HONORÉ DE BALZAC

THE THIRTEEN

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Содержание

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INTRODUCTION

The *Histoire des Treize* consists – or rather is built up – of three stories: *Ferragus* or the *Rue Soly*, *La Duchesse de Langeais* or *Ne touchez-paz a la hache*, and *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*.

To tell the truth, there is more power than taste throughout the *Histoire des Treize*, and perhaps not very much less unreality than power. Balzac is very much better than Eugene Sue, though Eugene Sue also is better than it is the fashion to think him just now. But he is here, to a certain extent competing with Sue on the latter's own ground. The notion of the "Devorants" – of a secret society of men devoted to each other's interests, entirely free from any moral or legal scruple, possessed of considerable means in wealth, ability, and position, all working together, by fair means or foul, for good ends or bad – is, no doubt, rather seducing to the imagination at all times; and it so happened that it was particularly seducing to the imagination of that time. And its example has been powerful since; it gave us Mr. Stevenson's *New Arabian Nights* only, as it were, the other day.

But there is something a little schoolboyish in it; and I do not know that Balzac has succeeded entirely in eliminating

this something. The pathos of the death, under persecution, of the innocent Clemence does not entirely make up for the unreasonableness of the whole situation. Nobody can say that the abominable misconduct of Maulincour – who is a hopeless "cad" – is too much punished, though an Englishman may think that Dr. Johnson's receipt of three or four footmen with cudgels, applied repeatedly and unsparingly, would have been better than elaborately prepared accidents and duels, which were too honorable for a Peeping Tom of this kind; and poisonings, which reduced the avengers to the level of their victim. But the imbroglio is of itself stupid; these fathers who cannot be made known to husbands are mere stage properties, and should never be fetched out of the theatrical lumber-room by literature.

La Duchesse de Langeais is, I think, a better story, with more romantic attraction, free from the objections just made to *Ferragus*, and furnished with a powerful, if slightly theatrical catastrophe. It is as good as anything that its author has done of the kind, subject to those general considerations of probability and otherwise which have been already hinted at. For those who are not troubled by any such critical reflections, both, no doubt, will be highly satisfactory.

The third of the series, *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or*, in some respects one of Balzac's most brilliant effects, has been looked at askance by many of his English readers. At one time he had the audacity to think of calling it *La Femme aux Yeux Rouges*. To those who consider the story morbid or, one may say, *bizarre*, one

word of justification, hardly of apology, may be offered. It was in the scheme of the *Comedie Humaine* to survey social life in its entirety by a minute analysis of its most diverse constituents. It included all the pursuits and passions, was large and patient, and unafraid. And the patience, the curiosity, of the artist which made Cesar Birotteau and his bankrupt ledgers matters of high import to us, which did not shrink from creating a Vautrin and a Lucien de Rubempre, would have been incomplete had it stopped short of a Marquise de San-Real, of a Paquita Valdes. And in the great mass of the *Comedie Humaine*, with its largeness and reality of life, as in life itself; the figure of Paquita justifies its presence.

Considering the *Histoire des Treize* as a whole, it is of engrossing interest. And I must confess I should not think much of any boy who, beginning Balzac with this series, failed to go rather mad over it. I know there was a time when I used to like it best of all, and thought not merely *Eugenie Grandet*, but *Le Pere Goriot* (though not the *Peau de Chagrin*), dull in comparison. Some attention, however, must be paid to two remarkable characters, on whom it is quite clear that Balzac expended a great deal of pains, and one of whom he seems to have "caressed," as the French say, with a curious admixture of dislike and admiration.

The first, Bourignard or Ferragus, is, of course, another, though a somewhat minor example – Collin or Vautrin being the chief – of that strange tendency to take intense interest in

criminals, which seems to be a pretty constant eccentricity of many human minds, and which laid an extraordinary grasp on the great French writers of Balzac's time. I must confess, though it may sink me very low in some eyes, that I have never been able to fully appreciate the attractions of crime and criminals, fictitious or real. Certain pleasant and profitable things, no doubt, retain their pleasure and their profit, to some extent, when they are done in the manner which is technically called criminal; but they seem to me to acquire no additional interest by being so. As the criminal of fact is, in the vast majority of cases, an exceedingly commonplace and dull person, the criminal of fiction seems to me only, or usually, to escape these curses by being absolutely improbable and unreal. But I know this is a terrible heresy.

Henri de Marsay is a much more ambitious and a much more interesting figure. In him are combined the attractions of criminality, beauty, brains, success, and, last of all, dandyism. It is a well-known and delightful fact that the most Anglophobe Frenchmen – and Balzac might fairly be classed among them – have always regarded the English dandy with half-jealous, half-awful admiration. Indeed, our novelist, it will be seen, found it necessary to give Marsay English blood. But there is a tradition that this young Don Juan – not such a good fellow as Byron's, nor such a *grand seigneur* as Moliere's – was partly intended to represent Charles de Remusat, who is best known to this generation by very sober and serious philosophical works, and by his part in his mother's correspondence. I do not know that

there ever were any imputation on M. de Remusat's morals; but in memoirs of the time, he is, I think, accused of a certain selfishness and *hauteur*, and he certainly made his way, partly by journalism, partly by society, to power very much as Marsay did. But Marsay would certainly not have written *Abelard* and the rest, or have returned to Ministerial rank in our own time. Marsay, in fact, more fortunate than Rubempre, and of a higher stamp and flight than Rastignac, makes with them Balzac's trinity of sketches of the kind of personage whose part, in his day and since, every young Frenchman has aspired to play, and some have played. It cannot be said that "a moral man is Marsay"; it cannot be said that he has the element of good-nature which redeems Rastignac. But he bears a blame and a burden for which we Britons are responsible in part – the Byronic ideal of the guilty hero coming to cross and blacken the old French model of unscrupulous good humor. It is not a very pretty mixture or a very worthy ideal; but I am not so sure that it is not still a pretty common one.

The association of the three stories forming the *Histoire des Treize* is, in book form, original, inasmuch as they filled three out of the four volumes of *Etudes des Moeurs* published in 1834-35, and themselves forming part of the first collection of *Scenes de la Vie Parisienne*. But *Ferragus* had appeared in parts (with titles to each) in the *Revue de Paris* for March and April 1833, and part of *La Duchesse de Langeais* in the *Echo de la Jeune France* almost contemporaneously. There are divisions in this also. *Ferragus*

and *La Duchesse* also appeared without *La Fille aux Yeux d'Or* in 1839, published in one volume by Charpentier, before their absorption at the usual time in the *Comedie*.

George Saintsbury

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

In the Paris of the Empire there were found Thirteen men equally impressed with the same idea, equally endowed with energy enough to keep them true to it, while among themselves they were loyal enough to keep faith even when their interests seemed to clash. They were strong enough to set themselves above all laws; bold enough to shrink from no enterprise; and lucky enough to succeed in nearly everything that they undertook. So profoundly politic were they, that they could dissemble the tie which bound them together. They ran the greatest risks, and kept their failures to themselves. Fear never entered into their calculations; not one of them had trembled before princes, before the executioner's axe, before innocence. They had taken each other as they were, regardless of social prejudices. Criminals they doubtless were, yet none the less were they all remarkable for some one of the virtues which go to the making of great men, and their numbers were filled up only from among picked recruits. Finally, that nothing should be lacking to complete the dark, mysterious romance of their history, nobody to this day knows who they were. The Thirteen once realized all the wildest ideas conjured up by tales of the occult powers of a Manfred, a Faust, or a Melmoth; and to-day the band is broken up or, at any rate, dispersed. Its members have quietly returned beneath the yoke of the Civil Code; much as Morgan,

the Achilles of piracy, gave up buccaneering to be a peaceable planter; and, untroubled by qualms of conscience, sat himself down by the fireside to dispose of blood-stained booty acquired by the red light of blazing towns.

After Napoleon's death, the band was dissolved by a chance event which the author is bound for the present to pass over in silence, and its mysterious existence, as curious, it may be, as the darkest novel by Mrs. Radcliffe, came to an end.

It was only lately that the present writer, detecting, as he fancied, a faint desire for celebrity in one of the anonymous heroes to whom the whole band once owed an occult allegiance, received the somewhat singular permission to make public certain of the adventures which befell that band, provided that, while telling the story in his own fashion, he observed certain limits.

The aforesaid leader was still an apparently young man with fair hair and blue eyes, and a soft, thin voice which might seem to indicate a feminine temperament. His face was pale, his ways mysterious. He chatted pleasantly, and told me that he was only just turned of forty. He might have belonged to any one of the upper classes. The name which he gave was probably assumed, and no one answering to his description was known in society. Who is he, do you ask? No one knows.

Perhaps when he made his extraordinary disclosures to the present writer, he wished to see them in some sort reproduced; to enjoy the effect of the sensation on the multitude; to feel

as Macpherson might have felt when the name of Ossian, his creation, passed into all languages. And, in truth, that Scottish advocate knew one of the keenest, or, at any rate, one of the rarest sensations in human experience. What was this but the incognito of genius? To write an *Itineraire de Paris a Jerusalem* is to take one's share in the glory of a century, but to give a Homer to one's country – this surely is a usurpation of the rights of God.

The writer is too well acquainted with the laws of narration to be unaware of the nature of the pledge given by this brief preface; but, at the same time, he knows enough of the history of the Thirteen to feel confident that he shall not disappoint any expectations raised by the programme. Tragedies dripping with gore, comedies piled up with horrors, tales of heads taken off in secret have been confided to him. If any reader has not had enough of the ghastly tales served up to the public for some time past, he has only to express his wish; the author is in a position to reveal cold-blooded atrocities and family secrets of a gloomy and astonishing nature. But in preference he has chosen those pleasanter stories in which stormy passions are succeeded by purer scenes, where the beauty and goodness of woman shine out the brighter for the darkness. And, to the honor of the Thirteen, such episodes as these are not wanting. Some day perhaps it may be thought worth while to give their whole history to the world; in which case it might form a pendant to the history of the buccaneers – that race apart so curiously energetic, so attractive in spite of their crimes.

When a writer has a true story to tell, he should scorn to turn it into a sort of puzzle toy, after the manner of those novelists who take their reader for a walk through one cavern after another to show him a dried-up corpse at the end of the fourth volume, and inform him, by way of conclusion, that he has been frightened all along by a door hidden somewhere or other behind some tapestry; or a dead body, left by inadvertence, under the floor. So the present chronicler, in spite of his objection to prefaces, felt bound to introduce his fragment by a few remarks.

Ferragus, the first episode, is connected by invisible links with the history of the Thirteen, for the power which they acquired in a natural manner provides the apparently supernatural machinery.

Again, although a certain literary coquetry may be permissible to retailers of the marvelous, the sober chronicler is bound to forego such advantage as he may reap from an odd-sounding name, on which many ephemeral successes are founded in these days. Wherefore the present writer gives the following succinct statement of the reasons which induced him to adopt the unlikely sounding title and sub-title.

In accordance with old-established custom, *Ferragus* is a name taken by the head of a guild of *Devorants*, *id est Devoirants* or journeymen. Every chief on the day of his election chooses a pseudonym and continues a dynasty of *Devorants* precisely as a pope changes his name on his accession to the triple tiara; and as the Church has its Clement XIV., Gregory XII., Julius II., or

Alexander VI., so the workmen have their Trempe-la-Soupe IX., Ferragus XXII., Tutanus XIII., or Masche-Fer IV. Who are the *Devorants*, do you ask?

The *Devorants* are one among many tribes of *compagnons* whose origin can be traced to a great mystical association formed among the workmen of Christendom for the rebuilding of the Temple at Jerusalem. *Compagnonnage* is still a popular institution in France. Its traditions still exert a power over little enlightened minds, over men so uneducated that they have not learned to break their oaths; and the various organizations might be turned to formidable account even yet if any rough-hewn man of genius arose to make use of them, for his instruments would be, for the most part, almost blind.

Wherever journeymen travel, they find a hostel for *compagnons* which has been in existence in the town from time immemorial. The *obade*, as they call it, is a kind of lodge with a "Mother" in charge, an old, half-gypsy wife who has nothing to lose. She hears all that goes on in the countryside; and, either from fear or from long habit, is devoted to the interests of the tribe boarded and lodged by her. And as a result, this shifting population, subject as it is to an unalterable law of custom, has eyes in every place, and will carry out an order anywhere without asking questions; for the oldest journeyman is still at an age when a man has some beliefs left. What is more, the whole fraternity professes doctrines which, if unfolded never so little, are both true enough and mysterious enough to electrify all the adepts with

patriotism; and the *compagnons* are so attached to their rules, that there have been bloody battles between different fraternities on a question of principle. Fortunately, however, for peace and public order; if a *Devorant* is ambitious, he takes to building houses, makes a fortune, and leaves the guild.

A great many curious things might be told of their rivals, the *Compagnons du Devior*, of all the different sects of workmen, their manners and customs and brotherhoods, and of the resemblances between them and the Freemasons; but there, these particulars would be out of place. The author will merely add, that before the Revolution a Trempe-la-Soupe had been known in the King's service, which is to say, that he had the tenure of a place in His Majesty's galleys for one hundred and one years; but even thence he ruled his guild, and was religiously consulted on all matters, and if he escaped from the hulks he met with help, succor, and respect wherever he went. To have a chief in the hulks is one of those misfortunes for which Providence is responsible; but a faithful lodge of *devorants* is bound, as before, to obey a power created by and set above themselves. Their lawful sovereign is in exile for the time being, but none the less is he their king. And now any romantic mystery hanging about the words *Ferragus* and the *devorants* is completely dispelled.

As for the Thirteen, the author feels that, on the strength of the details of this almost fantastic story, he can afford to give away yet another prerogative, though it is one of the greatest on record, and would possibly fetch a high price if brought into a literary

auction mart; for the owner might inflict as many volumes on the public as La Contemporaine.[1]

The Thirteen were all of them men tempered like Byron's friend Trelawney, the original (so it is said) of *The Corsair*. All of them were fatalists, men of spirit and poetic temperament; all of them were tired of the commonplace life which they led; all felt attracted towards Asiatic pleasures by all the vehement strength of newly awakened and long dormant forces. One of these, chancing to take up *Venice Preserved* for the second time, admired the sublime friendship between Pierre and Jaffir, and fell to musing on the virtues of outlaws, the loyalty of the hulks, the honor of thieves, and the immense power that a few men can wield if they bring their whole minds to bear upon the carrying out of a single will. It struck him that the individual man rose higher than men. Then he began to think that if a few picked men should band themselves together; and if, to natural wit, and education, and money, they could join a fanaticism hot enough to fuse, as it were, all those separate forces into a single one, then the whole world would be at their feet. From that time forth, with a tremendous power of concentration, they could wield an occult power against which the organization of society would be helpless; a power which would push obstacles aside and defeat the will of others; and the diabolical power of all would be at the service of each. A hostile world apart within the world, admitting none of the ideas, recognizing none of the laws of the world;

[1] A long series of so-called Memoirs, which appeared about 1830.

submitting only to the sense of necessity, obedient only from devotion; acting all as one man in the interests of the comrade who should claim the aid of the rest; a band of buccaneers with carriages and yellow kid gloves; a close confederacy of men of extraordinary power, of amused and cool spectators of an artificial and petty world which they cursed with smiling lips; conscious as they were that they could make all things bend to their caprice, weave ingenious schemes of revenge, and live with the life in thirteen hearts, to say nothing of the unfailing pleasure of facing the world of men with a hidden misanthropy, a sense that they were armed against their kind, and could retire into themselves with one idea which the most remarkable men had not, – all this constituted a religion of pleasure and egoism which made fanatics of the Thirteen. The history of the Society of Jesus was repeated for the Devil's benefit. It was hideous and sublime.

The pact was made; and it lasted, precisely because it seemed impossible. And so it came to pass that in Paris there was a fraternity of thirteen men, each one bound, body and soul, to the rest, and all of them strangers to each other in the sight of the world. But evening found them gathered together like conspirators, and then they had no thoughts apart; riches, like the wealth of the Old Man of the Mountain, they possessed in common; they had their feet in every salon, their hands in every strong box, their elbows in the streets, their heads upon all pillows, they did not scruple to help themselves at their pleasure. No chief commanded them, nobody was strong enough. The

liveliest passion, the most urgent need took precedence – that was all. They were thirteen unknown kings; unknown, but with all the power and more than the power of kings; for they were both judges and executioners, they had taken wings that they might traverse the heights and depths of society, scorning to take any place in it, since all was theirs. If the author learns the reason of their abdication, he will communicate it.

And now the author is free to give those episodes in the History of the Thirteen which, by reason of the Parisian flavor of the details or the strangeness of the contrasts, possessed a peculiar attraction for him.

Paris

I. FERRAGUS, CHIEF OF THE DEVORANTS

CHAPTER I. MADAME JULES

Certain streets in Paris are as degraded as a man covered with infamy; also, there are noble streets, streets simply respectable, young streets on the morality of which the public has not yet formed an opinion; also cut-throat streets, streets older than the age of the oldest dowagers, estimable streets, streets always clean, streets always dirty, working, laboring, and mercantile streets. In short, the streets of Paris have every human quality, and impress us, by what we must call their physiognomy, with certain ideas against which we are defenceless. There are, for instance, streets of a bad neighborhood in which you could not be induced to live, and streets where you would willingly take up your abode. Some streets, like the rue Montmartre, have a charming head, and end in a fish's tail. The rue de la Paix is a wide street, a fine street, yet it wakens none of those gracefully noble thoughts which come to an impressible mind in the middle of the rue Royale, and it certainly lacks the majesty which reigns in the Place Vendome.

If you walk the streets of the Ile Saint-Louis, do not seek the reason of the nervous sadness that lays hold upon you save

in the solitude of the spot, the gloomy look of the houses, and the great deserted mansions. This island, the ghost of *fermiers-generaux*, is the Venice of Paris. The Place de la Bourse is voluble, busy, degraded; it is never fine except by moonlight at two in the morning. By day it is Paris epitomized; by night it is a dream of Greece. The rue Traversiere-Saint-Honore – is not that a villainous street? Look at the wretched little houses with two windows on a floor, where vice, crime, and misery abound. The narrow streets exposed to the north, where the sun never comes more than three or four times a year, are the cut-throat streets which murder with impunity; the authorities of the present day do not meddle with them; but in former times the Parliament might perhaps have summoned the lieutenant of police and reprimanded him for the state of things; and it would, at least, have issued some decree against such streets, as it once did against the wigs of the Chapter of Beauvais. And yet Monsieur Benoiston de Chateauneuf has proved that the mortality of these streets is double that of others! To sum up such theories by a single example: is not the rue Fromentin both murderous and profligate!

These observations, incomprehensible out of Paris, will doubtless be understood by musing men of thought and poesy and pleasure, who know, while rambling about Paris, how to harvest the mass of floating interests which may be gathered at all hours within her walls; to them Paris is the most delightful and varied of monsters: here, a pretty woman; farther on, a haggard

pauper; here, new as the coinage of a new reign; there, in this corner, elegant as a fashionable woman. A monster, moreover, complete! Its garrets, as it were, a head full of knowledge and genius; its first storeys stomachs repleted; its shops, actual feet, where the busy ambulating crowds are moving. Ah! what an ever-active life the monster leads! Hardly has the last vibration of the last carriage coming from a ball ceased at its heart before its arms are moving at the barriers and it shakes itself slowly into motion. Doors open; turning on their hinges like the membrane of some huge lobster, invisibly manipulated by thirty thousand men or women, of whom each individual occupies a space of six square feet, but has a kitchen, a workshop, a bed, children, a garden, little light to see by, but must see all. Imperceptibly, the articulations begin to crack; motion communicates itself; the street speaks. By mid-day, all is alive; the chimneys smoke, the monster eats; then he roars, and his thousand paws begin to ramp. Splendid spectacle! But, O Paris! he who has not admired your gloomy passages, your gleams and flashes of light, your deep and silent *cul-de-sacs*, who has not listened to your murmurings between midnight and two in the morning, knows nothing as yet of your true poesy, nor of your broad and fantastic contrasts.

There are a few amateurs who never go their way heedlessly; who savor their Paris, so to speak; who know its physiognomy so well that they see every wart, and pimple, and redness. To others, Paris is always that monstrous marvel, that amazing assemblage of activities, of schemes, of thoughts; the city of a hundred

thousand tales, the head of the universe. But to those few, Paris is sad or gay, ugly or beautiful, living or dead; to them Paris is a creature; every man, every fraction of a house is a lobe of the cellular tissue of that great courtesan whose head and heart and fantastic customs they know so well. These men are lovers of Paris; they lift their noses at such or such a corner of a street, certain that they can see the face of a clock; they tell a friend whose tobacco-pouch is empty, "Go down that passage and turn to the left; there's a tobacconist next door to a confectioner, where there's a pretty girl." Rambling about Paris is, to these poets, a costly luxury. How can they help spending precious minutes before the dramas, disasters, faces, and picturesque events which meet us everywhere amid this heaving queen of cities, clothed in posters, – who has, nevertheless, not a single clean corner, so complying is she to the vices of the French nation! Who has not chanced to leave his home early in the morning, intending to go to some extremity of Paris, and found himself unable to get away from the centre of it by the dinner-hour? Such a man will know how to excuse this vagabondizing start upon our tale; which, however, we here sum up in an observation both useful and novel, as far as any observation can be novel in Paris, where there is nothing new, – not even the statue erected yesterday, on which some young gamin has already scribbled his name.

Well, then! there are streets, or ends of streets, there are houses, unknown for the most part to persons of social

distinction, to which a woman of that class cannot go without causing cruel and very wounding things to be thought of her. Whether the woman be rich and has a carriage, whether she is on foot, or is disguised, if she enters one of these Parisian defiles at any hour of the day, she compromises her reputation as a virtuous woman. If, by chance, she is there at nine in the evening the conjectures that an observer permits himself to make upon her may prove fearful in their consequences. But if the woman is young and pretty, if she enters a house in one of those streets, if the house has a long, dark, damp, and evil-smelling passage-way, at the end of which flickers the pallid gleam of an oil lamp, and if beneath that gleam appears the horrid face of a withered old woman with fleshless fingers, ah, then! and we say it in the interests of young and pretty women, that woman is lost. She is at the mercy of the first man of her acquaintance who sees her in that Parisian slough. There is more than one street in Paris where such a meeting may lead to a frightful drama, a bloody drama of death and love, a drama of the modern school.

Unhappily, this scene, this modern drama itself, will be comprehended by only a small number of persons; and it is a pity to tell the tale to a public which cannot enter into its local merit. But who can flatter himself that he will ever be understood? We all die unknown – 'tis the saying of women and of authors.

At half-past eight o'clock one evening, in the rue Pagevin, in the days when that street had no wall which did not echo some infamous word, and was, in the direction of the rue Soly, the

narrowest and most impassable street in Paris (not excepting the least frequented corner of the most deserted street), – at the beginning of the month of February about thirteen years ago, a young man, by one of those chances which come but once in life, turned the corner of the rue Pagevin to enter the rue des Vieux-Augustins, close to the rue Soly. There, this young man, who lived himself in the rue de Bourbon, saw in a woman near whom he had been unconsciously walking, a vague resemblance to the prettiest woman in Paris; a chaste and delightful person, with whom he was secretly and passionately in love, – a love without hope; she was married. In a moment his heart leaped, an intolerable heat surged from his centre and flowed through all his veins; his back turned cold, the skin of his head crept. He loved, he was young, he knew Paris; and his knowledge did not permit him to be ignorant of all there was of possible infamy in an elegant, rich, young, and beautiful woman walking there, alone, with a furtively criminal step. *She* in that mud! at that hour!

The love that this young man felt for that woman may seem romantic, and all the more so because he was an officer in the Royal Guard. If he had been in the infantry, the affair might have seemed more likely; but, as an officer of rank in the cavalry, he belonged to that French arm which demands rapidity in its conquests and derives as much vanity from its amorous exploits as from its dashing uniform. But the passion of this officer was a true love, and many young hearts will think it noble. He loved this woman because she was virtuous; he loved her virtue, her

modest grace, her imposing saintliness, as the dearest treasures of his hidden passion. This woman was indeed worthy to inspire one of those platonic loves which are found, like flowers amid bloody ruins, in the history of the middle-ages; worthy to be the hidden principle of all the actions of a young man's life; a love as high, as pure as the skies when blue; a love without hope and to which men bind themselves because it can never deceive; a love that is prodigal of unchecked enjoyment, especially at an age when the heart is ardent, the imagination keen, and the eyes of a man see very clearly.

Strange, weird, inconceivable effects may be met with at night in Paris. Only those who have amused themselves by watching those effects have any idea how fantastic a woman may appear there at dusk. At times the creature whom you are following, by accident or design, seems to you light and slender; the stockings, if they are white, make you fancy that the legs must be slim and elegant; the figure though wrapped in a shawl, or concealed by a pelisse, defines itself gracefully and seductively among the shadows; anon, the uncertain gleam thrown from a shop-window or a street lamp bestows a fleeting lustre, nearly always deceptive, on the unknown woman, and fires the imagination, carrying it far beyond the truth. The senses then bestir themselves; everything takes color and animation; the woman appears in an altogether novel aspect; her person becomes beautiful. Behold! she is not a woman, she is a demon, a siren, who is drawing you by magnetic attraction to some respectable house, where the worthy

bourgeoise, frightened by your threatening step and the clack of your boots, shuts the door in your face without looking at you.

A vacillating gleam, thrown from the shop-window of a shoemaker, suddenly illuminated from the waist down the figure of the woman who was before the young man. Ah! surely, *she* alone had that swaying figure; she alone knew the secret of that chaste gait which innocently set into relief the many beauties of that attractive form. Yes, that was the shawl, and that the velvet bonnet which she wore in the mornings. On her gray silk stockings not a spot, on her shoes not a splash. The shawl held tightly round the bust disclosed, vaguely, its charming lines; and the young man, who had often seen those shoulders at a ball, knew well the treasures that the shawl concealed. By the way a Parisian woman wraps a shawl around her, and the way she lifts her feet in the street, a man of intelligence in such studies can divine the secret of her mysterious errand. There is something, I know not what, of quivering buoyancy in the person, in the gait; the woman seems to weigh less; she steps, or rather, she glides like a star, and floats onward led by a thought which exhales from the folds and motion of her dress. The young man hastened his step, passed the woman, and then turned back to look at her. Pst! she had disappeared into a passage-way, the grated door of which and its bell still rattled and sounded. The young man walked back to the alley and saw the woman reach the farther end, where she began to mount – not without receiving the obsequious bow of an old portress – a winding staircase, the lower steps of which

were strongly lighted; she went up buoyantly, eagerly, as though impatient.

"Impatient for what?" said the young man to himself, drawing back to lean against a wooden railing on the other side of the street. He gazed, unhappy man, at the different storeys of the house, with the keen attention of a detective searching for a conspirator.

It was one of those houses of which there are thousands in Paris, ignoble, vulgar, narrow, yellowish in tone, with four storeys and three windows on each floor. The outer blinds of the first floor were closed. Where was she going? The young man fancied he heard the tinkle of a bell on the second floor. As if in answer to it, a light began to move in a room with two windows strongly illuminated, which presently lit up the third window, evidently that of a first room, either the salon or the dining-room of the apartment. Instantly the outline of a woman's bonnet showed vaguely on the window, and a door between the two rooms must have closed, for the first was dark again, while the two other windows resumed their ruddy glow. At this moment a voice said, "Hi, there!" and the young man was conscious of a blow on his shoulder.

"Why don't you pay attention?" said the rough voice of a workman, carrying a plank on his shoulder. The man passed on. He was the voice of Providence saying to the watcher: "What are you meddling with? Think of your own duty; and leave these Parisians to their own affairs."

The young man crossed his arms; then, as no one beheld him, he suffered tears of rage to flow down his cheeks unchecked. At last the sight of the shadows moving behind the lighted windows gave him such pain that he looked elsewhere and noticed a hackney-coach, standing against a wall in the upper part of the rue des Vieux-Augustins, at a place where there was neither the door of a house, nor the light of a shop-window.

Was it she? Was it not she? Life or death to a lover! This lover waited. He stood there during a century of twenty minutes. After that the woman came down, and he then recognized her as the one whom he secretly loved. Nevertheless, he wanted still to doubt. She went to the hackney-coach, and got into it.

"The house will always be there and I can search it later," thought the young man, following the carriage at a run, to solve his last doubts; and soon he did so.

The carriage stopped in the rue de Richelieu before a shop for artificial flowers, close to the rue de Menars. The lady got out, entered the shop, sent out the money to pay the coachman, and presently left the shop herself, on foot, after buying a bunch of marabouts. Marabouts for her black hair! The officer beheld her, through the window-panes, placing the feathers to her head to see the effect, and he fancied he could hear the conversation between herself and the shop-woman.

"Oh! madame, nothing is more suitable for brunettes: brunettes have something a little too strongly marked in their lines, and marabouts give them just that *flow* which they lack.

Madame la Duchesse de Langeais says they give a woman something vague, Ossianic, and very high-bred."

"Very good; send them to me at once."

Then the lady turned quickly toward the rue de Menars, and entered her own house. When the door closed on her, the young lover, having lost his hopes, and worse, far worse, his dearest beliefs, walked through the streets like a drunken man, and presently found himself in his own room without knowing how he came there. He flung himself into an arm-chair, put his head in his hands and his feet on the andirons, drying his boots until he burned them. It was an awful moment, – one of those moments in human life when the character is moulded, and the future conduct of the best of men depends on the good or evil fortune of his first action. Providence or fatality? – choose which you will.

This young man belonged to a good family, whose nobility was not very ancient; but there are so few really old families in these days, that all men of rank are ancient without dispute. His grandfather had bought the office of counsellor to the Parliament of Paris, where he afterwards became president. His sons, each provided with a handsome fortune, entered the army, and through their marriages became attached to the court. The Revolution swept the family away; but one old dowager, too obstinate to emigrate, was left; she was put in prison, threatened with death, but was saved by the 9th Thermidor and recovered her property. When the proper time came, about the year 1804, she recalled her grandson to France. Auguste de Maulincour, the

only scion of the Carbonnon de Maulincour, was brought up by the good dowager with the triple care of a mother, a woman of rank, and an obstinate dowager. When the Restoration came, the young man, then eighteen years of age, entered the Maison-Rouge, followed the princes to Ghent, was made an officer in the body-guard, left it to serve in the line, but was recalled later to the Royal Guard, where, at twenty-three years of age, he found himself major of a cavalry regiment, – a splendid position, due to his grandmother, who had played her cards well to obtain it, in spite of his youth. This double biography is a compendium of the general and special history, barring variations, of all the noble families who emigrated having debts and property, dowagers and tact.

Madame la Baronne de Maulincour had a friend in the old Vidame de Pamiers, formerly a commander of the Knights of Malta. This was one of those undying friendships founded on sexagenary ties which nothing can weaken, because at the bottom of such intimacies there are certain secrets of the human heart, delightful to guess at when we have the time, insipid to explain in twenty words, and which might make the text of a work in four volumes as amusing as the Doyen de Killerine, – a work about which young men talk and judge without having read it.

Auguste de Maulincour belonged therefore to the faubourg Saint-Germain through his grandmother and the vidame, and it sufficed him to date back two centuries to take the tone and opinions of those who assume to go back to Clovis. This young

man, pale, slender, and delicate in appearance, a man of honor and true courage, who would fight a duel for a yes or a no, had never yet fought upon a battle-field, though he wore in his button-hole the cross of the Legion of honor. He was, as you perceive, one of the blunders of the Restoration, perhaps the most excusable of them. The youth of those days was the youth of no epoch. It came between the memories of the Empire and those of the Emigration, between the old traditions of the court and the conscientious education of the *bourgeoisie*; between religion and fancy-balls; between two political faiths, between Louis XVIII., who saw only the present, and Charles X., who looked too far into the future; it was moreover bound to accept the will of the king, though the king was deceiving and tricking it. This unfortunate youth, blind and yet clear-sighted, was counted as nothing by old men jealously keeping the reins of the State in their feeble hands, while the monarchy could have been saved by their retirement and the accession of this Young France, which the old doctrinaires, the *emigres* of the Restoration, still speak of slightingly. Auguste de Maulincour was a victim to the ideas which weighed in those days upon French youth, and we must here explain why.

The Vidame de Pamiers was still, at sixty-seven years of age, a very brilliant man, having seen much and lived much; a good talker, a man of honor and a gallant man, but who held as to women the most detestable opinions; he loved them, and he despised them. *Their* honor! *their* feelings! Ta-ra-ra, rubbish and

shams! When he was with them, he believed in them, the ci-devant "monstre"; he never contradicted them, and he made them shine. But among his male friends, when the topic of the sex came up, he laid down the principle that to deceive women, and to carry on several intrigues at once, should be the occupation of those young men who were so misguided as to wish to meddle in the affairs of the State. It is sad to have to sketch so hackneyed a portrait, for has it not figured everywhere and become, literally, as threadbare as that of a grenadier of the Empire? But the vidame had an influence on Monsieur de Maulincour's destiny which obliges us to preserve his portrait; he lectured the young man after his fashion, and did his best to convert him to the doctrines of the great age of gallantry.

The dowager, a tender-hearted, pious woman, sitting between God and her vidame, a model of grace and sweetness, but gifted with that well-bred persistency which triumphs in the long run, had longed to preserve for her grandson the beautiful illusions of life, and had therefore brought him up in the highest principles; she instilled into him her own delicacy of feeling and made him, to outward appearance, a timid man, if not a fool. The sensibilities of the young fellow, preserved pure, were not worn by contact without; he remained so chaste, so scrupulous, that he was keenly offended by actions and maxims to which the world attached no consequence. Ashamed of this susceptibility, he forced himself to conceal it under a false hardihood; but he suffered in secret, all the while scoffing with others at the things

he reverenced.

It came to pass that he was deceived; because, in accordance with a not uncommon whim of destiny, he, a man of gentle melancholy, and spiritual in love, encountered in the object of his first passion a woman who held in horror all German sentimentalism. The young man, in consequence, distrusted himself, became dreamy, absorbed in his griefs, complaining of not being understood. Then, as we desire all the more violently the things we find difficult to obtain, he continued to adore women with that ingenuous tenderness and feline delicacy the secret of which belongs to women themselves, who may, perhaps, prefer to keep the monopoly of it. In point of fact, though women of the world complain of the way men love them, they have little liking themselves for those whose soul is half feminine. Their own superiority consists in making men believe they are their inferiors in love; therefore they will readily leave a lover if he is inexperienced enough to rob them of those fears with which they seek to deck themselves, those delightful tortures of feigned jealousy, those troubles of hope betrayed, those futile expectations, – in short, the whole procession of their feminine miseries. They hold Sir Charles Grandison in horror. What can be more contrary to their nature than a tranquil, perfect love? They want emotions; happiness without storms is not happiness to them. Women with souls that are strong enough to bring infinitude into love are angelic exceptions; they are among women what noble geniuses are among men. Their

great passions are rare as masterpieces. Below the level of such love come compromises, conventions, passing and contemptible irritations, as in all things petty and perishable.

Amid the hidden disasters of his heart, and while he was still seeking the woman who could comprehend him (a search which, let us remark in passing, is one of the amorous follies of our epoch), Auguste met, in the rank of society that was farthest from his own, in the secondary sphere of money, where banking holds the first place, a perfect being, one of those women who have I know not what about them that is saintly and sacred, – women who inspire such reverence that love has need of the help of a long familiarity to declare itself.

Auguste then gave himself up wholly to the delights of the deepest and most moving of passions, to a love that was purely adoring. Innumerable repressed desires there were, shadows of passion so vague yet so profound, so fugitive and yet so actual, that one scarcely knows to what we may compare them. They are like perfumes, or clouds, or rays of the sun, or shadows, or whatever there is in nature that shines for a moment and disappears, that springs to life and dies, leaving in the heart long echoes of emotion. When the soul is young enough to nurture melancholy and far-off hope, to find in woman more than a woman, is it not the greatest happiness that can befall a man when he loves enough to feel more joy in touching a gloved hand, or a lock of hair, in listening to a word, in casting a single look, than in all the ardor of possession given by happy

love? Thus it is that rejected persons, those rebuffed by fate, the ugly and unfortunate, lovers unrevealed, women and timid men, alone know the treasures contained in the voice of the beloved. Taking their source and their element from the soul itself, the vibrations of the air, charged with passion, put our hearts so powerfully into communion, carrying thought between them so lucidly, and being, above all, so incapable of falsehood, that a single inflection of a voice is often a revelation. What enchantments the intonations of a tender voice can bestow upon the heart of a poet! What ideas they awaken! What freshness they shed there! Love is in the voice before the glance avows it. Auguste, poet after the manner of lovers (there are poets who feel, and poets who express; the first are the happiest), Auguste had tasted all these early joys, so vast, so fecund. SHE possessed the most winning organ that the most artful woman of the world could have desired in order to deceive at her ease; *she* had that silvery voice which is soft to the ear, and ringing only for the heart which it stirs and troubles, caresses and subjugates.

And this woman went by night to the rue Soly through the rue Pagevin! and her furtive apparition in an infamous house had just destroyed the grandest of passions! The vidame's logic triumphed.

"If she is betraying her husband we will avenge ourselves," said Auguste.

There was still faith in that "if". The philosophic doubt of Descartes is a politeness with which we should always

honor virtue. Ten o'clock sounded. The Baron de Maulincour remembered that this woman was going to a ball that evening at a house to which he had access. He dressed, went there, and searched for her through all the salons. The mistress of the house, Madame de Nucingen, seeing him thus occupied, said: —

"You are looking for Madame Jules; but she has not yet come."

"Good evening, dear," said a voice.

Auguste and Madame de Nucingen turned round. Madame Jules had arrived, dressed in white, looking simple and noble, wearing in her hair the marabouts the young baron had seen her choose in the flower-shop. That voice of love now pierced his heart. Had he won the slightest right to be jealous of her he would have petrified her then and there by saying the words, "Rue Soly!" But if he, an alien to her life, had said those words in her ear a thousand times, Madame Jules would have asked him in astonishment what he meant. He looked at her stupidly.

For those sarcastic persons who scoff at all things it may be a great amusement to detect the secret of a woman, to know that her chastity is a lie, that her calm face hides some anxious thought, that under that pure brow is a dreadful drama. But there are other souls to whom the sight is saddening; and many of those who laugh in public, when withdrawn into themselves and alone with their conscience, curse the world while they despise the woman. Such was the case with Auguste de Maulincour, as he stood there in presence of Madame Jules. Singular situation! There was no other relation between them than that which social

life establishes between persons who exchange a few words seven or eight times in the course of a winter, and yet he was calling her to account on behalf of a happiness unknown to her; he was judging her, without letting her know of his accusation.

Many young men find themselves thus in despair at having broken forever with a woman adored in secret, condemned and despised in secret. There are many hidden monologues told to the walls of some solitary lodging; storms roused and calmed without ever leaving the depths of hearts; amazing scenes of the moral world, for which a painter is wanted. Madame Jules sat down, leaving her husband to make a turn around the salon. After she was seated she seemed uneasy, and, while talking with her neighbor, she kept a furtive eye on Monsieur Jules Desmarets, her husband, a broker chiefly employed by the Baron de Nucingen. The following is the history of their home life.

Monsieur Desmarets was, five years before his marriage, in a broker's office, with no other means than the meagre salary of a clerk. But he was a man to whom misfortune had early taught the truths of life, and he followed the strait path with the tenacity of an insect making for its nest; he was one of those dogged young men who feign death before an obstacle and wear out everybody's patience with their own beetle-like perseverance. Thus, young as he was, he had all the republican virtue of poor peoples; he was sober, saving of his time, an enemy to pleasure. He waited. Nature had given him the immense advantage of an agreeable exterior. His calm, pure brow, the shape of his

placid, but expressive face, his simple manners, – all revealed in him a laborious and resigned existence, that lofty personal dignity which is imposing to others, and the secret nobility of heart which can meet all events. His modesty inspired a sort of respect in those who knew him. Solitary in the midst of Paris, he knew the social world only by glimpses during the brief moments which he spent in his patron's salon on holidays.

There were passions in this young man, as in most of the men who live in that way, of amazing profundity, – passions too vast to be drawn into petty incidents. His want of means compelled him to lead an ascetic life, and he conquered his fancies by hard work. After paling all day over figures, he found his recreation in striving obstinately to acquire that wide general knowledge so necessary in these days to every man who wants to make his mark, whether in society, or in commerce, at the bar, or in politics or literature. The only peril these fine souls have to fear comes from their own uprightness. They see some poor girl; they love her; they marry her, and wear out their lives in a struggle between poverty and love. The noblest ambition is quenched perforce by the household account-book. Jules Desmarets went headlong into this peril.

He met one evening at his patron's house a girl of the rarest beauty. Unfortunate men who are deprived of affection, and who consume the finest hours of youth in work and study, alone know the rapid ravages that passion makes in their lonely, misconceived hearts. They are so certain of loving truly, all their forces are

concentrated so quickly on the object of their love, that they receive, while beside her, the most delightful sensations, when, as often happens, they inspire none at all. Nothing is more flattering to a woman's egotism than to divine this passion, apparently immovable, and these emotions so deep that they have needed a great length of time to reach the human surface. These poor men, anchorites in the midst of Paris, have all the enjoyments of anchorites; and may sometimes succumb to temptations. But, more often deceived, betrayed, and misunderstood, they are rarely able to gather the sweet fruits of a love which, to them, is like a flower dropped from heaven.

One smile from his wife, a single inflection of her voice sufficed to make Jules Desmarets conceive a passion which was boundless. Happily, the concentrated fire of that secret passion revealed itself artlessly to the woman who inspired it. These two beings then loved each other religiously. To express all in a word, they clasped hands without shame before the eyes of the world and went their way like two children, brother and sister, passing serenely through a crowd where all made way for them and admired them.

The young girl was in one of those unfortunate positions which human selfishness entails upon children. She had no civil status; her name of "Clemence" and her age were recorded only by a notary public. As for her fortune, that was small indeed. Jules Desmarets was a happy man on hearing these particulars. If Clemence had belonged to an opulent family, he might have

despaired of obtaining her; but she was only the poor child of love, the fruit of some terrible adulterous passion; and they were married. Then began for Jules Desmarets a series of fortunate events. Every one envied his happiness; and henceforth talked only of his luck, without recalling either his virtues or his courage.

Some days after their marriage, the mother of Clemence, who passed in society for her godmother, told Jules Desmarets to buy the office and good-will of a broker, promising to provide him with the necessary capital. In those days, such offices could still be bought at a modest price. That evening, in the salon as it happened of his patron, a wealthy capitalist proposed, on the recommendation of the mother, a very advantageous transaction for Jules Desmarets, and the next day the happy clerk was able to buy out his patron. In four years Desmarets became one of the most prosperous men in his business; new clients increased the number his predecessor had left to him; he inspired confidence in all; and it was impossible for him not to feel, by the way business came to him, that some hidden influence, due to his mother-in-law, or to Providence, was secretly protecting him.

At the end of the third year Clemence lost her godmother. By that time Monsieur Jules (so called to distinguish him from an elder brother, whom he had set up as a notary in Paris) possessed an income from invested property of two hundred thousand francs. There was not in all Paris another instance of the domestic happiness enjoyed by this couple. For five years

their exceptional love had been troubled by only one event, – a calumny for which Monsieur Jules exacted vengeance. One of his former comrades attributed to Madame Jules the fortune of her husband, explaining that it came from a high protection dearly paid for. The man who uttered the calumny was killed in the duel that followed it.

The profound passion of this couple, which survived marriage, obtained a great success in society, though some women were annoyed by it. The charming household was respected; everybody feted it. Monsieur and Madame Jules were sincerely liked, perhaps because there is nothing more delightful to see than happy people; but they never stayed long at any festivity. They slipped away early, as impatient to regain their nest as wandering pigeons. This nest was a large and beautiful mansion in the rue de Menars, where a true feeling for art tempered the luxury which the financial world continues, traditionally, to display. Here the happy pair received their society magnificently, although the obligations of social life suited them but little.

Nevertheless, Jules submitted to the demands of the world, knowing that, sooner or later, a family has need of it; but he and his wife felt themselves, in its midst, like green-house plants in a tempest. With a delicacy that was very natural, Jules had concealed from his wife the calumny and the death of the calumniator. Madame Jules, herself, was inclined, through her sensitive and artistic nature, to desire luxury. In spite of the terrible lesson of the duel, some imprudent women whispered

to each other that Madame Jules must sometimes be pressed for money. They often found her more elegantly dressed in her own home than when she went into society. She loved to adorn herself to please her husband, wishing to show him that to her he was more than any social life. A true love, a pure love, above all, a happy love! Jules, always a lover, and more in love as time went by, was happy in all things beside his wife, even in her caprices; in fact, he would have been uneasy if she had none, thinking it a symptom of some illness.

Auguste de Maulincour had the personal misfortune of running against this passion, and falling in love with the wife beyond recovery. Nevertheless, though he carried in his heart so intense a love, he was not ridiculous; he complied with all the demands of society, and of military manners and customs. And yet his face wore constantly, even though he might be drinking a glass of champagne, that dreamy look, that air of silently despising life, that nebulous expression which belongs, though for other reasons, to *blases* men, – men dissatisfied with hollow lives. To love without hope, to be disgusted with life, constitute, in these days, a social position. The enterprise of winning the heart of a sovereign might give, perhaps, more hope than a love rashly conceived for a happy woman. Therefore Maulincour had sufficient reason to be grave and gloomy. A queen has the vanity of her power; the height of her elevation protects her. But a pious *bourgeoise* is like a hedgehog, or an oyster, in its rough wrappings.

At this moment the young officer was beside his unconscious

mistress, who certainly was unaware that she was doubly faithless. Madame Jules was seated, in a naive attitude, like the least artful woman in existence, soft and gentle, full of a majestic serenity. What an abyss is human nature! Before beginning a conversation, the baron looked alternately at the wife and at the husband. How many were the reflections he made! He recomposed the "Night Thoughts" of Young in a second. And yet the music was sounding through the salons, the light was pouring from a thousand candles. It was a banker's ball, – one of those insolent festivals by means of which the world of solid gold endeavored to sneer at the gold-embossed salons where the faubourg Saint-Germain met and laughed, not foreseeing the day when the bank would invade the Luxembourg and take its seat upon the throne. The conspirators were now dancing, indifferent to coming bankruptcies, whether of Power or of the Bank. The gilded salons of the Baron de Nucingen were gay with that peculiar animation that the world of Paris, apparently joyous at any rate, gives to its fetes. There, men of talent communicate their wit to fools, and fools communicate that air of enjoyment that characterizes them. By means of this exchange all is liveliness. But a ball in Paris always resembles fireworks to a certain extent; wit, coquetry, and pleasure sparkle and go out like rockets. The next day all present have forgotten their wit, their coquetry, their pleasure.

"Ah!" thought Auguste, by way of conclusion, "women are what the vidame says they are. Certainly all those dancing here

are less irreproachable actually than Madame Jules appears to be, and yet Madame Jules went to the rue Soly!"

The rue Soly was like an illness to him; the very word shrivelled his heart.

"Madame, do you ever dance?" he said to her.

"This is the third time you have asked me that question this winter," she answered, smiling.

"But perhaps you have never answered it."

"That is true."

"I knew very well that you were false, like other women."

Madame Jules continued to smile.

"Listen, monsieur," she said; "if I told you the real reason, you would think it ridiculous. I do not think it false to abstain from telling things that the world would laugh at."

"All secrets demand, in order to be told, a friendship of which I am no doubt unworthy, madame. But you cannot have any but noble secrets; do you think me capable of jesting on noble things?"

"Yes," she said, "you, like all the rest, laugh at our purest sentiments; you calumniate them. Besides, I have no secrets. I have the right to love my husband in the face of all the world, and I say so, – I am proud of it; and if you laugh at me when I tell you that I dance only with him, I shall have a bad opinion of your heart."

"Have you never danced since your marriage with any one but your husband?"

"Never. His arm is the only one on which I have leaned; I have never felt the touch of another man."

"Has your physician never felt your pulse?"

"Now you are laughing at me."

"No, madame, I admire you, because I comprehend you. But you let a man hear your voice, you let yourself be seen, you – in short, you permit our eyes to admire you – "

"Ah!" she said, interrupting him, "that is one of my griefs. Yes, I wish it were possible for a married woman to live secluded with her husband, as a mistress lives with her lover, for then – "

"Then why were you, two hours ago, on foot, disguised, in the rue Soly?"

"The rue Soly, where is that?"

And her pure voice gave no sign of any emotion; no feature of her face quivered; she did not blush; she remained calm.

"What! you did not go up to the second floor of a house in the rue des Vieux-Augustins at the corner of the rue Soly? You did not have a hackney-coach waiting near by? You did not return in it to the flower-shop in the rue Richelieu, where you bought the feathers that are now in your hair?"

"I did not leave my house this evening."

As she uttered that lie she was smiling and imperturbable; she played with her fan; but if any one had passed a hand down her back they would, perhaps, have found it moist. At that instant Auguste remembered the instructions of the vidame.

"Then it was some one who strangely resembled you," he said,

with a credulous air.

"Monsieur," she replied, "if you are capable of following a woman and detecting her secrets, you will allow me to say that it is a wrong, a very wrong thing, and I do you the honor to say that I disbelieve you."

The baron turned away, placed himself before the fireplace and seemed thoughtful. He bent his head; but his eyes were covertly fixed on Madame Jules, who, not remembering the reflections in the mirror, cast two or three glances at him that were full of terror. Presently she made a sign to her husband and rising took his arm to walk about the salon. As she passed before Monsieur de Maulincour, who at that moment was speaking to a friend, he said in a loud voice, as if in reply to a remark: "That woman will certainly not sleep quietly this night." Madame Jules stopped, gave him an imposing look which expressed contempt, and continued her way, unaware that another look, if surprised by her husband, might endanger not only her happiness but the lives of two men. Auguste, frantic with anger, which he tried to smother in the depths of his soul, presently left the house, swearing to penetrate to the heart of the mystery. Before leaving, he sought Madame Jules, to look at her again; but she had disappeared.

What a drama cast into that young head so eminently romantic, like all who have not known love in the wide extent which they give to it. He adored Madame Jules under a new aspect; he loved her now with the fury of jealousy and the

frenzied anguish of hope. Unfaithful to her husband, the woman became common. Auguste could now give himself up to the joys of successful love, and his imagination opened to him a career of pleasures. Yes, he had lost the angel, but he had found the most delightful of demons. He went to bed, building castles in the air, excusing Madame Jules by some romantic fiction in which he did not believe. He resolved to devote himself wholly, from that day forth, to a search for the causes, motives, and keynote of this mystery. It was a tale to read, or better still, a drama to be played, in which he had a part.

CHAPTER II. FERRAGUS

A fine thing is the task of a spy, when performed for one's own benefit and in the interests of a passion. Is it not giving ourselves the pleasure of a thief and a rascal while continuing honest men? But there is another side to it; we must resign ourselves to boil with anger, to roar with impatience, to freeze our feet in the mud, to be numbed, and roasted, and torn by false hopes. We must go, on the faith of a mere indication, to a vague object, miss our end, curse our luck, improvise to ourselves elegies, dithyrambics, exclaim idiotically before inoffensive pedestrians who observe us, knock over old apple-women and their baskets, run hither and thither, stand on guard beneath a window, make a thousand suppositions. But, after all, it is a chase, a hunt; a hunt in Paris, a hunt with all its chances, minus dogs and guns and the tally-ho! Nothing compares with it but the life of gamblers. But it needs a heart big with love and vengeance to ambush itself in Paris, like a tiger waiting to spring upon its prey, and to enjoy the chances and contingencies of Paris, by adding one special interest to the many that abound there. But for this we need a many-sided soul – for must we not live in a thousand passions, a thousand sentiments?

Auguste de Maulincour flung himself into this ardent existence passionately, for he felt all its pleasures and all its misery. He went disguised about Paris, watching at the corners of the rue Pagevin and the rue des Vieux-Augustins. He hurried

like a hunter from the rue de Menars to the rue Soly, and back from the rue Soly to the rue de Menars, without obtaining either the vengeance or the knowledge which would punish or reward such cares, such efforts, such wiles. But he had not yet reached that impatience which wrings our very entrails and makes us sweat; he roamed in hope, believing that Madame Jules would only refrain for a few days from revisiting the place where she knew she had been detected. He devoted the first days therefore, to a careful study of the secrets of the street. A novice at such work, he dared not question either the porter or the shoemaker of the house to which Madame Jules had gone; but he managed to obtain a post of observation in a house directly opposite to the mysterious apartment. He studied the ground, trying to reconcile the conflicting demands of prudence, impatience, love, and secrecy.

Early in the month of March, while busy with plans by which he expected to strike a decisive blow, he left his post about four in the afternoon, after one of those patient watches from which he had learned nothing. He was on his way to his own house whither a matter relating to his military service called him, when he was overtaken in the rue Coquilliere by one of those heavy showers which instantly flood the gutters, while each drop of rain rings loudly in the puddles of the roadway. A pedestrian under these circumstances is forced to stop short and take refuge in a shop or cafe if he is rich enough to pay for the forced hospitality, or, if in poorer circumstances, under a

porte-cochere, that haven of paupers or shabbily dressed persons. Why have none of our painters ever attempted to reproduce the physiognomies of a swarm of Parisians, grouped, under stress of weather, in the damp *porte-cochere* of a building? First, there's the musing philosophical pedestrian, who observes with interest all he sees, – whether it be the stripes made by the rain on the gray background of the atmosphere (a species of chasing not unlike the capricious threads of spun glass), or the whirl of white water which the wind is driving like a luminous dust along the roofs, or the fitful disgorgements of the gutter-pipes, sparkling and foaming; in short, the thousand nothings to be admired and studied with delight by loungers, in spite of the porter's broom which pretends to be sweeping out the gateway. Then there's the talkative refugee, who complains and converses with the porter while he rests on his broom like a grenadier on his musket; or the pauper wayfarer, curled against the wall indifferent to the condition of his rags, long used, alas, to contact with the streets; or the learned pedestrian who studies, spells, and reads the posters on the walls without finishing them; or the smiling pedestrian who makes fun of others to whom some street fatality has happened, who laughs at the muddy women, and makes grimaces at those of either sex who are looking from the windows; and the silent being who gazes from floor to floor; and the working-man, armed with a satchel or a paper bundle, who is estimating the rain as a profit or loss; and the good-natured fugitive, who arrives like a shot exclaiming, "Ah! what

weather, messieurs, what weather!" and bows to every one; and, finally, the true *bourgeois* of Paris, with his unfailing umbrella, an expert in showers, who foresaw this particular one, but would come out in spite of his wife; this one takes a seat in the porter's chair. According to individual character, each member of this fortuitous society contemplates the skies, and departs, skipping to avoid the mud, – because he is in a hurry, or because he sees other citizens walking along in spite of wind and slush, or because, the archway being damp and mortally catarrhal, the bed's edge, as the proverb says, is better than the sheets. Each one has his motive. No one is left but the prudent pedestrian, the man who, before he sets forth, makes sure of a scrap of blue sky through the rifting clouds.

Monsieur de Maulincour took refuge, as we have said, with a whole family of fugitives, under the porch of an old house, the court-yard of which looked like the flue of a chimney. The sides of its plastered, nitrified, and mouldy walls were so covered with pipes and conduits from all the many floors of its four elevations, that it might have been said to resemble at that moment the *cascatelles* of Saint-Cloud. Water flowed everywhere; it boiled, it leaped, it murmured; it was black, white, blue, and green; it shrieked, it bubbled under the broom of the portress, a toothless old woman used to storms, who seemed to bless them as she swept into the street a mass of scraps an intelligent inventory of which would have revealed the lives and habits of every dweller in the house, – bits of printed cottons, tea-leaves, artificial flower-

petals faded and worthless, vegetable parings, papers, scraps of metal. At every sweep of her broom the old woman bared the soul of the gutter, that black fissure on which a porter's mind is ever bent. The poor lover examined this scene, like a thousand others which our heaving Paris presents daily; but he examined it mechanically, as a man absorbed in thought, when, happening to look up, he found himself all but nose to nose with a man who had just entered the gateway.

In appearance this man was a beggar, but not the Parisian beggar, – that creation without a name in human language; no, this man formed another type, while presenting on the outside all the ideas suggested by the word "beggar." He was not marked by those original Parisian characteristics which strike us so forcibly in the paupers whom Charlet was fond of representing, with his rare luck in observation, – coarse faces reeking of mud, hoarse voices, reddened and bulbous noses, mouths devoid of teeth but menacing; humble yet terrible beings, in whom a profound intelligence shining in their eyes seems like a contradiction. Some of these bold vagabonds have blotched, cracked, veiny skins; their foreheads are covered with wrinkles, their hair scanty and dirty, like a wig thrown on a dust-heap. All are gay in their degradation, and degraded in their joys; all are marked with the stamp of debauchery, casting their silence as a reproach; their very attitude revealing fearful thoughts. Placed between crime and beggary they have no compunctions, and circle prudently around the scaffold without mounting it, innocent in the midst

of crime, and vicious in their innocence. They often cause a laugh, but they always cause reflection. One represents to you civilization stunted, repressed; he comprehends everything, the honor of the galleys, patriotism, virtue, the malice of a vulgar crime, or the fine astuteness of elegant wickedness. Another is resigned, a perfect mimer, but stupid. All have slight yearnings after order and work, but they are pushed back into their mire by society, which makes no inquiry as to what there may be of great men, poets, intrepid souls, and splendid organizations among these vagrants, these gypsies of Paris; a people eminently good and eminently evil – like all the masses who suffer – accustomed to endure unspeakable woes, and whom a fatal power holds ever down to the level of the mire. They all have a dream, a hope, a happiness, – cards, lottery, or wine.

There was nothing of all this in the personage who now leaned carelessly against the wall in front of Monsieur de Maulincour, like some fantastic idea drawn by an artist on the back of a canvas the front of which is turned to the wall. This tall, spare man, whose leaden visage expressed some deep but chilling thought, dried up all pity in the hearts of those who looked at him by the scowling look and the sarcastic attitude which announced an intention of treating every man as an equal. His face was of a dirty white, and his wrinkled skull, denuded of hair, bore a vague resemblance to a block of granite. A few gray locks on either side of his head fell straight to the collar of his greasy coat, which was buttoned to the chin. He resembled both Voltaire and

Don Quixote; he was, apparently, scoffing but melancholy, full of disdain and philosophy, but half-crazy. He seemed to have no shirt. His beard was long. A rusty black cravat, much worn and ragged, exposed a protuberant neck deeply furrowed, with veins as thick as cords. A large brown circle like a bruise was strongly marked beneath his eyes, He seemed to be at least sixty years old. His hands were white and clean. His boots were trodden down at the heels, and full of holes. A pair of blue trousers, mended in various places, were covered with a species of fluff which made them offensive to the eye. Whether it was that his damp clothes exhaled a fetid odor, or that he had in his normal condition the "poor smell" which belongs to Parisian tenements, just as offices, sacristies, and hospitals have their own peculiar and rancid fetidness, of which no words can give the least idea, or whether some other reason affected them, those in the vicinity of this man immediately moved away and left him alone. He cast upon them and also upon the officer a calm, expressionless look, the celebrated look of Monsieur de Talleyrand, a dull, wan glance, without warmth, a species of impenetrable veil, beneath which a strong soul hides profound emotions and close estimation of men and things and events. Not a fold of his face quivered. His mouth and forehead were impassible; but his eyes moved and lowered themselves with a noble, almost tragic slowness. There was, in fact, a whole drama in the motion of those withered eyelids.

The aspect of this stoical figure gave rise in Monsieur de

Maulincour to one of those vagabond reveries which begin with a common question and end by comprising a world of thought. The storm was past. Monsieur de Maulincour presently saw no more of the man than the tail of his coat as it brushed the gate-post, but as he turned to leave his own place he noticed at his feet a letter which must have fallen from the unknown beggar when he took, as the baron had seen him take, a handkerchief from his pocket. The young man picked it up, and read, involuntarily, the address: "To Monsieur Ferragusse, Rue des Grands-Augustains, corner of rue Soly."

The letter bore no postmark, and the address prevented Monsieur de Maulincour from following the beggar and returning it; for there are few passions that will not fail in rectitude in the long run. The baron had a presentiment of the opportunity afforded by this windfall. He determined to keep the letter, which would give him the right to enter the mysterious house to return it to the strange man, not doubting that he lived there. Suspicions, vague as the first faint gleams of daylight, made him fancy relations between this man and Madame Jules. A jealous lover supposes everything; and it is by supposing everything and selecting the most probable of their conjectures that judges, spies, lovers, and observers get at the truth they are looking for.

"Is the letter for him? Is it from Madame Jules?"

His restless imagination tossed a thousand such questions to him; but when he read the first words of the letter he smiled. Here

it is, textually, in all the simplicity of its artless phrases and its miserable orthography, – a letter to which it would be impossible to add anything, or to take anything away, unless it were the letter itself. But we have yielded to the necessity of punctuating it. In the original there were neither commas nor stops of any kind, not even notes of exclamation, – a fact which tends to undervalue the system of notes and dashes by which modern authors have endeavored to depict the great disasters of all the passions: —

> Henry, – Among the manny sacrifisis I imposed upon myself for your sake was that of not giving you anny news of me; but an iresistible voise now compells me to let you know the wrong you have done me. I know beforehand that your soul hardened in vise will not pitty me. Your heart is deaf to feeling. Is it deaf to the cries of nature? But what matter? I must tell you to what a dredful point you are gilty, and the horror of the position to which you have brought me. Henry, you knew what I sufered from my first wrong-doing, and yet you plunged me into the same misery, and then abbandoned me to my dispair and sufering. Yes, I will say it, the belif I had that you loved me and esteemed me gave me corage to bare my fate. But now, what have I left? Have you not made me loose all that was dear to me, all that held me to life; parents, frends, onor, reputation, – all, I have sacrifised all to you, and nothing is left me but shame, oprobrum, and – I say this without blushing – poverty. Nothing was wanting to my misfortunes but the sertainty of your contempt and hatred; and now I have them I find the corage that my project requires. My decision is made; the onor of my famly

commands it. I must put an end to my suferins. Make no remarks upon my conduct, Henry; it is orful, I know, but my condition obliges me. Without help, without suport, without one frend to comfort me, can I live? No. Fate has desided for me. So in two days, Henry, two days, Ida will have seased to be worthy of your regard. Oh, Henry! oh, my frend! for I can never change to you, promise me to forgive me for what I am going to do.

Do not forget that you have driven me to it; it is your work, and you must judge it. May heven not punish you for all your crimes. I ask your pardon on my knees, for I feel nothing is wanting to my misery but the sorow of knowing you unhappy. In spite of the poverty I am in I shall refuse all help from you. If you had loved me I would have taken all from your friendship; but a benfit given by pitty *my soul refussis*. I would be baser to take it than he who offered it. I have one favor to ask of you. I don't know how long I must stay at Madame Meynardie's; be genrous enough not to come there. Your last two vissits did me a harm I cannot get ofer.

I cannot enter into particlers about that conduct of yours. You hate me, – you said so; that word is writen on my heart, and freeses it with fear. Alas! it is now, when I need all my corage, all my strength, that my faculties abandon me. Henry, my frend, before I put a barrier forever between us, give me a last pruf of your esteem. Write me, answer me, say you respect me still, though you have seased to love me. My eyes are worthy still to look into yours, but I do not ask an interfew; I fear my weakness and my love. But for pitty's

sake write me a line at once; it will give me the corage I need to meet my trubbles. Farewell, orther of all my woes, but the only frend my heart has chosen and will never forget.

Ida.

This life of a young girl, with its love betrayed, its fatal joys, its pangs, its miseries, and its horrible resignation, summed up in a few words, this humble poem, essentially Parisian, written on dirty paper, influenced for a passing moment Monsieur de Maulincour. He asked himself whether this Ida might not be some poor relation of Madame Jules, and that strange rendezvous, which he had witnessed by chance, the mere necessity of a charitable effort. But could that old pauper have seduced this Ida? There was something impossible in the very idea. Wandering in this labyrinth of reflections, which crossed, recrossed, and obliterated one another, the baron reached the rue Pagevin, and saw a hackney-coach standing at the end of the rue des Vieux-Augustins where it enters the rue Montmartre. All waiting hackney-coaches now had an interest for him.

"Can she be there?" he thought to himself, and his heart beat fast with a hot and feverish throbbing.

He pushed the little door with the bell, but he lowered his head as he did so, obeying a sense of shame, for a voice said to him secretly: —

"Why are you putting your foot into this mystery?"

He went up a few steps, and found himself face to face with the old portress.

"Monsieur Ferragus?" he said.

"Don't know him."

"Doesn't Monsieur Ferragus live here?"

"Haven't such a name in the house."

"But, my good woman – "

"I'm not your good woman, monsieur, I'm the portress."

"But, madame," persisted the baron, "I have a letter for Monsieur Ferragus."

"Ah! if monsieur has a letter," she said, changing her tone, "that's another matter. Will you let me see it – that letter?"

Auguste showed the folded letter. The old woman shook her head with a doubtful air, hesitated, seemed to wish to leave the lodge and inform the mysterious Ferragus of his unexpected visitor, but finally said: —

"Very good; go up, monsieur. I suppose you know the way?"

Without replying to this remark, which he thought might be a trap, the young officer ran lightly up the stairway, and rang loudly at the door of the second floor. His lover's instinct told him, "She is there."

The beggar of the porch, Ferragus, the "orther" of Ida's woes, opened the door himself. He appeared in a flowered dressing-gown, white flannel trousers, his feet in embroidered slippers, and his face washed clean of stains. Madame Jules, whose head projected beyond the casing of the door in the next room, turned pale and dropped into a chair.

"What is the matter, madame?" cried the officer, springing

toward her.

But Ferragus stretched forth an arm and flung the intruder back with so sharp a thrust that Auguste fancied he had received a blow with an iron bar full on his chest.

"Back! monsieur," said the man. "What do you want there? For five or six days you have been roaming about the neighborhood. Are you a spy?"

"Are you Monsieur Ferragus?" said the baron.

"No, monsieur."

"Nevertheless," continued Auguste, "it is to you that I must return this paper which you dropped in the gateway beneath which we both took refuge from the rain."

While speaking and offering the letter to the man, Auguste did not refrain from casting an eye around the room where Ferragus received him. It was very well arranged, though simply. A fire burned on the hearth; and near it was a table with food upon it, which was served more sumptuously than agreed with the apparent conditions of the man and the poorness of his lodging. On a sofa in the next room, which he could see through the doorway, lay a heap of gold, and he heard a sound which could be no other than that of a woman weeping.

"The paper belongs to me; I am much obliged to you," said the mysterious man, turning away as if to make the baron understand that he must go.

Too curious himself to take much note of the deep examination of which he was himself the object, Auguste did

not see the half-magnetic glance with which this strange being seemed to pierce him; had he encountered that basilisk eye he might have felt the danger that encompassed him. Too passionately excited to think of himself, Auguste bowed, went down the stairs, and returned home, striving to find a meaning in the connection of these three persons, – Ida, Ferragus, and Madame Jules; an occupation equivalent to that of trying to arrange the many-cornered bits of a Chinese puzzle without possessing the key to the game. But Madame Jules had seen him, Madame Jules went there, Madame Jules had lied to him. Maulincour determined to go and see her the next day. She could not refuse his visit, for he was now her accomplice; he was hands and feet in the mysterious affair, and she knew it. Already he felt himself a sultan, and thought of demanding from Madame Jules, imperiously, all her secrets.

In those days Paris was seized with a building-fever. If Paris is a monster, it is certainly a most mania-ridden monster. It becomes enamored of a thousand fancies: sometimes it has a mania for building, like a great seigneur who loves a trowel; soon it abandons the trowel and becomes all military; it arrays itself from head to foot as a national guard, and drills and smokes; suddenly, it abandons military manoeuvres and flings away cigars; it is commercial, care-worn, falls into bankruptcy, sells its furniture on the place de Chatelet, files its schedule; but a few days later, lo! it has arranged its affairs and is giving fetes and dances. One day it eats barley-sugar by the mouthful, by

the handful; yesterday it bought “papier Weymen”; to-day the monster’s teeth ache, and it applies to its walls an alexipharmatic to mitigate their dampness; to-morrow it will lay in a provision of pectoral paste. It has its manias for the month, for the season, for the year, like its manias of a day.

So, at the moment of which we speak, all the world was building or pulling down something, – people hardly knew what as yet. There were very few streets in which high scaffoldings on long poles could not be seen, fastened from floor to floor with transverse blocks inserted into holes in the walls on which the planks were laid, – a frail construction, shaken by the brick-layers, but held together by ropes, white with plaster, and insecurely protected from the wheels of carriages by the breastwork of planks which the law requires round all such buildings. There is something maritime in these masts, and ladders, and cordage, even in the shouts of the masons. About a dozen yards from the hotel Maulincour, one of these ephemeral barriers was erected before a house which was then being built of blocks of free-stone. The day after the event we have just related, at the moment when the Baron de Maulincour was passing this scaffolding in his cabriolet on his way to see Madame Jules, a stone, two feet square, which was being raised to the upper storey of this building, got loose from the ropes and fell, crushing the baron’s servant who was behind the cabriolet. A cry of horror shook both the scaffold and the masons; one of them, apparently unable to keep his grasp on a pole, was in danger of death, and

seemed to have been touched by the stone as it passed him.

A crowd collected rapidly; the masons came down the ladders swearing and insisting that Monsieur de Maulincour's cabriolet had been driven against the boarding and so had shaken their crane. Two inches more and the stone would have fallen on the baron's head. The groom was dead, the carriage shattered. 'Twas an event for the whole neighborhood, the newspapers told of it. Monsieur de Maulincour, certain that he had not touched the boarding, complained; the case went to court. Inquiry being made, it was shown that a small boy, armed with a lath, had mounted guard and called to all foot-passengers to keep away. The affair ended there. Monsieur de Maulincour obtained no redress. He had lost his servant, and was confined to his bed for some days, for the back of the carriage when shattered had bruised him severely, and the nervous shock of the sudden surprise gave him a fever. He did not, therefore, go to see Madame Jules.

Ten days after this event, he left the house for the first time, in his repaired cabriolet, when, as he drove down the rue de Bourgogne and was close to the sewer opposite to the Chamber of Deputies, the axle-tree broke in two, and the baron was driving so rapidly that the breakage would have caused the two wheels to come together with force enough to break his head, had it not been for the resistance of the leather hood. Nevertheless, he was badly wounded in the side. For the second time in ten days he was carried home in a fainting condition to his terrified grandmother.

This second accident gave him a feeling of distrust; he thought, though vaguely, of Ferragus and Madame Jules. To throw light on these suspicions he had the broken axle brought to his room and sent for his carriage-maker. The man examined the axle and the fracture, and proved two things: First, the axle was not made in his workshop; he furnished none that did not bear the initials of his name on the iron. But he could not explain by what means this axle had been substituted for the other. Secondly, the breakage of the suspicious axle was caused by a hollow space having been blown in it and a straw very cleverly inserted.

"Eh! Monsieur le baron, whoever did that was malicious!" he said; "any one would swear, to look at it, that the axle was sound."

Monsieur de Maulincour begged the carriage-maker to say nothing of the affair; but he felt himself warned. These two attempts at murder were planned with an ability which denoted the enmity of intelligent minds.

"It is war to the death," he said to himself, as he tossed in his bed, – "a war of savages, skulking in ambush, of trickery and treachery, declared in the name of Madame Jules. What sort of man is this to whom she belongs? What species of power does this Ferragus wield?"

Monsieur de Maulincour, though a soldier and brave man, could not repress a shudder. In the midst of many thoughts that now assailed him, there was one against which he felt he had neither defence nor courage: might not poison be employed ere long by his secret enemies? Under the influence of fears,

which his momentary weakness and fever and low diet increased, he sent for an old woman long attached to the service of his grandmother, whose affection for himself was one of those semi-maternal sentiments which are the sublime of the commonplace. Without confiding in her wholly, he charged her to buy secretly and daily, in different localities, the food he needed; telling her to keep it under lock and key and bring it to him herself, not allowing any one, no matter who, to approach her while preparing it. He took the most minute precautions to protect himself against that form of death. He was ill in his bed and alone, and he had therefore the leisure to think of his own security, – the one necessity clear-sighted enough to enable human egotism to forget nothing!

But the unfortunate man had poisoned his own life by this dread, and, in spite of himself, suspicion dyed all his hours with its gloomy tints. These two lessons of attempted assassination did teach him, however, the value of one of the virtues most necessary to a public man; he saw the wise dissimulation that must be practised in dealing with the great interests of life. To be silent about our own secret is nothing; but to be silent from the start, to forget a fact as Ali Pacha did for thirty years in order to be sure of a vengeance waited for for thirty years, is a fine study in a land where there are few men who can keep their own counsel for thirty days. Monsieur de Maulincour literally lived only through Madame Jules. He was perpetually absorbed in a sober examination into the means he ought to employ to triumph in

this mysterious struggle with these mysterious persons. His secret passion for that woman grew by reason of all these obstacles. Madame Jules was ever there, erect, in the midst of his thoughts, in the centre of his heart, more seductive by her presumable vices than by the positive virtues for which he had made her his idol.

At last, anxious to reconnoitre the position of the enemy, he thought he might without danger initiate the vidame into the secrets of his situation. The old commander loved Auguste as a father loves his wife's children; he was shrewd, dexterous, and very diplomatic. He listened to the baron, shook his head, and they both held counsel. The worthy vidame did not share his young friend's confidence when Auguste declared that in the time in which they now lived, the police and the government were able to lay bare all mysteries, and that if it were absolutely necessary to have recourse to those powers, he should find them most powerful auxiliaries.

The old man replied, gravely: "The police, my dear boy, is the most incompetent thing on this earth, and government the feeblest in all matters concerning individuals. Neither the police nor the government can read hearts. What we might reasonably ask of them is to search for the causes of an act. But the police and the government are both eminently unfitted for that; they lack, essentially, the personal interest which reveals all to him who wants to know all. No human power can prevent an assassin or a poisoner from reaching the heart of a prince or the stomach of an honest man. Passions are the best police."

The vidame strongly advised the baron to go to Italy, and from Italy to Greece, from Greece to Syria, from Syria to Asia, and not to return until his secret enemies were convinced of his repentance, and would so make tacit peace with him. But if he did not take that course, then the vidame advised him to stay in the house, and even in his own room, where he would be safe from the attempts of this man Ferragus, and not to leave it until he could be certain of crushing him.

"We should never touch an enemy until we can be sure of taking his head off," he said, gravely.

The old man, however, promised his favorite to employ all the astuteness with which Heaven had provided him (without compromising any one) in reconnoitring the enemy's ground, and laying his plans for future victory. The Commander had in his service a retired Figaro, the wiliest monkey that ever walked in human form; in earlier days as clever as a devil, working his body like a galley-slave, alert as a thief, sly as a woman, but now fallen into the decadence of genius for want of practice since the new constitution of Parisian society, which has reformed even the valets of comedy. This Scapin emeritus was attached to his master as to a superior being; but the shrewd old vidame added a good round sum yearly to the wages of his former provost of gallantry, which strengthened the ties of natural affection by the bonds of self-interest, and obtained for the old gentleman as much care as the most loving mistress could bestow on a sick friend. It was this pearl of the old-fashioned comedy-valets, relic

of the last century, auxiliary incorruptible from lack of passions to satisfy, on whom the old vidame and Monsieur de Maulincour now relied.

"Monsieur le baron will spoil all," said the great man in livery, when called into counsel. "Monsieur should eat, drink, and sleep in peace. I take the whole matter upon myself."

Accordingly, eight days after the conference, when Monsieur de Maulincour, perfectly restored to health, was breakfasting with his grandmother and the vidame, Justin entered to make his report. As soon as the dowager had returned to her own apartments he said, with that mock modesty which men of talent are so apt to affect: —

"Ferragus is not the name of the enemy who is pursuing Monsieur le baron. This man – this devil, rather – is called Gratien, Henri, Victor, Jean-Joseph Bourignard. The Sieur Gratien Bourignard is a former ship-builder, once very rich, and, above all, one of the handsomest men of his day in Paris, – a Lovelace, capable of seducing Grandison. My information stops short there. He has been a simple workman; and the Companions of the Order of the Devorants did, at one time, elect him as their chief, under the title of Ferragus XXIII. The police ought to know that, if the police were instituted to know anything. The man has moved from the rue des Vieux-Augustins, and now roosts rue Joquelet, where Madame Jules Desmarets goes frequently to see him; sometimes her husband, on his way to the Bourse, drives her as far as the rue Vivienne, or she drives her

husband to the Bourse. Monsieur le vidame knows about these things too well to want me to tell him if it is the husband who takes the wife, or the wife who takes the husband; but Madame Jules is so pretty, I'd bet on her. All that I have told you is positive. Bourignard often plays at number 129. Saving your presence, monsieur, he's a rogue who loves women, and he has his little ways like a man of condition. As for the rest, he wins sometimes, disguises himself like an actor, paints his face to look like anything he chooses, and lives, I may say, the most original life in the world. I don't doubt he has a good many lodgings, for most of the time he manages to evade what Monsieur le vidame calls 'parliamentary investigations.' If monsieur wishes, he could be disposed of honorably, seeing what his habits are. It is always easy to get rid of a man who loves women. However, this capitalist talks about moving again. Have Monsieur le vidame and Monsieur le baron any other commands to give me?"

"Justin, I am satisfied with you; don't go any farther in the matter without my orders, but keep a close watch here, so that Monsieur le baron may have nothing to fear."

"My dear boy," continued the vidame, when they were alone, "go back to your old life, and forget Madame Jules."

"No, no," said Auguste; "I will never yield to Gratien Bourignard. I will have him bound hand and foot, and Madame Jules also."

That evening the Baron Auguste de Maulincour, recently promoted to higher rank in the company of the Body-Guard of

the king, went to a ball given by Madame la Duchesse de Berry at the Elysee-Bourbon. There, certainly, no danger could lurk for him; and yet, before he left the palace, he had an affair of honor on his hands, – an affair it was impossible to settle except by a duel.

His adversary, the Marquis de Ronquerolles, considered that he had strong reasons to complain of Monsieur de Maulincour, who had given some ground for it during his former intimacy with Monsieur de Ronquerolles' sister, the Comtesse de Serizy. That lady, the one who detested German sentimentality, was all the more exacting in the matter of prudery. By one of those inexplicable fatalities, Auguste now uttered a harmless jest which Madame de Serizy took amiss, and her brother resented it. The discussion took place in the corner of a room, in a low voice. In good society, adversaries never raise their voices. The next day the faubourg Saint-Germain and the Chateau talked over the affair. Madame de Serizy was warmly defended, and all the blame was laid on Maulincour. August personages interfered. Seconds of the highest distinction were imposed on Messieurs de Maulincour and de Ronquerolles and every precaution was taken on the ground that no one should be killed.

When Auguste found himself face to face with his antagonist, a man of pleasure, to whom no one could possibly deny sentiments of the highest honor, he felt it was impossible to believe him the instrument of Ferragus, chief of the Devorants; and yet he was compelled, as it were, by an inexplicable

presentiment, to question the marquis.

"Messieurs," he said to the seconds, "I certainly do not refuse to meet the fire of Monsieur de Ronquerolles; but before doing so, I here declare that I was to blame, and I offer him whatever excuses he may desire, and publicly if he wishes it; because when the matter concerns a woman, nothing, I think, can degrade a man of honor. I therefore appeal to his generosity and good sense; is there not something rather silly in fighting without a cause?"

Monsieur de Ronquerolles would not allow of this way of ending the affair, and then the baron, his suspicions revived, walked up to him.

"Well, then! Monsieur le marquis," he said, "pledge me, in presence of these gentlemen, your word as a gentleman that you have no other reason for vengeance than that you have chosen to put forward."

"Monsieur, that is a question you have no right to ask."

So saying, Monsieur de Ronquerolles took his place. It was agreed, in advance, that the adversaries were to be satisfied with one exchange of shots. Monsieur de Ronquerolles, in spite of the great distance determined by the seconds, which seemed to make the death of either party problematical, if not impossible, brought down the baron. The ball went through the latter's body just below the heart, but fortunately without doing vital injury.

"You aimed too well, monsieur," said the baron, "to be avenging only a paltry quarrel."

And he fainted. Monsieur de Ronquerolles, who believed him

to be a dead man, smiled sardonically as he heard those words.

After a fortnight, during which time the dowager and the vidame gave him those cares of old age the secret of which is in the hands of long experience only, the baron began to return to life. But one morning his grandmother dealt him a crushing blow, by revealing anxieties to which, in her last days, she was now subjected. She showed him a letter signed F, in which the history of her grandson's secret espionage was recounted step by step. The letter accused Monsieur de Maulincour of actions that were unworthy of a man of honor. He had, it said, placed an old woman at the stand of hackney-coaches in the rue de Menars; an old spy, who pretended to sell water from her cask to the coachmen, but who was really there to watch the actions of Madame Jules Desmarets. He had spied upon the daily life of a most inoffensive man, in order to detect his secrets, – secrets on which depended the lives of three persons. He had brought upon himself a relentless struggle, in which, although he had escaped with life three times, he must inevitably succumb, because his death had been sworn and would be compassed if all human means were employed upon it. Monsieur de Maulincour could no longer escape his fate by even promising to respect the mysterious life of these three persons, because it was impossible to believe the word of a gentleman who had fallen to the level of a police-spy; and for what reason? Merely to trouble the respectable life of an innocent woman and a harmless old man.

The letter itself was nothing to Auguste in comparison to

the tender reproaches of his grandmother. To lack respect to a woman! to spy upon her actions without a right to do so! Ought a man ever to spy upon a woman whom he loved? – in short, she poured out a torrent of those excellent reasons which prove nothing; and they put the young baron, for the first time in his life, into one of those great human furies in which are born, and from which issue the most vital actions of a man's life.

"Since it is war to the knife," he said in conclusion, "I shall kill my enemy by any means that I can lay hold of."

The vidame went immediately, at Auguste's request, to the chief of the private police of Paris, and without bringing Madame Jules' name or person into the narrative, although they were really the gist of it, he made the official aware of the fears of the family of Maulincour about this mysterious person who was bold enough to swear the death of an officer of the Guards, in defiance of the law and the police. The chief pushed up his green spectacles in amazement, blew his nose several times, and offered snuff to the vidame, who, to save his dignity, pretended not to use tobacco, although his own nose was discolored with it. Then the chief took notes and promised, Vidocq and his spies aiding, to send in a report within a few days to the Maulincour family, assuring them meantime that there were no secrets for the police of Paris.

A few days after this the police official called to see the vidame at the Hotel de Maulincour, where he found the young baron quite recovered from his last wound. He gave them in

bureaucratic style his thanks for the indications they had afforded him, and told them that Bourignard was a convict, condemned to twenty years' hard labor, who had miraculously escaped from a gang which was being transported from Bicetre to Toulon. For thirteen years the police had been endeavoring to recapture him, knowing that he had boldly returned to Paris; but so far this convict had escaped the most active search, although he was known to be mixed up in many nefarious deeds. However, the man, whose life was full of very curious incidents, would certainly be captured now in one or other of his several domiciles and delivered up to justice. The bureaucrat ended his report by saying to Monsieur de Maulincour that if he attached enough importance to the matter to wish to witness the capture of Bourignard, he might come the next day at eight in the morning to a house in the rue Sainte-Foi, of which he gave him the number. Monsieur de Maulincour excused himself from going personally in search of certainty, – trusting, with the sacred respect inspired by the police of Paris, in the capability of the authorities.

Three days later, hearing nothing, and seeing nothing in the newspapers about the projected arrest, which was certainly of enough importance to have furnished an article, Monsieur de Maulincour was beginning to feel anxieties which were presently allayed by the following letter: —

> Monsieur le Baron, – I have the honor to announce to you that you need have no further uneasiness touching the affair in question. The man named Gratien Bourignard,

otherwise called Ferragus, died yesterday, at his lodgings, rue Joquelet No. 7. The suspicions we naturally conceived as to the identity of the dead body have been completely set at rest by the facts. The physician of the Prefecture of police was despatched by us to assist the physician of the arrondissement, and the chief of the detective police made all the necessary verifications to obtain absolute certainty.

Moreover, the character of the persons who signed the certificate of death, and the affidavits of those who took care of the said Bourignard in his last illness, among others that of the worthy vicar of the church of the Bonne-Nouvelle (to whom he made his last confession, for he died a Christian), do not permit us to entertain any sort of doubt.

Accept, Monsieur le baron, etc., etc.

Monsieur de Maulincour, the dowager, and the vidame breathed again with joy unspeakable. The good old woman kissed her grandson leaving a tear upon his cheek, and went away to thank God in prayer. The dear soul, who was making a novena for Auguste's safety, believed her prayers were answered.

"Well," said the vidame, "now you had better show yourself at the ball you were speaking of. I oppose no further objections."

CHAPTER III. THE WIFE ACCUSED

Monsieur de Maulincour was all the more anxious to go to this ball because he knew that Madame Jules would be present. The fete was given by the Prefect of the Seine, in whose salons the two social worlds of Paris met as on neutral ground. Auguste passed through the rooms without finding the woman who now exercised so mighty an influence on his fate. He entered an empty boudoir where card-tables were placed awaiting players; and sitting down on a divan he gave himself up to the most contradictory thoughts about her. A man presently took the young officer by the arm, and looking up the baron was stupefied to behold the pauper of the rue Coquilliere, the Ferragus of Ida, the lodger in the rue Soly, the Bourignard of Justin, the convict of the police, and the dead man of the day before.

"Monsieur, not a sound, not a word," said Bourignard, whose voice he recognized. The man was elegantly dressed; he wore the order of the Golden-Fleece, and a medal on his coat. "Monsieur," he continued, and his voice was sibilant like that of a hyena, "you increase my efforts against you by having recourse to the police. You will perish, monsieur; it has now become necessary. Do you love Madame Jules? Are you beloved by her? By what right do you trouble her peaceful life, and blacken her virtue?"

Some one entered the card-room. Ferragus rose to go.

"Do you know this man?" asked Monsieur de Maulincour

of the new-comer, seizing Ferragus by the collar. But Ferragus quickly disengaged himself, took Monsieur de Maulincour by the hair, and shook his head rapidly.

"Must you have lead in it to make it steady?" he said.

"I do not know him personally," replied Henri de Marsay, the spectator of this scene, "but I know that he is Monsieur de Funcal, a rich Portuguese."

Monsieur de Funcal had disappeared. The baron followed but without being able to overtake him until he reached the peristyle, where he saw Ferragus, who looked at him with a jeering laugh from a brilliant equipage which was driven away at high speed.

"Monsieur," said Auguste, re-entering the salon and addressing de Marsay, whom he knew, "I entreat you to tell me where Monsieur de Funcal lives."

"I do not know; but some one here can no doubt tell you."

The baron, having questioned the prefect, ascertained that the Comte de Funcal lived at the Portuguese embassy. At this moment, while he still felt the icy fingers of that strange man in his hair, he saw Madame Jules in all her dazzling beauty, fresh, gracious, artless, resplendent with the sanctity of womanhood which had won his love. This creature, now infernal to him, excited no emotion in his soul but that of hatred; and this hatred shone in a savage, terrible look from his eyes. He watched for a moment when he could speak to her unheard, and then he said: —

"Madame, your *bravi* have missed me three times."

"What do you mean, monsieur?" she said, flushing. "I know that you have had several unfortunate accidents lately, which I have greatly regretted; but how could I have had anything to do with them?"

"You knew that *bravi* were employed against me by that man of the rue Soly?"

"Monsieur!"

"Madame, I now call you to account, not for my happiness only, but for my blood – "

At this instant Jules Desmarets approached them.

"What are you saying to my wife, monsieur?"

"Make that inquiry at my own house, monsieur, if you are curious," said Maulincour, moving away, and leaving Madame Jules in an almost fainting condition.

There are few women who have not found themselves, once at least in their lives, *a propos* of some undeniable fact, confronted with a direct, sharp, uncompromising question, – one of those questions pitilessly asked by husbands, the mere apprehension of which gives a chill, while the actual words enter the heart like the blade of a dagger. It is from such crises that the maxim has come, "All women lie." Falsehood, kindly falsehood, venial falsehood, sublime falsehood, horrible falsehood, – but always the necessity to lie. This necessity admitted, ought they not to know how to lie well? French women do it admirably. Our manners and customs teach them deception! Besides, women are so naively saucy, so pretty, graceful, and withal so true in lying, – they

recognize so fully the utility of doing so in order to avoid in social life the violent shocks which happiness might not resist, – that lying is seen to be as necessary to their lives as the cotton-wool in which they put away their jewels. Falsehood becomes to them the foundation of speech; truth is exceptional; they tell it, if they are virtuous, by caprice or by calculation. According to individual character, some women laugh when they lie; others weep; others are grave; some grow angry. After beginning life by feigning indifference to the homage that deeply flatters them, they often end by lying to themselves. Who has not admired their apparent superiority to everything at the very moment when they are trembling for the secret treasures of their love? Who has never studied their ease, their readiness, their freedom of mind in the greatest embarrassments of life? In them, nothing is put on. Deception comes as the snow from heaven. And then, with what art they discover the truth in others! With what shrewdness they employ a direct logic in answer to some passionate question which has revealed to them the secret of the heart of a man who was guileless enough to proceed by questioning! To question a woman! why, that is delivering one's self up to her; does she not learn in that way all that we seek to hide from her? Does she not know also how to be dumb, through speaking? What men are daring enough to struggle with the Parisian woman? – a woman who knows how to hold herself above all dagger thrusts, saying: "You are very inquisitive; what is it to you? Why do you wish to know? Ah! you are jealous! And suppose I do not choose to

answer you?" – in short, a woman who possesses the hundred and thirty-seven methods of saying *No*, and incommensurable variations of the word *Yes*. Is not a treatise on the words *yes* and *no*, a fine diplomatic, philosophic, logographic, and moral work, still waiting to be written? But to accomplish this work, which we may also call diabolic, isn't an androgynous genius necessary? For that reason, probably, it will never be attempted. And besides, of all unpublished works isn't it the best known and the best practised among women? Have you studied the behavior, the pose, the *disinvoltura* of a falsehood? Examine it.

Madame Desmarets was seated in the right-hand corner of her carriage, her husband in the left. Having forced herself to recover from her emotion in the ballroom, she now affected a calm demeanor. Her husband had then said nothing to her, and he still said nothing. Jules looked out of the carriage window at the black walls of the silent houses before which they passed; but suddenly, as if driven by a determining thought, when turning the corner of a street he examined his wife, who appeared to be cold in spite of the fur-lined pelisse in which she was wrapped. He thought she seemed pensive, and perhaps she really was so. Of all communicable things, reflection and gravity are the most contagious.

"What could Monsieur de Maulincour have said to affect you so keenly?" said Jules; "and why does he wish me to go to his house and find out?"

"He can tell you nothing in his house that I cannot tell you

here," she replied.

Then, with that feminine craft which always slightly degrades virtue, Madame Jules waited for another question. Her husband turned his face back to the houses, and continued his study of their walls. Another question would imply suspicion, distrust. To suspect a woman is a crime in love. Jules had already killed a man for doubting his wife. Clemence did not know all there was of true passion, of loyal reflection, in her husband's silence; just as Jules was ignorant of the generous drama that was wringing the heart of his Clemence.

The carriage rolled on through a silent Paris, bearing the couple, – two lovers who adored each other, and who, gently leaning on the same silken cushion, were being parted by an abyss. In these elegant coupes returning from a ball between midnight and two in the morning, how many curious and singular scenes must pass, – meaning those coupes with lanterns, which light both the street and the carriage, those with their windows unshaded; in short, legitimate coupes, in which couples can quarrel without caring for the eyes of pedestrians, because the civil code gives a right to provoke, or beat, or kiss, a wife in a carriage or elsewhere, anywhere, everywhere! How many secrets must be revealed in this way to nocturnal pedestrians, – to those young fellows who have gone to a ball in a carriage, but are obliged, for whatever cause it may be, to return on foot. It was the first time that Jules and Clemence had been together thus, – each in a corner; usually the husband pressed close to his wife.

"It is very cold," remarked Madame Jules.

But her husband did not hear her; he was studying the signs above the shop windows.

"Clemence," he said at last, "forgive me the question I am about to ask you."

He came closer, took her by the waist, and drew her to him.

"My God, it is coming!" thought the poor woman. "Well," she said aloud, anticipating the question, "you want to know what Monsieur de Maulincour said to me. I will tell you, Jules; but not without fear. Good God! how is it possible that you and I should have secrets from one another? For the last few moments I have seen you struggling between a conviction of our love and vague fears. But that conviction is clear within us, is it not? And these doubts and fears, do they not seem to you dark and unnatural? Why not stay in that clear light of love you cannot doubt? When I have told you all, you will still desire to know more; and yet I myself do not know what the extraordinary words of that man meant. What I fear is that this may lead to some fatal affair between you. I would rather that we both forget this unpleasant moment. But, in any case, swear to me that you will let this singular adventure explain itself naturally. Here are the facts. Monsieur de Maulincour declared to me that the three accidents you have heard mentioned – the falling of a stone on his servant, the breaking down of his cabriolet, and his duel about Madame de Serizy – were the result of some plot I had laid against him. He also threatened to reveal to you the cause of my desire to destroy

him. Can you imagine what all this means? My emotion came from the sight of his face convulsed with madness, his haggard eyes, and also his words, broken by some violent inward emotion. I thought him mad. That is all that took place. Now, I should be less than a woman if I had not perceived that for over a year I have become, as they call it, the passion of Monsieur de Maulincour. He has never seen me except at a ball; and our intercourse has been most insignificant, – merely that which every one shares at a ball. Perhaps he wants to disunite us, so that he may find me at some future time alone and unprotected. There, see! already you are frowning! Oh, how cordially I hate society! We were so happy without him; why take any notice of him? Jules, I entreat you, forget all this! To-morrow we shall, no doubt, hear that Monsieur de Maulincour has gone mad."

"What a singular affair!" thought Jules, as the carriage stopped under the peristyle of their house. He gave his arm to his wife and together they went up to their apartments.

To develop this history in all its truth of detail, and to follow its course through many windings, it is necessary here to divulge some of love's secrets, to glide beneath the ceilings of a marriage chamber, not shamelessly, but like Trilby, frightening neither Dougal nor Jeannie, alarming no one, – being as chaste as our noble French language requires, and as bold as the pencil of Gerard in his picture of Daphnis and Chloe.

The bedroom of Madame Jules was a sacred plot. Herself, her husband, and her maid alone entered it. Opulence has

glorious privileges, and the most enviable are those which enable the development of sentiments to their fullest extent, – fertilizing them by the accomplishment of even their caprices, and surrounding them with a brilliancy that enlarges them, with refinements that purify them, with a thousand delicacies that make them still more alluring. If you hate dinners on the grass, and meals ill-served, if you feel a pleasure in seeing a damask cloth that is dazzlingly white, a silver-gilt dinner service, and porcelain of exquisite purity, lighted by transparent candles, where miracles of cookery are served under silver covers bearing coats of arms, you must, to be consistent, leave the garrets at the tops of the houses, and the grisettes in the streets, abandon garrets, grisettes, umbrellas, and overshoes to men who pay for their dinners with tickets; and you must also comprehend Love to be a principle which develops in all its grace only on Savonnerie carpets, beneath the opal gleams of an alabaster lamp, between guarded walls silk-hung, before gilded hearths in chambers deadened to all outward sounds by shutters and billowy curtains. Mirrors must be there to show the play of form and repeat the woman we would multiply as love itself multiplies and magnifies her; next low divans, and a bed which, like a secret, is divined, not shown. In this coquettish chamber are fur-lined slippers for pretty feet, wax-candles under glass with muslin draperies, by which to read at all hours of the night, and flowers, not those oppressive to the head, and linen, the fineness of which might have satisfied Anne of Austria.

Madame Jules had realized this charming programme, but that was nothing. All women of taste can do as much, though there is always in the arrangement of these details a stamp of personality which gives to this decoration or that detail a character that cannot be imitated. To-day, more than ever, reigns the fanaticism of individuality. The more our laws tend to an impossible equality, the more we shall get away from it in our manners and customs. Thus, rich people are beginning, in France, to become more exclusive in their tastes and their belongings, than they have been for the last thirty years. Madame Jules knew very well how to carry out this programme; and everything about her was arranged in harmony with a luxury that suits so well with love. Love in a cottage, or "Fifteen hundred francs and my Sophy," is the dream of starvelings to whom black bread suffices in their present state; but when love really comes, they grow fastidious and end by craving the luxuries of gastronomy. Love holds toil and poverty in horror. It would rather die than merely live on from hand to mouth.

Many women, returning from a ball, impatient for their beds, throw off their gowns, their faded flowers, their bouquets, the fragrance of which has now departed. They leave their little shoes beneath a chair, the white strings trailing; they take out their combs and let their hair roll down as it will. Little they care if their husbands see the puffs, the hairpins, the artful props which supported the elegant edifices of the hair, and the garlands or the jewels that adorned it. No more mysteries! all is over for the

husband; no more painting or decoration for him. The corset – half the time it is a corset of a reparative kind – lies where it is thrown, if the maid is too sleepy to take it away with her. The whalebone bustle, the oiled-silk protections round the sleeves, the pads, the hair bought from a coiffeur, all the false woman is there, scattered about in open sight. *Disjecta membra poetae*, the artificial poesy, so much admired by those for whom it is conceived and elaborated, the fragments of a pretty woman, litter every corner of the room. To the love of a yawning husband, the actual presents herself, also yawning, in a dishabille without elegance, and a tumbled night-cap, that of last night and that of to-morrow night also, – "For really, monsieur, if you want a pretty cap to rumple every night, increase my pin-money."

There's life as it is! A woman makes herself old and unpleasing to her husband; but dainty and elegant and adorned for others, for the rival of all husbands, – for that world which calumniates and tears to shreds her sex.

Inspired by true love, for Love has, like other creations, its instinct of preservation, Madame Jules did very differently; she found in the constant blessing of her love the necessary impulse to fulfil all those minute personal cares which ought never to be relaxed, because they perpetuate love. Besides, such personal cares and duties proceed from a personal dignity which becomes all women, and are among the sweetest of flatteries, for is it not respecting in themselves the man they love?

So Madame Jules denied to her husband all access to her

dressing-room, where she left the accessories of her toilet, and whence she issued mysteriously adorned for the mysterious fetes of her heart. Entering their chamber, which was always graceful and elegant, Jules found a woman coquettishly wrapped in a charming *peignoir*, her hair simply wound in heavy coils around her head; a woman always more simple, more beautiful there than she was before the world; a woman just refreshed in water, whose only artifice consisted in being whiter than her muslins, sweeter than all perfumes, more seductive than any siren, always loving and therefore always loved. This admirable understanding of a wife's business was the secret of Josephine's charm for Napoleon, as in former times it was that of Caesonia for Caius Caligula, of Diane de Poitiers for Henri II. If it was largely productive to women of seven or eight lustres what a weapon is it in the hands of young women! A husband gathers with delight the rewards of his fidelity.

Returning home after the conversation which had chilled her with fear, and still gave her the keenest anxiety, Madame Jules took particular pains with her toilet for the night. She wanted to make herself, and she did make herself enchanting. She belted the cambric of her dressing-gown round her waist, defining the lines of her bust; she allowed her hair to fall upon her beautifully modelled shoulders. A perfumed bath had given her a delightful fragrance, and her little bare feet were in velvet slippers. Strong in a sense of her advantages she came in stepping softly, and put her hands over her husband's eyes. She thought him pensive; he was

standing in his dressing-gown before the fire, his elbow on the mantel and one foot on the fender. She said in his ear, warming it with her breath, and nibbling the tip of it with her teeth: —

"What are you thinking about, monsieur?"

Then she pressed him in her arms as if to tear him away from all evil thoughts. The woman who loves has a full knowledge of her power; the more virtuous she is, the more effectual her coquetry.

"About you," he answered.

"Only about me?"

"Yes."

"Ah! that's a very doubtful 'yes.'"

They went to bed. As she fell asleep, Madame Jules said to herself: —

"Monsieur de Maulincour will certainly cause some evil. Jules' mind is preoccupied, disturbed; he is nursing thoughts he does not tell me."

It was three in the morning when Madame Jules was awakened by a presentiment which struck her heart as she slept. She had a sense both physical and moral of her husband's absence. She did not feel the arm Jules passed beneath her head, – that arm in which she had slept, peacefully and happy, for five years; an arm she had never wearied. A voice said to her, "Jules suffers, Jules is weeping." She raised her head, and then sat up; felt that her husband's place was cold, and saw him sitting before the fire, his feet on the fender, his head resting against the back of an arm-

chair. Tears were on his cheeks. The poor woman threw herself hastily from her bed and sprang at a bound to her husband's knees.

"Jules! what is it? Are you ill? Speak, tell me! Speak to me, if you love me!" and she poured out a hundred words expressing the deepest tenderness.

Jules knelt at her feet, kissed her hands and knees, and answered with fresh tears: —

"Dear Clemence, I am most unhappy! It is not loving to distrust the one we love. I adore you and suspect you. The words that man said to me to-night have struck to my heart; they stay there in spite of myself, and confound me. There is some mystery here. In short, and I blush to say it, your explanations do not satisfy me. My reason casts gleams into my soul which my love rejects. It is an awful combat. Could I stay there, holding your head, and suspecting thoughts within it to me unknown? Oh! I believe in you, I believe in you!" he cried, seeing her smile sadly and open her mouth as if to speak. "Say nothing; do not reproach me. Besides, could you say anything I have not said myself for the last three hours? Yes, for three hours, I have been here, watching you as you slept, so beautiful! admiring that pure, peaceful brow. Yes, yes! you have always told me your thoughts, have you not? I alone am in that soul. While I look at you, while my eyes can plunge into yours I see all plainly. Your life is as pure as your glance is clear. No, there is no secret behind those transparent eyes." He rose and kissed their lids. "Let me avow to

you, dearest soul," he said, "that for the last five years each day has increased my happiness, through the knowledge that you are all mine, and that no natural affection even can take any of your love. Having no sister, no father, no mother, no companion, I am neither above nor below any living being in your heart; I am alone there. Clemence, repeat to me those sweet things of the spirit you have so often said to me; do not blame me; comfort me, I am so unhappy. I have an odious suspicion on my conscience, and you have nothing in your heart to sear it. My beloved, tell me, could I stay there beside you? Could two heads united as ours have been lie on the same pillow when one was suffering and the other tranquil? What are you thinking of?" he cried abruptly, observing that Clemence was anxious, confused, and seemed unable to restrain her tears.

"I am thinking of my mother," she answered, in a grave voice. "You will never know, Jules, what I suffer in remembering my mother's dying farewell, said in a voice sweeter than all music, and in feeling the solemn touch of her icy hand at a moment when you overwhelm me with those assurances of your precious love."

She raised her husband, strained him to her with a nervous force greater than that of men, and kissed his hair, covering it with tears.

"Ah! I would be hacked in pieces for you! Tell me that I make you happy; that I am to you the most beautiful of women – a thousand women to you. Oh! you are loved as no other man ever was or will be. I don't know the meaning of those words 'duty,'

'virtue.' Jules, I love you for yourself; I am happy in loving you; I shall love you more and more to my dying day. I have pride in my love; I feel it is my destiny to have one sole emotion in my life. What I shall tell you now is dreadful, I know – but I am glad to have no child; I do not wish for any. I feel I am more wife than mother. Well, then, can you fear? Listen to me, my own beloved, promise to forget, not this hour of mingled tenderness and doubt, but the words of that madman. Jules, you *must*. Promise me not to see him, not to go to him. I have a deep conviction that if you set one foot in that maze we shall both roll down a precipice where I shall perish – but with your name upon my lips, your heart in my heart. Why hold me so high in that heart and yet so low in reality? What! you who give credit to so many as to money, can you not give me the charity of faith? And on the first occasion in our lives when you might prove to me your boundless trust, do you cast me from my throne in your heart? Between a madman and me, it is the madman whom you choose to believe? oh, Jules!" She stopped, threw back the hair that fell about her brow and neck, and then, in a heart-rending tone, she added: "I have said too much; one word should suffice. If your soul and your forehead still keep this cloud, however light it be, I tell you now that I shall die of it."

She could not repress a shudder, and turned pale.

"Oh! I will kill that man," thought Jules, as he lifted his wife in his arms and carried her to her bed.

"Let us sleep in peace, my angel," he said. "I have forgotten

all, I swear it!"

Clemence fell asleep to the music of those sweet words, softly repeated. Jules, as he watched her sleeping, said in his heart: —

"She is right; when love is so pure, suspicion blights it. To that young soul, that tender flower, a blight – yes, a blight means death."

When a cloud comes between two beings filled with affection for each other and whose lives are in absolute unison, that cloud, though it may disperse, leaves in those souls a trace of its passage. Either love gains a stronger life, as the earth after rain, or the shock still echoes like distant thunder through a cloudless sky. It is impossible to recover absolutely the former life; love will either increase or diminish.

At breakfast, Monsieur and Madame Jules showed to each other those particular attentions in which there is always something of affectation. There were glances of forced gaiety, which seemed the efforts of persons endeavoring to deceive themselves. Jules had involuntary doubts, his wife had positive fears. Still, sure of each other, they had slept. Was this strained condition the effect of a want of faith, or was it only a memory of their nocturnal scene? They did not know themselves. But they loved each other so purely that the impression of that scene, both cruel and beneficent, could not fail to leave its traces in their souls; both were eager to make those traces disappear, each striving to be the first to return to the other, and thus they could not fail to think of the cause of their first variance.

To loving souls, this is not grief; pain is still far-off; but it is a sort of mourning, which is difficult to depict. If there are, indeed, relations between colors and the emotions of the soul, if, as Locke's blind man said, scarlet produces on the sight the effect produced upon the hearing by a blast of trumpets, it is permissible to compare this reaction of melancholy to mourning tones of gray.

But even so, love saddened, love in which remains a true sentiment of its happiness, momentarily troubled though it be, gives enjoyments derived from pain and pleasure both, which are all novel. Jules studied his wife's voice; he watched her glances with the freshness of feeling that inspired him in the earliest days of his passion for her. The memory of five absolutely happy years, her beauty, the candor of her love, quickly effaced in her husband's mind the last vestiges of an intolerable pain.

The day was Sunday, – a day on which there was no Bourse and no business to be done. The reunited pair passed the whole day together, getting farther into each other's hearts than they ever yet had done, like two children who in a moment of fear, hold each other closely and cling together, united by an instinct. There are in this life of two-in-one completely happy days, the gift of chance, ephemeral flowers, born neither of yesterday nor belonging to the morrow. Jules and Clemence now enjoyed this day as though they forboded it to be the last of their loving life. What name shall we give to that mysterious power which hastens the steps of travellers before the storm is visible; which makes the

life and beauty of the dying so resplendent, and fills the parting soul with joyous projects for days before death comes; which tells the midnight student to fill his lamp when it shines brightest; and makes the mother fear the thoughtful look cast upon her infant by an observing man? We all are affected by this influence in the great catastrophes of life; but it has never yet been named or studied; it is something more than presentiment, but not as yet clear vision.

All went well till the following day. On Monday, Jules Desmarets, obliged to go to the Bourse on his usual business, asked his wife, as usual, if she would take advantage of his carriage and let him drive her anywhere.

"No," she said, "the day is too unpleasant to go out."

It was raining in torrents. At half-past two o'clock Monsieur Desmarets reached the Treasury. At four o'clock, as he left the Bourse, he came face to face with Monsieur de Maulincour, who was waiting for him with the nervous pertinacity of hatred and vengeance.

"Monsieur," he said, taking Monsieur Desmarets by the arm, "I have important information to give you. Listen to me. I am too loyal a man to have recourse to anonymous letters with which to trouble your peace of mind; I prefer to speak to you in person. Believe me, if my very life were not concerned, I should not meddle with the private affairs of any household, even if I thought I had the right to do so."

"If what you have to say to me concerns Madame Desmarets,"

replied Jules, “I request you to be silent, monsieur.”

“If I am silent, monsieur, you may before long see Madame Jules on the prisoner’s bench at the court of assizes beside a convict. Now, do you wish me to be silent?”

Jules turned pale; but his noble face instantly resumed its calmness, though it was now a false calmness. Drawing the baron under one of the temporary sheds of the Bourse, near which they were standing, he said to him in a voice which concealed his intense inward emotion: —

“Monsieur, I will listen to you; but there will be a duel to the death between us if – ”

“Oh, to that I consent!” cried Monsieur de Maulincour. “I have the greatest esteem for your character. You speak of death. You are unaware that your wife may have assisted in poisoning me last Saturday night. Yes, monsieur, since then some extraordinary evil has developed in me. My hair appears to distil an inward fever and a deadly languor through my skull; I know who clutched my hair at that ball.”

Monsieur de Maulincour then related, without omitting a single fact, his platonic love for Madame Jules, and the details of the affair in the rue Soly which began this narrative. Any one would have listened to him with attention; but Madame Jules’ husband had good reason to be more amazed than any other human being. Here his character displayed itself; he was more amazed than overcome. Made a judge, and the judge of an adored woman, he found in his soul the equity of a judge as

well as the inflexibility. A lover still, he thought less of his own shattered life than of his wife's life; he listened, not to his own anguish, but to some far-off voice that cried to him, "Clemence cannot lie! Why should she betray you?"

"Monsieur," said the baron, as he ended, "being absolutely certain of having recognized in Monsieur de Funcal the same Ferragus whom the police declared dead, I have put upon his traces an intelligent man. As I returned that night I remembered, by a fortunate chance, the name of Madame Meynardie, mentioned in that letter of Ida, the presumed mistress of my persecutor. Supplied with this clue, my emissary will soon get to the bottom of this horrible affair; for he is far more able to discover the truth than the police themselves."

"Monsieur," replied Desmarets, "I know not how to thank you for this confidence. You say that you can obtain proofs and witnesses; I shall await them. I shall seek the truth of this strange affair courageously; but you must permit me to doubt everything until the evidence of the facts you state is proved to me. In any case you shall have satisfaction, for, as you will certainly understand, we both require it."

Jules returned home.

"What is the matter, Jules?" asked his wife, when she saw him. "You look so pale you frighten me!"

"The day is cold," he answered, walking with slow steps across the room where all things spoke to him of love and happiness, – that room so calm and peaceful where a deadly storm was

gathering.

"Did you go out to-day?" he asked, as though mechanically.

He was impelled to ask the question by the last of a myriad of thoughts which had gathered themselves together into a lucid meditation, though jealousy was actively prompting them.

"No," she answered, in a tone that was falsely candid.

At that instant Jules saw through the open door of the dressing-room the velvet bonnet which his wife wore in the mornings; on it were drops of rain. Jules was a passionate man, but he was also full of delicacy. It was repugnant to him to bring his wife face to face with a lie. When such a situation occurs, all has come to an end forever between certain beings. And yet those drops of rain were like a flash tearing through his brain.

He left the room, went down to the porter's lodge, and said to the porter, after making sure that they were alone: —

"Fouguereau, a hundred crowns if you tell me the truth; dismissal if you deceive me; and nothing at all if you ever speak of my question and your answer."

He stopped to examine the man's face, leading him under the window. Then he continued: —

"Did madame go out this morning?"

"Madame went out at a quarter to three, and I think I saw her come in about half an hour ago."

"That is true, upon your honor?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"You will have the money; but if you speak of this, remember,

you will lose all."

Jules returned to his wife.

"Clemence," he said, "I find I must put my accounts in order. Do not be offended at the inquiry I am going to make. Have I not given you forty thousand francs since the beginning of the year?"

"More," she said, – "forty-seven."

"Have you spent them?"

"Nearly," she replied. "In the first place, I had to pay several of our last year's bills – "

"I shall never find out anything in this way," thought Jules. "I am not taking the best course."

At this moment Jules' own valet entered the room with a letter for his master, who opened it indifferently, but as soon as his eyes had lighted on the signature he read it eagerly. The letter was as follows: —

> Monsieur, – For the sake of your peace of mind as well as ours, I take the course of writing you this letter without possessing the advantage of being known to you; but my position, my age, and the fear of some misfortune compel me to entreat you to show indulgence in the trying circumstances under which our afflicted family is placed. Monsieur Auguste de Maulincour has for the last few days shown signs of mental derangement, and we fear that he may trouble your happiness by fancies which he confided to Monsieur le Vidame de Pamiers and myself during his first attack of frenzy. We think it right, therefore, to warn you of his malady, which is, we hope, curable; but it will have such

serious and important effects on the honor of our family and the career of my grandson that we must rely, monsieur, on your entire discretion.

If Monsieur le Vidame or I could have gone to see you we would not have written. But I make no doubt that you will regard this prayer of a mother, who begs you to destroy this letter.

Accept the assurance of my perfect consideration.

Baronne de Maulincour, *nee* de Rieux.

"Oh! what torture!" cried Jules.

"What is it? what is in your mind?" asked his wife, exhibiting the deepest anxiety.

"I have come," he answered, slowly, as he threw her the letter, "to ask myself whether it can be you who have sent me that to avert my suspicions. Judge, therefore, what I suffer." "Unhappy man!" said Madame Jules, letting fall the paper. "I pity him; though he has done me great harm."

"Are you aware that he has spoken to me?"

"Oh! have you been to see him, in spite of your promise?" she cried in terror.

"Clemence, our love is in danger of perishing; we stand outside of the ordinary rules of life; let us lay aside all petty considerations in presence of this great peril. Explain to me why you went out this morning. Women think they have the right to tell us little falsehoods. Sometimes they like to hide a pleasure they are preparing for us. Just now you said a word to me, by mistake, no doubt, a no for a yes."

He went into the dressing-room and brought out the bonnet.

"See," he said, "your bonnet has betrayed you; these spots are raindrops. You must, therefore, have gone out in a street cab, and these drops fell upon it as you went to find one, or as you entered or left the house where you went. But a woman can leave her own home for many innocent purposes, even after she has told her husband that she did not mean to go out. There are so many reasons for changing our plans! Caprices, whims, are they not your right? Women are not required to be consistent with themselves. You had forgotten something, – a service to render, a visit, some kind action. But nothing hinders a woman from telling her husband what she does. Can we ever blush on the breast of a friend? It is not a jealous husband who speaks to you, my Clemence; it is your lover, your friend, your brother." He flung himself passionately at her feet. "Speak, not to justify yourself, but to calm my horrible sufferings. I know that you went out. Well – what did you do? where did you go?"

"Yes, I went out, Jules," she answered in a strained voice, though her face was calm. "But ask me nothing more. Wait; have confidence; without which you will lay up for yourself terrible remorse. Jules, my Jules, trust is the virtue of love. I owe to you that I am at this moment too troubled to answer you: but I am not a false woman; I love you, and you know it."

"In the midst of all that can shake the faith of man and rouse his jealousy, for I see I am not first in your heart, I am no longer thine own self – well, Clemence, even so, I prefer to believe you,

to believe that voice, to believe those eyes. If you deceive me, you deserve – ”

“Ten thousand deaths!” she cried, interrupting him.

“I have never hidden a thought from you, but you – ”

“Hush!” she said, “our happiness depends upon our mutual silence.”

“Ha! I *will* know all!” he exclaimed, with sudden violence.

At that moment the cries of a woman were heard, – the yelping of a shrill little voice came from the antechamber.

“I tell you I will go in!” it cried. “Yes, I shall go in; I will see her! I shall see her!”

Jules and Clemence both ran to the salon as the door from the antechamber was violently burst open. A young woman entered hastily, followed by two servants, who said to their master: —

“Monsieur, this person would come in in spite of us. We told her that madame was not at home. She answered that she knew very well madame had been out, but she saw her come in. She threatened to stay at the door of the house till she could speak to madame.”

“You can go,” said Monsieur Desmarets to the two men. “What do you want, mademoiselle?” he added, turning to the strange woman.

This “demoiselle” was the type of a woman who is never to be met with except in Paris. She is made in Paris, like the mud, like the pavement, like the water of the Seine, such as it becomes in Paris before human industry filters it ten times ere it enters

the cut-glass decanters and sparkles pure and bright from the filth it has been. She is therefore a being who is truly original. Depicted scores of times by the painter's brush, the pencil of the caricaturist, the charcoal of the etcher, she still escapes analysis, because she cannot be caught and rendered in all her moods, like Nature, like this fantastic Paris itself. She holds to vice by one thread only, and she breaks away from it at a thousand other points of the social circumference. Besides, she lets only one trait of her character be known, and that the only one which renders her blamable; her noble virtues are hidden; she prefers to glory in her naive libertinism. Most incompletely rendered in dramas and tales where she is put upon the scene with all her poesy, she is nowhere really true but in her garret; elsewhere she is invariably calumniated or over-praised. Rich, she deteriorates; poor, she is misunderstood. She has too many vices, and too many good qualities; she is too near to pathetic asphyxiation or to a dissolute laugh; too beautiful and too hideous. She personifies Paris, to which, in the long run, she supplies the toothless portresses, washerwomen, street-sweepers, beggars, occasionally insolent countesses, admired actresses, applauded singers; she has even given, in the olden time, two quasi-queens to the monarchy. Who can grasp such a Proteus? She is all woman, less than woman, more than woman. From this vast portrait the painter of manners and morals can take but a feature here and there; the *ensemble* is infinite.

She was a grisette of Paris; a grisette in all her glory; a grisette

in a hackney-coach, – happy, young, handsome, fresh, but a grisette; a grisette with claws, scissors, impudent as a Spanish woman, snarling as a prudish English woman proclaiming her conjugal rights, coquettish as a great lady, though more frank, and ready for everything; a perfect *lionne* in her way; issuing from the little apartment of which she had dreamed so often, with its red-calico curtains, its Utrecht velvet furniture, its tea-table, the cabinet of china with painted designs, the sofa, the little moquette carpet, the alabaster clock and candlesticks (under glass cases), the yellow bedroom, the eider-down quilt, – in short, all the domestic joys of a grisette's life; and in addition, the woman-of-all-work (a former grisette herself, now the owner of a moustache), theatre-parties, unlimited bonbons, silk dresses, bonnets to spoil, – in fact, all the felicities coveted by the grisette heart except a carriage, which only enters her imagination as a marshal's baton into the dreams of a soldier. Yes, this grisette had all these things in return for a true affection, or in spite of a true affection, as some others obtain it for an hour a day, – a sort of tax carelessly paid under the claws of an old man.

The young woman who now entered the presence of Monsieur and Madame Jules had a pair of feet so little covered by her shoes that only a slim black line was visible between the carpet and her white stockings. This peculiar foot-gear, which Parisian caricaturists have well-rendered, is a special attribute of the grisette of Paris; but she is even more distinctive to the eyes of an observer by the care with which her garments are made to

adhere to her form, which they clearly define. On this occasion she was trigly dressed in a green gown, with a white chemisette, which allowed the beauty of her bust to be seen; her shawl, of Ternaux cashmere, had fallen from her shoulders, and was held by its two corners, which were twisted round her wrists. She had a delicate face, rosy cheeks, a white skin, sparkling gray eyes, a round, very promising forehead, hair carefully smoothed beneath her little bonnet, and heavy curls upon her neck.

"My name is Ida," she said, "and if that's Madame Jules to whom I have the advantage of speaking, I've come to tell her all I have in my heart against her. It is very wrong, when a woman is set up and in her furniture, as you are here, to come and take from a poor girl a man with whom I'm as good as married, morally, and who did talk of making it right by marrying me before the municipality. There's plenty of handsome young men in the world – ain't there, monsieur? – to take your fancy, without going after a man of middle age, who makes my happiness. Yah! I haven't got a fine hotel like this, but I've got my love, I have. I hate handsome men and money; I'm all heart, and – "

Madame Jules turned to her husband.

"You will allow me, monsieur, to hear no more of all this," she said, retreating to her bedroom.

"If the lady lives with you, I've made a mess of it; but I can't help that," resumed Ida. "Why does she come after Monsieur Ferragus every day?"

"You are mistaken, mademoiselle," said Jules, stupefied; "my

wife is incapable – ”

“Ha! so you’re married, you two,” said the grisette showing some surprise. “Then it’s very wrong, monsieur, – isn’t it? – for a woman who has the happiness of being married in legal marriage to have relations with a man like Henri – ”

“Henri! who is Henri?” said Jules, taking Ida by the arm and pulling her into an adjoining room that his wife might hear no more.

“Why, Monsieur Ferragus.”

“But he is dead,” said Jules.

“Nonsense; I went to Franconi’s with him last night, and he brought me home – as he ought. Besides, your wife can tell you about him; didn’t she go there this very afternoon at three o’clock? I know she did, for I waited in the street, and saw her, – all because that good-natured fellow, Monsieur Justin, whom you know perhaps, – a little old man with jewelry who wears corsets, – told me that Madame Jules was my rival. That name, monsieur, sounds mighty like a feigned one; but if it is yours, excuse me. But this I say, if Madame Jules was a court duchess, Henri is rich enough to satisfy all her fancies, and it is my business to protect my property; I’ve a right to, for I love him, that I do. He is my *first* inclination; my happiness and all my future fate depends on it. I fear nothing, monsieur; I am honest; I never lied, or stole the property of any living soul, no matter who. If an empress was my rival, I’d go straight to her, empress as she was; because all pretty women are equals, monsieur – ”

"Enough! enough!" said Jules. "Where do you live?"

"Rue de la Corderie-du-Temple, number 14, monsieur, – Ida Gruget, corset-maker, at your service, – for we make lots of corsets for men."

"Where does the man whom you call Ferragus live?"

"Monsieur," she said, pursing up her lips, "in the first place, he's not a man; he is a rich monsieur, much richer, perhaps, than you are. But why do you ask me his address when your wife knows it? He told me not to give it. Am I obliged to answer you? I'm not, thank God, in a confessional or a police-court; I'm responsible only to myself."

"If I were to offer you ten thousand francs to tell me where Monsieur Ferragus lives, how then?"

"Ha! n, o, *no*, my little friend, and that ends the matter," she said, emphasizing this singular reply with a popular gesture. "There's no sum in the world could make me tell you. I have the honor to bid you good-day. How do I get out of here?"

Jules, horror-struck, allowed her to go without further notice. The whole world seemed to crumble beneath his feet, and above him the heavens were falling with a crash.

"Monsieur is served," said his valet.

The valet and the footman waited in the dining-room a quarter of an hour without seeing master or mistress.

"Madame will not dine to-day," said the waiting-maid, coming in.

"What's the matter, Josephine?" asked the valet.

"I don't know," she answered. "Madame is crying, and is going to bed. Monsieur has no doubt got some love-affair on hand, and it has been discovered at a very bad time. I wouldn't answer for madame's life. Men are so clumsy; they'll make you scenes without any precaution."

"That's not so," said the valet, in a low voice. "On the contrary, madame is the one who – you understand? What times does monsieur have to go after pleasures, he, who hasn't slept out of madame's room for five years, who goes to his study at ten and never leaves it till breakfast, at twelve. His life is all known, it is regular; whereas madame goes out nearly every day at three o'clock, Heaven knows where."

"And monsieur too," said the maid, taking her mistress's part.

"Yes, but he goes straight to the Bourse. I told him three times that dinner was ready," continued the valet, after a pause. "You might as well talk to a post."

Monsieur Jules entered the dining-room.

"Where is madame?" he said.

"Madame is going to bed; her head aches," replied the maid, assuming an air of importance.

Monsieur Jules then said to the footmen composedly: "You can take away; I shall go and sit with madame."

He went to his wife's room and found her weeping, but endeavoring to smother her sobs with her handkerchief.

"Why do you weep?" said Jules; "you need expect no violence and no reproaches from me. Why should I avenge myself? If you

have not been faithful to my love, it is that you were never worthy of it."

"Not worthy?" The words were repeated amid her sobs and the accent in which they were said would have moved any other man than Jules.

"To kill you, I must love more than perhaps I do love you," he continued. "But I should never have the courage; I would rather kill myself, leaving you to your – happiness, and with – whom! – "

He did not end his sentence.

"Kill yourself!" she cried, flinging herself at his feet and clasping them.

But he, wishing to escape the embrace, tried to shake her off, dragging her in so doing toward the bed.

"Let me alone," he said.

"No, no, Jules!" she cried. "If you love me no longer I shall die. Do you wish to know all?"

"Yes."

He took her, grasped her violently, and sat down on the edge of the bed, holding her between his legs. Then, looking at that beautiful face now red as fire and furrowed with tears, —

"Speak," he said.

Her sobs began again.

"No; it is a secret of life and death. If I tell it, I – No, I cannot. Have mercy, Jules!"

"You have betrayed me – "

"Ah! Jules, you think so now, but soon you will know all."

"But this Ferragus, this convict whom you go to see, a man enriched by crime, if he does not belong to you, if you do not belong to him – "

"Oh, Jules!"

"Speak! Is he your mysterious benefactor? – the man to whom we owe our fortune, as persons have said already?"

"Who said that?"

"A man whom I killed in a duel."

"Oh, God! one death already!"

"If he is not your protector, if he does not give you money, if it is you, on the contrary, who carry money to him, tell me, is he your brother?"

"What if he were?" she said.

Monsieur Desmarets crossed his arms.

"Why should that have been concealed from me?" he said. "Then you and your mother have both deceived me? Besides, does a woman go to see her brother every day, or nearly every day?"

His wife had fainted at his feet.

"Dead," he said. "And suppose I am mistaken?"

He sprang to the bell-rope; called Josephine, and lifted Clemence to the bed.

"I shall die of this," said Madame Jules, recovering consciousness.

"Josephine," cried Monsieur Desmarets. "Send for Monsieur

Desplein; send also to my brother and ask him to come here immediately."

"Why your brother?" asked Clemence.

But Jules had already left the room.

CHAPTER IV. WHERE GO TO DIE?

For the first time in five years Madame Jules slept alone in her bed, and was compelled to admit a physician into that sacred chamber. These in themselves were two keen pangs. Desplein found Madame Jules very ill. Never was a violent emotion more untimely. He would say nothing definite, and postponed till the morrow giving any opinion, after leaving a few directions, which were not executed, the emotions of the heart causing all bodily cares to be forgotten.

When morning dawned, Clemence had not yet slept. Her mind was absorbed in the low murmur of a conversation which lasted several hours between the brothers; but the thickness of the walls allowed no word which could betray the object of this long conference to reach her ears. Monsieur Desmarets, the notary, went away at last. The stillness of the night, and the singular activity of the senses given by powerful emotion, enabled Clemence to distinguish the scratching of a pen and the involuntary movements of a person engaged in writing. Those who are habitually up at night, and who observe the different acoustic effects produced in absolute silence, know that a slight echo can be readily perceived in the very places where louder but more equable and continued murmurs are not distinct. At four o'clock the sound ceased. Clemence rose, anxious and trembling. Then, with bare feet and without a wrapper, forgetting her

illness and her moist condition, the poor woman opened the door softly without noise and looked into the next room. She saw her husband sitting, with a pen in his hand, asleep in his arm-chair. The candles had burned to the sockets. She slowly advanced and read on an envelope, already sealed, the words, "This is my will."

She knelt down as if before an open grave and kissed her husband's hand. He woke instantly.

"Jules, my friend, they grant some days to criminals condemned to death," she said, looking at him with eyes that blazed with fever and with love. "Your innocent wife asks only two. Leave me free for two days, and – wait! After that, I shall die happy – at least, you will regret me."

"Clemence, I grant them."

Then, as she kissed her husband's hands in the tender transport of her heart, Jules, under the spell of that cry of innocence, took her in his arms and kissed her forehead, though ashamed to feel himself still under subjection to the power of that noble beauty.

On the morrow, after taking a few hours' rest, Jules entered his wife's room, obeying mechanically his invariable custom of not leaving the house without a word to her. Clemence was sleeping. A ray of light passing through a chink in the upper blind of a window fell across the face of the dejected woman. Already suffering had impaired her forehead and the freshness of her lips. A lover's eye could not fail to notice the appearance of dark blotches, and a sickly pallor in place of the uniform tone of the cheeks and the pure ivory whiteness of the skin, – two points

at which the sentiments of her noble soul were artlessly wont to show themselves.

"She suffers," thought Jules. "Poor Clemence! May God protect us!"

He kissed her very softly on the forehead. She woke, saw her husband, and remembered all. Unable to speak, she took his hand, her eyes filling with tears.

"I am innocent," she said, ending her dream.

"You will not go out to-day, will you?" asked Jules.

"No, I feel too weak to leave my bed."

"If you should change your mind, wait till I return," said Jules.

Then he went down to the porter's lodge.

"Fouguereau, you will watch the door yourself to-day. I wish to know exactly who comes to the house, and who leaves it."

Then he threw himself into a hackney-coach, and was driven to the hotel de Maulincour, where he asked for the baron.

"Monsieur is ill," they told him.

Jules insisted on entering, and gave his name. If he could not see the baron, he wished to see the vidame or the dowager. He waited some time in the salon, where Madame de Maulincour finally came to him and told him that her grandson was much too ill to receive him.

"I know, madame, the nature of his illness from the letter you did me the honor to write, and I beg you to believe – "

"A letter to you, monsieur, written by me!" cried the dowager, interrupting him. "I have written you no letter. What was I made

to say in that letter, monsieur?"

"Madame," replied Jules, "intending to see Monsieur de Maulincour to-day, I thought it best to preserve the letter in spite of its injunction to destroy it. There it is."

Madame de Maulincour put on her spectacles, and the moment she cast her eyes on the paper she showed the utmost surprise.

"Monsieur," she said, "my writing is so perfectly imitated that, if the matter were not so recent, I might be deceived myself. My grandson is ill, it is true; but his reason has never for a moment been affected. We are the puppets of some evil-minded person or persons; and yet I cannot imagine the object of a trick like this. You shall see my grandson, monsieur, and you will at once perceive that he is perfectly sound in mind."

She rang the bell, and sent to ask if the baron felt able to receive Monsieur Desmarets. The servant returned with an affirmative answer. Jules went to the baron's room, where he found him in an arm-chair near the fire. Too feeble to move, the unfortunate man merely bowed his head with a melancholy gesture. The Vidame de Pamiers was sitting with him.

"Monsieur le baron," said Jules, "I have something to say which makes it desirable that I should see you alone."

"Monsieur," replied Auguste, "Monsieur le vidame knows about this affair; you can speak fearlessly before him."

"Monsieur le baron," said Jules, in a grave voice, "you have troubled and well-nigh destroyed my happiness without having

any right to do so. Until the moment when we can see clearly which of us should demand, or grant, reparation to the other, you are bound to help me in following the dark and mysterious path into which you have flung me. I have now come to ascertain from you the present residence of the extraordinary being who exercises such a baneful effect on your life and mine. On my return home yesterday, after listening to your avowals, I received that letter."

Jules gave him the forged letter.

"This Ferragus, this Bourignard, or this Monsieur de Funcal, is a demon!" cried Maulincour, after having read it. "Oh, what a frightful maze I put my foot into when I meddled in this matter! Where am I going? I did wrong, monsieur," he continued, looking at Jules; "but death is the greatest of all expiations, and my death is now approaching. You can ask me whatever you like; I am at your orders."

"Monsieur, you know, of course, where this man is living, and I must know it if it costs me all my fortune to penetrate this mystery. In presence of so cruel an enemy every moment is precious."

"Justin shall tell you all," replied the baron.

At these words the vidame fidgeted on his chair. Auguste rang the bell.

"Justin is not in the house!" cried the vidame, in a hasty manner that told much.

"Well, then," said Auguste, excitedly, "the other servants must

know where he is; send a man on horseback to fetch him. Your valet is in Paris, isn't he? He can be found."

The vidame was visibly distressed.

"Justin can't come, my dear boy," said the old man; "he is dead. I wanted to conceal the accident from you, but – "

"Dead!" cried Monsieur de Maulincour, – "dead! When and how?"

"Last night. He had been supping with some old friends, and, I dare say, was drunk; his friends – no doubt they were drunk, too – left him lying in the street, and a heavy vehicle ran over him."

"The convict did not miss *him*; at the first stroke he killed," said Auguste. "He has had less luck with me; it has taken four blows to put me out of the way."

Jules was gloomy and thoughtful.

"Am I to know nothing, then?" he cried, after a long pause. "Your valet seems to have been justly punished. Did he not exceed your orders in calumniating Madame Desmarets to a person named Ida, whose jealousy he roused in order to turn her vindictiveness upon us?"

"Ah, monsieur! in my anger I informed him about Madame Jules," said Auguste.

"Monsieur!" cried the husband, keenly irritated.

"Oh, monsieur!" replied the baron, claiming silence by a gesture, "I am prepared for all. You cannot tell me anything my own conscience has not already told me. I am now expecting the most celebrated of all professors of toxicology, in order to learn

my fate. If I am destined to intolerable suffering, my resolution is taken. I shall blow my brains out."

"You talk like a child!" cried the vidame, horrified by the coolness with which the baron said these words. "Your grandmother would die of grief."

"Then, monsieur," said Jules, "am I to understand that there exist no means of discovering in what part of Paris this extraordinary man resides?"

"I think, monsieur," said the old vidame, "from what I have heard poor Justin say, that Monsieur de Funcal lives at either the Portuguese or the Brazilian embassy. Monsieur de Funcal is a nobleman belonging to both those countries. As for the convict, he is dead and buried. Your persecutor, whoever he is, seems to me so powerful that it would be well to take no decisive measures until you are sure of some way of confounding and crushing him. Act prudently and with caution, my dear monsieur. Had Monsieur de Maulincour followed my advice, nothing of all this would have happened."

Jules coldly but politely withdrew. He was now at a total loss to know how to reach Ferragus. As he passed into his own house, the porter told him that Madame had just been out to throw a letter into the post box at the head of the rue de Menars. Jules felt humiliated by this proof of the insight with which the porter espoused his cause, and the cleverness by which he guessed the way to serve him. The eagerness of servants, and their shrewdness in compromising masters who compromised

themselves, was known to him, and he fully appreciated the danger of having them as accomplices, no matter for what purpose. But he could not think of his personal dignity until the moment when he found himself thus suddenly degraded. What a triumph for the slave who could not raise himself to his master, to compel his master to come down to his level! Jules was harsh and hard to him. Another fault. But he suffered so deeply! His life till then so upright, so pure, was becoming crafty; he was to scheme and lie. Clemence was scheming and lying. This to him was a moment of horrible disgust. Lost in a flood of bitter feelings, Jules stood motionless at the door of his house. Yielding to despair, he thought of fleeing, of leaving France forever, carrying with him the illusions of uncertainty. Then, again, not doubting that the letter Clemence had just posted was addressed to Ferragus, his mind searched for a means of obtaining the answer that mysterious being was certain to send. Then his thoughts began to analyze the singular good fortune of his life since his marriage, and he asked himself whether the calumny for which he had taken such signal vengeance was not a truth. Finally, reverting to the coming answer, he said to himself: —

"But this man, so profoundly capable, so logical in his every act, who sees and foresees, who calculates, and even divines, our very thoughts, is he likely to make an answer? Will he not employ some other means more in keeping with his power? He may send his answer by some beggar; or in a carton brought by an honest

man, who does not suspect what he brings; or in some parcel of shoes, which a shop-girl may innocently deliver to my wife. If Clemence and he have agreed upon such means – "

He distrusted all things; his mind ran over vast tracts and shoreless oceans of conjecture. Then, after floating for a time among a thousand contradictory ideas, he felt he was strongest in his own house, and he resolved to watch it as the ant-lion watches his sandy labyrinth.

"Fouguereau," he said to the porter, "I am not at home to any one who comes to see me. If any one calls to see madame, or brings her anything, ring twice. Bring all letters addressed here to me, no matter for whom they are intended."

"Thus," thought he, as he entered his study, which was in the entresol, "I forestall the schemes of this Ferragus. If he sends some one to ask for me so as to find out if Clemence is alone, at least I shall not be tricked like a fool."

He stood by the window of his study, which looked upon the street, and then a final scheme, inspired by jealousy, came into his mind. He resolved to send his head-clerk in his own carriage to the Bourse with a letter to another broker, explaining his sales and purchases and requesting him to do his business for that day. He postponed his more delicate transactions till the morrow, indifferent to the fall or rise of stocks or the debts of all Europe. High privilege of love! – it crushes all things, all interests fall before it: altar, throne, consols!

At half-past three, just the hour at which the Bourse is

in full blast of reports, monthly settlements, premiums, etc., Fouguereau entered the study, quite radiant with his news.

"Monsieur, an old woman has come, but very cautiously; I think she's a sly one. She asked for monsieur, and seemed much annoyed when I told her he was out; then she gave me a letter for madame, and here it is."

Fevered with anxiety, Jules opened the letter; then he dropped into a chair, exhausted. The letter was mere nonsense throughout, and needed a key. It was virtually in cipher.

"Go away, Fouguereau." The porter left him. "It is a mystery deeper than the sea below the plummet line! Ah! it must be love; love only is so sagacious, so inventive as this. Ah! I shall kill her."

At this moment an idea flashed through his brain with such force that he felt almost physically illuminated by it. In the days of his toilsome poverty before his marriage, Jules had made for himself a true friend. The extreme delicacy with which he had managed the susceptibilities of a man both poor and modest; the respect with which he had surrounded him; the ingenious cleverness he had employed to nobly compel him to share his opulence without permitting it to make him blush, increased their friendship. Jacquet continued faithful to Desmarets in spite of his wealth.

Jacquet, a nobly upright man, a toiler, austere in his morals, had slowly made his way in that particular ministry which develops both honesty and knavery at the same time. A clerk in the ministry of Foreign Affairs, he had charge of the most

delicate division of its archives. Jacquet in that office was like a glow-worm, casting his light upon those secret correspondences, deciphering and classifying despatches. Ranking higher than a mere *bourgeois*, his position at the ministry was superior to that of the other subalterns. He lived obscurely, glad to feel that such obscurity sheltered him from reverses and disappointments, and was satisfied to humbly pay in the lowest coin his debt to the country. Thanks to Jules, his position had been much ameliorated by a worthy marriage. An unrecognized patriot, a minister in actual fact, he contented himself with groaning in his chimney-corner at the course of the government. In his own home, Jacquet was an easy-going king, – an umbrella-man, as they say, who hired a carriage for his wife which he never entered himself. In short, to end this sketch of a philosopher unknown to himself, he had never suspected and never in all his life would suspect the advantages he might have drawn from his position, – that of having for his intimate friend a broker, and of knowing every morning all the secrets of the State. This man, sublime after the manner of that nameless soldier who died in saving Napoleon by a "qui vive," lived at the ministry.

In ten minutes Jules was in his friend's office. Jacquet gave him a chair, laid aside methodically his green silk eye-shade, rubbed his hands, picked up his snuff-box, rose, stretched himself till his shoulder-blades cracked, swelled out his chest, and said: —

"What brings you here, Monsieur Desmarets? What do you

want with me?"

"Jacquet, I want you to decipher a secret, – a secret of life and death."

"It doesn't concern politics?"

"If it did, I shouldn't come to you for information," said Jules. "No, it is a family matter, about which I require you to be absolutely silent."

"Claude-Joseph Jacquet, dumb by profession. Don't you know me by this time?" he said, laughing. "Discretion is my lot."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.