

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

A WOMAN OF THIRTY

Оноре де Бальзак
A Woman of Thirty

«Public Domain»

де Бальзак О.

A Woman of Thirty / О. де Бальзак — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

I. EARLY MISTAKES	5
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	28

Honoré de Balzac

A Woman of Thirty

I. EARLY MISTAKES

It was a Sunday morning in the beginning of April 1813, a morning which gave promise of one of those bright days when Parisians, for the first time in the year, behold dry pavements underfoot and a cloudless sky overhead. It was not yet noon when a luxurious cabriolet, drawn by two spirited horses, turned out of the Rue de Castiglione into the Rue de Rivoli, and drew up behind a row of carriages standing before the newly opened barrier half-way down the Terrasse de Feuillants. The owner of the carriage looked anxious and out of health; the thin hair on his sallow temples, turning gray already, gave a look of premature age to his face. He flung the reins to a servant who followed on horseback, and alighted to take in his arms a young girl whose dainty beauty had already attracted the eyes of loungers on the Terrasse. The little lady, standing upon the carriage step, graciously submitted to be taken by the waist, putting an arm round the neck of her guide, who set her down upon the pavement without so much as ruffling the trimming of her green rep dress. No lover would have been so careful. The stranger could only be the father of the young girl, who took his arm familiarly without a word of thanks, and hurried him into the Garden of the Tuileries.

The old father noted the wondering stare which some of the young men gave the couple, and the sad expression left his face for a moment. Although he had long since reached the time of life when a man is fain to be content with such illusory delights as vanity bestows, he began to smile.

“They think you are my wife,” he said in the young lady’s ear, and he held himself erect and walked with slow steps, which filled his daughter with despair.

He seemed to take up the coquette’s part for her; perhaps of the two, he was the more gratified by the curious glances directed at those little feet, shod with plum-colored prunella; at the dainty figure outlined by a low-cut bodice, filled in with an embroidered chemisette, which only partially concealed the girlish throat. Her dress was lifted by her movements as she walked, giving glimpses higher than the shoes of delicately moulded outlines beneath open-work silk stockings. More than one of the idlers turned and passed the pair again, to admire or to catch a second glimpse of the young face, about which the brown tresses played; there was a glow in its white and red, partly reflected from the rose-colored satin lining of her fashionable bonnet, partly due to the eagerness and impatience which sparkled in every feature. A mischievous sweetness lighted up the beautiful, almond-shaped dark eyes, bathed in liquid brightness, shaded by the long lashes and curving arch of eyebrow. Life and youth displayed their treasures in the petulant face and in the gracious outlines of the bust unspoiled even by the fashion of the day, which brought the girdle under the breast.

The young lady herself appeared to be insensible to admiration. Her eyes were fixed in a sort of anxiety on the Palace of the Tuileries, the goal, doubtless, of her petulant promenade. It wanted but fifteen minutes of noon, yet even at that early hour several women in gala dress were coming away from the Tuileries, not without backward glances at the gates and pouting looks of discontent, as if they regretted the lateness of the arrival which had cheated them of a longed-for spectacle. Chance carried a few words let fall by one of these disappointed fair ones to the ears of the charming stranger, and put her in a more than common uneasiness. The elderly man watched the signs of impatience and apprehension which flitted across his companion’s pretty face with interest, rather than amusement, in his eyes, observing her with a close and careful attention, which perhaps could only be prompted by some after-thought in the depths of a father’s mind.

It was the thirteenth Sunday of the year 1813. In two days’ time Napoleon was to set out upon the disastrous campaign in which he was to lose first Bessieres, and then Duroc; he was to

win the memorable battles of Lutzen and Bautzen, to see himself treacherously deserted by Austria, Saxony, Bavaria, and Bernadotte, and to dispute the dreadful field of Leipsic. The magnificent review commanded for that day by the Emperor was to be the last of so many which had long drawn forth the admiration of Paris and of foreign visitors. For the last time the Old Guard would execute their scientific military manoeuvres with the pomp and precision which sometimes amazed the Giant himself. Napoleon was nearly ready for his duel with Europe. It was a sad sentiment which brought a brilliant and curious throng to the Tuileries. Each mind seemed to foresee the future, perhaps too in every mind another thought was dimly present, how that in the future, when the heroic age of France should have taken the half-fabulous color with which it is tinged for us to-day, men's imaginations would more than once seek to retrace the picture of the pageant which they were assembled to behold.

"Do let us go more quickly, father; I can hear the drums," the young girl said, and in a half-teasing, half-coaxing manner she urged her companion forward.

"The troops are marching into the Tuileries," said he.

"Or marching out of it – everybody is coming away," she answered in childish vexation, which drew a smile from her father.

"The review only begins at half-past twelve," he said; he had fallen half behind his impetuous daughter.

It might have been supposed that she meant to hasten their progress by a movement of her right arm, for it swung like an oar blade through the water. In her impatience she had crushed her handkerchief into a ball in her tiny, well-gloved fingers. Now and then the old man smiled, but the smiles were succeeded by an anxious look which crossed his withered face and saddened it. In his love for the fair young girl by his side, he was as fain to exalt the present moment as to dread the future. "She is happy to-day; will her happiness last?" he seemed to ask himself, for the old are somewhat prone to foresee their own sorrows in the future of the young.

Father and daughter reached the peristyle under the tower where the tricolor flag was still waving; but as they passed under the arch by which people came and went between the Gardens of the Tuileries and the Place du Carrousel, the sentries on guard called out sternly:

"No admittance this way."

By standing on tiptoe the young girl contrived to catch a glimpse of a crowd of well-dressed women, thronging either side of the old marble arcade along which the Emperor was to pass.

"We were too late in starting, father; you can see that quite well." A little piteous pout revealed the immense importance which she attached to the sight of this particular review.

"Very well, Julie – let us go away. You dislike a crush."

"Do let us stay, father. Even here I may catch a glimpse of the Emperor; he might die during this campaign, and then I should never have seen him."

Her father shuddered at the selfish speech. There were tears in the girl's voice; he looked at her, and thought that he saw tears beneath her lowered eyelids; tears caused not so much by the disappointment as by one of the troubles of early youth, a secret easily guessed by an old father. Suddenly Julie's face flushed, and she uttered an exclamation. Neither her father nor the sentinels understood the meaning of the cry; but an officer within the barrier, who sprang across the court towards the staircase, heard it, and turned abruptly at the sound. He went to the arcade by the Gardens of the Tuileries, and recognized the young lady who had been hidden for a moment by the tall bearskin caps of the grenadiers. He set aside in favor of the pair the order which he himself had given. Then, taking no heed of the murmurings of the fashionable crowd seated under the arcade, he gently drew the enraptured child towards him.

"I am no longer surprised at her vexation and enthusiasm, if *you* are in waiting," the old man said with a half-mocking, half-serious glance at the officer.

“If you want a good position, M. le Duc,” the young man answered, “we must not spend any time in talking. The Emperor does not like to be kept waiting, and the Grand Marshal has sent me to announce our readiness.”

As he spoke, he had taken Julie’s arm with a certain air of old acquaintance, and drew her rapidly in the direction of the Place du Carrousel. Julie was astonished at the sight. An immense crowd was penned up in a narrow space, shut in between the gray walls of the palace and the limits marked out by chains round the great sanded squares in the midst of the courtyard of the Tuileries. The cordon of sentries posted to keep a clear passage for the Emperor and his staff had great difficulty in keeping back the eager humming swarm of human beings.

“Is it going to be a very fine sight?” Julie asked (she was radiant now).

“Pray take care!” cried her guide, and seizing Julie by the waist, he lifted her up with as much vigor as rapidity and set her down beside a pillar.

But for his prompt action, his gazing kinswoman would have come into collision with the hindquarters of a white horse which Napoleon’s Mameluke held by the bridle; the animal in its trappings of green velvet and gold stood almost under the arcade, some ten paces behind the rest of the horses in readiness for the Emperor’s staff.

The young officer placed the father and daughter in front of the crowd in the first space to the right, and recommended them by a sign to the two veteran grenadiers on either side. Then he went on his way into the palace; a look of great joy and happiness had succeeded to his horror-struck expression when the horse backed. Julie had given his hand a mysterious pressure; had she meant to thank him for the little service he had done her, or did she tell him, “After all, I shall really see you?” She bent her head quite graciously in response to the respectful bow by which the officer took leave of them before he vanished.

The old man stood a little behind his daughter. He looked grave. He seemed to have left the two young people together for some purpose of his own, and now he furtively watched the girl, trying to lull her into false security by appearing to give his whole attention to the magnificent sight in the Place du Carrousel. When Julie’s eyes turned to her father with the expression of a schoolboy before his master, he answered her glance by a gay, kindly smile, but his own keen eyes had followed the officer under the arcade, and nothing of all that passed was lost upon him.

“What a grand sight!” said Julie in a low voice, as she pressed her father’s hand; and indeed the pomp and picturesqueness of the spectacle in the Place du Carrousel drew the same exclamation from thousands upon thousands of spectators, all agape with wonder. Another array of sightseers, as tightly packed as the ranks behind the old noble and his daughter, filled the narrow strip of pavement by the railings which crossed the Place du Carrousel from side to side in a line parallel with the Palace of the Tuileries. The dense living mass, variegated by the colors of the women’s dresses, traced out a bold line across the centre of the Place du Carrousel, filling in the fourth side of a vast parallelogram, surrounded on three sides by the Palace of the Tuileries itself. Within the precincts thus railed off stood the regiments of the Old Guard about to be passed in review, drawn up opposite the Palace in imposing blue columns, ten ranks in depth. Without and beyond in the Place du Carrousel stood several regiments likewise drawn up in parallel lines, ready to march in through the arch in the centre; the Triumphal Arch, where the bronze horses of St. Mark from Venice used to stand in those days. At either end, by the Galeries du Louvre, the regimental bands were stationed, masked by the Polish Lancers then on duty.

The greater part of the vast graveled space was empty as an arena, ready for the evolutions of those silent masses disposed with the symmetry of military art. The sunlight blazed back from ten thousand bayonets in thin points of flame; the breeze ruffled the men’s helmet plumes till they swayed like the crests of forest-trees before a gale. The mute glittering ranks of veterans were full of bright contrasting colors, thanks to their different uniforms, weapons, accoutrements, and aiguillettes; and the whole great picture, that miniature battlefield before the combat, was framed

by the majestic towering walls of the Tuileries, which officers and men seemed to rival in their immobility. Involuntarily the spectator made the comparison between the walls of men and the walls of stone. The spring sunlight, flooding white masonry reared but yesterday and buildings centuries old, shone full likewise upon thousands of bronzed faces, each one with its own tale of perils passed, each one gravely expectant of perils to come.

The colonels of the regiments came and went alone before the ranks of heroes; and behind the masses of troops, checkered with blue and silver and gold and purple, the curious could discern the tricolor pennons on the lances of some half-a-dozen indefatigable Polish cavalry, rushing about like shepherds' dogs in charge of a flock, caracoling up and down between the troops and the crowd, to keep the gazers within their proper bounds. But for this slight flutter of movement, the whole scene might have been taking place in the courtyard of the palace of the Sleeping Beauty. The very spring breeze, ruffling up the long fur on the grenadiers' bearskins, bore witness to the men's immobility, as the smothered murmur of the crowd emphasized their silence. Now and again the jingling of Chinese bells, or a chance blow to a big drum, woke the reverberating echoes of the Imperial Palace with a sound like the far-off rumblings of thunder.

An indescribable, unmistakable enthusiasm was manifest in the expectancy of the multitude. France was about to take farewell of Napoleon on the eve of a campaign of which the meanest citizen foresaw the perils. The existence of the French Empire was at stake – to be, or not to be. The whole citizen population seemed to be as much inspired with this thought as that other armed population standing in serried and silent ranks in the enclosed space, with the Eagles and the genius of Napoleon hovering above them.

Those very soldiers were the hope of France, her last drop of blood; and this accounted for not a little of the anxious interest of the scene. Most of the gazers in the crowd had bidden farewell – perhaps farewell for ever – to the men who made up the rank and file of the battalions; and even those most hostile to the Emperor, in their hearts, put up fervent prayers to heaven for the glory of France; and those most weary of the struggle with the rest of Europe had left their hatreds behind as they passed in under the Triumphal Arch. They too felt that in the hour of danger Napoleon meant France herself.

The clock of the Tuileries struck the half-hour. In a moment the hum of the crowd ceased. The silence was so deep that you might have heard a child speak. The old noble and his daughter, wholly intent, seeming to live only by their eyes, caught a distinct sound of spurs and clank of swords echoing up under the sonorous peristyle.

And suddenly there appeared a short, somewhat stout figure in a green uniform, white trousers, and riding boots; a man wearing on his head a cocked hat well-nigh as magically potent as its wearer; the broad red ribbon of the Legion of Honor rose and fell on his breast, and a short sword hung at his side. At one and the same moment the man was seen by all eyes in all parts of the square.

Immediately the drums beat a salute, both bands struck up a martial refrain, caught and repeated like a fugue by every instrument from the thinnest flutes to the largest drum. The clangor of that call to arms thrilled through every soul. The colors dropped, and the men presented arms, one unanimous rhythmical movement shaking every bayonet from the foremost front near the Palace to the last rank in the Place du Carrousel. The words of command sped from line to line like echoes. The whole enthusiastic multitude sent up a shout of "Long live the Emperor!"

Everything shook, quivered, and thrilled at last. Napoleon had mounted his horse. It was his movement that had put life into those silent masses of men; the dumb instruments had found a voice at his coming, the Eagles and the colors had obeyed the same impulse which had brought emotion into all faces.

The very walls of the high galleries of the old palace seemed to cry aloud, "Long live the Emperor!"

There was something preternatural about it – it was magic at work, a counterfeit presentment of the power of God; or rather it was a fugitive image of a reign itself so fugitive.

And *he* the centre of such love, such enthusiasm and devotion, and so many prayers, he for whom the sun had driven the clouds from the sky, was sitting there on his horse, three paces in front of his Golden Squadron, with the grand Marshal on his left, and the Marshal-in-waiting on his right. Amid all the outburst of enthusiasm at his presence not a feature of his face appeared to alter.

“Oh! yes. At Wagram, in the thick of the firing, on the field of Borodino, among the dead, always as cool as a cucumber *he* is!” said the grenadier, in answer to the questions with which the young girl plied him. For a moment Julie was absorbed in the contemplation of that face, so quiet in the security of conscious power. The Emperor noticed Mlle. de Chatillonest, and leaned to make some brief remark to Duroc, which drew a smile from the Grand Marshal. Then the review began.

If hitherto the young lady’s attention had been divided between Napoleon’s impassive face and the blue, red, and green ranks of troops, from this time forth she was wholly intent upon a young officer moving among the lines as they performed their swift symmetrical evolutions. She watched him gallop with tireless activity to and from the group where the plainly dressed Napoleon shone conspicuous. The officer rode a splendid black horse. His handsome sky-blue uniform marked him out amid the variegated multitude as one of the Emperor’s orderly staff-officers. His gold lace glittered in the sunshine which lighted up the aigrette on his tall, narrow shako, so that the gazer might have compared him to a will-o’-the-wisp, or to a visible spirit emanating from the Emperor to infuse movement into those battalions whose swaying bayonets flashed into flames; for, at a mere glance from his eyes, they broke and gathered again, surging to and fro like the waves in a bay, or again swept before him like the long ridges of high-crested wave which the vexed Ocean directs against the shore.

When the manoeuvres were over the officer galloped back at full speed, pulled up his horse, and awaited orders. He was not ten paces from Julie as he stood before the Emperor, much as General Rapp stands in Gerard’s *Battle of Austerlitz*. The young girl could behold her lover in all his soldierly splendor.

Colonel Victor d’Aiglemont, barely thirty years of age, was tall, slender, and well made. His well-proportioned figure never showed to better advantage than now as he exerted his strength to hold in the restive animal, whose back seemed to curve gracefully to the rider’s weight. His brown masculine face possessed the indefinable charm of perfectly regular features combined with youth. The fiery eyes under the broad forehead, shaded by thick eyebrows and long lashes, looked like white ovals bordered by an outline of black. His nose had the delicate curve of an eagle’s beak; the sinuous lines of the inevitable black moustache enhanced the crimson of the lips. The brown and tawny shades which overspread the wide high-colored cheeks told a tale of unusual vigor, and his whole face bore the impress of dashing courage. He was the very model which French artists seek to-day for the typical hero of Imperial France. The horse which he rode was covered with sweat, the animal’s quivering head denoted the last degree of restiveness; his hind hoofs were set down wide apart and exactly in a line, he shook his long thick tail to the wind; in his fidelity to his master he seemed to be a visible presentment of that master’s devotion to the Emperor.

Julie saw her lover watching intently for the Emperor’s glances, and felt a momentary pang of jealousy, for as yet he had not given her a look. Suddenly at a word from his sovereign Victor gripped his horse’s flanks and set out at a gallop, but the animal took fright at a shadow cast by a post, shied, backed, and reared up so suddenly that his rider was all but thrown off. Julie cried out, her face grew white, people looked at her curiously, but she saw no one, her eyes were fixed upon the too mettlesome beast. The officer gave the horse a sharp admonitory cut with the whip, and galloped off with Napoleon’s order.

Julie was so absorbed, so dizzy with sights and sounds, that unconsciously she clung to her father’s arm so tightly that he could read her thoughts by the varying pressure of her fingers. When Victor was all but flung out of the saddle, she clutched her father with a convulsive grip as if she

herself were in danger of falling, and the old man looked at his daughter's tell-tale face with dark and painful anxiety. Pity, jealousy, something even of regret stole across every drawn and wrinkled line of mouth and brow. When he saw the unwonted light in Julie's eyes, when that cry broke from her, when the convulsive grasp of her fingers drew away the veil and put him in possession of her secret, then with that revelation of her love there came surely some swift revelation of the future. Mournful forebodings could be read in his own face.

Julie's soul seemed at that moment to have passed into the officer's being. A torturing thought more cruel than any previous dread contracted the old man's painworn features, as he saw the glance of understanding that passed between the soldier and Julie. The girl's eyes were wet, her cheeks glowed with unwonted color. Her father turned abruptly and led her away into the Garden of the Tuileries.

"Why, father," she cried, "there are still the regiments in the Place du Carrousel to be passed in review."

"No, child, all the troops are marching out."

"I think you are mistaken, father; M. d'Aiglemont surely told them to advance –"

"But I feel ill, my child, and I do not care to stay."

Julie could readily believe the words when she glanced at his face; he looked quite worn out by his fatherly anxieties.

"Are you feeling very ill?" she asked indifferently, her mind was so full of other thoughts.

"Every day is a reprieve for me, is it not?" returned her father.

"Now do you mean to make me miserable again by talking about your death? I was in such spirits! Do pray get rid of those horrid gloomy ideas of yours."

The father heaved a sigh. "Ah! spoiled child," he cried, "the best hearts are sometimes very cruel. We devote our whole lives to you, you are our one thought, we plan for your welfare, sacrifice our tastes to your whims, idolize you, give the very blood in our veins for you, and all this is nothing, is it? Alas! yes, you take it all as a matter of course. If we would always have your smiles and your disdainful love, we should need the power of God in heaven. Then comes another, a lover, a husband, and steals away your heart."

Julie looked in amazement at her father; he walked slowly along, and there was no light in the eyes which he turned upon her.

"You hide yourself even from us," he continued, "but, perhaps, also you hide yourself from yourself –"

"What do you mean by that, father?"

"I think that you have secrets from me, Julie. – You love," he went on quickly, as he saw the color rise to her face. "Oh! I hoped that you would stay with your old father until he died. I hoped to keep you with me, still radiant and happy, to admire you as you were but so lately. So long as I knew nothing of your future I could believe in a happy lot for you; but now I cannot possibly take away with me a hope of happiness for your life, for you love the colonel even more than the cousin. I can no longer doubt it."

"And why should I be forbidden to love him?" asked Julie, with lively curiosity in her face.

"Ah, my Julie, you would not understand me," sighed the father.

"Tell me, all the same," said Julie, with an involuntary petulant gesture.

"Very well, child, listen to me. Girls are apt to imagine noble and enchanting and totally imaginary figures in their own minds; they have fanciful extravagant ideas about men, and sentiment, and life; and then they innocently endow somebody or other with all the perfections of their day-dreams, and put their trust in him. They fall in love with this imaginary creature in the man of their choice; and then, when it is too late to escape from their fate, behold their first idol, the illusion made fair with their fancies, turns to an odious skeleton. Julie, I would rather have you fall in love with an old man than with the Colonel. Ah! if you could but see things from the standpoint of ten years hence, you would admit that my old experience was right. I know what Victor is, that gaiety of his

is simply animal spirits – the gaiety of the barracks. He has no ability, and he is a spendthrift. He is one of those men whom Heaven created to eat and digest four meals a day, to sleep, to fall in love with the first woman that comes to hand, and to fight. He does not understand life. His kind heart, for he has a kind heart, will perhaps lead him to give his purse to a sufferer or to a comrade; *but* he is careless, he has not the delicacy of heart which makes us slaves to a woman's happiness, he is ignorant, he is selfish. There are plenty of *buts*– ”

“But, father, he must surely be clever, he must have ability, or he would not be a colonel – ”

“My dear, Victor will be a colonel all his life. – I have seen no one who appears to me to be worthy of you,” the old father added, with a kind of enthusiasm.

He paused an instant, looked at his daughter, and added, “Why, my poor Julie, you are still too young, too fragile, too delicate for the cares and rubs of married life. D'Aiglemont's relations have spoiled him, just as your mother and I have spoiled you. What hope is there that you two could agree, with two imperious wills diametrically opposed to each other? You will be either the tyrant or the victim, and either alternative means, for a wife, an equal sum of misfortune. But you are modest and sweet-natured, you would yield from the first. In short,” he added, in a quivering voice, “there is a grace of feeling in you which would never be valued, and then – ” he broke off, for the tears overcame him.

“Victor will give you pain through all the girlish qualities of your young nature,” he went on, after a pause. “I know what soldiers are, my Julie; I have been in the army. In a man of that kind, love very seldom gets the better of old habits, due partly to the miseries amid which soldiers live, partly to the risks they run in a life of adventure.”

“Then you mean to cross my inclinations, do you, father?” asked Julie, half in earnest, half in jest. “Am I to marry to please you and not to please myself?”

“To please me!” cried her father, with a start of surprise. “To please *me*, child? when you will not hear the voice that upbraids you so tenderly very much longer! But I have always heard children impute personal motives for the sacrifices that their parents make for them. Marry Victor, my Julie! Some day you will bitterly deplore his ineptitude, his thriftless ways, his selfishness, his lack of delicacy, his inability to understand love, and countless troubles arising through him. Then, remember, that here under these trees your old father's prophetic voice sounded in your ears in vain.”

He said no more; he had detected a rebellious shake of the head on his daughter's part. Both made several paces towards the carriage which was waiting for them at the grating. During that interval of silence, the young girl stole a glance at her father's face, and little by little her sullen brow cleared. The intense pain visible on his bowed forehead made a lively impression upon her.

“Father,” she began in gentle tremulous tones, “I promise to say no more about Victor until you have overcome your prejudices against him.”

The old man looked at her in amazement. Two tears which filled his eyes overflowed down his withered cheeks. He could not take Julie in his arms in that crowded place; but he pressed her hand tenderly. A few minutes later when they had taken their places in the cabriolet, all the anxious thought which had gathered about his brow had completely disappeared. Julie's pensive attitude gave him far less concern than the innocent joy which had betrayed her secret during the review.

Nearly a year had passed since the Emperor's last review. In early March 1814 a caleche was rolling along the highroad from Amboise to Tours. As the carriage came out from beneath the green-roofed aisle of walnut trees by the post-house of la Frilliere, the horses dashed forward with such speed that in a moment they gained the bridge built across the Cise at the point of its confluence with the Loire. There, however, they come to a sudden stand. One of the traces had given way in consequence of the furious pace at which the post-boy, obedient to his orders, had urged on four horses, the most vigorous of their breed. Chance, therefore, gave the two recently awakened occupants of the carriage an opportunity of seeing one of the most lovely landscapes along the enchanting banks of the Loire, and that at their full leisure.

At a glance the travelers could see to the right the whole winding course of the Cise meandering like a silver snake among the meadows, where the grass had taken the deep, bright green of early spring. To the left lay the Loire in all its glory. A chill morning breeze, ruffling the surface of the stately river, had fretted the broad sheets of water far and wide into a network of ripples, which caught the gleams of the sun, so that the green islets here and there in its course shone like gems set in a gold necklace. On the opposite bank the fair rich meadows of Touraine stretched away as far as the eye could see; the low hills of the Cher, the only limits to the view, lay on the far horizon, a luminous line against the clear blue sky. Tours itself, framed by the trees on the islands in a setting of spring leaves, seemed to rise like Venice out of the waters, and her old cathedral towers soaring in air were blended with the pale fantastic cloud shapes in the sky.

Over the side of the bridge, where the carriage had come to a stand, the traveler looks along a line of cliffs stretching as far as Tours. Nature in some freakish mood must have raised these barriers of rock, undermined incessantly by the rippling Loire at their feet, for a perpetual wonder for spectators. The village of Vouvray nestles, as it were, among the clefts and crannies of the crags, which begin to describe a bend at the junction of the Loire and Cise. A whole population of vine-dressers lives, in fact, in appalling insecurity in holes in their jagged sides for the whole way between Vouvray and Tours. In some places there are three tiers of dwellings hollowed out, one above the other, in the rock, each row communicating with the next by dizzy staircases cut likewise in the face of the cliff. A little girl in a short red petticoat runs out into her garden on the roof of another dwelling; you can watch a wreath of hearth-smoke curling up among the shoots and trails of the vines. Men are at work in their almost perpendicular patches of ground, an old woman sits tranquilly spinning under a blossoming almond tree on a crumbling mass of rock, and smiles down on the dismay of the travelers far below her feet. The cracks in the ground trouble her as little as the precarious state of the old wall, a pendant mass of loose stones, only kept in position by the crooked stems of its ivy mantle. The sound of coopers' mallets rings through the skyey caves; for here, where Nature stints human industry of soil, the soil is everywhere tilled, and everywhere fertile.

No view along the whole course of the Loire can compare with the rich landscape of Touraine, here outspread beneath the traveler's eyes. The triple picture, thus barely sketched in outline, is one of those scenes which the imagination engraves for ever upon the memory; let a poet fall under its charm, and he shall be haunted by visions which shall reproduce its romantic loveliness out of the vague substance of dreams.

As the carriage stopped on the bridge over the Cise, white sails came out here and there from among the islands in the Loire to add new grace to the perfect view. The subtle scent of the willows by the water's edge was mingled with the damp odor of the breeze from the river. The monotonous chant of a goat-herd added a plaintive note to the sound of birds' songs in a chorus which never ends; the cries of the boatmen brought tidings of distant busy life. Here was Touraine in all its glory, and the very height of the splendor of spring. Here was the one peaceful district in France in those troublous days; for it was so unlikely that a foreign army should trouble its quiet that Touraine might be said to defy invasion.

As soon as the caleche stopped, a head covered with a foraging cap was put out of the window, and soon afterwards an impatient military man flung open the carriage door and sprang down into the road to pick a quarrel with the postilion, but the skill with which the Tourangeau was repairing the trace restored Colonel d'Aiglemont's equanimity. He went back to the carriage, stretched himself to relieve his benumbed muscles, yawned, looked about him, and finally laid a hand on the arm of a young woman warmly wrapped up in a furred pelisse.

"Come, Julie," he said hoarsely, "just wake up and take a look at this country. It is magnificent."

Julie put her head out of the window. She wore a traveling cap of sable fur. Nothing could be seen of her but her face, for the whole of her person was completely concealed by the folds of her fur pelisse. The young girl who tripped to the review at the Tuileries with light footsteps and joy and

gladness in her heart was scarcely recognizable in Julie d'Aiglemont. Her face, delicate as ever, had lost the rose-color which once gave it so rich a glow. A few straggling locks of black hair, straightened out by the damp night air, enhanced its dead whiteness, and all its life and sparkle seemed to be torpid. Yet her eyes glittered with preternatural brightness in spite of the violet shadows under the lashes upon her wan cheeks.

She looked out with indifferent eyes over the fields towards the Cher, at the islands in the river, at the line of the crags of Vouvray stretching along the Loire towards Tours; then she sank back as soon as possible into her seat in the caleche. She did not care to give a glance to the enchanting valley of the Cise.

"Yes, it is wonderful," she said, and out in the open air her voice sounded weak and faint to the last degree. Evidently she had had her way with her father, to her misfortune.

"Would you not like to live here, Julie?"

"Yes; here or anywhere," she answered listlessly.

"Do you feel ill?" asked Colonel d'Aiglemont.

"No, not at all," she answered with momentary energy; and, smiling at her husband, she added, "I should like to go to sleep."

Suddenly there came a sound of a horse galloping towards them. Victor d'Aiglemont dropped his wife's hand and turned to watch the bend in the road. No sooner had he taken his eyes from Julie's pale face than all the assumed gaiety died out of it; it was as if a light had been extinguished. She felt no wish to look at the landscape, no curiosity to see the horseman who was galloping towards them at such a furious pace, and, ensconcing herself in her corner, stared out before her at the hindquarters of the post-horses, looking as blank as any Breton peasant listening to his *recteur's* sermon.

Suddenly a young man riding a valuable horse came out from behind the clump of poplars and flowering briar-rose.

"It is an Englishman," remarked the Colonel.

"Lord bless you, yes, General," said the post-boy; "he belongs to the race of fellows who have a mind to gobble up France, they say."

The stranger was one of the foreigners traveling in France at the time when Napoleon detained all British subjects within the limits of the Empire, by way of reprisals for the violation of the Treaty of Amiens, an outrage of international law perpetrated by the Court of St. James. These prisoners, compelled to submit to the Emperor's pleasure, were not all suffered to remain in the houses where they were arrested, nor yet in the places of residence which at first they were permitted to choose. Most of the English colony in Touraine had been transplanted thither from different places where their presence was supposed to be inimical to the interests of the Continental Policy.

The young man, who was taking the tedium of the early morning hours on horseback, was one of these victims of bureaucratic tyranny. Two years previously, a sudden order from the Foreign Office had dragged him from Montpellier, whither he had gone on account of consumptive tendencies. He glanced at the Comte d'Aiglemont, saw that he was a military man, and deliberately looked away, turning his head somewhat abruptly towards the meadows by the Cise.

"The English are all as insolent as if the globe belonged to them," muttered the Colonel. "Luckily, Soult will give them a thrashing directly."

The prisoner gave a glance to the caleche as he rode by. Brief though that glance was, he had yet time to notice the sad expression which lent an indefinable charm to the Countess' pensive face. Many men are deeply moved by the mere semblance of suffering in a woman; they take the look of pain for a sign of constancy or of love. Julie herself was so much absorbed in the contemplation of the opposite cushion that she saw neither the horse nor the rider. The damaged trace meanwhile had been quickly and strongly repaired; the Count stepped into his place again; and the post-boy, doing his best to make up for lost time, drove the carriage rapidly along the embankment. On they drove under the overhanging cliffs, with their picturesque vine-dressers' huts and stores of wine maturing

in their dark sides, till in the distance uprose the spire of the famous Abbey of Marmoutiers, the retreat of St. Martin.

“What can that diaphanous milord want with us?” exclaimed the Colonel, turning to assure himself that the horseman who had followed them from the bridge was the young Englishman.

After all, the stranger committed no breach of good manners by riding along on the footway, and Colonel d’Aiglemont was fain to lie back in his corner after sending a scowl in the Englishman’s direction. But in spite of his hostile instincts, he could not help noticing the beauty of the animal and the graceful horsemanship of the rider. The young man’s face was of that pale, fair-complexioned, insular type, which is almost girlish in the softness and delicacy of its color and texture. He was tall, thin, and fair-haired, dressed with the extreme and elaborate neatness characteristic of a man of fashion in prudish England. Any one might have thought that bashfulness rather than pleasure at the sight of the Countess had called up that flush into his face. Once only Julie raised her eyes and looked at the stranger, and then only because she was in a manner compelled to do so, for her husband called upon her to admire the action of the thoroughbred. It so happened that their glances clashed; and the shy Englishman, instead of riding abreast of the carriage, fell behind on this, and followed them at a distance of a few paces.

Yet the Countess had scarcely given him a glance; she saw none of the various perfections, human and equine, commended to her notice, and fell back again in the carriage, with a slight movement of the eyelids intended to express her acquiescence in her husband’s views. The Colonel fell asleep again, and both husband and wife reached Tours without another word. Not one of those enchanting views of everchanging landscape through which they sped had drawn so much as a glance from Julie’s eyes.

Mme. d’Aiglemont looked now and again at her sleeping husband. While she looked, a sudden jolt shook something down upon her knees. It was her father’s portrait, a miniature which she wore suspended about her neck by a black cord. At the sight of it, the tears, till then kept back, overflowed her eyes, but no one, save perhaps the Englishman, saw them glitter there for a brief moment before they dried upon her pale cheeks.

Colonel d’Aiglemont was on his way to the South. Marshal Soult was repelling an English invasion of Bearn; and d’Aiglemont, the bearer of the Emperor’s orders to the Marshal, seized the opportunity of taking his wife as far as Tours to leave her with an elderly relative of his own, far away from the dangers threatening Paris.

Very shortly the carriage rolled over the paved road of Tours, over the bridge, along the Grande-Rue, and stopped at last before the old mansion of the *ci-devant* Marquise de Listomere-Landon.

The Marquise de Listomere-Landon, with her white hair, pale face, and shrewd smile, was one of those fine old ladies who still seem to wear the paniers of the eighteenth century, and affects caps of an extinct mode. They are nearly always caressing in their manners, as if the heyday of love still lingered on for these septuagenarian portraits of the age of Louis Quinze, with the faint perfume of *poudre a la marechale* always clinging about them. Bigoted rather than pious, and less of bigots than they seem, women who can tell a story well and talk still better, their laughter comes more readily for an old memory than for a new jest – the present intrudes upon them.

When an old waiting-woman announced to the Marquise de Listomere-Landon (to give her the title which she was soon to resume) the arrival of a nephew whom she had not seen since the outbreak of the war with Spain, the old lady took off her spectacles with alacrity, shut the *Galerie de l’ancienne Cour* (her favorite work), and recovered something like youthful activity, hastening out upon the flight of steps to greet the young couple there.

Aunt and niece exchanged a rapid glance of survey.

“Good-morning, dear aunt,” cried the Colonel, giving the old lady a hasty embrace. “I am bringing a young lady to put under your wing. I have come to put my treasure in your keeping. My

Julie is neither jealous nor a coquette, she is as good as an angel. I hope that she will not be spoiled here," he added, suddenly interrupting himself.

"Scapegrace!" returned the Marquise, with a satirical glance at her nephew.

She did not wait for her niece to approach her, but with a certain kindly graciousness went forward herself to kiss Julie, who stood there thoughtfully, to all appearance more embarrassed than curious concerning her new relation.

"So we are to make each other's acquaintance, are we, my love?" the Marquise continued. "Do not be too much alarmed of me. I always try not to be an old woman with young people."

On the way to the drawing-room, the Marquise ordered breakfast for her guests in provincial fashion; but the Count checked his aunt's flow of words by saying soberly that he could only remain in the house while the horses were changing. On this the three hurried into the drawing-room. The Colonel had barely time to tell the story of the political and military events which had compelled him to ask his aunt for a shelter for his young wife. While he talked on without interruption, the older lady looked from her nephew to her niece, and took the sadness in Julie's white face for grief at the enforced separation. "Eh! eh!" her looks seemed to say, "these young things are in love with each other."

The crack of the postilion's whip sounded outside in the silent old grass-grown courtyard. Victor embraced his aunt once more, and rushed out.

"Good-bye, dear," he said, kissing his wife, who had followed him down to the carriage.

"Oh! Victor, let me come still further with you," she pleaded coaxingly. "I do not want to leave you –"

"Can you seriously mean it?"

"Very well," said Julie, "since you wish it." The carriage disappeared.

"So you are very fond of my poor Victor?" said the Marquise, interrogating her niece with one of those sagacious glances which dowagers give younger women.

"Alas, madame!" said Julie, "must one not love a man well indeed to marry him?"

The words were spoken with an artless accent which revealed either a pure heart or inscrutable depths. How could a woman, who had been the friend of Duclos and the Marechal de Richelieu, refrain from trying to read the riddle of this marriage? Aunt and niece were standing on the steps, gazing after the fast vanishing caleche. The look in the young Countess' eyes did not mean love as the Marquise understood it. The good lady was a Provencale, and her passions had been lively.

"So you were captivated by my good-for-nothing of a nephew?" she asked.

Involuntarily Julie shuddered, something in the experienced coquette's look and tone seemed to say that Mme. de Listomere-Landon's knowledge of her husband's character went perhaps deeper than his wife's. Mme. d'Aiglemont, in dismay, took refuge in this transparent dissimulation, ready to her hand, the first resource of an artless unhappiness. Mme. de Listomere appeared to be satisfied with Julie's answers; but in her secret heart she rejoiced to think that here was a love affair on hand to enliven her solitude, for that her niece had some amusing flirtation on foot she was fully convinced.

In the great drawing-room, hung with tapestry framed in strips of gilding, young Mme. d'Aiglemont sat before a blazing fire, behind a Chinese screen placed to shut out the cold draughts from the window, and her heavy mood scarcely lightened. Among the old eighteenth-century furniture, under the old paneled ceiling, it was not very easy to be gay. Yet the young Parisienne took a sort of pleasure in this entrance upon a life of complete solitude and in the solemn silence of the old provincial house. She exchanged a few words with the aunt, a stranger, to whom she had written a bride's letter on her marriage, and then sat as silent as if she had been listening to an opera. Not until two hours had been spent in an atmosphere of quiet befitting la Trappe, did she suddenly awaken to a sense of uncourteous behavior, and bethink herself of the short answers which she had given her aunt. Mme. de Listomere, with the gracious tact characteristic of a bygone age, had respected her niece's mood. When Mme. d'Aiglemont became conscious of her shortcomings, the dowager sat

knitting, though as a matter of fact she had several times left the room to superintend preparations in the Green Chamber, whither the Countess' luggage had been transported; now, however, she had returned to her great armchair, and stole a glance from time to time at this young relative. Julie felt ashamed of giving way to irresistible broodings, and tried to earn her pardon by laughing at herself.

"My dear child, *we* know the sorrows of widowhood," returned her aunt. But only the eyes of forty years could have distinguished the irony hovering about the old lady's mouth.

Next morning the Countess improved. She talked. Mme. de Listomere no longer despaired of fathoming the new-made wife, whom yesterday she had set down as a dull, unsociable creature, and discoursed on the delights of the country, of dances, of houses where they could visit. All that day the Marquise's questions were so many snares; it was the old habit of the old Court, she could not help setting traps to discover her niece's character. For several days Julie, plied with temptations, steadfastly declined to seek amusement abroad; and much as the old lady's pride longed to exhibit her pretty niece, she was fain to renounce all hope of taking her into society, for the young Countess was still in mourning for her father, and found in her loss and her mourning dress a pretext for her sadness and desire for seclusion.

By the end of the week the dowager admired Julie's angelic sweetness of disposition, her diffident charm, her indulgent temper, and thenceforward began to take a prodigious interest in the mysterious sadness gnawing at this young heart. The Countess was one of those women who seem born to be loved and to bring happiness with them. Mme. de Listomere found her niece's society grown so sweet and precious, that she doted upon Julie, and could no longer think of parting with her. A month sufficed to establish an eternal friendship between the two ladies. The dowager noticed, not without surprise, the changes that took place in Mme. d'Aiglemont; gradually her bright color died away, and her face became dead white. Yet, Julie's spirits rose as the bloom faded from her cheeks. Sometimes the dowager's sallies provoked outbursts of merriment or peals of laughter, promptly repressed, however, by some clamorous thought.

Mme. de Listomere had guessed by this time that it was neither Victor's absence nor a father's death which threw a shadow over her niece's life; but her mind was so full of dark suspicions, that she found it difficult to lay a finger upon the real cause of the mischief. Possibly truth is only discoverable by chance. A day came, however, at length when Julie flashed out before her aunt's astonished eyes into a complete forgetfulness of her marriage; she recovered the wild spirits of careless girlhood. Mme. de Listomere then and there made up her mind to fathom the depths of this soul, for its exceeding simplicity was as inscrutable as dissimulation.

Night was falling. The two ladies were sitting by the window which looked out upon the street, and Julie was looking thoughtful again, when some one went by on horseback.

"There goes one of your victims," said the Marquise.

Mme. d'Aiglemont looked up; dismay and surprise blended in her face.

"He is a young Englishman, the Honorable Arthur Ormand, Lord Grenville's eldest son. His history is interesting. His physician sent him to Montpellier in 1802; it was hoped that in that climate he might recover from the lung complaint which was gaining ground. He was detained, like all his fellow-countrymen, by Bonaparte when war broke out. That monster cannot live without fighting. The young Englishman, by way of amusing himself, took to studying his own complaint, which was believed to be incurable. By degrees he acquired a liking for anatomy and physic, and took quite a craze for that kind of thing, a most extraordinary taste in a man of quality, though the Regent certainly amused himself with chemistry! In short, Monsieur Arthur made astonishing progress in his studies; his health did the same under the faculty of Montpellier; he consoled his captivity, and at the same time his cure was thoroughly completed. They say that he spent two whole years in a cowshed, living on cresses and the milk of a cow brought from Switzerland, breathing as seldom as he could, and never speaking a word. Since he come to Tours he has lived quite alone; he is as proud as a peacock; but you have certainly made a conquest of him, for probably it is not on my account

that he has ridden under the window twice every day since you have been here. – He has certainly fallen in love with you.”

That last phrase roused the Countess like magic. Her involuntary start and smile took the Marquise by surprise. So far from showing a sign of the instinctive satisfaction felt by the most strait-laced of women when she learns that she has destroyed the peace of mind of some male victim, there was a hard, haggard expression in Julie’s face – a look of repulsion amounting almost to loathing.

A woman who loves will put the whole world under the ban of Love’s empire for the sake of the one whom she loves; but such a woman can laugh and jest; and Julie at that moment looked as if the memory of some recently escaped peril was too sharp and fresh not to bring with it a quick sensation of pain. Her aunt, by this time convinced that Julie did not love her nephew, was stupefied by the discovery that she loved nobody else. She shuddered lest a further discovery should show her Julie’s heart disenchanted, lest the experience of a day, or perhaps of a night, should have revealed to a young wife the full extent of Victor’s emptiness.

“If she has found him out, there is an end of it,” thought the dowager. “My nephew will soon be made to feel the inconveniences of wedded life.”

The Marquise now proposed to convert Julie to the monarchical doctrines of the times of Louis Quinze; but a few hours later she discovered, or, more properly speaking, guessed, the not uncommon state of affairs, and the real cause of her niece’s low spirits.

Julie turned thoughtful on a sudden, and went to her room earlier than usual. When her maid left her for the night, she still sat by the fire in the yellow velvet depths of a great chair, an old-world piece of furniture as well suited for sorrow as for happy people. Tears flowed, followed by sighs and meditation. After a while she drew a little table to her, sought writing materials, and began to write. The hours went by swiftly. Julie’s confidences made to the sheet of paper seemed to cost her dear; every sentence set her dreaming, and at last she suddenly burst into tears. The clocks were striking two. Her head, grown heavy as a dying woman’s, was bowed over her breast. When she raised it, her aunt appeared before her as suddenly as if she had stepped out of the background of tapestry upon the walls.

“What can be the matter with you, child?” asked the Marquise. “Why are you sitting up so late? And why, in the first place, are you crying alone, at your age?”

Without further ceremony she sat down beside her niece, her eyes the while devouring the unfinished letter.

“Were you writing to your husband?”

“Do I know where he is?” returned the Countess.

Her aunt thereupon took up the sheet and proceeded to read it. She had brought her spectacles; the deed was premeditated. The innocent writer of the letter allowed her to take it without the slightest remark. It was neither lack of dignity nor consciousness of secret guilt which left her thus without energy. Her aunt had come in upon her at a crisis. She was helpless; right or wrong, reticence and confidence, like all things else, were matters of indifference. Like some young maid who had heaped scorn upon her lover, and feels so lonely and sad when evening comes, that she longs for him to come back or for a heart to which she can pour out her sorrow, Julie allowed her aunt to violate the seal which honor places upon an open letter, and sat musing while the Marquise read on: —

“MY DEAR LOUISA, – Why do you ask so often for the fulfilment of as rash a promise as two young and inexperienced girls could make? You say that you often ask yourself why I have given no answer to your questions for these six months. If my silence told you nothing, perhaps you will understand the reasons for it to-day, as you read the secrets which I am about to betray. I should have buried them for ever in the depths of my heart if you had not announced your own approaching marriage. You are about to be married, Louisa. The thought makes me shiver. Poor little one! marry, yes, in a few months’ time one of the keenest pangs of regret will be the

recollection of a self which used to be, of the two young girls who sat one evening under one of the tallest oak-trees on the hillside at Ecoeu, and looked along the fair valley at our feet in the light of the sunset, which caught us in its glow. We sat on a slab of rock in ecstasy, which sobered down into melancholy of the gentlest. You were the first to discover that the far-off sun spoke to us of the future. How inquisitive and how silly we were! Do you remember all the absurd things we said and did? We embraced each other; 'like lovers,' said we. We solemnly promised that the first bride should faithfully reveal to the other the mysteries of marriage, the joys which our childish minds imagined to be so delicious. That evening will complete your despair, Louisa. In those days you were young and beautiful and careless, if not radiantly happy; a few days of marriage, and you will be, what I am already – ugly, wretched, and old. Need I tell you how proud I was and how vain and glad to be married to Colonel Victor d'Aiglemont? And besides, how could I tell you now? for I cannot remember that old self. A few moments turned my girlhood to a dream. All through the memorable day which consecrated a chain, the extent of which was hidden from me, my behavior was not free from reproach. Once and again my father tried to repress my spirits; the joy which I showed so plainly was thought unbecoming the occasion, my talk scarcely innocent, simply because I was so innocent. I played endless child's tricks with my bridal veil, my wreath, my gown. Left alone that night in the room whither I had been conducted in state, I planned a piece of mischief to tease Victor. While I awaited his coming, my heart beat wildly, as it used to do when I was a child stealing into the drawing-room on the last day of the old year to catch a glimpse of the New Year's gifts piled up there in heaps. When my husband came in and looked for me, my smothered laughter ringing out from beneath the lace in which I had shrouded myself, was the last outburst of the delicious merriment which brightened our games in childhood..."

When the dowager had finished reading the letter, and after such a beginning the rest must have been sad indeed, she slowly laid her spectacles on the table, put the letter down beside them, and looked fixedly at her niece. Age had not dimmed the fire in those green eyes as yet.

"My little girl," she said, "a married woman cannot write such a letter as this to a young unmarried woman; it is scarcely proper –"

"So I was thinking," Julie broke in upon her aunt. "I felt ashamed of myself while you were reading it."

"If a dish at table is not to our taste, there is no occasion to disgust others with it, child," the old lady continued benignly, "especially when marriage has seemed to us all, from Eve downwards, so excellent an institution... You have no mother?"

The Countess trembled, then she raised her face meekly, and said:

"I have missed my mother many times already during the past year; but I have myself to blame, I would not listen to my father. He was opposed to my marriage; he disapproved of Victor as a son-in-law."

She looked at her aunt. The old face was lighted up with a kindly look, and a thrill of joy dried Julie's tears. She held out her young, soft hand to the old Marquise, who seemed to ask for it, and the understanding between the two women was completed by the close grasp of their fingers.

"Poor orphan child!"

The words came like a final flash of enlightenment to Julie. It seemed to her that she heard her father's prophetic voice again.

"Your hands are burning! Are they always like this?" asked the Marquise.

"The fever only left me seven or eight days ago."

"You had a fever upon you, and said nothing about it to me!"

“I have had it for a year,” said Julie, with a kind of timid anxiety.

“My good little angel, then your married life hitherto has been one long time of suffering?”

Julie did not venture to reply, but an affirmative sign revealed the whole truth.

“Then you are unhappy?”

“On! no, no, aunt. Victor loves me, he almost idolizes me, and I adore him, he is so kind.”

“Yes, you love him; but you avoid him, do you not?”

“Yes... sometimes... He seeks me too often.”

“And often when you are alone you are troubled with the fear that he may suddenly break in on your solitude?”

“Alas! yes, aunt. But, indeed, I love him, I do assure you.”

“Do you not, in your own thoughts, blame yourself because you find it impossible to share his pleasures? Do you never think at times that marriage is a heavier yoke than an illicit passion could be?”

“Oh, that is just it,” she wept. “It is all a riddle to me, and can you guess it all? My faculties are benumbed, I have no ideas, I can scarcely see at all. I am weighed down by vague dread, which freezes me till I cannot feel, and keeps me in continual torpor. I have no voice with which to pity myself, no words to express my trouble. I suffer, and I am ashamed to suffer when Victor is happy at my cost.”

“Babyish nonsense, and rubbish, all of it!” exclaimed the aunt, and a gay smile, an after-glow of the joys of her own youth, suddenly lighted up her withered face.

“And do you too laugh!” the younger woman cried despairingly.

“It was just my own case,” the Marquise returned promptly. “And now Victor has left you, you have become a girl again, recovering a tranquillity without pleasure and without pain, have you not?”

Julie opened wide eyes of bewilderment.

“In fact, my angel, you adore Victor, do you not? But still you would rather be a sister to him than a wife, and, in short, your marriage is emphatically not a success?”

“Well – no, aunt. But why do you smile?”

“Oh! you are right, poor child! There is nothing very amusing in all this. Your future would be big with more than one mishap if I had not taken you under my protection, if my old experience of life had not guessed the very innocent cause of your troubles. My nephew did not deserve his good fortune, the blockhead! In the reign of our well-beloved Louis Quinze, a young wife in your position would very soon have punished her husband for behaving like a ruffian. The selfish creature! The men who serve under this Imperial tyrant are all of them ignorant boors. They take brutality for gallantry; they know no more of women than they know of love; and imagine that because they go out to face death on the morrow, they may dispense to-day with all consideration and attentions for us. The time was when a man could love and die too at the proper time. My niece, I will form you. I will put an end to this unhappy divergence between you, a natural thing enough, but it would end in mutual hatred and desire for a divorce, always supposing that you did not die on the way to despair.”

Julie’s amazement equaled her surprise as she listened to her aunt. She was surprised by her language, dimly divining rather than appreciating the wisdom of the words she heard, and very much dismayed to find what this relative, out of great experience, passed judgment upon Victor as her father had done, though in somewhat milder terms. Perhaps some quick prevision of the future crossed her mind; doubtless, at any rate, she felt the heavy weight of the burden which must inevitably overwhelm her, for she burst into tears, and sprang to the old lady’s arms. “Be my mother,” she sobbed.

The aunt shed no tears. The Revolution had left old ladies of the Monarchy but few tears to shed. Love, in bygone days, and the Terror at a later time, had familiarized them with extremes of joy and anguish in such a sort that, amid the perils of life, they preserved their dignity and coolness, a capacity for sincere but undemonstrative affection which never disturbed their well-bred self-possession, and a dignity of demeanor which a younger generation has done very ill to discard.

The dowager took Julie in her arms, and kissed her on the forehead with a tenderness and pity more often found in women’s ways and manner than in their hearts. Then she coaxed her niece with

kind, soothing words, assured her of a happy future, lulled her with promises of love, and put her to bed as if she had been not a niece, but a daughter, a much-beloved daughter whose hopes and cares she had made her own. Perhaps the old Marquise had found her own youth and inexperience and beauty again in this nephew's wife. And the Countess fell asleep, happy to have found a friend, nay a mother, to whom she could tell everything freely.

Next morning, when the two women kissed each other with heartfelt kindness, and that look of intelligence which marks a real advance in friendship, a closer intimacy between two souls, they heard the sound of horsehoofs, and, turning both together, saw the young Englishman ride slowly past the window, after his wont. Apparently he had made a certain study of the life led by the two lonely women, for he never failed to ride by as they sat at breakfast, and again at dinner. His horse slackened pace of its own accord, and for the space of time required to pass the two windows in the room, its rider turned a melancholy look upon the Countess, who seldom deigned to take the slightest notion of him. Not so the Marquise. Minds not necessarily little find it difficult to resist the little curiosity which fastens upon the most trifling event that enlivens provincial life; and the Englishman's mute way of expressing his timid, earnest love tickled Mme. de Listomere. For her the periodically recurrent glance became a part of the day's routine, hailed daily with new jests. As the two women sat down to table, both of them looked out at the same moment. This time Julie's eyes met Arthur's with such a precision of sympathy that the color rose to her face. The stranger immediately urged his horse into a gallop and went.

"What is to be done, madame?" asked Julie. "People see this Englishman go past the house, and they will take it for granted that I –"

"Yes," interrupted her aunt.

"Well, then, could I not tell him to discontinue his promenades?"

"Would not that be a way of telling him that he was dangerous? You might put that notion into his head. And besides, can you prevent a man from coming and going as he pleases? Our meals shall be served in another room to-morrow; and when this young gentleman sees us no longer, there will be an end of making love to you through the window. There, dear child, that is how a woman of the world does."

But the measure of Julie's misfortune was to be filled up. The two women had scarcely risen from table when Victor's man arrived in hot haste from Bourges with a letter for the Countess from her husband. The servant had ridden by unfrequented ways.

Victor sent his wife news of the downfall of the Empire and the capitulation of Paris. He himself had gone over to the Bourbons, and all France was welcoming them back with transports of enthusiasm. He could not go so far as Tours, but he begged her to come at once to join him at Orleans, where he hoped to be in readiness with passports for her. His servant, an old soldier, would be her escort so far as Orleans; he (Victor) believed that the road was still open.

"You have not a moment to lose, madame," said the man. "The Prussians, Austrians, and English are about to effect a junction either at Blois or at Orleans."

A few hours later, Julie's preparations were made, and she started out upon her journey in an old traveling carriage lent by her aunt.

"Why should you not come with us to Paris?" she asked, as she put her arms about the Marquise. "Now that the Bourbons have come back you would be –"

"Even if there had not been this unhoped-for return, I should still have gone to Paris, my poor child, for my advice is only too necessary to both you and Victor. So I shall make all my preparations for rejoining you there."

Julie set out. She took her maid with her, and the old soldier galloped beside the carriage as escort. At nightfall, as they changed horses for the last stage before Blois, Julie grew uneasy. All the way from Amboise she had heard the sound of wheels behind them, a carriage following hers had kept at the same distance. She stood on the step and looked out to see who her traveling companions

might be, and in the moonlight saw Arthur standing three paces away, gazing fixedly at the chaise which contained her. Again their eyes met. The Countess hastily flung herself back in her seat, but a feeling of dread set her pulses throbbing. It seemed to her, as to most innocent and inexperienced young wives, that she was herself to blame for this love which she had all unwittingly inspired. With this thought came an instinctive terror, perhaps a sense of her own helplessness before aggressive audacity. One of a man's strongest weapons is the terrible power of compelling a woman to think of him when her naturally lively imagination takes alarm or offence at the thought that she is followed.

The Countess bethought herself of her aunt's advice, and made up her mind that she would not stir from her place during the rest of the journey; but every time the horses were changed she heard the Englishman pacing round the two carriages, and again upon the road heard the importunate sound of the wheels of his caleche. Julie soon began to think that, when once reunited to her husband, Victor would know how to defend her against this singular persecution.

"Yet suppose that in spite of everything, this young man does not love me?" This was the thought that came last of all.

No sooner did she reach Orleans than the Prussians stopped the chaise. It was wheeled into an inn-yard and put under a guard of soldiers. Resistance was out of the question. The foreign soldiers made the three travelers understand by signs that they were obeying orders, and that no one could be allowed to leave the carriage. For about two hours the Countess sat in tears, a prisoner surrounded by the guard, who smoked, laughed, and occasionally stared at her with insolent curiosity. At last, however, she saw her captors fall away from the carriage with a sort of respect, and heard at the same time the sound of horses entering the yard. Another moment, and a little group of foreign officers, with an Austrian general at their head, gathered about the door of the traveling carriage.

"Madame," said the General, "pray accept our apologies. A mistake has been made. You may continue your journey without fear; and here is a passport which will spare you all further annoyance of any kind."

Trembling the Countess took the paper, and faltered out some vague words of thanks. She saw Arthur, now wearing an English uniform, standing beside the General, and could not doubt that this prompt deliverance was due to him. The young Englishman himself looked half glad, half melancholy; his face was turned away, and he only dared to steal an occasional glance at Julie's face.

Thanks to the passport, Mme. d'Aiglemont reached Paris without further misadventure, and there she found her husband. Victor d'Aiglemont, released from his oath of allegiance to the Emperor, had met with a most flattering reception from the Comte d'Artois, recently appointed Lieutenant-General of the kingdom by his brother Louis XVIII. D'Aiglemont received a commission in the Life Guards, equivalent to the rank of general. But amid the rejoicings over the return of the Bourbons, fate dealt poor Julie a terrible blow. The death of the Marquise de Listomere-Landon was an irreparable loss. The old lady died of joy and of an accession of gout to the heart when the Duc d'Angouleme came back to Tours, and the one living being entitled by her age to enlighten Victor, the woman who, by discreet counsels, might have brought about perfect unanimity of husband and wife, was dead; and Julie felt the full extent of her loss. Henceforward she must stand alone between herself and her husband. But she was young and timid; there could be no doubt of the result, or that from the first she would elect to bear her lot in silence. The very perfections of her character forbade her to venture to swerve from her duties, or to attempt to inquire into the cause of her sufferings, for to put an end to them would have been to venture on delicate ground, and Julie's girlish modesty shrank from the thought.

A word as to M. d'Aiglemont's destinies under the Restoration.

How many men are there whose utter incapacity is a secret kept from most of their acquaintance. For such as these high rank, high office, illustrious birth, a certain veneer of politeness, and considerable reserve of manner, or the *prestige* of great fortunes, are but so many sentinels to turn back critics who would penetrate to the presence of the real man. Such men are like kings, in

that their real figure, character, and life can never be known nor justly appreciated, because they are always seen from too near or too far. Factitious merit has a way of asking questions and saying little; and understands the art of putting others forward to save the necessity of posing before them; then, with a happy knack of its own, it draws and attaches others by the thread of the ruling passion of self-interest, keeping men of far greater abilities to play like puppets, and despising those whom it has brought down to its own level. The petty fixed idea naturally prevails; it has the advantage of persistence over the plasticity of great thoughts.

The observer who should seek to estimate and appraise the negative values of these empty heads needs subtlety rather than superior wit for the task; patience is a more necessary part of his judicial outfit than great mental grasp, cunning and tact rather than any elevation or greatness of ideas. Yet skilfully as such usurpers can cover and defend their weak points, it is difficult to delude wife and mother and children and the house-friend of the family; fortunately for them, however, these persons almost always keep a secret which in a manner touches the honor of all, and not unfrequently go so far as to help to foist the imposture upon the public. And if, thanks to such domestic conspiracy, many a noodle passes current for a man of ability, on the other hand many another who has real ability is taken for a noodle to redress the balance, and the total average of this kind of false coin in circulation in the state is a pretty constant quantity.

Bethink yourself now of the part to be played by a clever woman quick to think and feel, mated with a husband of this kind, and can you not see a vision of lives full of sorrow and self-sacrifice? Nothing upon earth can repay such hearts so full of love and tender tact. Put a strong-willed woman in this wretched situation, and she will force a way out of it for herself by a crime, like Catherine II., whom men nevertheless style “the Great.” But these women are not all seated upon thrones, they are for the most part doomed to domestic unhappiness none the less terrible because obscure.

Those who seek consolation in this present world for their woes often effect nothing but a change of ills if they remain faithful to their duties; or they commit a sin if they break the laws for their pleasure. All these reflections are applicable to Julie’s domestic life.

Before the fall of Napoleon nobody was jealous of d’Aiglemont. He was one colonel among many, an efficient orderly staff-officer, as good a man as you could find for a dangerous mission, as unfit as well could be for an important command. D’Aiglemont was looked upon as a dashing soldier such as the Emperor liked, the kind of man whom his mess usually calls “a good fellow.” The Restoration gave him back his title of Marquis, and did not find him ungrateful; he followed the Bourbons into exile at Ghent, a piece of logical loyalty which falsified the horoscope drawn for him by his late father-in-law, who predicted that Victor would remain a colonel all his life. After the Hundred Days he received the appointment of Lieutenant-General, and for the second time became a marquis; but it was M. d’Aiglemont’s ambition to be a peer of France. He adopted, therefore, the maxims and the politics of the *Conservateur*, cloaked himself in dissimulation which hid nothing (there being nothing to hide), cultivated gravity of countenance and the art of asking questions and saying little, and was taken for a man of profound wisdom. Nothing drew him from his intrenchments behind the forms of politeness; he laid in a provision of formulas, and made lavish use of his stock of the catch-words coined at need in Paris to give fools the small change for the ore of great ideas and events. Among men of the world he was reputed a man of taste and discernment; and as a bigoted upholder of aristocratic opinions he was held up for a noble character. If by chance he slipped now and again into his old light-heartedness or levity, others were ready to discover an undercurrent of diplomatic intention beneath his inanity and silliness. “Oh! he only says exactly as much as he means to say,” thought these excellent people.

So d’Aiglemont’s defects and good qualities stood him alike in good stead. He did nothing to forfeit a high military reputation gained by his dashing courage, for he had never been a commander-in-chief. Great thoughts surely were engraven upon that manly aristocratic countenance, which imposed upon every one but his own wife. And when everybody else believed in the Marquis

d'Aiglemont's imaginary talents, the Marquis persuaded himself before he had done that he was one of the most remarkable men at Court, where, thanks to his purely external qualifications, he was in favor and taken at his own valuation.

At home, however, M. d'Aiglemont was modest. Instinctively he felt that his wife, young though she was, was his superior; and out of this involuntary respect there grew an occult power which the Marquise was obliged to wield in spite of all her efforts to shake off the burden. She became her husband's adviser, the director of his actions and his fortunes. It was an unnatural position; she felt it as something of a humiliation, a source of pain to be buried in the depths of her heart. From the first her delicately feminine instinct told her that it is a far better thing to obey a man of talent than to lead a fool; and that a young wife compelled to act and think like a man is neither man nor woman, but a being who lays aside all the charms of her womanhood along with its misfortunes, yet acquires none of the privileges which our laws give to the stronger sex. Beneath the surface her life was a bitter mockery. Was she not compelled to protect her protector, to worship a hollow idol, a poor creature who flung her the love of a selfish husband as the wages of her continual self-sacrifice; who saw nothing in her but the woman; and who either did not think it worth while, or (wrong quite as deep) did not think at all of troubling himself about her pleasures, of inquiring into the cause of her low spirits and dwindling health? And the Marquis, like most men who chafe under a wife's superiority, saved his self-love by arguing from Julie's physical feebleness a corresponding lack of mental power, for which he was pleased to pity her; and he would cry out upon fate which had given him a sickly girl for a wife. The executioner posed, in fact, as the victim.

All the burdens of this dreary lot fell upon the Marquise, who still must smile upon her foolish lord, and deck a house of mourning with flowers, and make a parade of happiness in a countenance wan with secret torture. And with this sense of responsibility for the honor of both, with the magnificent immolation of self, the young Marquise unconsciously acquired a wifely dignity, a consciousness of virtue which became her safeguard amid many dangers.

Perhaps, if her heart were sounded to the very depths, this intimate closely hidden wretchedness, following upon her unthinking, girlish first love, had roused in her an abhorrence of passion; possibly she had no conception of its rapture, nor of the forbidden but frenzied bliss for which some women will renounce all the laws of prudence and the principles of conduct upon which society is based. She put from her like a dream the thought of bliss and tender harmony of love promised by Mme. de Listomere-Landon's mature experience, and waited resignedly for the end of her troubles with a hope that she might die young.

Her health had declined daily since her return from Touraine; her life seemed to be measured to her in suffering; yet her ill-health was graceful, her malady seemed little more than languor, and might well be taken by careless eyes for a fine lady's whim of invalidism.

Her doctors had condemned her to keep to the sofa, and there among her flowers lay the Marquise, fading as they faded. She was not strong enough to walk, nor to bear the open air, and only went out in a closed carriage. Yet with all the marvels of modern luxury and invention about her, she looked more like an indolent queen than an invalid. A few of her friends, half in love perhaps with her sad plight and her fragile look, sure of finding her at home, and speculating no doubt upon her future restoration to health, would come to bring her the news of the day, and kept her informed of the thousand and one small events which fill life in Paris with variety. Her melancholy, deep and real though it was was still the melancholy of a woman rich in many ways. The Marquise d'Aiglemont was like a flower, with a dark insect gnawing at its root.

Occasionally she went into society, not to please herself, but in obedience to the exigencies of the position which her husband aspired to take. In society her beautiful voice and the perfection of her singing could always gain the social success so gratifying to a young woman; but what was social success to her, who drew nothing from it for her heart or her hopes? Her husband did not care for music. And, moreover, she seldom felt at her ease in salons, where her beauty attracted homage not

wholly disinterested. Her position excited a sort of cruel compassion, a morbid curiosity. She was suffering from an inflammatory complaint not infrequently fatal, for which our nosology as yet has found no name, a complaint spoken of among women in confidential whispers. In spite of the silence in which her life was spent, the cause of her ill-health was no secret. She was still but a girl in spite of her marriage; the slightest glance threw her into confusion. In her endeavor not to blush, she was always laughing, always apparently in high spirits; she would never admit that she was not perfectly well, and anticipated questions as to her health by shame-stricken subterfuges.

In 1817, however, an event took place which did much to alleviate Julie's hitherto deplorable existence. A daughter was born to her, and she determined to nurse her child herself. For two years motherhood, its all-absorbing multiplicity of cares and anxious joys, made life less hard for her. She and her husband lived necessarily apart. Her physicians predicted improved health, but the Marquise herself put no faith in these auguries based on theory. Perhaps, like many a one for whom life has lost its sweetness, she looked forward to death as a happy termination of the drama.

But with the beginning of the year 1819 life grew harder than ever. Even while she congratulated herself upon the negative happiness which she had contrived to win, she caught a terrifying glimpse of yawning depths below it. She had passed by degrees out of her husband's life. Her fine tact and her prudence told her that misfortune must come, and that not singly, of this cooling of an affection already lukewarm and wholly selfish. Sure though she was of her ascendancy over Victor, and certain as she felt of his unalterable esteem, she dreaded the influence of unbridled passions upon a head so empty, so full of rash self-conceit.

Julie's friends often found her absorbed in prolonged musings; the less clairvoyant among them would jestingly ask her what she was thinking about, as if a young wife would think of nothing but frivolity, as if there were not almost always a depth of seriousness in a mother's thoughts. Unhappiness, like great happiness, induces dreaming. Sometimes as Julie played with her little Helene, she would gaze darkly at her, giving no reply to the childish questions in which a mother delights, questioning the present and the future as to the destiny of this little one. Then some sudden recollection would bring back the scene of the review at the Tuileries and fill her eyes with tears. Her father's prophetic warnings rang in her ears, and conscience reproached her that she had not recognized its wisdom. Her troubles had all come of her own wayward folly, and often she knew not which among so many were the hardest to bear. The sweet treasures of her soul were unheeded, and not only so, she could never succeed in making her husband understand her, even in the commonest everyday things. Just as the power to love developed and grew strong and active, a legitimate channel for the affections of her nature was denied her, and wedded love was extinguished in grave physical and mental sufferings. Add to this that she now felt for her husband that pity closely bordering upon contempt, which withers all affection at last. Even if she had not learned from conversations with some of her friends, from examples in life, from sundry occurrences in the great world, that love can bring ineffable bliss, her own wounds would have taught her to divine the pure and deep happiness which binds two kindred souls each to each.

In the picture which her memory traced of the past, Arthur's frank face stood out daily nobler and purer; it was but a flash, for upon that recollection she dared not dwell. The young Englishman's shy, silent love for her was the one event since her marriage which had left a lingering sweetness in her darkened and lonely heart. It may be that all the blighted hopes, all the frustrated longings which gradually clouded Julie's mind, gathered, by a not unnatural trick of imagination, about this man – whose manners, sentiments, and character seemed to have so much in common with her own. This idea still presented itself to her mind fitfully and vaguely, like a dream; yet from that dream, which always ended in a sigh, Julie awoke to greater wretchedness, to keener consciousness of the latent anguish brooding beneath her imaginary bliss.

Occasionally her self-pity took wilder and more daring flights. She determined to have happiness at any cost; but still more often she lay a helpless victim of an indescribable numbing stupor,

the words she heard had no meaning to her, or the thoughts which arose in her mind were so vague and indistinct that she could not find language to express them. Balked of the wishes of her heart, realities jarred harshly upon her girlish dreams of life, but she was obliged to devour her tears. To whom could she make complaint? Of whom be understood? She possessed, moreover, that highest degree of woman's sensitive pride, the exquisite delicacy of feeling which silences useless complainings and declines to use an advantage to gain a triumph which can only humiliate both victor and vanquished.

Julie tried to endow M. d'Aiglemont with her own abilities and virtues, flattering herself that thus she might enjoy the happiness lacking in her lot. All her woman's ingenuity and tact was employed in making the best of the situation; pure waste of pains unsuspected by him, whom she thus strengthened in his despotism. There were moments when misery became an intoxication, expelling all ideas, all self-control; but, fortunately, sincere piety always brought her back to one supreme hope; she found a refuge in the belief in a future life, a wonderful thought which enabled her to take up her painful task afresh. No elation of victory followed those terrible inward battles and throes of anguish; no one knew of those long hours of sadness; her haggard glances met no response from human eyes, and during the brief moments snatched by chance for weeping, her bitter tears fell unheeded and in solitude.

One evening in January 1820, the Marquise became aware of the full gravity of the crisis, gradually brought on by force of circumstances. When a husband and wife know each other thoroughly, and their relation has long been a matter of use and wont, when the wife has learned to interpret every slightest sign, when her quick insight discerns thoughts and facts which her husband keeps from her, a chance word, or a remark so carelessly let fall in the first instance, seems, upon subsequent reflection, like the swift breaking out of light. A wife not seldom suddenly awakes upon the brink of a precipice or in the depths of the abyss; and thus it was with the Marquise. She was feeling glad to have been left to herself for some days, when the real reason of her solitude flashed upon her. Her husband, whether fickle and tired of her, or generous and full of pity for her, was hers no longer.

In the moment of that discovery she forgot herself, her sacrifices, all that she had passed through, she remembered only that she was a mother. Looking forward, she thought of her daughter's fortune, of the future welfare of the one creature through whom some gleams of happiness came to her, of her Helene, the only possession which bound her to life.

Then Julie wished to live to save her child from a stepmother's terrible thralldom, which might crush her darling's life. Upon this new vision of threatened possibilities followed one of those paroxysms of thought at fever-heat which consume whole years of life.

Henceforward husband and wife were doomed to be separated by a whole world of thought, and all the weight of that world she must bear alone. Hitherto she had felt sure that Victor loved her, in so far as he could be said to love; she had been the slave of pleasures which she did not share; to-day the satisfaction of knowing that she purchased his contentment with her tears was hers no longer. She was alone in the world, nothing was left to her now but a choice of evils. In the calm stillness of the night her despondency drained her of all her strength. She rose from her sofa beside the dying fire, and stood in the lamplight gazing, dry-eyed, at her child, when M. d'Aiglemont came in. He was in high spirits. Julie called to him to admire Helene as she lay asleep, but he met his wife's enthusiasm with a commonplace:

“All children are nice at that age.”

He closed the curtains about the cot after a careless kiss on the child's forehead. Then he turned his eyes on Julie, took her hand and drew her to sit beside him on the sofa, where she had been sitting with such dark thoughts surging up in her mind.

“You are looking very handsome to-night, Mme. d'Aiglemont,” he exclaimed, with the gaiety intolerable to the Marquise, who knew its emptiness so well.

“Where have you spent the evening?” she asked, with a pretence of complete indifference.

“At Mme. de Serizy’s.”

He had taken up a fire-screen, and was looking intently at the gauze. He had not noticed the traces of tears on his wife’s face. Julie shuddered. Words could not express the overflowing torrent of thoughts which must be forced down into inner depths.

“Mme. de Serizy is giving a concert on Monday, and is dying for you to go. You have not been anywhere for some time past, and that is enough to set her longing to see you at her house. She is a good-natured woman, and very fond of you. I should be glad if you would go; I all but promised that you should – ”

“I will go.”

There was something so penetrating, so significant in the tones of Julie’s voice, in her accent, in the glance that went with the words, that Victor, startled out of his indifference, stared at his wife in astonishment.

That was all, Julie had guessed that it was Mme. de Serizy who had stolen her husband’s heart from her. Her brooding despair benumbed her. She appeared to be deeply interested in the fire. Victor meanwhile still played with the fire-screen. He looked bored, like a man who has enjoyed himself elsewhere, and brought home the consequent lassitude. He yawned once or twice, then he took up a candle in one hand, and with the other languidly sought his wife’s neck for the usual embrace; but Julie stooped and received the good-night kiss upon her forehead; the formal, loveless grimace seemed hateful to her at that moment.

As soon as the door closed upon Victor, his wife sank into a seat. Her limbs tottered beneath her, she burst into tears. None but those who have endured the torture of some such scene can fully understand the anguish that it means, or divine the horror of the long-drawn tragedy arising out of it.

Those simple, foolish words, the silence that followed between the husband and wife, the Marquis’ gesture and expression, the way in which he sat before the fire, his attitude as he made that futile attempt to put a kiss on his wife’s throat, – all these things made up a dark hour for Julie, and the catastrophe of the drama of her sad and lonely life. In her madness she knelt down before the sofa, burying her face in it to shut out everything from sight, and prayed to Heaven, putting a new significance into the words of the evening prayer, till it became a cry from the depths of her own soul, which would have gone to her husband’s heart if he had heard it.

The following week she spent in deep thought for her future, utterly overwhelmed by this new trouble. She made a study of it, trying to discover a way to regain her ascendancy over the Marquis, scheming how to live long enough to watch over her daughter’s happiness, yet to live true to her own heart. Then she made up her mind. She would struggle with her rival. She would shine once more in society. She would feign the love which she could no longer feel, she would captivate her husband’s fancy; and when she had lured him into her power, she would coquet with him like a capricious mistress who takes delight in tormenting a lover. This hateful strategy was the only possible way out of her troubles. In this way she would become mistress of the situation; she would prescribe her own sufferings at her good pleasure, and reduce them by enslaving her husband, and bringing him under a tyrannous yoke. She felt not the slightest remorse for the hard life which he should lead. At a bound she reached cold, calculating indifference – for her daughter’s sake. She had gained a sudden insight into the treacherous, lying arts of degraded women; the wiles of coquetry, the revolting cunning which arouses such profound hatred in men at the mere suspicion of innate corruption in a woman.

Julie’s feminine vanity, her interests, and a vague desire to inflict punishment, all wrought unconsciously with the mother’s love within her to force her into a path where new sufferings awaited her. But her nature was too noble, her mind too fastidious, and, above all things, too open, to be the accomplice of these frauds for very long. Accustomed as she was to self-scrutiny, at the first step in vice – for vice it was – the cry of conscience must inevitably drown the clamor of the passions and of selfishness. Indeed, in a young wife whose heart is still pure, whose love has never been mated, the

very sentiment of motherhood is overpowered by modesty. Modesty; is not all womanhood summed up in that? But just now Julie would not see any danger, anything wrong, in her life.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.