

GUY DE MAUPASSANT

THE WORKS OF GUY DE
MAUPASSANT, VOLUME 8

Ги д. Мопассан

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Maupassant, Volume 8**

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OF "THE NOVEL"

I do not intend in these pages to put in a plea for this little novel. On the contrary, the ideas I shall try to set forth will rather involve a criticism of the class of psychological analysis which I have undertaken in *Pierre et Jean*. I propose to treat of novels in general.

I am not the only writer who finds himself taken to task in the same terms each time he brings out a new book. Among many laudatory phrases, I invariably meet with this observation, penned by the same critics: "The greatest fault of this book is that it is not, strictly speaking, a novel."

The same form might be adopted in reply:

"The greatest fault of the writer who does me the honor to review me is that he is not a critic."

For what are, in fact, the essential characteristics of a critic?

It is necessary that, without preconceived notions, prejudices of "School," or partisanship for any class of artists, he should appreciate, distinguish, and explain the most antagonistic tendencies and the most dissimilar temperaments, recognizing and accepting the most varied efforts of art.

Now the Critic who, after reading *Manon Lescaut*, *Paul and Virginia*, *Don Quixote*, *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, *Werther*, *Elective Affinities* (*Wahlverwandschaften*), *Clarissa Harlowe*, *Émile*, *Candide*, *Cinq-Mars*, *René*, *Les Trois Mousquetaires*, *Mauprat*, *Le Père Goriot*, *La Cousine Bette*, *Colomba*, *Le Rouge et le Noir*, *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, *Notre-Dame de Paris*, *Salamambo*, *Madame Bovary*, *Adolphe*, *M. de Camors*, *l'Assommoir*, *Sapho*, etc., still can be so bold as to write "This or that is, or is not, a novel," seems to me to be gifted with a perspicacity strangely akin to incompetence. Such a critic commonly understands by a novel a more or less improbable narrative of adventure, elaborated after the fashion of a piece for the stage, in three acts, of which the first contains the exposition, the second the action, and the third the catastrophe or *dénouement*.

And this method of construction is perfectly admissible, but on condition that all others are accepted on equal terms.

Are there any rules for the making of a novel, which, if we neglect, the tale must be called by another name? If *Don Quixote* is a novel, then is *Le Rouge et le Noir* a novel? If *Monte Christo* is a novel, is *l'Assommoir*? Can any conclusive comparison be drawn between Goethe's *Elective Affinities*, *The Three Mousqueteers*, by Dumas, Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, *M. de Camors* by Octave Feuillet, and *Germinal*, by Zola? Which of them all is The Novel? What are these famous rules? Where did they originate? Who laid them down? And in virtue of what principle, of whose authority, and of what reasoning?

And yet, as it would appear, these critics know in some positive and indisputable way what constitutes a novel, and what distinguishes it from other tales which are not novels. What this amounts to is that without being producers themselves they are enrolled under a School, and that, like the writers of novels, they reject all work which is conceived and executed outside the pale of their esthetics. An intelligent critic ought, on the contrary, to seek out everything which least resembles the novels already written, and urge young authors as much as possible to try fresh paths.

All writers, Victor Hugo as much as M. Zola, have insistently claimed the absolute and incontrovertible right to compose – that is to say, to imagine or observe – in accordance with their individual conception of originality, and that is a special manner of thinking, seeing, understanding, and judging. Now the critic who assumes that "the novel" can be defined in conformity with the ideas he has based on the novels he prefers, and that certain immutable rules of construction can be laid down, will always find himself at war with the artistic temperament of a writer who introduces a new

manner of work. A critic really worthy of the name ought to be an analyst, devoid of preferences or passions; like an expert in pictures, he should simply estimate the artistic value of the object of art submitted to him. His intelligence, open to everything, must so far supersede his individuality as to leave him free to discover and praise books which as a man he may not like, but which as a judge he must duly appreciate.

But critics, for the most part, are only readers; whence it comes that they almost always find fault with us on wrong grounds, or compliment us without reserve or measure.

The reader, who looks for no more in a book than that it should satisfy the natural tendencies of his own mind, wants the writer to respond to his predominant taste, and he invariably praises a work or a passage which appeals to his imagination, whether idealistic, gay, licentious, melancholy, dreamy, or positive, as "striking" or "well written."

The public as a whole is composed of various groups, whose cry to us writers is:

"Comfort me."

"Amuse me."

"Touch me."

"Make me dream."

"Make me laugh."

"Make me shudder."

"Make me weep."

"Make me think."

And only a few chosen spirits say to the artist:

"Give me something fine in any form which may suit you best, according to your own temperament."

The artist makes the attempt; succeeds or fails.

The critic ought to judge the result only in relation to the nature of the attempt; he has no right to concern himself about tendencies. This has been said a thousand times already; it will always need repeating.

Thus, after a succession of literary schools which have given us deformed, superhuman, poetical, pathetic, charming or magnificent pictures of life, a realistic or naturalistic school has arisen, which asserts that it shows us the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

All these theories of art must be recognized as of equal interest, and we must judge the works which are their outcome solely from the point of view of artistic value, with an *a priori* acceptance of the general notions which gave birth to each. To dispute the author's right to produce a poetical work or a realistic work, is to endeavor to coerce his temperament, to take exception to his originality, to forbid his using the eyes and wits bestowed on him by Nature. To blame him for seeing things as beautiful or ugly, as mean or epic, as gracious or sinister, is to reproach him for not being made on this or that pattern, and for having eyes which do not see exactly as ours see.

Let him be free by all means to conceive of things as he pleases, provided he is an artist. Let us rise to poetic heights to judge an idealist, and then prove to him that his dream is commonplace, ordinary, not mad or magnificent enough. But if we judge a materialistic writer, let us show him wherein the truth of life differs from the truth in his book.

It is self-evident that schools so widely different must have adopted diametrically opposite processes in composition.

The novelist who transforms truth – immutable, uncompromising, and displeasing as it is – to extract from it an exceptional and delightful plot, must necessarily manipulate events without an exaggerated respect for probability, molding them to his will, dressing and arranging them so as to attract, excite, or affect the reader. The scheme of his romance is no more than a series of ingenious combinations, skillfully leading to the issue. The incidents are planned and graduated up to the culminating point and effect of the conclusion, which is the crowning and fatal result, satisfying

the curiosity aroused from the first, closing the interest, and ending the story so completely that we have no further wish to know what happened on the morrow to the most engaging actors in it.

The novelist who, on the other hand, proposes to give us an accurate picture of life, must carefully eschew any concatenation of events which might seem exceptional. His aim is not to tell a story to amuse us, or to appeal to our feelings, but to compel us to reflect, and to understand the occult and deeper meaning of events. By dint of seeing and meditating he has come to regard the world, facts, men, and things in a way peculiar to himself, which is the outcome of the sum total of his studious observation. It is this personal view of the world which he strives to communicate to us by reproducing it in a book. To make the spectacle of life as moving to us as it has been to him, he must bring it before our eyes with scrupulous exactitude. Hence he must construct his work with such skill, it must be so artful under so simple a guise, that it is impossible to detect and sketch the plan, or discern the writer's purpose.

Instead of manipulating an adventure and working it out in such a way as to make it interesting to the last, he will take his actor or actors at a certain period of their lives, and lead them by natural stages to the next. In this way he will show either how men's minds are modified by the influence of their environment, or how their passions and sentiments are evolved; how they love or hate, how they struggle in every sphere of society, and how their interests clash – social interests, pecuniary interests, family interests, political interests. The skill of his plan will not consist in emotional power or charm, in an attractive opening or a stirring catastrophe, but in the happy grouping of small but constant facts from which the final purpose of the work may be discerned. If within three hundred pages he depicts ten years of a life so as to show what its individual and characteristic significance may have been in the midst of all the other human beings which surrounded it, he ought to know how to eliminate from among the numberless trivial incidents of daily life all which do not serve his end, and how to set in a special light all those which might have remained invisible to less clear-sighted observers, and which give his book caliber and value as a whole.

It is intelligible that this method of construction, so unlike the old manner which was patent to all, must often mislead the critics, and that they will not all detect the subtle and secret wires – almost invisibly fine – which certain modern artists use instead of the one string formerly known as the "plot."

In a word, while the novelist of yesterday preferred to relate the crises of life, the acute phases of the mind and heart, the novelist of to-day writes the history of the heart, soul, and intellect in their normal condition. To achieve the effects he aims at – that is to say, the sense of simple reality, and to point the artistic lesson he endeavors to draw from it – that is to say, a revelation of what his contemporary man is before his very eyes, he must bring forward no facts that are not irrefragable and invariable.

But even when we place ourselves at the same point of view as these realistic artists, we may discuss and dispute their theory, which seems to be comprehensively stated in these words: "The whole Truth and nothing but the Truth." Since the end they have in view is to bring out the philosophy of certain constant and current facts, they must often correct events in favor of probability and to the detriment of truth; for

"Le vrai peut quelquefois, n'être pas le vraisemblable." (Truth may sometimes not seem probable.)

The realist, if he is an artist, will endeavor not to show us a commonplace photograph of life, but to give us a presentment of it which shall be more complete, more striking, more cogent than reality itself. To tell everything is out of the question; it would require at least a volume for each day to enumerate the endless, insignificant incidents which crowd our existence. A choice must be made – and this is the first blow to the theory of "the whole truth."

Life, moreover, is composed of the most dissimilar things, the most unforeseen, the most contradictory, the most incongruous; it is merciless, without sequence or connection, full of

inexplicable, illogical, and contradictory catastrophes, such as can only be classed as miscellaneous facts. This is why the artist, having chosen his subject, can only select such characteristic details as are of use to it, from this life overlaid with chances and trifles, and reject everything else, everything by the way.

To give an instance from among a thousand. The number of persons who, every day, meet with an accidental death, all over the world, is very considerable. But how can we bring a tile onto the head of an important character, or fling him under the wheels of a vehicle in the middle of a story, under the pretext that accident must have its due?

Again, in life there is no difference of foreground and distance, and events are sometimes hurried on, sometimes left to linger indefinitely. Art, on the contrary, consists in the employment of foresight, and elaboration in arranging skillful and ingenious transitions, in setting essential events in a strong light, simply by the craft of composition, and giving all else the degree of relief, in proportion to their importance, requisite to produce a convincing sense of the special truth to be conveyed.

"Truth" in such work consists in producing a complete illusion by following the common logic of facts and not by transcribing them pell-mell, as they succeed each other.

Whence I conclude that the higher order of Realists should rather call themselves Illusionists.

How childish it is, indeed, to believe in this reality, since to each of us the truth is in his own mind, his own organs. Our own eyes and ears, taste and smell, create as many different truths as there are human beings on earth. And our brains, duly and differently informed by those organs, apprehend, analyze, and decide as differently as if each of us were a being of an alien race. Each of us, then, has simply his own illusion of the world – poetical, sentimental, cheerful, melancholy, foul, or gloomy, according to his nature. And the writer has no other mission than faithfully to reproduce this illusion, with all the elaborations of art which he may have learnt and have at his command. The illusion of beauty – which is merely a conventional term invented by man! The illusion of ugliness – which is a matter of varying opinion! The illusion of truth – never immutable! The illusion of depravity – which fascinates so many minds! All the great artists are those who can make other men see their own particular illusion.

Then we must not be wroth with any theory, since each is simply the outcome, in generalizations, of a special temperament analyzing itself.

Two of these theories have more particularly been the subject of discussion, and set up in opposition to each other instead of being admitted on an equal footing: that of the purely analytical novel, and that of the objective novel.

The partisans of analysis require the writer to devote himself to indicating the smallest evolutions of a soul, and all the most secret motives of our every action, giving but a quite secondary importance to the act and fact in itself. It is but the goal, a simple milestone, the excuse for the book. According to them, these works, at once exact and visionary, in which imagination merges into observation, are to be written after the fashion in which a philosopher composes a treatise on psychology, seeking out causes in their remotest origin, telling the why and wherefore of every impulse, and detecting every reaction of the soul's movements under the promptings of interest, passion, or instinct.

The partisans of objectivity – odious word – aiming, on the contrary, at giving us an exact presentment of all that happens in life, carefully avoid all complicated explanations, all disquisitions on motive, and confine themselves to let persons and events pass before our eyes. In their opinion, psychology should be concealed in the book, as it is in reality, under the facts of existence.

The novel as conceived of on these lines gains in interest; there is more movement in the narrative, more color, more of the stir of life.

Hence, instead of giving long explanations of the state of mind of an actor in the tale, the objective writer tries to discover the action or gesture which that state of mind must inevitably lead to in that personage, under certain given circumstances. And he makes him so demean himself from one

end of the volume to the other, that all his actions, all his movements shall be the expression of his inmost nature, of all his thoughts, and all his impulses or hesitations. Thus they conceal psychology instead of flaunting it; they use it as the skeleton of the work, just as the invisible bony framework is the skeleton of the human body. The artist who paints our portrait does not display our bones.

To me it seems that the novel executed on this principle gains also in sincerity. It is, in the first place, more probable, for the persons we see moving about us do not divulge to us the motives from which they act.

We must also take into account the fact that, even if by close observation of men and women we can so exactly ascertain their characters as to predict their behavior under almost any circumstances, if we can say decisively: "Such a man, of such a temperament, in such a case, will do this or that"; yet it does not follow that we could lay a finger, one by one, on all the secret evolutions of his mind – which is not our own; all the mysterious pleadings of his instincts – which are not the same as ours; all the mingled promptings of his nature – in which the organs, nerves, blood, and flesh are different from ours.

However great the genius of a gentle, delicate man, guileless of passions and devoted to science and work, he never can so completely transfuse himself into the body of a dashing, sensual, and violent man, of exuberant vitality, torn by every desire or even by every vice, as to understand and delineate the inmost impulses and sensations of a being so unlike himself, even though he may very adequately foresee and relate all the actions of his life.

In short, the man who writes pure psychology can do no more than put himself in the place of all his puppets in the various situations in which he places them. It is impossible that he should change his organs, which are the sole intermediary between external life and ourselves, which constrain us by their perceptions, circumscribe our sensibilities, and create in each of us a soul essentially dissimilar to all those about us. Our purview and knowledge of the world, and our ideas of life, are acquired by the aid of our senses, and we cannot help transferring them, in some degree, to all the personages whose secret and unknown nature we propose to reveal. Thus, it is always ourselves that we disclose in the body of a king or an assassin, a robber or an honest man, a courtesan, a nun, a young girl, or a coarse market woman; for we are compelled to put the problem in this personal form: "If *I* were a king, a murderer, a prostitute, a nun, or a market woman, what should *I* do, what should *I* think, how should *I* act?" We can only vary our characters by altering the age, the sex, the social position, and all the circumstances of life, of that *ego* which nature has in fact inclosed in an insurmountable barrier of organs of sense. Skill consists in not betraying this *ego* to the reader, under the various masks which we employ to cover it.

Still, though on the point of absolute exactitude, pure psychological analysis is impregnable, it can nevertheless produce works of art as fine as any other method of work.

Here, for instance we have the *Symbolists*. And why not? Their artistic dream is a worthy one; and they have this especially interesting feature: that they know and proclaim the extreme difficulty of art.

And, indeed, a man must be very daring or foolish to write at all nowadays. And so many and such various masters of the craft, of such multifarious genius, what remains to be done that has not been done, or what to say that has not been said? Which of us all can boast of having written a page, a phrase, which is not to be found – or something very like it – in some other book? When we read, we who are so soaked in (French) literature that our whole body seems as it were a mere compound of words, do we ever light on a line, a thought, which is not familiar to us, or of which we have not had at least some vague forecast?

The man who only tries to amuse his public by familiar methods, writes confidently, in his candid mediocrity, works intended only for the ignorant and idle crowd. But those who are conscious of the weight of centuries of past literature, whom nothing satisfies, whom everything disgusts because they dream of something better, to whom the bloom is off everything, and who always are

impressed with the uselessness, the commonness of their own achievements – these come to regard literary art as a thing unattainable and mysterious, scarcely to be detected save in a few pages by the greatest masters.

A score of phrases suddenly discovered thrill us to the heart like a startling revelation; but the lines which follow are just like all other verse, the further flow of prose is like all other prose.

Men of genius, no doubt, escape this anguish and torment because they bear within themselves an irresistible creative power. They do not sit in judgment on themselves. The rest of us, who are no more than persevering and conscientious workers, can only contend against invincible discouragement by unremitting effort.

Two men by their simple and lucid teaching gave me the strength to try again and again: Louis Bouilhet and Gustave Flaubert.

If I here speak of myself in connection with them, it is because their counsels, as summed up in a few lines, may prove useful to some young writers who may be less self-confident than most are when they make their *début* in print. Bouilhet, whom I first came to know somewhat intimately about two years before I gained the friendship of Flaubert, by dint of telling me that a hundred lines – or less – if they are without a flaw and contain the very essence of the talent and originality of even a second-rate man, are enough to establish an artist's reputation, made me understand that persistent toil and a thorough knowledge of the craft, might, in some happy hour of lucidity, power, and enthusiasm, by the fortunate occurrence of a subject in perfect concord with the tendency of our mind, lead to the production of a single work, short but as perfect as we can make it. Then I learned to see that the best-known writers have hardly ever left us more than one such volume; and that needful above all else is the good fortune which leads us to hit upon and discern, amid the multifarious matter which offers itself for selection, the subject which will absorb all our faculties, all that is of worth in us, all our artistic powers.

At a later date, Flaubert, whom I had occasionally met, took a fancy to me. I ventured to show him a few attempts. He read them kindly and replied: "I cannot tell whether you will have any talent. What you have brought me proves a certain intelligence; but never forget this, young man: talent – as Chateaubriand¹ says – is nothing but long patience. Go and work."

I worked; and I often went to see him, feeling that he liked me, for he had taken to calling me, in jest, his disciple. For seven years I wrote verses, I wrote tales, I even wrote a villainous play. Nothing of all this remains. The master read it all; then, the next Sunday while we breakfasted together, he would give me his criticisms, driving into me by degrees two or three principles which sum up the drift of his long and patient exhortations: "If you have any originality," said he, "you must above all things bring it out; if you have not you must acquire it."

Talent is long patience.

Everything you want to express must be considered so long, and so attentively, as to enable you to find some aspect of it which no one has yet seen and expressed. There is an unexplored side to everything, because we are wont never to use our eyes but with the memory of what others before us have thought of the things we see. The smallest thing has something unknown in it; we must find it. To describe a blazing fire, a tree in a plain, we must stand face to face with that fire or that tree, till to us they are wholly unlike any other fire or tree. Thus we may become original.

Then, having established the truth that there are not in the whole world two grains of sand, two flies, two hands, or two noses absolutely alike, he would make me describe in a few sentences some person or object, in such a way as to define it exactly, and distinguish it from every other of the same race or species.

"When you pass a grocer sitting in his doorway," he would say, "a porter smoking his pipe, or a cab stand, show me that grocer and that porter, their attitude and their whole physical aspect,

¹ The idea did not originate with Chateaubriand.

including, as indicated by the skill of the portrait, their whole moral nature, in such a way that I could never mistake them for any other grocer or porter; and by a single word give me to understand wherein one cab horse differs from fifty others before or behind it."

I have explained his notions of style at greater length in another place; they bear a marked relation to the theory of observation I have just laid down. Whatever the thing we wish to say, there is but one word to express it, but one verb to give it movement, but one adjective to qualify it. We must seek till we find this noun, this verb, and this adjective, and never be content with getting very near it, never allow ourselves to play tricks, even happy ones, or have recourse to sleights of language to avoid a difficulty. The subtlest things may be rendered and suggested by applying the hint conveyed in Boileau's line:

"D'un mot mis en sa place enseigna le pouvoir." "He taught the power of a word put in the right place."

There is no need for an eccentric vocabulary to formulate every shade of thought – the complicated, multifarious, and outlandish words which are put upon us nowadays in the name of artistic writing; but every modification of the value of a word by the place it fills must be distinguished with extreme clearness. Give us fewer nouns, verbs, and adjectives, with almost inscrutable shades of meaning, and let us have a greater variety of phrases, more variously constructed, ingeniously divided, full of sonority and learned rhythm. Let us strive to be admirable in style, rather than curious in collecting rare words.

It is in fact more difficult to bend a sentence to one's will and make it express everything – even what it does not say, to fill it full of implications of covert and inexplicit suggestions, than to invent new expressions, or seek out in old and forgotten books all those which have fallen into disuse and lost their meaning, so that to us they are as a dead language.

The French tongue, to be sure, is a pure stream, which affected writers never have and never can trouble. Each age has flung into the limpid waters its pretentious archaisms and euphuisms, but nothing has remained on the surface to perpetuate these futile attempts and impotent efforts. It is the nature of the language to be clear, logical, and vigorous. It does not lend itself to weakness, obscurity, or corruption.

Those who describe without duly heeding abstract terms, those who make rain and hail fall on the *cleanliness* of the window panes, may throw stones at the simplicity of their brothers of the pen. The stones may indeed hit their brothers, who have a body, but will never hurt simplicity – which has none.

Guy de Maupassant.
La Guillette, Etretat, September, 1887.

PIERRE ET JEAN

CHAPTER I

"Tschah!" exclaimed old Roland suddenly, after he had remained motionless for a quarter of an hour, his eyes fixed on the water, while now and again he very slightly lifted his line sunk in the sea.

Madame Roland, dozing in the stern by the side of Madame Rosémilly, who had been invited to join the fishing-party, woke up, and turning her head to look at her husband, said:

"Well, well! Gérôme."

And the old fellow replied in a fury:

"They do not bite at all. I have taken nothing since noon. Only men should ever go fishing. Women always delay the start till it is too late."

His two sons, Pierre and Jean, who each held a line twisted round his forefinger, one to port and one to starboard, both began to laugh, and Jean remarked:

"You are not very polite to our guest, father."

M. Roland was abashed, and apologized.

"I beg your pardon, Madame Rosémilly, but that is just like me. I invite ladies because I like to be with them, and then, as soon as I feel the water beneath me, I think of nothing but the fish."

Madame Roland was now quite awake, and gazing with a softened look at the wide horizon of cliff and sea.

"You have had good sport, all the same," she murmured.

But her husband shook his head in denial, though at the same time he glanced complacently at the basket where the fish caught by the three men were still breathing spasmodically, with a low rustle of clammy scales and struggling fins, and dull, ineffectual efforts, gasping in the fatal air. Old Roland took the basket between his knees and tilted it up, making the silver heap of creatures slide to the edge that he might see those lying at the bottom, and their death-throes became more convulsive, while the strong smell of their bodies, a wholesome reek of brine, came up from the full depths of the creel. The old fisherman sniffed it eagerly, as we smell at roses, and exclaimed:

"Cristi! But they are fresh enough!" and he went on: "How many did you pull out, doctor?"

His eldest son, Pierre, a man of thirty, with black whiskers trimmed square like a lawyer's, his moustache and beard shaved away, replied:

"Oh, not many; three or four."

The father turned to the younger. "And you, Jean?" said he.

Jean, a tall fellow, much younger than his brother, fair, with a full beard, smiled and murmured:

"Much the same as Pierre – four or five."

Every time they told the same fib, which delighted father Roland. He had hitched his line round a row-lock, and folding his arms he announced:

"I will never again try to fish after noon. After ten in the morning it is all over. The lazy brutes will not bite; they are taking their siesta in the sun." And he looked round at the sea on all sides, with the satisfied air of a proprietor.

He was a retired jeweler who had been led by an inordinate love of seafaring and fishing to fly from the shop as soon as he had made enough money to live in modest comfort on the interest of his savings. He retired to le Havre, bought a boat, and became an amateur skipper. His two sons, Pierre et Jean, had remained at Paris to continue their studies, and came for the holidays from time to time to share their father's amusements.

On leaving school, Pierre, the elder, five years older than Jean, had felt a vocation to various professions and had tried half a dozen in succession, but, soon disgusted with each in turn, he started

afresh with new hopes. Medicine had been his last fancy, and he had set to work with so much ardor that he had just qualified after an unusually short course of study, by a special remission of time from the minister. He was enthusiastic, intelligent, fickle, but obstinate, full of Utopias and philosophical notions.

Jean, who was as fair as his brother was dark, as deliberate as his brother was vehement, as gentle as his brother was unforgiving, had quietly gone through his studies for the law and had just taken his diploma as a licentiate, at the time when Pierre had taken his in medicine. So they were now having a little rest at home, and both looked forward to settling at Havre if they could find a satisfactory opening.

But a vague jealousy, one of those dormant jealousies which grow up between brothers or sisters and slowly ripen till they burst, on the occasion of a marriage perhaps, or of some good fortune happening to one of them, kept them on the alert in a sort of brotherly and non-aggressive animosity. They were fond of each other, it is true, but they watched each other. Pierre, five years old when Jean was born, had looked with the eyes of a little petted animal at that other little animal which had suddenly come to lie in his father's and mother's arms and to be loved and fondled by them. Jean, from his birth, had always been a pattern of sweetness, gentleness, and good temper, and Pierre had by degrees begun to chafe at everlastingly hearing the praises of this great lad whose sweetness in his eyes was indolence, whose gentleness was stupidity, and whose kindness was blindness. His parents, whose dream for their sons was some respectable and undistinguished calling, blamed him for so often changing his mind, for his fits of enthusiasm, his abortive beginnings, and all his ineffectual impulses toward generous ideas and the liberal professions.

Since he had grown to manhood they no longer said in so many words: "Look at Jean and follow his example," but every time he heard them say "Jean did this – Jean does that," he understood their meaning and the hint the words conveyed.

Their mother, an orderly soul, a thrifty and rather sentimental woman of the middle class, with the soul of a soft-hearted book-keeper, was constantly quenching the little rivalries between her two big sons to which the petty events of their life in common gave rise day by day. Another little circumstance, too, just now disturbed her peace of mind, and she was in fear of some complication; for in the course of the winter, while her boys were finishing their studies, each in his own line, she had made the acquaintance of a neighbor, Mme. Rosémilly, the widow of a captain of a merchantman who had died at sea two years before. The young widow – quite young, only three-and-twenty – a woman of strong intellect who knew life by instinct as the free animals do, as though she had seen, gone through, understood, and weighed every conceivable contingency, and judged them with a wholesome, strict, and benevolent mind, had fallen into the habit of calling to work or chat for an hour in the evening with these friendly neighbors, who would give her a cup of tea.

Father Roland, always goaded on by his seafaring craze, would question their new friend about the departed captain; and she would talk of him, and his voyages, and his old-world tales, without hesitation, like a resigned and reasonable woman who loves life and respects death.

The two sons on their return, finding the pretty widow quite at home in the house forthwith began to court her, less from any wish to charm her than from the desire to cut each other out.

Their mother, being practical and prudent, sincerely hoped that one of them might win the young widow, for she was rich; and then she would have liked that the other should not be grieved.

Mme. Rosémilly was fair, with blue eyes, a mass of light waving hair, fluttering at the least breath of wind, and an alert, daring, pugnacious little way with her, which did not in the least answer to the sober method of her mind.

She already seemed to like Jean best, attracted, no doubt, by an affinity of nature. This preference, however, she betrayed only by an almost imperceptible difference of voice and look and also by occasionally asking his opinion. She seemed to guess that Jean's views would support her own, while those of Pierre must inevitably be different. When she spoke of the doctor's ideas on

politics, art, philosophy, or morals, she would sometimes say: "Your crotchets." Then he would look at her with the cold gleam of an accuser drawing up an indictment against woman – all women, poor weak things.

Never till his sons came home had M. Roland invited her to join his fishing expeditions, nor had he ever taken his wife; for he liked to put off before daybreak, with his ally, Captain Beausire, a master mariner retired, whom he had first met on the quay at high tides and with whom he had struck up an intimacy, and the old sailor Papagris, known as Jean Bart, in whose charge the boat was left.

But one evening of the week before, as Mme. Rosémilly, who had been dining with them, remarked, "It must be great fun to go out fishing," the jeweler, flattered on his passion, and suddenly fired with the wish to impart it, to make a convert after the manner of priests, exclaimed: "Would you like to come?"

"To be sure I should."

"Next Tuesday?"

"Yes, next Tuesday."

"Are you the woman to be ready to start at five in the morning?"

She exclaimed in horror:

"No, indeed: that is too much."

He was disappointed and chilled, suddenly doubting her true vocation. However, he said:

"At what hour can you be ready?"

"Well – at nine?"

"Not before?"

"No, not before. Even that is very early."

The old fellow hesitated; he certainly would catch nothing, for when the sun has warmed the sea the fish bite no more; but the two brothers had eagerly pressed the scheme, and organized and arranged everything there and then.

So on the following Tuesday the *Pearl* had dropped anchor under the white rocks of Cape la Héve; they had fished till mid-day, then they had slept awhile, and then fished again without catching anything; and then it was that father Roland, perceiving, rather late, that all that Mme. Rosémilly really enjoyed and cared for was the sail on the sea, and seeing that his lines hung motionless, had uttered in a spirit of unreasonable annoyance, that vehement "Tschah!" which applied as much to the pathetic widow as to the creatures he could not catch.

Now he contemplated the spoil – his fish – with the joyful thrill of a miser; and seeing as he looked up at the sky that the sun was getting low: "Well, boys," said he, "suppose we turn homeward."

The young men hauled in their lines, coiled them up, cleaned the hooks and stuck them into corks, and sat waiting.

Roland stood up to look out like a captain:

"No wind," said he. "You will have to pull, young 'uns."

And suddenly extending one arm to the northward, he exclaimed:

"Here comes the packet from Southampton."

Away over the level sea, spread out like a blue sheet, vast and sheeny and shot with flame and gold, an inky cloud was visible against the rosy sky in the quarter to which he pointed, and below it they could make out the hull of the steamer, which looked tiny at such a distance. And to the southward other wreaths of smoke, numbers of them, could be seen, all converging toward the Havre pier, now scarcely visible as a white streak with the light-house, upright, like a horn, at the end of it.

Roland asked: "Is not the *Normandie* due to-day?" And Jean replied:

"Yes, to-day."

"Give me my glass. I fancy I see her out there."

The father pulled out the copper tube, adjusted it to his eye, sought the speck, and then, delighted to have seen it, exclaimed:

"Yes, yes, there she is. I know her two funnels. Would you like to look, Mme. Rosémilly?"

She took the telescope and directed it toward the Atlantic horizon, without being able, however, to find the vessel, for she could distinguish nothing – nothing but blue, with a colored halo round it, a circular rainbow – and then all manner of queer things, winking eclipses which made her feel sick.

She said as she returned the glass:

"I never could see with that thing. It used to put my husband in quite a rage; he would stand for hours at the window watching the ships pass."

Old Roland, much put out, retorted:

"Then it must be some defect in your eye, for my glass is a very good one."

Then he offered it to his wife.

"Would you like to look?"

"No, thank you. I know beforehand that I could not see through it."

Mme. Roland, a woman of eight-and-forty, but who did not look it, seemed to be enjoying this excursion and this waning day more than any of the party.

Her chestnut hair was only just beginning to show streaks of white. She had a calm, reasonable face, a kind and happy way with her which it was a pleasure to see. Her son Pierre was wont to say that she knew the value of money, but this did not hinder her from enjoying the delights of dreaming. She was fond of reading, of novels and poetry, not for their value as works of art, but for the sake of the tender melancholy mood they would induce in her. A line of poetry, often but a poor one, often a bad one, would touch the little chord, as she expressed it, and give her the sense of some mysterious desire almost realized. And she delighted in these faint emotions which brought a little flutter to her soul, otherwise as strictly kept as a ledger.

Since settling at Havre she had become perceptibly stouter, and her figure, which had been very supple and slight, had grown heavier.

This day on the sea had been delightful to her. Her husband, without being brutal, was rough with her, as a man who is the despot of his shop is apt to be rough, without anger or hatred; to such men to give an order is to swear. He controlled himself in the presence of strangers, but in private he let loose and gave himself terrible vent, though he was himself afraid of every one. She, in sheer horror of the turmoil, of scenes, of useless explanations, always gave way and never asked for anything; for a very long time she had not ventured to ask Roland to take her out in the boat. So she had joyfully hailed this opportunity, and was keenly enjoying the rare and new pleasure.

From the moment when they started she surrendered herself completely body and soul, to the soft, gliding motion over the waves. She was not thinking; her mind was not wandering through either memories or hopes; it seemed to her as though her heart, like her body, was floating on something soft and liquid and delicious which rocked and lulled it.

When their father gave the word to return, "Come, take your places at the oars!" she smiled to see her sons, her two great boys, take off their jackets and roll up their shirt-sleeves on their bare arms.

Pierre, who was the nearest to the two women, took the stroke oar, Jean the other, and they sat waiting till the skipper should say: "Give way!" For he insisted on everything being done according to strict rule.

Both at once, as if by a single effort, they dipped the oars and lay back, pulling with all their might, and then a struggle began to display their strength. They had come out easily, under sail, but the breeze had died away, and the masculine pride of the two brothers was suddenly aroused by the prospect of measuring their powers. When they went out alone with their father they plied the oars without any steering, for Roland would be busy getting the lines ready, while he kept a lookout in the boat's course, guiding it by a sign or a word: "Easy, Jean, and you, Pierre, put your back into it." Or he would say, "Now, then, number one; come, number two – a little elbow grease." Then the one who had been dreaming pulled harder, the one who had got excited eased down, and the boat's head came round.

But to-day they meant to display their biceps. Pierre's arms were hairy, somewhat lean but sinewy; Jean's were round and white and rosy, and the knot of muscles moved under the skin.

At first Pierre had the advantage. With his teeth set, his brow knit, his legs rigid, his hands clenched on the oar, he made it bend from end to end at every stroke, and the *Pearl* was veering landward. Father Roland, sitting in the bows, so as to leave the stern seat to the two women, wasted his breath shouting, "Easy, number one; pull harder, number two!" Pierre pulled harder in his frenzy, and "number two" could not keep time with his wild stroke.

At last the skipper cried: "Stop her!" The two oars were lifted simultaneously, and then by his father's orders Jean pulled alone for a few minutes. But from that moment he had it all his own way; he grew eager and warmed to his work, while Pierre, out of breath and exhausted by his first vigorous spurt, was lax and panting. Four times running father Roland made them stop while the elder took breath, so as to get the boat into her right course again. Then the doctor humiliated and fuming, his forehead dropping with sweat, his cheeks white, stammered out:

"I cannot think what has come over me; I have a stitch in my side. I started very well, but it has pulled me up."

Jean asked: "Shall I pull alone with both oars for a time?"

"No, thanks, it will go off."

And their mother, somewhat vexed, said:

"Why, Pierre, what rhyme or reason is there in getting in such a state. You are not a child."

And he shrugged his shoulders and set to once more.

Mme. Rosémilly pretended not to see, not to understand, not to hear. Her fair head went back with an engaging little jerk every time the boat moved forward, making the fine wayward hairs flutter about her temples.

But father Roland presently called out:

"Look, the *Prince Albert* is catching us up!"

They all looked round. Long and low in the water, with her two raking funnels and two yellow paddle-boxes like two round cheeks, the Southampton packet came plowing on at full steam, crowded with passengers under open parasols. Its hurrying, noisy paddle-wheels beating up the water, which fell again in foam, gave it an appearance of haste as of a courier pressed for time, and the upright stem cut through the water, throwing up two thin translucent waves which glided off along the hull.

When it had come quite near the *Pearl*, father Roland lifted his hat, the ladies shook their handkerchiefs, and half a dozen parasols eagerly waved on board the steamboat responded to this salute as she went on her way, leaving behind her a few broad undulations on the still and glassy surface of the sea.

There were other vessels, each with its smoky cap, coming in from every part of the horizon toward the short white jetty, which swallowed them up, one after another, like a mouth. And the fishing barks and lighter craft with broad sails and slender masts, stealing across the sky in tow of inconspicuous tugs, were coming in, faster and slower, toward the devouring ogre, who from time to time seemed to have had a surfeit, and spewed out to the open sea another fleet of steamers, brigs, schooners, and three-masted vessels with their top-weight of tangled antlers. The hurrying steamships flew off to the right and left over the smooth bosom of the ocean, while sailing vessels, cast off by the pilot-tugs which had hauled them out, lay motionless, dressing themselves from the mainmast to the fore-top in canvas, white or brown, and ruddy in the setting sun.

Mme. Roland, with her eyes half-shut, murmured: "Good heavens, how beautiful the sea is!"

And Mme. Rosémilly replied with a long sigh, which, however, had no sadness in it:

"Yes, but it is sometimes very cruel, all the same."

Roland exclaimed:

"Look, there is the *Normandie* just going in. A big ship, isn't she?"

Then he described the coast opposite, far, far away, on the other side of the mouth of the Seine – that mouth extended over twenty kilometers, said he. He pointed out Villerville, Trouville, Houlgate, Luc, Arromanches, the little river of Caen, and the rocks of Calvados which make the coast unsafe as far as Cherbourg. Then he enlarged on the question of the sand banks in the Seine, which shift at every tide so that the pilots of Quillebœuf are at fault if they do not survey the channel every day. He bid them notice how the town of Havre divided Upper from Lower Normandy. In Lower Normandy the shore sloped down to the sea in pasture-lands, fields, and meadows. The coast of Upper Normandy, on the contrary, was steep, a high cliff, ravined, cleft and towering, forming an immense white rampart all the way to Dunkirk, while in each hollow a village or a port lay hidden: Etretat, Fécamp, Saint-Valery, Tréport, Dieppe, and the rest.

The two women did not listen. Torpid with comfort and impressed by the sight of the ocean covered with vessels rushing to and fro like wild beasts about their den, they sat speechless, somewhat awed by the soothing and gorgeous sunset. Roland alone talked on without end; he was one of those whom nothing can disturb. Women, whose nerves are more sensitive, sometimes feel, without knowing why, that the sound of useless speech is as irritating as an insult.

Pierre and Jean, who had calmed down, were rowing slowly, and the *Pearl* was making for the harbor, a tiny thing among those huge vessels.

When they came alongside of the quay, Papagris, who was waiting there, gave his hand to the ladies to help them out, and they took the way into the town. A large crowd – the crowd which haunts the pier every day at high tide – was also drifting homeward. Mme. Roland and Mme. Rosémilly led the way, followed by the three men. As they went up the rue de Paris they stopped now and then in front of a milliner's or jeweler's shop, to look at a bonnet or an ornament; then after making their comments they went on again. In front of the Place de la Bourse Roland paused, as he did every day, to gaze at the docks full of vessels – the *Bassin du Commerce*, with other docks beyond, where the huge hulls lay side by side, closely packed in rows, four or five deep. And masts innumerable; along several kilometers of quays the endless masts, with their yards, poles, and rigging, gave this great gap in the heart of the town the look of a dead forest. Above this leafless forest the gulls were wheeling, and watching to pounce, like a falling stone, on any scraps flung overboard; a sailor boy, fixing a pulley to a cross-beam, looked as if he had gone up there bird's-nesting.

"Will you dine with us without any sort of ceremony, just that we may end the day together?" said Mme. Roland to her friend.

"To be sure I will, with pleasure; I accept equally without ceremony. It would be dismal to go home and be alone this evening."

Pierre, who had heard, and who was beginning to be restless under the young woman's indifference, muttered to himself: "Well, the widow is taking root now, it would seem." For some days past he had spoken of her as "the widow." The word, harmless in itself, irritated Jean merely by the tone given to it, which to him seemed spiteful and offensive.

The three men spoke not another word till they reached the threshold of their own house. It was a narrow one, consisting of a ground-floor and two floors above, in the rue Belle-Normande. The maid, Joséphine, a girl of nineteen, a rustic servant-of-all-work at low wages, gifted to excess with the startled, animal expression of a peasant, opened the door, went upstairs at her master's heels to the drawing-room, which was on the first floor, and then said:

"A gentleman called – three times."

Old Roland, who never spoke to her without shouting and swearing, cried out:

"Who do you say called, in the devil's name?"

She never winced at her master's roaring voice, and replied:

"A gentleman from the lawyer's."

"What lawyer?"

"Why M'sieu' Canu – who else?"

"And what did this gentleman say?"

"That M'sieu' Canu will call in himself in the course of the evening."

Maître Lecanu was M. Roland's lawyer, and in a way his friend, managing his business for him. For him to send word that he would call in the evening, something urgent and important must be in the wind; and the four Rolands looked at each other, disturbed by the announcement as folks of small fortune are wont to be at any intervention of a lawyer, with its suggestions of contracts, inheritance, law-suits – all sorts of desirable or formidable contingencies. The father, after a few moments of silence, muttered:

"What on earth can it mean?"

Mme. Rosémilly began to laugh.

"Why, a legacy, of course. I am sure of it. I bring good luck."

But they did not expect the death of any one who might leave them anything.

Mme. Roland who had a good memory for relationships, began to think over all their connections on her husband's side and on her own, to trace up pedigrees and the ramifications of cousinship.

Before even taking off her bonnet she said:

"I say, father" (she called her husband "Father" at home, and sometimes "Monsieur Roland" before strangers), "tell me, do you remember who it was that Joseph Lebru married for the second time?"

"Yes – a little girl named Dumenil, stationer's daughter."

"Had they any children?"

"I should think so! four or five at least."

"Not from that quarter, then."

She was quite eager already in her search; she caught at the hope of some added ease dropping from the sky. But Pierre, who was very fond of his mother, who knew her to be somewhat visionary and feared she might be disappointed, a little grieved, a little saddened if the news were bad instead of good, checked her:

"Do not get excited, mother; there is no rich American uncle. For my part I should sooner fancy that it is about a marriage for Jean."

Every one was surprised at the suggestion, and Jean was a little ruffled by his brother's having spoken of it before Madame Rosémilly.

"And why for me rather than for you? The hypothesis is very disputable. You are the elder; you, therefore, would be the first to be thought of. Besides, I do not wish to marry."

Pierre smiled sneeringly:

"Are you in love, then?"

And the other, much put out, retorted:

"Is it necessary that a man should be in love because he does not care to marry yet?"

"Ah, there you are! That 'yet' sets it right; you are waiting."

"Granted that I am waiting, if you will have it so."

But old Roland who had been listening and cogitating, suddenly hit upon the most probable solution.

"Bless me! what fools we are to be racking our brains. Maître Lecanu is our very good friend; he knows that Pierre is looking out for a medical partnership and Jean for a lawyer's office, and he has found something to suit one of you."

This was so obvious and likely that every one accepted it.

"Dinner is ready," said the maid. And they all hurried off to their rooms to wash their hands before sitting down to table.

Ten minutes after they were at dinner in the little dining-room on the ground-floor.

At first they were silent; but presently Roland began again in amazement at this lawyer's visit.

"For after all, why did he not write? Why should he have sent his clerk three times? Why is he coming himself?"

Pierre thought it quite natural.

"An immediate decision is required, no doubt; and perhaps there are certain confidential conditions which it does not do to put into writing."

Still, they were all puzzled, and all four a little annoyed at having invited a stranger, who would be in the way of their discussing and deciding on what should be done.

They had just gone upstairs again when the lawyer was announced. Roland flew to meet him:

"Good-evening, my dear Maître," said he, giving his visitor the title which in France is the official prefix to the name of every lawyer.

Mme. Rosémilly rose.

"I am going," she said. "I am very tired."

A faint attempt was made to detain her; but she would not consent, and went home without either of the three men offering to escort her as they always had done.

Mme. Roland did the honors eagerly to their visitor.

"A cup of coffee, Monsieur?"

"No, thank you. I have this moment done dinner."

"A cup of tea, then?"

"Thank you, I will not refuse presently. First we must attend to business."

The total silence which succeeded this remark was broken only by the regular ticking of the clock, and below stairs the clatter of saucepans which the girl was cleaning – too stupid even to listen at the door.

The lawyer went on:

"Did you, in Paris, know a certain M. Maréchal – Léon Maréchal?"

M. and Mme. Roland both exclaimed at once: "I should think so!"

"He was a friend of yours?"

Roland replied: "Our best friend, monsieur, but a fanatic for Paris; never to be got away from the boulevard. He was head clerk in the exchequer office. I have never seen him since I left the capital, and latterly we had ceased writing to each other. When people are far apart, you know – "

The lawyer gravely put in:

"M. Maréchal is deceased."

Both man and wife responded with the little movement of pained surprise, genuine or false, but always ready, with which such news is received.

Maître Lecanu went on:

"My colleague in Paris has just communicated to me the main item of his will, by which he makes your son Jean – Monsieur Jean Roland – his sole legatee."

They were all too much amazed to utter a single word. Mme. Roland was the first to control her emotions and stammered out:

"Good heavens! Poor Léon – our poor friend! Dear me! Dear me! Dead!"

The tears started to her eyes, a woman's silent tears, drops of grief from her very soul, which trickle down her cheeks and seem so very sad, being so clear. But Roland was thinking less of the loss than of the prospect announced. Still, he dared not at once inquire into the clauses of the will and the amount of the fortune, so to work around to these interesting facts he asked.

"And what did he die of, poor Maréchal?"

Maître Lecanu did not know in the least.

"All I know is," said he, "that, dying without any direct heirs, he has left the whole of his fortune – about twenty thousand francs a year (\$3,840) in three per cents – to your second son, whom he has known from his birth up, and judges worthy of the legacy. If M. Jean should refuse the money, it is to go to the foundling hospitals."

Old Roland could not conceal his delight and exclaimed:

"Sacristi! It is the thought of a kind heart. And if I had no heir I would not have forgotten him; he was a true friend."

The lawyer smiled.

"I was very glad," he said, "to announce the event to you myself. It is always a pleasure to be the bearer of good news."

It had not struck him that this good news was that of the death of a friend, of Roland's best friend; and the old man himself had suddenly forgotten the intimacy he had just spoken of with so much conviction.

Only Mme. Roland and her sons still looked mournful. She, indeed, was still shedding a few tears, wiping her eyes with her handkerchief, which she then pressed to her lips to smother her deep sobs.

The doctor murmured:

"He was a good fellow, very affectionate. He often invited us to dine with him – my brother and me."

Jean, with wide-open, glittering eyes, laid his hand on his handsome fair beard, a familiar gesture with him, and drew his fingers down it to the tip of the last hairs, as if to pull it longer and thinner. Twice his lips parted to utter some decent remark, but after long meditation he could only say this:

"Yes, he was certainly fond of me. He would always embrace me when I went to see him."

But his father's thoughts had set off at a gallop – galloping round this inheritance to come; nay, already in hand; this money lurking behind the door which would walk in quite soon, to-morrow, at a word of consent.

"And there is no possible difficulty in the way?" he asked. "No lawsuit – no one to dispute it?"

Maître Lecanu seemed quite easy.

"No; my Paris correspondent states that everything is quite clear. M. Jean has only to sign his acceptance."

"Good. Then – then the fortune is quite clear?"

"Perfectly clear."

"All the necessary formalities have been gone through?"

"All."

Suddenly the old jeweler had an impulse of shame – obscure, instinctive, and fleeting; shame of his eagerness to be informed, and he added:

"You understand when I ask all these questions so immediately it is to save my son disagreeables which he might not foresee. Sometimes there are debts, embarrassing liabilities, what not! And a legatee finds himself in an inextricable thorn bush. After all, I am not the heir – but I think first of the little 'un."

They were accustomed to speak of Jean among themselves as the "little one," though he was much bigger than Pierre.

Suddenly Mme. Roland seemed to wake from a dream, to recall some remote fact, a thing almost forgotten that she had heard long ago, and of which she was not altogether sure. She inquired doubtfully:

"Were you not saying that our poor friend Maréchal had left his fortune to my little Jean?"

"Yes, madame."

And she went on simply:

"I am much pleased to hear it; it proves that he was attached to us."

Roland had risen.

"And would you wish, my dear sir, that my son should at once sign his acceptance?"

"No – no, M. Roland. To-morrow, at my office to-morrow, at two o'clock, if that suits you."

"Yes, to be sure – yes, indeed, I should think so."

Then Mme. Roland, who had also risen and who was smiling after her tears, went up to the lawyer, and laying her hand on the back of his chair while she looked at him with the pathetic eyes of a grateful mother, she said:

"And now for that cup of tea, Monsieur Lecanu?"

"Now I will accept it with pleasure, madame."

The maid, on being summoned, brought in first some dry biscuits in deep tin boxes, those crisp, insipid English cakes which seem to have been made for a parrot's beak, and soldered into metal cases for a voyage round the world. Next she fetched some little gray linen doilies, folded square, those tea-napkins which in thrifty families never get washed. A third time she came in with the sugar basin and cups; then she departed to heat the water. They sat waiting.

No one could talk; they had too much to think about and nothing to say. Mme. Roland alone attempted a few commonplace remarks. She gave an account of the fishing excursion, and sang the praises of the *Pearl* and of Mme. Rosémilly.

"Charming! charming!" the lawyer said again and again.

Roland, leaning against the marble mantelshelf as if it were winter and the fire burning, with his hands in his pockets and his lips puckered for a whistle, could not keep still, tortured by the invincible desire to give vent to his delight. The two brothers, in two armchairs that matched, one on each side of the center-table, stared in front of them, in similar attitudes full of dissimilar expression.

At last the tea appeared. The lawyer took a cup, sugared it, and drank it, after having crumbled into it a little cake which was too hard to crunch. Then he rose, shook hands, and departed.

"Then it is understood," repeated Roland. "To-morrow, at your place, at two?"

"Quite so. To-morrow, at two."

Jean had not spoken a word.

When their guest had gone, silence fell again till father Roland clapped his two hands on his younger son's shoulders, crying:

"Well, you devilish lucky dog! You don't embrace me!"

Then Jean smiled. He embraced his father, saying:

"It had not struck me as indispensable."

The old man was beside himself with glee. He walked about the room, strummed on the furniture with his clumsy nails, turned about on his heels, and kept saying:

"What luck! what luck! Now, that is really what I call luck!"

Pierre asked:

"Then you used to know this Maréchal well?"

And his father replied:

"I believe you! Why, he used to spend every evening at our house. Surely you remember he used to fetch you from school on half-holidays, and often took you back again after dinner. Why, the very day when Jean was born it was he who went for the doctor. He had been breakfasting with us when your mother was taken ill. Of course we knew at once what it meant, and he set off post-haste. In his hurry he took my hat instead of his own. I remember that because we had a good laugh over it afterward. It is very likely that he may have thought of that when he was dying, and as he had no heir he may have said to himself: 'I remember helping to bring that youngster into the world, so I will leave him my savings.'"

Mme. Roland, sunk in a deep chair, seemed lost in reminiscences once more. She murmured, as though she were thinking aloud:

"Ah, he was a good friend, very devoted, very faithful, a rare soul in these days."

Jean got up.

"I shall go out for a little walk," he said.

His father was surprised and tried to keep him; they had much to talk about, plans to be made, decisions to be formed. But the young man insisted, declaring that he had an engagement. Besides, there would be time for settling everything before he came into possession of his inheritance. So he went away, for he wished to be alone to reflect. Pierre, on his part, said that he too was going out, and after a few minutes followed his brother.

As soon as he was alone with his wife, father Roland took her in his arms, kissed her a dozen times on each cheek, and replying to a reproach she had often brought against him, said:

"You see, my dearest, it would have been of no good to stay any longer in Paris and work for the children till I dropped, instead of coming here to recruit my health, since fortune drops on us from the skies."

She was quite serious.

"It drops from the skies on Jean," she said. "But Pierre?"

"Pierre? But he is a doctor; he will make plenty of money; besides, his brother will surely do something for him."

"No, he would not take it. Besides, this legacy is for Jean, only for Jean. Pierre will find himself at a great disadvantage."

The old fellow seemed perplexed: "Well, then, we will leave him rather more in our will."

"No; that again would not be quite just."

"Drat it all!" he exclaimed. "What do you want me to do in the matter? You always hit on a whole heap of disagreeable ideas. You must spoil all my pleasures. Well, I am going to bed. Good-night. All the same, I call it good luck, jolly good luck!"

And he went off, delighted in spite of everything, and without a word of regret for the friend so generous in his death.

Mme. Roland sat thinking again, in front of the lamp which was burning out.

CHAPTER II

As soon as he got out, Pierre made his way to the Rue de Paris, the high-street of Havre, brightly lighted up, lively and noisy. The rather sharp air of the seacoast kissed his face, and he walked slowly, his stick under his arm and his hands behind his back. He was ill at ease, oppressed, out of heart, as one is after hearing unpleasant tidings. He was not distressed by any definite thought, and he would have been puzzled to account, on the spur of the moment, for this dejection of spirit and heaviness of limb. He was hurt somewhere, without knowing where; somewhere within him there was a pin-point of pain – one of these almost imperceptible wounds which we cannot lay a finger on, but which incommode us, tire us, depress us, irritate us – a slight and occult pang, as it were a small seed of distress.

When he reached the square in front of the theater, he was attracted by the lights in the Café Tortoni, and slowly bent his steps to the dazzling façade; but just as he was going in he reflected that he would meet friends there and acquaintances – people he would be obliged to talk to; and fierce repugnance surged up in him for this commonplace good-fellowship over coffee cups and liqueur glasses. So, retracing his steps, he went back to the high-street leading to the harbor.

"Where shall I go?" he asked himself, trying to think of a spot he liked which would agree with his frame of mind. He could not think of one, for being alone made him feel fractious, yet he could not bear to meet any one. As he came out on the Grand Quay he hesitated once more; then he turned toward the pier; he had chosen solitude.

Going close by a bench on the breakwater he sat down, tired already of walking and out of humor with his stroll before he had taken it.

He said to himself: "What is the matter with me this evening?" And he began to search in his memory for what vexation had crossed him, as we question a sick man to discover the cause of his fever.

His mind was at once irritable and sober; he got excited, then he reasoned, approving or blaming his impulses; but in time primitive nature at last proved the stronger; the sensitive man always had the upper hand over the intellectual man. So he tried to discover what had induced this irascible mood, this craving to be moving without wanting anything, this desire to meet some one for the sake of differing from him, and at the same time this aversion for the people he might see and the things they might say to him.

And then he put the question to himself, "Can it be Jean's inheritance?"

Yes, it was certainly possible. When the lawyer had announced the news he had felt his heart beat a little faster. For, indeed, one is not always master of one's self; there are sudden and pertinacious emotions against which a man struggles in vain.

He fell into meditation on the physiological problem of the impression produced on the instinctive element in man, and giving rise to a current of painful or pleasurable sensations diametrically opposed to those which the thinking man desires, aims at, and regards as right and wholesome, when he has risen superior to himself by the cultivation of his intellect. He tried to picture to himself the frame of mind of a son who has inherited a vast fortune, and who, thanks to that wealth, may now know many long-wished-for delights which the avarice of his father had prohibited – a father, nevertheless, beloved and regretted.

He got up and walked on to the end of the pier. He felt better, and glad to have understood, to have detected himself, to have unmasked *the other* which lurks in us.

"Then I was jealous of Jean," thought he. "That is really vilely mean. And I am sure of it now, for the first idea which came into my head was that he would marry Madame Rosémilly. And yet I am not in love myself with that priggish little goose, who is just the woman to disgust a man with

good sense and good conduct. So it is the most gratuitous jealousy, the very essence of jealousy, which is merely because it is! I must keep an eye on that!"

By this time he was in front of the flagstaff, whence the depth of water in the harbor is signaled, and he struck a match to read the list of vessels signaled in the roadstead and coming in with the next high tide. Ships were due from Brazil, from La Plata, from Chili and Japan, two Danish brigs, a Norwegian schooner, and a Turkish steamship – which startled Pierre as much as if it had read a Swiss steamship; and in a whimsical vision he pictured a great vessel crowded with men in turbans climbing the shrouds in loose trousers.

"How absurd," thought he. "But the Turks are a maritime people, too."

A few steps further on he stopped again, looking out at the roads. On the right, above Sainte-Adresse, the two electric lights of Cape la Hève, like monstrous twin Cyclops, shot their long and powerful beams across the sea. Starting from two neighboring centers, the two parallel shafts of light, like the colossal tails of two comets, fell in a straight and endless slope from the top of the cliff to the uttermost horizon. Then, on the two piers, two more lights, the children of these giants, marked the entrance to the harbor; and far away on the other side of the Seine others were in sight, many others, steady or winking, flashing or revolving, opening and shutting like eyes – the eyes of the ports – yellow, red, and green, watching the night-wrapped sea covered with ships; the living eyes of the hospitable shore saying, merely by the mechanical and regular movement of their eyelids: "I am here. I am Trouville; I am Honfleur; I am the Audemer River." And high above all the rest, so high that from this distance it might be taken for a planet, the airy light-house of Etouville showed the way to Rouen across the sand banks at the mouth of the great river.

Out on the deep water, the limitless water, darker than the sky, stars seemed to have fallen here and there. They twinkled in the night haze, small, close to shore or far away – white, red, and green, too. Most of them were motionless; some, however, seemed to be scudding onward. These were the lights of the ships at anchor or moving about in search of moorings.

Just at this moment the moon rose behind the town; and it, too, looked like some huge, divine pharos lighted up in the heavens to guide the countless fleet of stars in the sky. Pierre murmured, almost speaking aloud: "Look at that! And we let our bile rise for two-pence!"

On a sudden, close to him, in the wide, dark ditch between the two piers, a shadow stole up, a large shadow of fantastic shape. Leaning over the granite parapet, he saw that a fishing-boat had glided in, without the sound of a voice or the splash of a ripple, or the plunge of an oar, softly borne in by its broad, tawny sail spread to the breeze from the open sea.

He thought to himself: "If one could but live on board that boat, what peace it would be – perhaps!"

And then a few steps further again, he saw a man sitting at the very end of the breakwater.

A dreamer, a lover, a sage – a happy or a desperate man? Who was it? He went forward, curious to see the face of this lonely individual, and he recognized his brother.

"What, is it you, Jean?"

"Pierre! You? What has brought you here?"

"I came out to get some fresh air. And you?"

Jean began to laugh.

"I too came out for fresh air." And Pierre sat down by his brother's side.

"Lovely – isn't it?"

"Oh, yes, lovely."

He understood from the tone of voice that Jean had not looked at anything. He went on:

"For my part, whenever I come here I am seized with a wild desire to be off with all those boats, to the north or the south. Only to think that all those little sparks out there have just come from the uttermost ends of the earth, from the lands of great flowers and beautiful olive or copper colored girls, the lands of humming-birds, of elephants, of roaming lions, of negro kings, from all the

lands which are like fairy tales to us who no longer believe in the White Cat or the Sleeping Beauty. It would be awfully jolly to be able to treat one's self to an excursion out there; but, then, it would cost a great deal of money, no end – "

He broke off abruptly, remembering that his brother had that money now; and released from care, released from laboring for his daily bread, free, unfettered, happy, and light-hearted, he might go whither he listed, to find the fair-haired Swedes or the brown damsels of Havana. And then one of those involuntary flashes which were common with him, so sudden and swift that he could neither anticipate them, nor stop them, nor qualify them, communicated, as it seemed to him, from some second, independent, and violent soul, shot through his brain.

"Bah! He is too great a simpleton; he will marry that little Rosémilly." He was standing up now. "I will leave you to dream of the future. I want to be moving." He grasped his brother's hand and added in a heavy tone:

"Well, my dear old boy, you are a rich man. I am very glad to have come upon you this evening to tell you how pleased I am about it, how truly I congratulate you, and how much I care for you."

Jean, tender and soft-hearted, was deeply touched.

"Thank you, my good brother – thank you!" he stammered.

And Pierre turned away with his slow step, his stick under his arm, and his hands behind his back.

Back in the town again, he once more wondered what he should do, being disappointed of his walk and deprived of the company of the sea by his brother's presence. He had an inspiration. "I will go and take a glass of liqueur with old Marowsko," and he went off toward the quarter of the town known as Ingouville.

He had known old Marowsko — *le père Marowsko*, he called him – in the hospitals in Paris. He was a Pole, an old refugee, it was said, who had gone through terrible things out there, and who had come to ply his calling as a chemist and druggist in France after passing a fresh examination. Nothing was known of his early life, and all sorts of legends had been current among the indoor and outdoor patients and afterwards among his neighbors. This reputation as a terrible conspirator, a nihilist, a regicide, a patriot ready for anything and everything, who had escaped death by a miracle, had bewitched Pierre Roland's lively and bold imagination; he had made friends with the old Pole, without, however, having ever extracted from him any revelation as to his former career. It was owing to the young doctor that this worthy had come to settle at Havre, counting on the large custom which the rising practitioner would secure him. Meanwhile he lived very poorly in his little shop, selling medicines to the small tradesmen and workmen in his part of the town.

Pierre often went to see him and chat with him for an hour after dinner, for he liked Marowsko's calm look and rare speech, and attributed great depth to his long spells of silence.

A single gas-burner was alight over the counter crowded with phials. Those in the window were not lighted, from motives of economy. Behind the counter, sitting on a chair with his legs stretched out and crossed, an old man, quite bald, with a large beak of a nose which, as a prolongation of his hairless forehead, gave him a melancholy likeness to a parrot, was sleeping soundly, his chin resting on his breast. He woke at the sound of the shop-bell, and recognizing the doctor, came forward to meet him, holding out both hands.

His black frock coat, streaked with stains of acids and syrups, was much too wide for his lean little person, and looked like a shabby old cassock; and the man spoke with a strong Polish accent which gave a childlike character to his thin voice, the lisping note and intonations of a young thing learning to speak.

Pierre sat down, and Marowsko asked him: "What news, dear doctor?"

"None. Everything as usual, everywhere."

"You do not look very gay this evening."

"I am not often gay."

"Come, come, you must shake that off. Will you try a glass of liqueur?"

"Yes, I do not mind."

"Then I will give you something new to try. For these two months I have been trying to extract something from currants, of which only a syrup has been made hitherto – well, and I have done it. I have invented a very good liqueur – very good indeed; very good."

And quite delighted, he went to a cupboard, opened it, and picked out a bottle which he brought forth. He moved and did everything in jerky gestures, always incomplete; he never quite stretched out his arm, nor quite put out his legs; nor made any broad and definite movements. His ideas seemed to be like his actions; he suggested them, promised them, sketched them, hinted at them, but never fully uttered them.

And indeed, his great end in life seemed to be the concoction of syrups and liqueurs. "A good syrup or a good liqueur is enough to make a fortune," he would often say.

He had compounded hundreds of these sweet mixtures without ever succeeding in floating one of them. Pierre declared that Marowsko always reminded him of Marat.

Two little glasses were fetched out of the back shop and placed on the mixing-board. Then the two men scrutinized the color of the fluid by holding it up to the gas.

"A fine ruby," Pierre declared.

"Isn't it?" Marowsko's old parrot-face beamed with satisfaction.

The doctor tasted, smacked his lips, meditated, tasted again, meditated again, and spoke:

"Very good – capital; and quite new in flavor. It is a find, my dear fellow."

"Ah, really? Well, I am very glad."

Then Marowsko took counsel as to baptizing the new liqueur. He wanted to call it "Extract of currants," or else "*Fine Groseille*," or "*Grosélie*," or again "*Groséline*." Pierre did not approve of either of these names.

Then the old man had an idea:

"What you said just now would be very good, very good: 'Fine Ruby.'" But the doctor disputed the merit of this name, though it had originated with him. He recommended simply "Groseillette," which Marowsko thought admirable.

Then they were silent, and sat for some minutes without a word under the solitary gas-lamp. At last Pierre began, almost in spite of himself: "A queer thing has happened at home this evening. A friend of my father's, who is lately dead, has left his fortune to my brother."

The druggist did not at first seem to understand, but after thinking it over he hoped that the doctor had half the inheritance. When the matter was clearly explained to him he appeared surprised and vexed; and to express his dissatisfaction at finding that his young friend had been sacrificed, he said several times over:

"It will not look well."

Pierre, who was relapsing into nervous irritation, wanted to know what Marowsko meant by this phrase.

Why would it not look well? What was there to look badly in the fact that his brother had come into the money of a friend of the family?

But the cautious old man would not explain further.

"In such a case the money is left equally to the two brothers, and I tell you, it will not look well."

And the doctor, out of all patience, went away, returned to his father's house, and went to bed. For some time yet he could hear Jean moving softly about the adjoining room, and then, after drinking two glasses of water, he fell asleep.

CHAPTER III

The doctor awoke next morning firmly resolved to make his fortune. Several times already he had come to the same determination without following up the reality. At the outset of all his trials of some new career the hopes of rapidly acquired riches kept up his efforts and confidence, till the first obstacle, the first check, threw him into a fresh path. Snug in bed between the warm sheets, he lay meditating. How many medical men had become wealthy in quite a short time! All that was needed was a little knowledge of the world; for in the course of his studies he had learnt to estimate the most famous physicians, and he judged them all to be asses. He was certainly as good as they, if not better. If by any means he could secure a practice among the wealth and fashion of Havre, he could easily make a hundred thousand francs a year. And he calculated with great exactitude what his certain profits must be. He would go out in the mornings to visit his patients; at the very moderate average of ten a day, at twenty francs each, that would mount up to seventy-two thousand francs a year at least, or even seventy-five thousand; for ten patients was certainly below the mark. In the afternoon he would be at home to, say, another ten patients, at ten francs each – thirty-six thousand francs. Here, then, in round numbers, was an income of twenty thousand francs. Old patients, or friends whom he would charge only ten francs for a visit, or see at home for five, would perhaps make a slight reduction on this sum total, but consultations with other physicians and various incidental fees would make up for that.

Nothing would be easier than to achieve this by skillful advertising remarks in the *Figaro* to the effect that the scientific faculty of Paris had their eye on him, and were interested in the cures effected by the modest young practitioner of Havre! And he would be richer than his brother, richer and more famous; and satisfied with himself, for he would owe his fortune solely to his own exertions; and liberal to his old parents, who would be justly proud of his fame. He would not marry, would not burden his life with a wife who would be in his way, but then he might make love. He felt so sure of success that he sprang out of bed as though to grasp it on the spot, and he dressed to go and search through the town for rooms to suit him.

Then, as he wandered about the streets, he reflected how slight are the causes which determine our actions. Any time these three weeks he might and ought to have come to this decision, which, beyond a doubt, the news of his brother's inheritance had abruptly given rise to.

He stopped before every door where a placard proclaimed that "fine apartments" or "handsome rooms" were to be let; announcements without an adjective he turned from with scorn. Then he inspected them with a lofty air, measuring the height of the rooms, sketching the plan in his notebook, with the passages, the arrangements of the exits, explaining that he was a medical man and had many visitors. He must have a broad and well-kept staircase; nor could he be any higher up than the first floor.

After having written down seven or eight addresses and scribbled two hundred notes, he got home to breakfast a quarter of an hour too late.

In the hall he heard the clatter of plates. Then they had begun without him! Why? They were never wont to be so punctual. He was nettled and put out, for he was somewhat thin-skinned. As he went in Roland said to him:

"Come, Pierre, make haste, devil take you! You know we have to be at the lawyer's at two o'clock. This is not the day to be dawdling about."

Pierre sat down without replying, after kissing his mother and shaking hands with his father and brother; and he helped himself from the deep dish in the middle of the table to the cutlet which had been kept for him. It was cold and dry, probably the least tempting of them all. He thought that they might have left it on the hot plate till he came in, and not lose their heads so completely as to have forgotten their other son, their eldest.

The conversation, which his entrance had interrupted, was taken up again at the point where it had ceased.

"In your place," Mme. Roland was saying to Jean, "I will tell you what I should do at once. I should settle in handsome rooms so as to attract attention; I should rise on horseback and select one or two interesting cases to defend and make a mark in court. I would be a sort of amateur lawyer, and very select. Thank God you are out of all danger of want, and if you pursue a profession, it is, after all, only that you may not lose the benefit of your studies, and because a man ought never to sit idle."

Old Roland, who was peeling a pear, exclaimed:

"Christi! In your place I should buy a nice yacht, a cutter on the build of our pilot-boats. I would sail as far as Senegal in such a boat as that."

Pierre, in his turn, spoke his views. After all, said he, it was not his wealth which made the moral worth, the intellectual worth of a man. To a man of inferior mind it was only a means of degradation, while in the hands of a strong man it was a powerful lever. They, to be sure, were rare. If Jean were a really superior man, now that he could never want he might prove it. But then he must work a hundred times harder than he would have done in other circumstances. His business now must be not to argue for or against the widow and the orphan, and pocket his fees for every case he gained, but to become a really eminent legal authority, a luminary of the law. And he added in conclusion:

"If I were rich wouldn't I dissect no end of bodies!"

Father Roland shrugged his shoulders.

"That is all very fine," he said. "But the wisest way of life is to take it easy. We are not beasts of burden, but men. If you are born poor you must work; well, so much the worse; and you do work. But where you have dividends! You must be a flat if you grind yourself to death."

Pierre replied haughtily:

"Our notions differ. For my part, I respect nothing on earth but learning and intellect; everything else is beneath contempt."

Mme. Roland always tried to deaden the constant shocks between father and son; she turned the conversation, and began talking of a murder committed the week before at Bolbec Nointot. Their minds were immediately full of the circumstances under which the crime had been committed, and absorbed by the interesting horror, the attractive mystery of crime, which, however commonplace, shameful, and disgusting, exercises a strange and universal fascination over the curiosity of mankind. Now and again, however, old Roland looked at his watch. "Come," said he, "it is time to be going."

Pierre sneered.

"It is not yet one o'clock," he said. "It really was hardly worth while to condemn me to eat a cold cutlet."

"Are you coming to the lawyer's?" his mother asked.

"I? No. What for?" he replied dryly. "My presence is quite unnecessary."

Jean sat silent, as though he had no concern in the matter. When they were discussing the murder at Bolbec he, as a legal authority, had put forward some opinions and uttered some reflections on crime and criminals. Now he spoke no more; but the sparkle in his eye, the bright color in his cheeks, the very gloss of his beard seemed to proclaim his happiness.

When the family had gone, Pierre, alone once more, resumed his investigations in the apartments to let. After two or three hours spent in going up and down stairs, he at last found, in the Boulevard François, a pretty set of rooms; a spacious entresol with two doors on two different streets, two drawing-rooms, a glass corridor, where his patients while they waited, might walk among flowers, and a delightful dining-room with a bow-window looking out over the sea.

When it came to taking it, the terms – three thousand francs – pulled him up; the first quarter must be paid in advance, and he had nothing, not a penny to call his own.

The little fortune his father had saved brought him in about eight thousand francs a year, and Pierre had often blamed himself for having placed his parents in difficulties by his long delay in

deciding on a profession, by forfeiting his attempts and beginning fresh courses of study. So he went away, promising to send his answer within two days, and it occurred to him to ask Jean to lend him the amount of this quarter's rent, or even of a half-year, fifteen hundred francs, as soon as Jean should have come into possession.

"It will be a loan for a few months at most," he thought. "I shall repay him, very likely, before the end of the year. It is a simple matter, and he will be glad to do so much for me."

As it was not yet four o'clock, and he had nothing to do, absolutely nothing, he went to sit in the public gardens; and he remained a long time on a bench, without an idea in his brain, his eyes fixed on the ground, crushed by weariness amounting to distress.

And yet this was how he had been living all these days since his return home, without suffering so acutely from the vacuity of his existence and from inaction. How had he spent his time from rising in the morning till bed-time?

He had loafed on the pier at high tide, loafed in the streets, loafed in the cafés, loafed at Marowsko's, loafed everywhere. And on a sudden this life, which he had endured till now, had become odious, intolerable. If he had had any pocket-money he would have taken a carriage for a long drive in the country, along by the farm-ditches shaded by beech and elm trees; but he had to think twice of the cost of a glass of beer or a postage-stamp, and such an indulgence was out of his ken. It suddenly struck him how hard it was for a man of past thirty to be reduced to ask his mother, with a blush, for a twenty-franc piece every now and then; and he muttered, as he scored the gravel with the ferrule of his stick:

"Christi, if I only had money!"

And again the thought of his brother's legacy came into his head like the sting of a wasp; but he drove it out indignantly, not choosing to allow himself to slip down that descent to jealousy.

Some children were playing about in the dusty paths. They were fair little things with long hair, and they were making little mounds of sand with the greatest gravity and careful attention, to crush them at once by stamping on them.

It was one of those gloomy days with Pierre when we pry into every corner of our souls and shake out every crease.

"All our endeavors are like the labors of those babies," thought he. And then he wondered whether the wisest thing in life were not to beget two or three of these little creatures and watch them grow up with complacent curiosity. A longing for marriage breathed on his soul. A man is not so lost when he is not alone. At any rate, he hears some one stirring at his side in hours of trouble or of uncertainty; and it is something only to be able to speak on equal terms to a woman when one is suffering.

Then he began thinking of women. He knew very little of them, never having had any but very transient connections as a medical student, broken off as soon as the month's allowance was spent, and renewed or replaced by another the following month. And yet there must be some very kind, gentle, and comforting creatures among them. Had not his mother been the good sense and saving grace of his own home? How glad he would be to know a woman, a true woman.

He started up with a sudden determination to go and call on Mme. Rosémilly. But he promptly sat down again. He did not like that woman. Why not? She had too much vulgar and sordid common sense; besides, did she not seem to prefer Jean? Without confessing it to himself too bluntly, this preference had a great deal to do with his low opinion of the widow's intellect; for, though he loved his brother, he could not help thinking him somewhat mediocre and believing himself the superior. However, he was not going to sit there till nightfall; and as he had done on the previous evening, he anxiously asked himself: "What am I going to do?"

At this moment he felt in his soul the need of a melting mood, of being embraced and comforted. Comforted – for what? He could not have put it into words; but he was in one of those hours of weakness and exhaustion when a woman's presence, a woman's kiss, the touch of a hand,

the rustle of a petticoat, a soft look out of black or blue eyes, seem the one thing needful, there and then, to our heart. And the memory flashed upon him of a little barmaid at a beer-house, whom he had walked home with one evening, and seen again from time to time.

So once more he rose, to go and drink a bock with the girl. What should he say to her? What would she say to him? Nothing, probably. But what did that matter? He would hold her hand for a few seconds. She seemed to have a fancy for him. Why, then, did he not go to see her oftener?

He found her dozing on a chair in the beer-shop, which was almost deserted. Three men were drinking and smoking with their elbows on the oak tables; the book-keeper in her desk was reading a novel, while the master, in his shirt-sleeves, lay sound asleep on a bench.

As soon as she saw him the girl rose eagerly, and coming to meet him, said:

"Good-day, monsieur – how are you?"

"Pretty well; and you?"

"I – oh, very well. How scarce you make yourself."

"Yes. I have very little time to myself. I am a doctor, you know."

"Indeed! You never told me. If I had known that – I was out of sorts last week and I would have sent for you. What will you take?"

"A bock. And you?"

"I will have a bock too since you are game to treat me."

She had addressed him with the familiar *tu*, and continued to use it, as if the offer of a drink had tacitly conveyed permission. Then, sitting down opposite each other, they talked for a while. Every now and then she took his hand with the light familiarity of girls whose kisses are for sale, and looking at him with inviting eyes, she said:

"Why don't you come here oftener? I like you very much, sweetheart."

He was already disgusted with her; he saw how stupid she was, and common, smacking of low life. A woman, he told himself, should appear to us in a dream, or such a glory as may poetize her vulgarity.

Next she asked him:

"You went by the other morning with a handsome fair man, wearing a big beard. Is he your brother?"

"Yes, he is my brother."

"Awfully good-looking."

"Do you think so?"

"Yes, indeed; and he looks like a man who enjoys life, too."

What strange craving impelled him on a sudden to tell this tavern-wench about Jean's legacy? Why should this thing, which he kept at arm's-length when he was alone, which he drove from him for fear of the torment it brought upon his soul, rise to his lips at this moment? And why did he allow it to overflow them, as if he needed once more to empty out his heart to some one, gorged as it was with bitterness?

He crossed his legs and said:

"He has wonderful luck, that brother of mine. He has just come into a legacy of twenty thousand francs a year."

She opened those covetous blue eyes of hers very wide.

"Oh! and who left him that? His grandmother or his aunt?"

"No. An old friend of my parents'."

"Only a friend! Impossible! And you – did he leave you nothing?"

"No. I knew him very slightly."

She sat thinking some minutes; then, with an odd smile on her lips, she said:

"Well, he is a lucky dog, that brother of yours, to have friends of that pattern. My word! and no wonder he is so unlike you."

He longed to slap her, without knowing why; and he asked with pinched lips: "And what do you mean by saying that?"

She had put on a stolid, innocent face.

"O – h, nothing. I mean he has better luck than you."

He tossed a franc piece on the table and went out.

Now he kept repeating the phrase: "No wonder he is so unlike you."

What had her thought been, what had been her meaning under those words? There was certainly some malice, some spite, something shameful in it. Yes, that hussy must have fancied, no doubt, that Jean was Maréchal's son. The agitation which came over him at the notion of this suspicion cast at his mother was so violent that he stood still, looking about him for some place where he might sit down. In front of him was another café. He went in, took a chair, and as the waiter came up, "A bock," he said.

He felt his heart beating, his skin was goose-flesh. And then the recollection flashed upon him of what Marowski had said the evening before. "It will not look well." Had he had the same thought, the same suspicion as this baggage? Hanging his head over the glass, he watched the white froth as the bubbles rose and burst, asking himself: "Is it possible that such a thing should be believed?"

But the reasons which might give rise to this horrible doubt in other men's minds now struck him, one after another, as plain, obvious, and exasperating. That a childless old bachelor should leave his fortune to a friend's two sons was the most simple and natural thing in the world; but that he should leave the whole of it to one alone – of course people would wonder, and whisper, and end by smiling. How was it that he had not foreseen this, that his father had not felt it? How was it that his mother had not guessed it? No; they had been too delighted at this un hoped-for wealth for the idea to come near them. And besides, how should these worthy souls have ever dreamed of anything so ignominious?

But the public – their neighbors, the shopkeepers, their own tradesmen, all who knew them – would not they repeat the abominable thing, laugh at it, enjoy it, make game of his father and despise his mother?

And the barmaid's remark that Jean was fair and he dark, that they were not in the least alike in face, manner, figure, or intelligence, would now strike every eye and every mind. When any one spoke of Roland's son, the question would be: "Which, the real or the false?"

He rose, firmly resolved to warn Jean, and put him on his guard against the frightful danger which threatened their mother's honor.

But what could Jean do? The simplest thing, no doubt, would be to refuse the inheritance, which would then go to the poor, and to tell all friends or acquaintances who had heard of the bequest that the will contained clauses and conditions impossible to subscribe to, which would have made Jean not inheritor but merely a trustee.

As he made his way home he was thinking that he must see his brother alone, so as not to speak of such a matter in the presence of his parents. On reaching the door he heard a great noise of voices and laughter in the drawing-room, and when he went in he found Captain Beausire and Mme. Rosémilly, whom his father had brought home and engaged to dine with them in honor of the good news. Vermouth and absinthe had been served to whet their appetites, and every one had been at once put into good spirits. Captain Beausire, a funny little man who had become quite round by dint of being rolled about at sea, and whose ideas also seemed to have been worn round, like the pebbles of a beach, while he laughed with his throat full of *r*'s, looked upon life as a capital thing, in which everything that might turn up was good to take. He clinked his glass against father Roland's, while Jean was offering two freshly filled glasses to the ladies. Mme. Rosémilly refused, till Captain Beausire, who had known her husband, cried:

"Come, come, madame, *bis repetita placent*, as we say in the lingo, which is as much as to say two glasses of vermouth never hurt any one. Look at me; since I have left the sea, in this way I give myself an artificial roll or two every day before dinner; I add a little pitching after my coffee, and

that keeps things lively for the rest of the evening. I never rise to a hurricane, mind you, never, never. I am too much afraid of damage."

Roland, whose nautical mania was humored by the old mariner, laughed heartily, his face flushed already and his eye watery from the absinthe. He had a burly shopkeeping stomach – nothing but stomach – in which the rest of his body seemed to have got stowed away; the flabby paunch of men who spend their lives sitting, and who have neither thighs, nor chest, nor arms, nor neck; the seat of their chairs having accumulated all their substance in one spot. Beausire, on the contrary, though short and stout, was as tight as an egg and as hard as a cannon-ball.

Mme. Roland had not emptied her glass and was gazing at her son Jean with sparkling eyes, happiness had brought a color to her cheeks.

In him too the fullness of joy had now blazed out. It was a settled thing, signed and sealed; he had twenty thousand francs a year. In the sound of his laugh, in the fuller voice with which he spoke, in his way of looking at the others, his more positive manners, his greater confidence, the assurance given by money was at once perceptible.

Dinner was announced, and as the old man was about to offer his arm to Mme. Rosémilly, his wife exclaimed:

"No, no, father. Everything is for Jean to-day."

Unwonted luxury graced the table. In front of Jean, who sat in his father's place, an enormous bouquet of flowers intermingled with ribbon favors – a bouquet for a really great occasion – stood up like a cupola dressed with flags, and was flanked by four high dishes, one containing a pyramid of splendid peaches; the second, a monumental cake gorged with whipped cream and covered with pinnacles of sugar – a cathedral in confectionery; the third, slices of pine-apple floating in clear syrup; and the fourth unheard-of lavishness – black grapes brought from the warmer south.

"The devil!" exclaimed Pierre as he sat down. "We are celebrating the accession of Jean the Rich."

After the soup, Madeira was passed round, and already every one was talking at once. Beausire was giving the history of a dinner he had eaten at San Domingo at the table of a negro general. Old Roland was listening, and at the same time trying to get in, between the sentences, his account of another dinner, given by a friend of his at Mendon, after which every guest was ill for a fortnight. Mme. Rosémilly, Jean, and his mother were planning an excursion to breakfast at Saint Jouin, from which they promised themselves the greatest pleasure; and Pierre was only sorry that he had not dined alone in some pot-house by the sea, so as to escape all this noise and laughter and glee which fretted him. He was wondering how he could now set to work to confide his fears to his brother, and induce him to renounce the fortune he had already accepted and of which he was enjoying the intoxicating foretaste. It would be hard on him, no doubt; but it must be done; he could not hesitate; their mother's reputation was at stake.

The appearance of an enormous shade-fish threw Roland back on fishing stories. Beausire told some wonderful tales of adventure on the Gaboon, at Sainte-Marie, in Madagascar, and above all, off the coasts of China and Japan, where the fish are as queer-looking as the natives. And he described the appearance of these fishes – their goggle gold eyes, their blue or red bellies, their fantastic fins like fans, their eccentric crescent-shaped tails – with such droll gesticulation that they all laughed till they cried as they listened.

Pierre alone seemed incredulous, muttering to himself: "True enough, the Normans are the Gascons of the north!"

After the fish came a vol-au-vent; then a roast fowl, a salad, French beans with a Pithiviers lark-pie. Mme. Rosémilly's maid-servant helped to wait on them, and the fun rose with the number of glasses of wine they drank. When the cork of the first champagne bottle was drawn with a pop, father Roland, highly excited, imitated the noise with his tongue and then declared: "I like that noise better than a pistol-shot."

Pierre, more and more fractious every moment, retorted with a sneer:

"And yet it is perhaps a greater danger for you."

Roland, who was on the point of drinking, set his full glass down on the table again, and asked:
"Why?"

He had for some time been complaining of his health, of heaviness, giddiness, frequent and unaccountable discomfort. The doctor replied:

"Because the bullet might very possibly miss you, while the glass of wine is dead certain to hit you in the stomach."

"And what then?"

"Then it scorches your inside, upsets your nervous system, makes the circulation sluggish, and leads the way to the apoplectic fit which always threatens a man of your build."

The jeweler's incipient intoxication had vanished like smoke before the wind. He looked at his son with fixed, uneasy eyes, trying to discover whether he was making game of him.

But Beausire exclaimed:

"Oh, these confounded doctors! They all sing the same tune; eat nothing, drink nothing, never make love or enjoy yourself; it all plays the devil with your precious health. Well, all I can say is I have done all these things, sir, in every quarter of the globe, wherever and as often as I have had the chance, and I am none the worse."

Pierre answered with some asperity:

"In the first place, captain, you are a stronger man than my father; and in the next, all free livers talk as you do till the day when – when they come back no more to say to the cautious doctor: 'You were right.' When I see my father doing what is worst and most dangerous for him, it is but natural that I should warn him. I should be a bad son if I did otherwise."

Mme. Roland, much distressed, now put in her word: "Come, Pierre, what ails you? For once it cannot hurt him? Think of what an occasion it is for him, for all of us. You will spoil his pleasure and make us all unhappy. It is too bad of you to do such a thing."

He muttered, as he shrugged his shoulders:

"He can do as he pleases. I have warned him."

But father Roland did not drink. He sat looking at his glass full of the clear and luminous liquor while its light soul, its intoxicating soul, flew off in tiny bubbles mounting from its depths in hurried succession to die on the surface. He looked at it with the suspicious eye of a fox smelling at a dead hen and suspecting a trap. He asked doubtfully: "Do you think it will really do me much harm?" Pierre had a pang of remorse and blamed himself for letting his ill-humor punish the rest:

"No," said he. "Just for once you may drink it; but do not take too much, or get into the habit of it."

Then old Roland raised his glass, but still he could not make up his mind to put it to his lips. He contemplated it regretfully, with longing and with fear; then he smelt it, tasted it, drank it in sips, swallowing them slowly, his heart full of terrors, of weakness and greediness; and then, when he had drained the last drop, of regret.

Pierre's eye suddenly met that of Mme. Rosémilly; it rested on him clear and blue, far-seeing and hard. And he read, he knew, the precise thought which lurked in that look, the indignant thought of this simple and right-minded little woman; for the look said: "You are jealous – that is what you are. Shameful!"

He bent his head and went on with his dinner.

He was not hungry and found nothing nice. A longing to be off harassed him, a craving to be away from these people, to hear no more of their talking, jests, and laughter.

Father Roland meanwhile, to whose head the fumes of the wine were rising once more, had already forgotten his son's advice and was eyeing a champagne-bottle with a tender leer as it stood, still nearly full, by the side of his plate. He dared not touch it for fear of being lectured again, and he

was wondering by what device or trick he could possess himself of it without exciting Pierre's remark. A ruse occurred to him, the simplest possible. He took up the bottle with an air of indifference, and holding it by the neck, stretched his arm across the table to fill the doctor's glass, which was empty; then he filled up all the other glasses, and when he came to his own he began talking very loud, so that if he poured anything into it they might have sworn it was done inadvertently. And in fact no one took any notice.

Pierre, without observing it, was drinking a good deal. Nervous and fretted, he every minute raised to his lips the tall crystal funnel where the bubbles were dancing in the living, translucent fluid. He let the wine slip very slowly over his tongue, that he might feel the little sugary sting of the fixed air as it evaporated.

Gradually a pleasant warmth glowed in his frame. Starting from the stomach as from a focus, it spread to his chest, took possession of his limbs, and diffused itself throughout his flesh, like a warm and comforting tide, bringing pleasure with it. He felt better now, less impatient, less annoyed, and his determination to speak to his brother that very evening faded away; not that he thought for a moment of giving it up, but simply not to disturb the happy mood in which he found himself.

Beausire presently arose to propose a toast. Having bowed to the company, he began:

"Most gracious ladies and gentlemen, we have met to do honor to a happy event which has befallen one of our friends. It used to be said that Fortune was blind, but I believe that she is only short-sighted or tricky, and that she has lately brought a good pair of glasses which enabled her to discover in the town of Havre the son of our worthy friend Roland, skipper of the *Pearl*."

Every one cried bravo and clapped their hands, and the elder Roland rose to reply. After clearing his throat, for it felt thick and his tongue was heavy, he stammered out:

"Thank you, captain, thank you – for myself and my son. I shall never forget your behavior on this occasion. Here's good luck to you!"

His eyes and nose were full of tears, and he sat down, finding nothing more to say.

Jean, who was laughing, spoke in his turn:

"It is I," said he, "who ought to thank my friends here, my excellent friends," and he glanced at Mme. Rosémilly, "who have given me such a touching evidence of their affection. But it is not by words that I can prove my gratitude. I will prove it to-morrow, every hour of my life, always, for our friendship is not one of those which fade away."

His mother, deeply moved, murmured: "Well said, my boy."

But Beausire cried out:

"Come, Mme. Rosémilly, speak on behalf of the fair sex."

She raised her glass, and in a pretty voice, slightly touched with sadness, she said: "I will pledge you to the memory of Monsieur Maréchal."

There was a few moments' lull, a pause for decent meditation, as after prayer. Beausire, who always had a flow of compliment, remarked:

"Only a woman ever thinks of these refinements." Then turning to father Roland: "And who was this Maréchal, after all? You must have been very intimate with him."

The old man, emotional with drink, began to whimper, and in a broken voice he said:

"Like a brother, you know. Such a friend as one does not make twice – we were always together – he dined with us every evening – and would treat us to the play – I need say no more – no more – no more. A true friend – a real true friend – wasn't he, Louise?"

His wife merely answered: "Yes; he was a faithful friend."

Pierre looked at his father and then at his mother, then, as the subject changed, he drank some more wine. He scarcely remembered the remainder of the evening. They had coffee, then liqueurs, and they laughed and joked a great deal. At about midnight he went to bed, his mind confused and his head heavy; and he slept like a brute till nine next morning.

CHAPTER IV

These slumbers, lapped in champagne and chartreuse, had soothed and calmed him, no doubt, for he awoke in a very benevolent frame of mind. While he was dressing he appraised, weighed, and summed up the agitations of the past day, trying to bring out quite clearly and fully their real and occult causes, those personal to himself as well as those from outside.

It was, in fact, possible that the girl at the beer-shop had had an evil suspicion – a suspicion worthy of such a hussy – on hearing that only one of the Roland brothers had been made heir to a stranger; but have not such natures as she always similar notions, without a shadow of foundation, about every honest woman? Do they not, whenever they speak, vilify, calumniate, and abuse all whom they believe to be blameless? Whenever a woman who is above imputation is mentioned in their presence, they are as angry as if they were being insulted, and exclaim: "Ah, yes, I know your married women; a pretty sort they are! Why, they have more lovers than we have, only they conceal it because they are such hypocrites. Oh, yes, a pretty sort, indeed!"

Under any other circumstances he would certainly not have understood, not have imagined the possibility of such an insinuation against his poor mother, who was so kind, so simple, so excellent. But his spirit seethed with the leaven of jealousy that was fermenting within him. His own excited mind, on the scent, as it were, in spite of himself, for all that could damage his brother, had even perhaps attributed to the tavern barmaid an odious intention of which she was innocent. It was possible that his imagination had, unaided, invented this dreadful doubt – his imagination, which he never controlled, which constantly evaded his will and went off, unfettered, audacious, adventurous, and stealthy, into the infinite world of ideas, bringing back now and then some which were shameless and repulsive, and which it buried in him, in the depths of his soul, in its most fathomless recesses, like something stolen. His heart, most certainly, his own heart had secrets from him; and had not that wounded heart discerned in this atrocious doubt a means of depriving his brother of the inheritance of which he was jealous? He suspected himself now, cross-examining all the mysteries of his mind as bigots search their consciences.

Mme. Rosémilly, though her intelligence was limited, had certainly a woman's instinct, scent, and subtle intuitions. And this notion had never entered her head, since she had, with perfect simplicity, drunk the blessed memory of the deceased Maréchal. She was not the woman to have done this if she had had the faintest suspicion. Now he doubted no longer; his involuntary displeasure at his brother's windfall of fortune and his religious affection for his mother had magnified his scruples – very pious and respectable scruples, but exaggerated. As he put this conclusion into words in his own mind he felt happy, as at the doing of a good action; and he resolved to be nice to every one beginning with his father, whose manias, and silly statements, and vulgar opinions, and too conspicuous mediocrity were a constant irritation to him.

He came in not late for breakfast, and amused all the family by his fun and good-humor.

His mother, quite delighted, said to him:

"My little Pierre, you have no notion how humorous and clever you can be when you choose."

And he talked, putting things in a witty way, and making them laugh by ingenious hits at their friends. Beausire was his butt, and Mme. Rosémilly a little, but in a very judicious way, not too spiteful. And he thought as he looked at his brother: "Stand up for her, you muff. You may be as rich as you please, I can always eclipse you when I take the trouble."

As they drank their coffee he said to his father:

"Are you going out in the *Pearl* to-day?"

"No, my boy."

"May I have her with Jean Bart?"

"To be sure, as long as you like."

He bought a good cigar at the first tobacconist's and went down to the quay with a light step. He glanced up at the sky, which was clear and luminous, of a pale blue, freshly swept by the sea breeze.

Papagris, the boatman, commonly called Jean Bart, was dozing in the bottom of the boat, which he was required to have in readiness every day at noon when they had not been out fishing in the morning.

"You and I together, mate," cried Pierre. He went down the iron ladder of the quay and leaped into the vessel.

"Which way is the wind?" he asked.

"Due east still, M'sieu Pierre. A fine breeze out at sea."

"Well, then, old man, off we go!"

They hoisted the foresail and weighed anchor; and the boat, feeling herself free, glided slowly down toward the jetty on the still water of the harbor. The breath of wind that came down the street caught the top of the sail so lightly as to be imperceptible, and the *Pearl* seemed endowed with life – the life of a vessel driven on by a mysterious latent power. Pierre took the tiller, and, holding his cigar between his teeth, he stretched his legs on the bunk, and with his eyes half-shut in the blinding sunshine, he watched the great tarred timbers of the breakwater as they glided past.

When they reached the open sea, round the nose of the north pier which had sheltered them, the fresher breeze puffed in the doctor's face and on his hands, like a somewhat icy caress, filled his chest, which rose with a long sigh to drink it in, and swelling the tawny sail, tilted the *Pearl* on her beam and made her more lively. Jean Bart hastily hauled up the jib, and the triangle of canvas, full of wind, looked like a wing; then, with two strides to the stern, he let out the spanker, which was close-reefed against its mast.

Then, along the hull of the boat, which suddenly heeled over and was running at top speed, there was a soft, crisp sound of water hissing and rushing past. The prow ripped up the sea like the share of a plough gone mad, and the yielding water it turned up curled over and fell white with foam, as the ploughed soil, heavy and brown, rolls and falls in a ridge. At each wave they met – and there was a short, chopping sea – the *Pearl* shivered from the point of the bowsprit to the rudder, which trembled under Pierre's hand; when the wind blew harder in gusts, the swell rose to the gunwale as if it would overflow into the boat. A coal brig from Liverpool was lying at anchor, waiting for the tide; they made a sweep round her stern and went to look at each of the vessels in the roads one after another; then they put further out to look at the unfolding line of coast.

For three hours Pierre, easy, calm, and happy, wandered to and fro over the dancing waters, guiding the thing of wood and canvas, which came and went at his will, under the pressure of his hand, as if it were a swift and docile winged creature.

He was lost in day-dreams, the dreams one has on horseback or on the deck of a boat; thinking of his future, which should be brilliant, and the joys of living intelligently. On the morrow he would ask his brother to lend him fifteen hundred francs for three months, that he might settle at once in the pretty rooms on the Boulevard François, 1er.

Suddenly the sailor said: "The fog is coming up, M'sieu Pierre. We must go in."

He looked up and saw to the northward a gray shade, filmy but dense, blotting out the sky and covering the sea; it was sweeping down on them like a cloud fallen from above. He tacked for the land and made for the pier, scudding before the wind and followed by the flying fog, which gained upon them. When it reached the *Pearl*, wrapping her in its intangible density, a cold shudder ran over Pierre's limbs, and a smell of smoke and mold, the peculiar smell of a sea fog, made him close his mouth that he might not taste the cold, wet vapor. By the time the boat was at her usual moorings in the harbor the whole town was buried in this fine mist, which did not fall but yet wetted everything like rain, and glided and rolled along the roofs and streets like the flow of a river. Pierre, with his hands and feet frozen, made haste home and threw himself on his bed to take a nap till dinner-time. When he made his appearance in the dining-room his mother was saying to Jean:

"The glass corridor will be lovely. We will fill it with flowers. You will see. I will undertake to care for them and renew them. When you give a party the effect will be quite fairy like."

"What in the world are you talking about?" the doctor asked.

"Of a delightful apartment I have just taken for your brother. It is quite a find; an entresol looking out on two streets. There are two drawing-rooms, a glass passage, and a little circular dining-room, perfectly charming for a bachelor's quarters."

Pierre turned pale.

"Where is it?" he asked.

"Boulevard François, 1er."

There was no possibility for doubt. He took his seat in such a state of exasperation that he longed to exclaim: "This is really too much! Is there nothing for any one but him?"

His mother, beaming, went on talking: "And only fancy, I got it for two thousand eight hundred francs a year. They asked three thousand, but I got a reduction of two hundred francs on taking for three, six, or nine years. Your brother will be delightfully housed there. An elegant home is enough to make the fortune of a lawyer. It attracts clients, charms them, holds them fast, commands respect, and shows them that a man who lives in such good style expects a good price for his words."

She was silent for a few seconds and then went on:

"We must look out for something suitable for you; much less pretentious, since you have nothing, but nice and pretty all the same. I assure you it will be to your advantage."

Pierre replied contemptuously:

"For me! Oh, I shall make my way by hard work and learning."

But his mother insisted: "Yes, but I assure you that to be well lodged will be of use to you nevertheless."

About half-way through the meal he suddenly asked:

"How did you first come to know this man Maréchal?"

Old Roland looked up and racked his memory:

"Wait a bit; I scarcely recollect. It is such an old story now. Ah, yes, I remember. It was your mother who made acquaintance with him in the shop, was it not, Louise? He first came to order something, and then he called frequently. We knew him as a customer before we knew him as a friend."

Pierre, who was eating beans, sticking his fork into them one by one as if he were spitting them, went on:

"And when was it that you made his acquaintance?"

Again Roland sat thinking, but he could remember no more and appealed to his wife's better memory.

"In what year was it, Louise? You surely have not forgotten, you who remember everything. Let me see – it was in – in – in fifty-five or fifty-six? Try to remember. You ought to know better than I."

She did in fact think it over for some minutes, and then replied in a steady voice and with calm decision:

"It was in fifty-eight, old man. Pierre was three years old. I am quite sure that I am not mistaken, for it was in that year that the child had scarlet fever, and Maréchal, whom we then knew but very little, was of the greatest service to us."

Roland exclaimed:

"To be sure – very true; he was really invaluable. When your mother was half-dead with fatigue and I had to attend to the shop, he would go to the chemist's to fetch your medicine. He really had the kindest heart! And when you were well again, you cannot think how glad he was and how he petted you. It was from that time that we became such great friends."

And this thought rushed into Pierre's soul, as abrupt and violent as a cannon-ball rending and piercing it: "Since he knew me first, since he was so devoted to me, since he was so fond of me and

petted me so much, since I —I was the cause of this great intimacy with my parents, why did he leave all his money to my brother and nothing to me?"

He asked no more questions and remained gloomy; absent-minded rather than thoughtful, feeling in his soul a new anxiety as yet undefined, the secret germ of a new pain.

He went out early, wandering about the streets once more. They were shrouded in the fog which made the night heavy, opaque, and nauseous. It was like a pestilential rock dropped on earth. It could be seen swirling past the gas-lights, which it seemed to put out at intervals. The pavement was as slippery as on a frosty night after a rain, and all sorts of evil smells seemed to come up from the bowels of the houses – the stench of cellars, drains, sewers, squalid kitchens – to mingle with the horrible savor of this wandering fog.

Pierre, with his shoulders up and his hands in his pockets, not caring to remain out of doors in the cold, turned into Marowsko's. The druggist was asleep as usual under the gas-light, which kept watch. On recognizing Pierre, for whom he had the affection of a faithful dog, he shook off his drowsiness, went for two glasses, and brought out the *Groseillette*.

"Well," said the doctor, "how is the liqueur getting on?"

The Pole explained that four of the chief cafés in the town had agreed to have it on sale, and that two papers, the *Northcoast Pharos* and the *Havre Semaphore*, would advertise it, in return for certain chemical preparations to be supplied to the editors.

After a long silence Marowsko asked whether Jean had come definitely into possession of his fortune; and then he put two or three other questions vaguely referring to the same subject. His jealous devotion to Pierre rebelled against this preference. And Pierre felt as though he could hear him thinking; he guessed and understood, read in his averted eyes and in the hesitancy of his tone, the words which rose to his lips but were not spoken – which the druggist was too timid or too prudent and cautious to utter.

At this moment, he felt sure, the old man was thinking: "You ought not to have suffered him to accept this inheritance which will make people speak ill of your mother."

Perhaps, indeed, Marowsko believed that Jean was Maréchal's son. Of course he believed it! How could he help believing it when the thing must seem so possible, so probable, self-evident? Why, he himself, Pierre, her son – had not he been for these three days past fighting with all the subtlety at his command to cheat his reason, fighting against this hideous suspicion?

And suddenly the need to be alone, to reflect, to discuss the matter with himself – to face boldly, without scruple or weakness, this possible but monstrous thing – came upon him anew, and so imperative that he rose without even drinking his glass of *Groseillette*, shook hands with the astounded druggist and plunged out into the foggy streets again.

He asked himself: "What made this Maréchal leave all his fortune to Jean?"

It was not jealousy now which made him dwell on this question, not the rather mean but natural envy which he knew lurked within him, and with which he had been struggling these three days, but the dread of an overpowering horror; the dread that he himself should believe Jean, his brother, was that man's son.

No. He did not believe it; he could not even ask himself the question which was a crime! Meanwhile he must get rid of this faint suspicion, improbable as it was, utterly and for ever. He craved for light, for certainty – he must win absolute security in his heart, for he loved no one in the world but his mother. And as he wandered alone through the darkness he would rack his memory and his reason with a minute search that should bring out the blazing truth. Then there would be an end to the matter; he would not think of it again – never. He would go and sleep.

He argued thus: "Let me see: first to examine the facts; then I will recall all I know about him, his behavior to my brother and to me. I will seek out the causes which might have given rise to this preference. He knew Jean from his birth? Yes, but he had known me first. If he had loved my mother silently, unselfishly, he would surely have chosen me, since it was through me, through my

scarlet fever, that he became so intimate with my parents. Logically, then, he ought to have preferred me, to have had a keener affection for me – unless it were that he felt an instinctive attraction and predilection for my brother as he watched him grow up."

Then, with desperate tension of brain and of all the powers of his intellect, he strove to reconstitute from memory the image of this Maréchal, to see him, to know him, to penetrate the man whom he had seen pass by him, indifferent to his heart during all those years in Paris.

But he perceived that the slight exertion of walking somewhat disturbed his ideas, dislocated their continuity, weakened their precision, clouded his recollection. To enable him to look at the past and at unknown events with so keen an eye that nothing should escape it, he must be motionless in a vast and empty space. And he made up his mind to go and sit on the jetty as he had done that other night. As he approached the harbor he heard, out at sea, a lugubrious and sinister wail like the bellowing of a bull, but more long-drawn and steady. It was the roar of a fog-horn, the cry of a ship lost in the fog. A shiver ran through him, chilling his heart; so deeply did this cry of distress thrill his soul and nerves that he felt as if he had uttered it himself. Another and a similar voice answered with such another moan, but further away; then, close by, the fog-horn on the pier gave out a fearful sound in answer. Pierre made for the jetty with long steps, thinking no more of anything, content to walk on into this ominous and bellowing darkness.

When he had seated himself at the end of the breakwater he closed his eyes, that he might not see the two electric lights, now blurred by the fog, which make the harbor accessible at night, and the red glare of the light on the south pier, which was, however, scarcely visible. Turning half-round, he rested his elbows on the granite and hid his face in his hands.

Though he did not pronounce the word with his lips, his mind kept repeating: "Maréchal – Maréchal," as if to raise and challenge the shade. And on the black background of his closed eyelids, he suddenly saw him as he had known him: a man of about sixty, with a white beard cut in a point and very thick eyebrows, also white. He was neither tall nor short, his manner was pleasant, his eyes gray and soft, his movements gentle, his whole appearance that of a good fellow, simple and kindly. He called Pierre et Jean "my dear children," and had never seemed to prefer either, asking them both together to dine with him. And then Pierre, with the pertinacity of a dog seeking a lost scent, tried to recall the words, gestures, tones, looks, of this man who had vanished from the world. By degrees he saw him quite clearly in his rooms in the rue Tronchet, where he received his brother and himself at dinner.

He was waited on by two maids, both old women who had been in the habit – a very old one, no doubt – of saying "Monsieur Pierre" and "Monsieur Jean." Maréchal would hold out both hands, the right hand to one of the young men, the left to the other, as they happened to come in.

"How are you, my children?" he would say. "Have you any news of your parents? As for me, they never write to me."

The talk was quiet and intimate, of commonplace matters. There was nothing remarkable in the man's mind, but much that was winning, charming, and gracious. He had certainly been a good friend to them, one of those good friends of whom we think the less because we feel sure of them.

Now, reminiscences came readily to Pierre's mind. Having seen him anxious from time to time, and suspecting his student's impecuniousness, Maréchal had of his own accord offered and lent him money, a few hundred francs perhaps, forgotten by both, and never repaid. Then this man must always have been fond of him, always have taken an interest in him, since he thought of his needs. Well then – well then – why leave his whole fortune to Jean? No, he had never shown any more marked affection for the younger than for the elder, had never been more interested in one than in the other, or seemed to care more tenderly for this one or that one. Well then – well then – he must have had some strong secret reason for leaving everything to Jean – everything – and nothing to Pierre.

The more he thought, the more he recalled the past few years, the more extraordinary, the more incredible was it that he should have made such a difference between them. And an agonizing pang of

unspeakable anguish piercing his bosom made his heart beat like a fluttering rag. Its springs seemed broken, and the blood rushed through in a flood, unchecked, tossing it with wild surges.

Then in an undertone, as a man speaks in a nightmare, he muttered: "I must know. My God! I must know."

He looked further back now, to an earlier time, when his parents had lived in Paris. But the faces escaped him, and this confused his recollections. He struggled above all to see Maréchal with light, or brown, or black hair. But he could not; the later image, his face as an old man, blotted out all others. However, he remembered that he had been slighter, and had a soft hand, and that he often brought flowers. Very often – for his father would constantly say: "What, another bouquet! But this is madness, my dear fellow; you will ruin yourself in roses." And Maréchal would say: "No matter; I like it."

And suddenly his mother's voice and accent, his mother's as she smiled and said: "Thank you, my kind friend," flashed on his brain, so clearly that he could have believed he heard her. She must have spoken those words very often that they should remain thus graven on her son's memory.

So Maréchal brought flowers; he, the gentleman, the rich man, the customer, to the humble shop-keeper, the jeweler's wife. Had he loved her? Why should he have made friends with these tradespeople if he had not been in love with the wife? He was a man of education and fairly refined tastes. How many a time had he discussed poets and poetry with Pierre. He did not appreciate these writers from an artistic point of view, but with sympathetic and responsive feeling. The doctor had often smiled at his emotions which had struck him as rather silly; now he plainly saw that this sentimental soul could never, never have been the friend of his father, who was so matter-of-fact, so narrow, so heavy, to whom the word "Poetry" meant idiocy.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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