evil is done, there is no help for it: you must fight: the laws of honor, or rather the laws of society, oblige you to do so." [161]

"What!" exclaimed Eusebe, with vehemence; "I encounter in my walk a wretch who slanders in the most infamous style a woman whom I love and whom I had quitted but a moment previous. I could pulverize this fellow with my fists, but refrain, because his shameful conduct awakens only contempt. I am content to tell him that he lies. And now I am forced to fight with this infamous scoundrel, and, as you say, to put myself at his disposal, and accept the weapons with which he is familiar, but which I have never used! Really, this cannot be so! it is barbarous!"

"But it is so, my dear fellow. I repeat, the laws of honor are inflexible."

"The laws of honor! What honor? It is not I who have broken these laws, if any such exist: he is the guilty party."

"Listen, Eusebe," rejoined Clamens, gravely. "You have defended the reputation of Adéonne; and in so doing you have acted nobly, not only because she is your mistress, but because she is a noble creature who loves you with all her heart. Yes, you have acted nobly. I also am convinced that La Soulaye has lied like a pickpocket. But in telling him so you did him an injury for which he has a right to demand reparation in the field. If you refuse to fight, you will be regarded as a coward, and the world will believe that he has truth and right on his side. I have made myself your second in this affair. I do not regret the step thus taken, and, if you refuse to fight, I will take your place." [162]

"Why so?"

"The laws of honor force me to do so."

"I will fight," said Eusebe, resolutely; "but may the devil fly away with me if I can comprehend what you call the laws of honor!" [163]

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## CHAPTER XXXIV.

After a long discussion, during which Clamens talked a great deal and Eusebe comprehended very little, the necessity for securing another second for the duel occurred to them, and the provincial started to hunt up his old friend Paul Buck, the painter. Paul had broken up his modest establishment some time previous, and it was not without extreme difficulty and much wearisome search that Eusebe found him, located in a wretched garret in the Rue Neuve Coquenard.

Alas! Paul Buck was sadly changed. He was no longer the joyous artist with a contented heart and merry countenance. His woebegone features, neglected hair, ragged garments, and ventilated boots made him a sorry shadow of his former self.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, upon seeing Eusebe, "I was thinking of you this morning. I said to myself, 'If I knew the address of the barbarian, I would go to him and borrow ten francs?'"

"Here are twenty," said Eusebe. "Are you ill?" [164]

"Not at all. You find me much changed, do you not?"

"Yes."

"It is from grief."

"Have you been unfortunate?"

"Yes."

"The cause? You have talent, love art, and are persevering."

"As for talent, I no longer possess it. Art I despise, since I see fame bestowed upon fellows without merit. As for my strength, it vanished with Virginie,—a girl who left me to follow a waiter of a *café*."

"Did you love the girl?" asked Eusebe, with an air of surprise.

"She was all that remained to console me. There is no denying that I was attached to her. But, tell me, how do you come on?"

"I fight to-morrow."

"Ah!"

Eusebe then related to his friend all that had occurred to him since they had seen one another. At the conclusion, he said,—

"Well, what do you think of the affair?"

"I think you have done right to come in search of me, and that you acted bravely in giving the lie to this gentleman of the card. But it is quite possible, nevertheless, that he spoke the truth." [165]

Eusebe became pale, and Paul continued:—

"You see, women are very strange creatures. Why may not Adéonne have deceived you for the sake of a count, since Virginie has deceived me for the sake of a waiter?"

"Adéonne has too much heart for that."

"Mon Dieu! It is always the woman who has too much heart who experiences the need of sharing it. Do you know how to shoot?"

"No."

"You are not afraid, I hope?"

"Yes," replied Eusebe, "I am afraid,—very much afraid."

"It is not possible!" exclaimed Buck, dropping his pipe: "you mistake your own nature."

"No: I know what I say. I have no fear of being wounded, or of being forced to suffer pain: I have none of that ignoble shrinking from danger which characterizes cowards. Yet I fear to die while still so young: I fear to die and leave Adéonne, whom I love. I fear to die without having seen my father and the dear old trees of the Capelette once more. For the last two hours, the thought that I may be slain to-morrow has given me a fit of home-sickness. I no longer seek to read the future. My eyes are turned to the past, where it seems to me I have never known any thing but happiness. The most humble creatures for whom I have cherished affection appear to have taken a firmer hold upon my heart. There remain to me, perhaps, not more than fifteen hours of life. I would give seven of them to once more behold big Katy, a peasant who nursed me when an infant, and to embrace my poor dog Medor, who is blind." [166]

"Bah! All will go well," said Paul. "Courage! You can count upon my services. To-morrow, at the hour indicated, I will visit your friend Clamens."

Eusebe shook the hand of the painter, and departed. Paul, as soon as he found himself alone, thus soliloquized:—

"Poor fellow! He is right. It is hard to die at his age, when one has so many reasons to regret life. But who says he will die? It is hardly probable. If he should escape with a wound, he can go see his father and the dear old trees again, and continue to love his mistress. My father, now, is dead. When he was alive, we never had any other trees than those of the road. My mistress has fled. I do not possess even an old blind dog; and—I have just broken my pipe." [167]

And then, as the painter's eyes fell upon the piece of gold left by Eusebe, he exclaimed,—

"However, I have no right to complain while I possess twenty francs,—the means to live well for one day, or to keep me from starving for at least two weeks." [168]

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

As chance or destiny would have it, four persons met at the lodgings of Clamens, whose opinions in regard to the approaching duel were widely different. (These were the four individuals who, according to the French code, acted as "seconds" for Eusebe and his antagonist.)

Paul Buck contended, with the utmost simplicity, that the duel was a piece of stupidity.

Daniel Clamens maintained that such combats were a necessary evil.

The Commandant de Vic, who was the *premier témoin* (principal second) of the Count de la Soulaye, affirmed that the duel was the judgment of God.

As for M. de Buffières, the young gentleman who had exchanged cards with Clamens, he

confessed that his opinion was governed by the laws and customs of society.

Notwithstanding the disparity of their ideas, the quartette soon came to an understanding. Only one—Paul Buck—thought of extending the olive-branch of peace.

"Messieurs," said the painter, "I believe that, as the honor of our principals is not in peril, our duty dictates that we should arrange this foolish difficulty." [169]

"Monsieur," replied M. de Buffières, "we—that is, myself and the Commandant de Vic—are not authorized to entertain such a proposition from anybody."

"You are perfectly free to listen or not, messieurs, and I am just as free to make known my impressions. If I speak, it is not idly, but because I feel that I am in some measure responsible for the lives of two men, one of whom is my friend. If any thing serious should occur, I wish to enjoy my rest afterwards."

"If speaking will insure you easy slumbers hereafter, proceed."

"If I seek to insure the tranquillity of my nights," said the artist, "it is because, up to the present, my days have not been too happy. Come, gentlemen, let us talk little, but let us speak to the point. We ought to be able to come to an understanding. I am certain that each of us regrets what has occurred."

"Certainly," rejoined the Commandant de Vic. "As for myself, I have been engaged in ten duels, and am not yet dead. Nevertheless, I never take pleasure in seeing two men cross swords with a deadly purpose. I will even go further, and say that the spectacle is very disagreeable to me. But, you know, there are circumstances—you understand me." [170]

"Youth must be broken in," observed Clamens, humorously, which caused M. de Buffières to smile. Paul Buck thought this a favorable moment for renewing his attempt at reconciliation.

"After all, to what does this affair amount? Nothing. A young gentleman, jesting with his friends, boasts of possessing a woman to whom he has never spoken,—at least so we are assured; the real proprietor of the lady overhears this vaunt, and tells the young boaster that he has spoken falsely: that seems rather rough. But, between ourselves, what else could he have done? He could not very well invite the young gentleman to dinner. Well, then, let M. de la Soulaye, who, I am sure, is a man of courage, acknowledge that he was wrong, and let the affair drop. Parbleu! We do not seek the life of the offender."

"You forget," said M. de Buffières, "that it is the man who gave the insult, and not the one who was insulted, who ought to make the apology." [171]

"There is another way," resumed the painter, "of terminating this absurd difficulty. Let M. de la Soulaye prove that he spoke the truth when he referred to the lady. We will prevent our friend from fighting for a woman who is not worth the trouble."

"M. de la Soulaye," replied the commandant, "will prove all that is required, after he has obtained reparation for the outrage perpetrated upon him."

"Precisely so," added M. de Buffières.

"If," continued Paul, "by an unfortunate chance, M. de la Soulaye should kill M. Martin, or M. Martin should kill M. de la Soulaye, would that prove that the one did wrong, or that the other lied? Or would the reputation of Adéonne be in the least benefited?"

"Probably not," said M. de Buffières, dryly.

Paul Buck, seeing that his efforts to effect a reconciliation would be fruitless, withdrew to a corner, and seemed absorbed in thought. At length, M. de Vic arose and said,—

"Well, is it understood? To-morrow, at seven o'clock, at the Pecq, Avenue de la Grotte; each to bring swords." [172]

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## CHAPTER XXXVI.

Paul and Clamens conducted Eusebe to a renowned *maître d'armes*, named Grisier, or Gate-chair.

"Professor," said Clamens, "I have the honor to introduce to you one of my best friends, M. Eusebe Martin, who is to fight to-morrow, and who does not know how to hold a sword. I have persuaded him that you will be kind enough to give him the benefit of your valuable counsel."

"I can give him only one piece of advice," replied the professor; "and that is, not to kill himself. I tender him that, with all my heart: it is all I can do for him."

"How? Do you mean to say that you cannot teach him how to make some passes with the weapon?"

"Fencing is not to be learned in an hour."

"Doubtless; but are there not some special mysteries of the art in which you can instruct him?" [173]

"All the movements are mysteries to one who does not know how to parry them."

"But can you not at least show my friend the manner of putting himself on guard? He is to fight

with a man of the world, and he ought to be able to show that he knows as well how to kill as to live."

"That is easy enough," said the professor. "I am at your disposal."

The professor then put Eusebe in position, explained to him how to hold his weapon, how to make passes, how to break the force of a stroke, and many other things pertaining to the art of fencing. The quickness with which Eusebe comprehended the demonstrations and followed the instructions, as well as his graceful attitude and manly vigor, excited the interest of the professor. Eusebe thanked him, and was about to withdraw, when the master of the sword recalled him.

"Resume your guard," said he, "and listen to me attentively. In order to give you a correct idea of duelling, I am going to charge upon you with this sword, which, you see, is very sharp. Observe my movements, and endeavor to parry; for, while I am sure of not giving you dangerous thrusts, the vigor of my attack, or your lack of skill, may result in your receiving some severe scratches. Now protect yourself." [174]

The professor suddenly precipitated himself upon Eusebe with extreme violence. His sword menaced the breast of the young man, who, however, retreated and parried so adroitly as not to be touched. The professor stopped as soon as the provincial had reached the wall. Eusebe was perfectly calm. The professor scrutinized him closely, and, seeing his entire self-possession, said, —

"That will do, monsieur: you will return from the field, I promise you."

"God grant that I may!" solemnly responded Eusebe.

On the following day the three friends were the first to reach the appointed rendezvous. A convenient spot was chosen, the swords were measured, and the Commandant de Vic pronounced the word "Go!"

Eusebe attacked his adversary furiously. Surprised by a vigor which he had by no means anticipated, and not recognizing in the passes of the provincial any of those movements usually taught in the schools of fencing, the count manifested an embarrassment which only served to encourage Eusebe. Suddenly M. de la Soulaye was touched in the hand. The seconds immediately interposed, and Clamens hastily cried,—

"Messieurs, the combat is finished." [175]

"How so?" inquired Eusebe.

"Honor has been satisfied," responded the Commandant de Vic.

The young provincial thought that this honor was not difficult to satisfy; but he said nothing, and, in company with his two friends, took the road back to Paris.

Eusebe thought proper not to say a word about this affair to her who had been the involuntary cause of the quarrel. In this matter his native delicacy served him admirably. Adéonne would have thrown herself upon her knees and implored him not to fight, or she would have turned him out-of-doors if he had refused.

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## CHAPTER XXXVII.

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About three-quarters of an hour after the combatants had quitted the Bois du Vésinet, two gendarmes arrived in the Avenue de la Grotte. They looked about them for a moment, and their attitude betokened disappointment.

"We have arrived too late," said one.

"I doubt it," rejoined the other.

"Good gentlemen, charity, if you please; for the love of God and the Holy Virgin, a little charity, if you please," murmured a dolorous voice.

"Brigadier, suppose we seek information of the beggar."

"It is our duty to push our inquiries to the furthest limit."

"That is also my way of doing business, if I may say so without offence to you."

"Ho! woman!" cried the first officer, addressing an old woman as wrinkled as a dried pear, "didn't you see two men pass this way?"

"I could not see any such persons," responded the beggar, "because I could not see any thing, having been blind for now twenty years; for twenty years I have been deprived of the light of heaven." [177]

"Ah! that alters the case."

"I have not seen them; but, my good sir, I certainly heard them."

"Then they have gone this way?"

"They have gone and returned. By this time they ought to be in Paris, for they arrived in time for the train."

The gendarmes expressed their disappointment in the phraseology peculiar to their calling.

"My good woman," said one, "you can perhaps give us some information. Speak without fear."

The gendarme spoke majestically, as the representative of the law.

"There were seven in the party of young gentlemen,—three on one side and four on the other."

"How do you know there were seven?" inquired the officer.

"Because they stopped to give me a little charity. Five gave me something. Of the two others, one said, 'I have no money,' and the other, 'I am not superstitious.'"

"How do you know they were young?"

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"Because they walked quickly; and, you see, when one is old, one is not in a hurry to die."

"How? to die?"

"Yes; since they came to fight."

"Who told you that?"

"I learned that from their alms. Four of them gave me twenty sous each. They supposed that bit of charity would bring good luck to their friends. The fifth, a fine young man, who was going to fight, gave me a five-franc piece. One is generous when one is either very unfortunate or very fortunate, when one weeps or when one laughs. The sixth said, 'I have no money:' he was the surgeon. The doctors never give any thing to beggars, because it is of no importance to them whether we live or die. The seventh said, 'It is a superstition:' he is the one who committed the wrong."

"Of course," said one of the gendarmes, laughing, "you think the one who gave you the five-franc piece was in the right. I understand that."

"You do not understand it at all, my dear sir, I can assure you. I understand it, I do. I have seen so many persons pass here on their way to fight. Those who have not the right on their side never give any thing, not on account of their avarice, but because they know very well that it is not with a hundred sous they can turn aside the hand of God."

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"Well?"

"They did not go very far into the woods, for they did not remain more than ten minutes. They fought with swords, for I did not hear any pistol-shots. They returned, without either party being badly wounded."

"Until now, your sagacity has not been at fault," said one of the officers. "But how do you know that the wound was slight?"

"Ah, my son, I am quite certain of what I tell you. If the wound had been dangerous, they would have given me much greater alms upon their return."

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

Eusebe had forgotten this "adventure," as the Commandant de Vic would have called it, when, one morning, Adéonne, pale and trembling, embraced him tenderly, and handed him a document bearing an official stamp.

"You have fought, my dear Eusebe," she cried, "you have fought, and you have not told me!"

"It is true."

"Oh, it was wrong, very wrong, not to tell me!"

"What is this paper?"

"Read!"

The document was a "summons," in which the sieur Eusebe Martin, perpetrator of sundry strokes and wounds on the person of the sieur Ravaud, calling himself De la Soulaye, &c. &c. was summoned to appear on the following Wednesday before Monsieur De la Varade, *juge d'instruction*, at Versailles. It was also set forth that, in default of his appearance at the time specified, a warrant would be issued for his arrest.

Eusebe took the official document to Clamens, for the purpose of asking an explanation. The dramatist reassured him, saying that he also had been summoned, but that the affair was of no importance.

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"We will be sentenced to pay a few hundred francs as a fine, and to spend a few months in prison: that's all. Do not alarm yourself."

"So!" said Eusebe, "a fellow is pleased to slander a lady; I have risked my life against his, when I ought to have simply strangled him; and now it is necessary that I should pay a fine and be subjected, with you and Paul, to imprisonment!"

"All very natural," replied the poet.

"But he will be condemned also, I hope?" said Eusebe, with some vehemence of tone.



"Not at all. He will be acquitted,—first, because he was insulted, and second, because he has suffered at your hands."

"But if I had killed him?"

"As the combat was honorably conducted, we should have been exonerated from all blame."

"Ah!" exclaimed Eusebe, "my father said wisely that we should never do things by halves."

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## CHAPTER XXXIX.

On the appointed Wednesday, Eusebe, Daniel Clamens, and Paul Buck arrived at Versailles. As the hour fixed for the hearing had not yet come, the three friends took a stroll through the city before repairing to the court-room.

"Is that what you call the *Palais de Justice*?" inquired Eusebe, pointing to a building of rather pitiful appearance.

"Yes," responded Clamens.

"You said to me, on the way," rejoined the lover of Adéonne, "that justice was the first of established powers. One could have very little reason to question that, if he compared the palace of justice with that of a king."

"We have in France," said Paul, "but ten palaces for kings, while for justice there are more than five hundred, in which she condemns more in a day than a monarch could pardon in a year."

"Fortunately for society, messieurs," said the Commandant de Vic, who had just arrived, and who was followed by MM. de la Soulaye and de Buffières.

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The first step Justice takes in the punishment of duellists is to bring them together in her ante-chamber. But for the profound respect the French profess for her, conflicts might be renewed there. It is true, nevertheless, that the custom, which might be attended with grave consequences, has often a wholesome effect. Adversaries often shake hands at the moment they are about to appear before the judge.

M. de la Soulaye, perceiving the lover of Adéonne, saluted him courteously, and offered his hand.

Eusebe bowed, but did not respond to the advance made by his late antagonist.

"Monsieur," said the Commandant de Vic, frowning, "I have the honor to call your attention to the fact that M. de la Soulaye offers you his hand."

"I do not wish to offer him mine," replied Eusebe, "and am sorry that you compel me to say so."

The officer, fired by this curt repulse, advanced, as if he meditated a quarrel; but M. de Buffières restrained him.

"You are too condescending, commandant," said the latter, "in paying any attention to this rustic."

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On their part, Paul Buck and Daniel Clamens reproached Eusebe with his want of courtesy.

At this moment, three gendarmes entered, escorting three men with villainous countenances, who were seated near the actors in the duel at Peck.

"What!" exclaimed Eusebe; "you wish to persuade me that I would act like a well-bred man in giving my hand to a rogue who has slandered a lady, who has tried to kill me, and, in addition, is the cause of our being brought to this disagreeable place, here to await condemnation, in company with three thieves? I cannot credit such a monstrosity of meanness; and I would rather pass for the worst blackguard in the world than touch a finger of the villain."

MM. de la Soulaye, de Vic, and de Buffières were first called into the presence of the magistrate, who kept them away for nearly three hours.

Eusebe bit his nails with fierce impatience during this vexatious delay. Clamens, pencil in hand, occupied himself in composing couplets upon the incidents in which he had recently figured. Paul Buck speculated with one of the gendarmes on the philosophy of history.

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"Monsieur," said one of the thieves to Eusebe, "won't you please to give me a little tobacco? I have not smoked for more than four months."

"I have no tobacco," responded Martin, "but I have some cigars, which, if these gentlemen will permit me, I will give you willingly."

"Give them to him, if you wish," said one of the gendarmes. "It ought not to be allowed; but"—and the officer shrugged his shoulders.

The three young men then emptied their cigar-cases, and slipped some money into the hands of the malefactors. The ice was broken.

"Why were you arrested?" asked Paul Buck of a thief who had just been gladdened with three cigars and two francs.

"Oh, I have been jugged by mistake," replied the bandit, with a voice of sinister tone.

"It was the seventh time that Justice was deceived in your case," dryly observed a gendarme.

"As for the other times," rejoined the rogue, "I have nothing to say; but for this, as true as you are an honest man, monsieur, I am innocent. I didn't do it." [186]

"If it was not you, it was your brother," said the gendarme, sententiously.

"By my faith," said the man, "that's worth thinking of: it might be so. I will just mention that to the judge."

"And you," said Eusebe to a second rogue, "are you also charged with robbery?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Who or what could have led you to rob?"

"You shall hear. My story is a very simple one. I was only nineteen years old when I fell in love with a young girl residing in my native province. One day she asked me to bring her some flowers; it was the day after the festival of Sainte-Marie, and she wished to cover the altar with flowers, so that the Blessed Virgin would be favorable to us. Her parents troubled themselves but little about our union. I had neither garden nor flowers. Night came, and I took a stroll. When all the village was sound asleep, I reached the wall of a garden adjoining that of the Maire——"

"Robbery, with escalade, at midnight, in an inhabited house: five years in irons," interrupted a gendarme.

"That is the penalty," resumed the bandit; "but as I was young, had good antecedents, and the booty was only a few roses, which, sooner or later, would have been offered to the Virgin, I was let off with imprisonment for three years. When the term of my sentence expired, I found my mistress a wife. While in prison I had learned the theory of crime; and, as I was now an outcast on account of having been a convict, I was forced to commence its practice." [187]

"And you, old fellow," demanded Clamens of the third criminal, "why did you steal?"

"From taste," was the laconic reply.

"Mon Dieu!" exclaimed the gendarme, "there are all sorts of taste in human nature." [188]

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## CHAPTER XL.

Notwithstanding his cold and rigid aspect, M. de la Varade was not a malicious or a severe man.

From the time of Francis I. to the Revolution of '93, the family of la Varade had always held office in a judicial capacity. The first of the judges was ennobled because he labored to please the beautiful Diana, Countess de Brézé; one of the latest was guillotined because he had displeased the fair Manon Ladri, who had considerable influence with the Revolutionary authorities.

The father of the present *juge d'instruction* died, after the Restoration, attorney-general of the provinces.

M. de la Varade spoke with extreme difficulty. Naturally mild and indolent, the magistracy had few charms for him. His profession caused him many torments and vexations; but he would have thought himself wanting in self-respect and regard for the memory of his ancestors had he not continued to exercise the functions of the office.

"A la Varade," said he to his son, "must be a magistrate: his nobility demands it." [189]

When the magistrate was alone, he bitterly regretted that he was not able to pursue a more congenial career, and expend in the gratification of his tastes his income of sixty thousand livres. He often asked himself if a citizen was not justified in withdrawing from such severe duties, when the State possessed many thousands of persons quite competent to fill the vacancy. His wife said "yes," but his conscience said "no."

Madame de la Varade, who ardently desired to reside in Paris, sometimes said to her lord,—

"Please to explain, *mon ami*, what society gains by substituting a la Varade for a Rabauel—for example—to instruct the big thieves how to draw the little ones to Versailles. Do you imagine that with your name and fortune you could not render service to your country in any other way? A pleasant duty, truly, that which you have chosen. You will exercise your functions for about twenty-five years, and then, as a reward, you will be made President of the Court in some out-of-the-way province."

"As my fathers have done," replied the husband, "I will do; and, God willing, I hope my sons will imitate my example." [190]

The wife shrugged her shoulders; the mother sighed.

Eusebe entered the *cabinet* of this magistrate, bowed, and waited the examination.

"Will you, monsieur," said the magistrate, after some preliminary formalities, "narrate the circumstances which led to the *rencontre* between you and M. de la Soulaye?"

"But first," replied Eusebe, eagerly, "I am accused of having inflicted blows and wounds upon my adversary. I desire you to take note that I did not hurt him at all."

"That does not signify," said the magistrate. "It is a mere form. Come to the facts of the case."

"Is it possible that you are ignorant of them? These gentlemen say that they have told you all."

"No matter: I must needs learn them from you."

"Well, if you desire it," rejoined Eusebe. And he then narrated his story of the quarrel and the duel.

"Sir," said the magistrate, "it was you who gave the lie."

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"Certainly; and in my place you would have done the same."

"I am not here to say what I should have done: I am here only to question you. Was the affair honorably conducted?"

"No."

"With what do you reproach your adversary?"

"With having lied."

"That is not the point. I speak of his conduct on the field of combat. I have nothing to do with the rest."

"On the field, we were seven in number. My adversary could not have behaved dishonorably had we been but two. I have an arm equal to his own. I do not fear him."

"You are doubtless skilful with the sword?"

"I do not know. Until this affair, I had never held a sword on guard."

"Then there is nothing with which you can reproach your adversary?"

"Yes: with having lied."

"And are you quite sure?"

"Yes, quite sure."

"Then why did you fight?"

"Indeed, I don't know. They told me that honor demanded that I should fight."

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"Then, if they had not represented honor as being so exacting, you would not have fought?"

"No: I would have told the man that he was an impostor, and that would have sufficed."

The frankness of Eusebe evidently made an impression on the magistrate.

"Monsieur Martin," said he, "I am a father. Permit me to address you as a man."

Eusebe bowed, and the magistrate continued.

"Do you think that an actress cares for those who get themselves killed in her defence?"

"Yes," replied the provincial, "when she is honorable and when she knows she is beloved."

"And you love this creature?"

"Ah! monsieur, with all my heart!"

"Where and how did you make her acquaintance?"

Eusebe then related how his father had sent him to Paris to study life, admire civilization, and learn to distinguish the false from the true. His journey, his arrival, his illusions, his meeting with Adéonne, his mode of life since then, his grief, his humiliation,—all,—were told with perfect candor and simplicity.

"My son," said M. de la Varade, "I know something of human nature, and I feel sure that you are sincere. Your affair here will not be followed up. Now it is no longer the judge who speaks: it is the man. Listen! Up to the present time you have not followed the injunctions of your father: you are on the wrong road. Are you not conscious that your present pleasures are entirely factitious and forced? Have you never thought of the hollowness of such fancied enjoyments? Are you not ashamed of being absolutely nothing in a society where each individual has a mission?"

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"Yes, indeed," exclaimed the young man. "I have experienced all the sensations you describe. But what can I do, powerless as I am to discover the true path, and with no counsellor to point the way?"

"The true is synonymous with one word, which is the religion of society: that word is DUTY."

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## CHAPTER XLI.

Eusebe, upon quitting the *cabinet* of the magistrate, rejoined his two friends, who were glad to learn that the affair of the duel would be dropped. All three then returned to Paris.

Adéonne fairly wept with joy on seeing Eusebe return. But, while the cantatrice did not try to conceal her delight, the provincial seemed abstracted, and paid little attention to this evidence of affection.

On the following morning, Eusebe arose at an early hour, hastily completed his toilet, and left the house, much to the astonishment of Adéonne, who did not venture to interrogate him as to the cause of his hasty departure.

"He did not close his eyes during the night," said she to herself, "and he leaves me at this early hour. What can be the matter with him, and where is he going?"

Eusebe had taken but a few steps when he returned, as if he had forgotten something. After embracing his mistress, he said,—

"Adéonne, my sweet queen, do you know what duty is?"

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"Certainly I do."

"Well?"

"My duty," replied the comédienne, "consists in not being hissed off the stage, and in being faithful to the man I love,—to you, my dear Eusebe."

"Then the duty of a woman is not like that of a man."

"The same precisely. Your duty is to love me as I love you."

Eusebe then left the house, and directed his steps towards the residence of Clamens. When he entered the apartment of the poet, he found him snoring in a most unpoetical manner.

"My friend," said Eusebe, "I ask pardon for disturbing you at so early an hour, but there is an important question I wish to have answered. Have the goodness to tell me what duty is."

Daniel opened his eyes with difficulty, stared at his provincial visitor for a moment, and then responded,—

"As for me, my duty is to get a piece in five acts accepted at the Théâtre Français."

So saying, he turned his face to the wall, and was soon snoring as vigorously as ever. Eusebe departed, and, not long afterwards, ascended to the attic apartment of Paul Buck, the painter.

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"Welcome!" exclaimed the artist, upon the entrance of his provincial friend. "Happiness has again taken up her abode under my roof. Gredinette has returned, and I have pardoned her. You are about to censure me,—to tell me that I have been weak. But could I do otherwise? My happiness is attached to the ribbons of her bonnet. Besides, why should not clemency, which is a virtue in kings, be exercised by artists?"

"Who could blame you for seeking to be happy? Not I, assuredly. My visit here has quite another purpose."

"Ah?"

"I wish you to tell me what duty is."

"Duty is the only thing that Gredinette ignores."

"Your definition is very vague."

"Duty! Oh, there are many interpretations of the word."

"Give me the best."

"In my opinion, the duty of a man is to smoke his pipe in peace under the eye of Heaven, and to do no wrong to his neighbor."

"Thank you," was the sole response of Eusebe, as he abruptly quitted his artist friend.

Once more in the street, the poor provincial strolled about, at the mercy of chance, more embarrassed and perplexed than ever. The sight of the old store of Lansade, before which he passed, reminded him of the honest merchant who had assisted him in an emergency of a more serious character. He decided to go at once to Lansade and ask his advice. On the way he met the stage-manager of the theatre, who saluted him politely.

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"M. Sainval," said Eusebe, hurrying towards him, "you can perhaps save me a long walk."

"I am at your service."

"Please explain to me what you understand by duty."

"That is very easy, M. Martin. My duty is to first please the director, then the public."

"Thank you," said Eusebe; and he continued his walk.

On reaching Viroflay, the young man had great difficulty in recognizing the house he went to seek. The garden was no longer there,—the space being filled with boxes and packages. The house, formerly so white and neat, had become gray, and the walls were nearly covered by the gigantic letters of a sign, reading as follows:—

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## **F. B. LANSADE,**

**Formerly of the Boulevard Saint-Denis, at Paris.**

**DEPOT OF PORCELAIN AND CRYSTAL,**

**THE BEST IN FRANCE.**

**MANUFACTURED FOR EXPORT.**

A man, wearing a blue blouse, his brow dropping perspiration, appeared before the astonished provincial.

"Ah! M. Martin," he exclaimed, "is this indeed you? I did not expect to see you again. I thought you had left Paris. I have often intended to inquire for you, but I am so busy when I go to the city that I have not a minute to spare."

"You have then resumed business?" asked Eusebe.

"Oh, no; far from it. I was so fortunate as to acquire enough to satisfy my modest desires; I live now quite at my ease. Now and then, 'tis true, I do a little something in the way of trade, just to kill time."

"One would suppose to see your house that it had been turned into a factory."

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"Would you not? But such is by no means the case. I furnish a few of the merchants in the neighborhood: indeed, I sell almost as much as I did in Paris. This is the only pastime I have. Formerly I employed a salesman and a porter; now I am entirely alone. To tell the truth, I do the work of four; but, you know, it is necessary for a man to be occupied."

Without taking any further notice of his visitor, Lansade resumed his work among the glass and porcelain. After a few moments he said,—

"*Sans cérémonie*, M. Martin. Of course you remain to breakfast."

"Thank you," said Eusebe: "it is absolutely necessary that I should be at Versailles before noon. I came to ask a favor."

A sudden change of expression was visible in Lansade's features, and it was evident that he felt uncomfortable.

"I should be glad," continued the young man, "if you would tell me in what, in your opinion, duty consists."

"That is very easy, M. Martin," replied the porcelain-merchant, his features resuming their usual expression. "Duty consists in working when one is young, in always honoring one's signature, and in giving way to others when one has acquired a sufficiency."

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Eusebe then took leave of the merchant.

"I hope to see you again, M. Martin," said Lansade. "Come breakfast with me one of these days. Let it be some Sunday."

The weather was fine; the shrubbery along the road was in bloom. Eusebe, who had not seen the country for a long time, felt, in spite of his preoccupation, the reviving influence of natural beauty, and resolved to pursue his journey afoot.

"I have done wrong," said he, "in questioning all these people, each of whom regards duty from a different point of view. The only man who can give me any light on the subject is the honorable magistrate, who kindly pointed out my error in living without an object."

An hour afterwards, the young man knocked at the door of M. de la Varade, who, unfortunately, was absent. A servant conducted the visitor into the magistrate's study, and asked him to await the return of the master of the house.

Eusebe had waited for something more than ten minutes, and, becoming impatient, was about to retire, when among the books on the table he observed a dictionary.

"Ah!" thought he, "I was sure that here my expectations would be realized. Now I shall certainly find what I seek."

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He turned over the leaves of the dictionary, and found,—

"DUTY.—*Subst.* That which conscience, reason, law, or custom demands that one should do."

Eusebe dropped the book, with an expression of bitter disappointment.

"Now," thought he, "I am more perplexed than ever; since the things which law and custom oblige one to do are directly contrary to those dictated by conscience and reason."

Eusebe was absorbed in reflection, when a young lady, with a sparkling eye, appeared at the door of the study. It was Madame de la Varade.

"My husband," said she, "told me that he would not return until late in the day. I regret that you have been kept waiting uselessly."

"And I, madame, regret having disturbed you."

"Will you oblige me with your name?"

"Eusebe Martin."

The wives of magistrates generally know more about any matters of interest that are transacted at their husbands' offices than the *procureur-général*. M. de la Varade had related to his wife the particulars of the late duel, and imparted to her the curiosity he felt in regard to the young man who possessed the love of a woman comparatively celebrated. After a protracted silence, Madame de la Varade observed,—

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"If you are particularly desirous to speak to my husband, and wish to await his return——"

"No, madame," interrupted Eusebe, "I have nothing of importance to say to Monsieur de la Varade. Yesterday he was so kind as to give me some good advice. But, unfortunately, I did not

entirely comprehend his meaning; and to-day I have come to beg him to define a word which he said was the religion of society."

"And what is the word?"

"Duty."

Madame de la Varade burst into a laugh,—which enabled Eusebe to note that she had pearly teeth and rosy lips.

"And so, monsieur, it is for this you have come all the way from Paris?"

"Yes, madame."

"Well, I can satisfy you."

"I shall be very grateful for the favor, indeed, madame."

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"You have, doubtless, heard of the ancient Hydra?"

"But," stammered the provincial, "I thought that was a fabulous monster."

"Precisely so:—a vile beast, with seven heads. If one were cut off, seven others appeared in its stead. Monsieur, duty is a moral monster. While you may accomplish one, seven others will rise to demand your attention."

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## CHAPTER XLII.

One morning, about a month after his visit to Versailles, Eusebe, with an enormous bouquet in his hand, entered the boudoir of Adéonne.

"Why do you bring these flowers?" inquired the comédienne. "This is not my birthday, if I remember rightly."

"No," responded the young man: "it is only the birthday of the bouquet."

"It is one of those days on which both flowers and compliments are of bad augury. I will wager that these camellias conceal some bad news."

"That is true."

"The nature of it?"

"I hardly know how to inform you."

"You are about to be married: is it not so?"

"Yes. Who could have told you?"

"I have known it for more than two weeks. I found a letter from your father in the pocket of your coat. You need not attempt to excuse yourself. I know all you could say."

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"I shall not attempt to justify myself," replied Eusebe, affecting a tranquillity of mind which he was far from possessing. "I take a wife because a man must discharge the duties he owes to society."

"You see, my dear Eusebe," continued the actress, "we are thought to be hardened, to have no heart,—we women of the theatre. Nothing could be further from the truth. I loved you because I thought you a man of sense and of courage. How grossly I was deceived! You are a fool and a coward!"

"Adéonne!"

[206]

"Do not become excited: you see that I am perfectly calm. I repeat that you are both a fool and a coward. The first duty of a man is to live for the woman whom he loves and who loves him. The characteristic of a man of intelligence is to prefer that happiness he knows to that which is untried. Of what importance is it to me that you are going to be married, since you love me no longer? I should only ask time to avenge myself, if I did not love you still. It is a great misfortune for me; for my love will kill me, if I cannot succeed in crushing it, which would be little better than death itself."

"Do you desire me to break off this marriage?" demanded Eusebe. "There is yet time."

"No, Eusebe. If you were to revoke your promise, I could not recall my illusions."

[207]

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## CHAPTER XLIII.

"M.—"

"Monsieur and Madame Bonnaud, *rentiers*, have the honor to notify you of the marriage of their daughter, Mademoiselle Louise Clementine Bonnaud, with Monsieur Eusebe Martin.

"The nuptial benediction will be pronounced on the 27th instant, at eleven o'clock in the morning, in the Church of Marly-le-Roi."

This notice was addressed to Adéonne by Bonnaud, who, like a prudent father, wished to advise the cantatrice of the approaching nuptials, in case Eusebe had failed to do so, and thereby prevent the occurrence of an unpleasant scene at Marly-le-Roi. After having read the note, Adéonne said to Marie Bachu, who had come to console her,—

“If Heaven did not appear to favor me so little, I would have a mass said for my happiness, which on that day will be buried.”

“Mine was long since entombed, and I am not yet dead,” was the response of Marie.

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## CHAPTER XLIV.

[208]

On the eve of the day fixed for the marriage, Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle Bonnaud, with their friends, Eusebe Martin, assisted by Lansade and Monsieur de la Varade, went to sign, in the official presence of Monflor, the notary, two important documents. The first was a contract of marriage; the second was a deed of partnership between Eusebe Martin and Isidore Boncain, manufacturer of chemicals, and successor of Bonnaud. Isidore Boncain brought to the firm of E. Martin & Co. his commercial information and experience. Eusebe brought the money which constituted the dowry of his wife.

The notary read the two documents in a loud tone. Then Eusebe arose and said, “Will you add that I also bring into the partnership the sum of forty-eight thousand francs, which I now deposit in your hands?”

Bonnaud and Lansade uttered an exclamation which could not be rendered by any known assemblage of letters.

“What!” exclaimed the first: “the actress has, then, restored your money?”

[209]

“Read!” said Eusebe, offering the astonished merchants a letter, the contents of which they immediately began to devour. The epistle ran as follows:—

“Eusebe:—You desired to purchase me; but I did not sell myself. I send you the forty-eight notes which you placed in my hands. I deposited the money at my banker’s. The interest has sufficed to defray your expenses. Allow me to retain the leather belt in which you used to carry the money, for my commissions. You will not return to your chestnut woods, and nowhere else could you have further use for this rustic purse.

“Adieu, Eusebe,

“ADÉONNE.”

“Insolent creature!” muttered Bonnaud, and, turning to the notary, he added, in a whisper, “Will you put in an additional clause, to the effect that, in case of the decease of one of the parties, if there be no children born of their union, all the property shall go to the survivor?”

[210]

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## CHAPTER XLV.

When all the honest *bourgeois* friends of Bonnaud and Lansade had satisfied their appetites, they did not leave the table, but began to drink, and, as they drank, they sang. It was Bonnaud himself, the father of the bride, who commenced: the guests joined in the chorus. Take ten men of the world, accustomed to every variety of debauch, give them the means to indulge in the most fearful orgies, and at the moment when the riot and revel are at their height call them to the window to see a newly-married couple pass from church. Then you will behold a novel and curious spectacle. The orgies will cease; the ribald song will be hushed. The happy couple will pass, and the innocent laugh of their friends will alone disturb the silence of the hour. These revellers are suddenly reminded of their sisters, of their mothers, and of the days of their youth, blighted and darkened by vice and debauchery. Well, for marriage—this solemn and formidable sacrament,—this act, horrible, or sublime, which rivets forever two beings to a chain, of which each broken link is a grief or a shame—the *bourgeois* have not the least respect. They await the moment when the priest shall have finished, to break forth in silly songs or idle jests.

[211]

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## CHAPTER XLVI.

[212]

Great sorrows only encroach upon one’s life little by little, and Heaven has given to the man who must experience such trials the strength to support them. In the presence of a great misfortune, nature seems to harden itself; it bends or breaks only under the petty miseries of existence.

On the day after his marriage, Eusebe began to realize the depth of his love for Adéonne. He felt

that the simple pronunciation of the sacramental words by a man in priestly robes did not suffice to destroy the greatest of human weaknesses,—habit. By nature mild and honest, the son of the skeptic Martin did not seek to deceive himself. He saw the magnitude of his misfortune, and determined to bear it with resignation. Daily and nightly comparisons between the objects by which he was then surrounded, and those to which he had been accustomed, destroyed his tranquillity of mind and heart. The modest coldness of Clementine's manner contrasted painfully with the passionate enthusiasm of Adéonne. The sober simplicity of his wife had no charm for him like the warm sympathy of the actress. The interior of the chemical factory gave him the vertigo. He never touched the books in the counting-house without fear and disgust. He regretted the pleasures of the past, and suffered continually from *ennui* and gloom.

[213]

## CHAPTER XLVII.

[214]

One morning, an irresistible impulse drove Eusebe to visit Adéonne.

"Jenny," said he, on entering the house, "where is madame?"

"Madame is dead," replied the girl, beginning to weep.

Eusebe threw himself on a divan, and for two hours patiently waited an effusion of his grief in tears. His heart beat violently, and his throat seemed parched; but no tears came to his relief. Jenny had at first regarded Eusebe with anger, for his desertion had caused her mistress's untimely end. But the depth of his sorrow touched her pity.

"Monsieur," said the girl, producing a small steel casket, "I was about to write you, in order to fulfil the last wishes of my poor mistress. She said to me, 'One week after my death, take this to Eusebe.' Here it is, monsieur: here it is." And the girl sobbed more bitterly than ever.

Eusebe took the casket, looked at it fixedly for a moment, and then opened it with a key he found behind the frame of Adéonne's portrait. In the box there was a letter. Eusebe broke the seal with a trembling hand, and read:—

[215]

"MY DEAR EUSEBE:—

"When you read this ugly letter, I shall be dead; my love for you will have killed me. Weep for me, but do not pity me. I prefer to die of this love than from any other cause. I feel myself gradually sinking, yet I experience a certain joy in thinking that it is for you I am about to part with life. If you only knew how good it is to love so wildly and so faithfully! Marie Bachu has endeavored to console me with her pity and her reasoning: how foolish!

"What follows, my dear Eusebe, I wish you to regard as my last will and testament. I bequeath to you my ring, set with turquoise and brilliants; it was the first article I purchased with money I had earned. You will find in one of my drawers my other jewels, in little packets, with names written upon them. These are *souvenirs* for my companions of the theatre. You will give my watch and chain to Madame Marignan, my dresser, and pay forty-two francs that I owe to Adolphe, the *coiffeur*. You will wear mourning for me for at least a month, will you not, my dear Eusebe? you can say at home that you have lost a cousin. I have seen your wife: she is beautiful, but her beauty will not remind you of Adéonne. Give all my dresses and linen to Jenny, my maid, and, also, two thousand francs, upon condition that she marry her lover. When you have done all this, and sold all my furniture, you will have about fifteen thousand francs. Go to Strasburg and seek out a turner in wood, named Antoine Krutger. If you find him, ask him if he was not a sutler in a regiment of chasseurs, at Saumur, twenty-two years ago. If he should reply in the affirmative, give him all the money. He is my father,—a respectable man, who would have despised me, if he had known how I was living. If he be dead, give the money to his children. Are they not my brothers and sisters? And now, my dear Eusebe, farewell forever. I have loved you,—oh, I cannot tell you how I have loved you; and I embrace you now as I embraced you the day you wished to purchase me. Farewell forever!

[216]

"ADÉONNE.

"P.S.—I ask pardon for the trouble I give you; I am yours for life, but that will not be long."

[217]

Eusebe sobbed and moaned. After having read and reread Adéonne's letter, he summoned Jenny.

"Jenny," said he, "madame has not forgotten you: she has left you a dowry."

"How, monsieur? Then I can return to my native town. Ah! monsieur, poor madame was so good."

"From what town are you?" inquired Eusebe.

"From Strasburg."

"Did madame know you were from Strasburg?"

"No, monsieur. In Paris, Alsations have difficulty in procuring places. Upon coming here, I said I



was from Nancy."

"Did you ever hear of a turner named Antoine Krutger?"

"Antoine Krutger!" exclaimed the girl. "Did you know him? He was my father."

"Was he ever attached to the army?"

"Oh, yes, monsieur: he served in the cavalry at Saumur. If he had lived, I should have been better off than I am."

"My girl," said Eusebe, after a pause, "all that is here belongs to you. Madame has made you her sole legatee." [218]

"Ah, monsieur!" exclaimed Jenny, weeping with joy and sorrow, "I am very happy and very unhappy at the same time. I had no need of this to make me love madame like a sister." [219]

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## CHAPTER XLVIII.

Eusebe, oppressed with grief, returned home a prey to a violent fever. Notwithstanding his efforts to conceal his suffering, he was forced to take to his bed, where he remained for a month, almost without consciousness. When he recovered his senses, he found Paul Buck and Gredinette at his bedside. Eusebe asked for his wife: they told him that she had gone to attend a dying sister. Some days afterwards, Eusebe, being convalescent, walked in the garden, leaning on the arm of Gredinette.

"Eusebe," said the young woman, stopping suddenly, "since you must learn the truth sooner or later, I prefer relieving my mind by telling you at once. Prepare yourself to hear of a great misfortune."

"Speak!" said Eusebe: "I could not be more unhappy than I am."

After much hesitation and circumlocution, Gredinette informed Eusebe that his wife had eloped with Isidore Boncain, and that the guilty couple had carried away with them the money of the firm. [220]

Eusebe made no response, nor did his countenance betray any inward emotion.

"He takes it better than I thought he would," said Gredinette, in the evening, to Paul.

By degrees, Eusebe was restored to health. One morning he said to his two friends,—

"I am about to bid you farewell. I am going to return to La Capelette, which I should never have quitted. I shall say good-bye to my father-in-law, and set out this very evening. Thanks for all your kind friendship: I shall never forget it. If, some day, weary of life, you should desire to taste the sweets of repose, come to my home, and I will love you as you have loved me."

"Do not go to see Bonnaud," said Paul: "the distracted father accuses you of being the cause of his daughter's fault."

"Accuses me!" [221]

"Yes. He pretends that this elopement is one of the results of your *liaison* with Adéonne. Nor would I advise you to trouble yourself any more about Madame de la Varade. She is absorbed in the preaching of a missionary who is creating a sensation at Versailles."

"A missionary? What is that?"

"Missionaries, my friend," replied Paul, seriously, "are men, or rather children of God, who traverse the seas, and encounter a thousand perils, to bear to benighted savages the word of God and civilization. The priest of whom I speak has been crucified, and has been six times in danger of being eaten."

"I will go to see him," said Eusebe; and he departed.

Father Vernier belonged to the Congregation of Lazaristes of Turin. He was an old man, with a snowy beard and a bronzed complexion. His black eyes were full of courage and good nature. He received Eusebe kindly.

"What do you desire, my son?" he inquired.

"Father," replied the young man, "I am weary of struggling with the contradictions and troubles of life. The more I seek truth, the more deeply do I become involved in doubt. To-day I come to you, like the wounded bird flying for rest to the branch of an aged oak. In the name of Heaven, tell me where to find the true, and where the false is hidden."

"Monsieur," said the priest, dryly, "I have devoted my life to the service of the Lord. I have traversed the wilderness to teach His word to the heathen. I owe my support to the humble and the suffering, to whom I am devoted. I have neither time nor inclination to enter into philosophic speculations." [222]

The same evening, Eusebe departed for the home of his childhood. Not finding at Limoges any vehicle to convey him to La Capelette, he determined to perform the rest of the journey on foot. He had proceeded scarcely half the distance, when a violent storm arose and forced him to seek shelter in a wayside inn. While the landlady was preparing his supper, he picked up,

mechanically, a greasy volume which was lying on the table, and read. After he had eaten, he retired to his chamber, where he passed the night in reading the same book. At dawn he arose and tendered a golden louis to the landlord for the privilege of carrying away the volume in which he was so deeply interested. When once more on the road, Eusebe said,—

“Why have I gone so far and exposed myself to so much sorrow in the search of truth, when it was at my very door?”

The volume contained the various books of the New Testament.

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“I was wrong to let the gentleman carry away the book,” said the innkeeper to his wife. [223]

“Bah! it cost only twelve sous,” she replied.

“And suppose it did: would he have given us twenty francs for it, if it had not been worth more?”

On reaching the great gate of his father’s house, Eusebe knocked.

“Ah! The good Lord be praised, Monsieur Eusebe,” exclaimed Katy, who soon appeared, “here you are at last. Hurry up to your father’s chamber: he so wishes to see you before he dies.”

Eusebe ascended quickly to his father’s chamber.

“Do I behold you at last, my son?” said M. Martin, gasping. “Have you attained your object? Tell me, if you can, before I die, where is the false; where is the true?”

“Father,” replied Eusebe, “*the false is on earth; the true is in heaven!*”

“You are perhaps right,” said the dying man; “and if the Abbé Jaucourt were not dead, and there were yet time, I would invite him to my bedside.”

“Father,” rejoined the young man, “the preachers of the word of God never die. They have no need to marry to reproduce themselves. Religion is a prolific mother. For one of her children who dies, ten are born.” [224]

“You may be right, my son,” murmured Martin, in a tone that was scarcely audible; “but I do not wish to see the Abbé Faye: he has such red hair!” And so he breathed his last sigh.

“Father! father!” cried Eusebe, not yet aware that his parent was dead, “believe me, *there is nothing true but the greatness of God!*”

“And,” cried the Abbé Faye, who at that moment thrust his red head in at the door,

“HUMAN FOLLIES!”

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## Transcriber’s Notes

Page 4 (blank in the original) was replaced with a Table of Contents to facilitate eBook navigation.

Quotation marks missed by the printer have been restored.

Period spellings were retained.

“hand” changed to “hard” on page 166. ([It is hard to die](#))

“renowed” changed to “renowned” on page 172. ([a renowned maître d’armes](#))

\*\*\* END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK HUMAN FOLLIES (LA BÊTISE HUMAINE.) \*\*\*

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