ГЕНРИК СЕНКЕВИЧ

WITHOUT DOGMA

Генрик Сенкевич

Without Dogma

Сенкевич Г.

Without Dogma / Г. Сенкевич — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

Henryk Sienkiewicz
Without Dogma: A Novel of Modern Poland

"A man who leaves memoirs, whether well or badly written, provided they be sincere, renders a service to future psychologists and writers, giving them not only a faithful picture of the times, but likewise human documents that can be relied upon."

PUBLISHER'S PREFACE

In "WITHOUT DOGMA" we have a remarkable work, by a writer known only in this country through his historical novels; and a few words concerning this novel and its author may not be without interest.

Readers of Henryk Sienkiewicz in America, who have known him only through Mr. Curtin's fine, strong translations, will be surprised to meet with a production so unlike "Fire and Sword," and "The Deluge," that on first reading one can scarcely believe it to be from the pen of the great novelist.

"Fire and Sword," "The Deluge," and "Pan Michael" (now in press) form, so to speak, a Polish trilogy. They are, first and last, Polish in sentiment, nationality, and patriotism. What Wagner did for Germany in music, what Dumas did for France, and Scott for all English-speaking people, the great Pole has achieved for his own country in literature. Even to those most unfamiliar with her history, it grows life-like and real as it speaks to us from the pages of these historical romances. Only a very great genius can unearth the dusty chronicles of past centuries, and make its men and women live and breathe, and speak to us. These historical characters are not mere shadows, puppets, or nullities, but very real men and women, our own flesh and blood.

His warriors fight, love, hate; they embrace each other; they laugh; they weep in each other's arms; give each other sage counsels, with a truly Homeric simplicity. They are deep-versed in stratagems of love and war, these Poles of the seventeenth century! They have their Nestor, their Agamemnon, their great Achilles sulking in his tent. Oddly enough, at times they grow very familiar to us, and in spite of their Polish titles and faces, and a certain tenderness of nature that is almost feminine, they seem to have good, stout, Saxon stuff in them. Especially where the illustrious knights recount their heroic deeds there is a Falstaffian strut in their performance, and there runs riot a Falstaffian imagination truly sublime.

Yet, be it observed, however much in all this is suggestive of the literature of other races and ages, these characters never cease for a moment to be Poles. Here is a vast, moving panorama spread before us; across it pass mighty armies; hetman and banneret go by; the scene is full of stir, life, action. It is constantly changing, so that at times we are almost bewildered, attempting to follow the quick succession of events. We are transported in a moment from the din and uproar of a beleaguered town to the awful solitude of the vast steppes, – yet it is always the Polish Commonwealth that the novelist paints for us, and beneath every other music rises the wild Slavic music, rude, rhythmical, and sad.

There is, too, a background against which these pictures paint themselves, and it reminds us not a little of Verestchagin, – the same deep feeling for nature, and a certain sadness that seems inseparable from the Russian and Lithuanian temperaments, tears following closely upon mirth. At times, after incident upon incident of war, the reader is tempted to exclaim, "Something too much of this!" Yet nowhere, perhaps, except from the great canvases of Verestchagin, has there ever come a more awful, powerful plea for peace than from the pages of "Fire and Sword."

In "Without Dogma" is presented quite another theme, treated in a fashion strikingly different. In the historical novels the stage is crowded with personages. In "Without Dogma," the chief interest centres in a single character. This is not a battle between contending armies, but the greater conflict that goes on in silence, – the battle of a man for his own soul.

He can scarcely be considered an heroic character; he is to some extent the creature of circumstances, the fine product of a highly complex culture and civilization. He regards himself as a nineteenth-century Hamlet, and for him not merely the times, but his race and all mankind, are out of joint. He is not especially Polish save by birth; he is as little at home in Paris or at Rome as in Warsaw. Set him down in any quarter of the globe and he would be equally out of place. He folds the mantle of his pessimism about him. Life has interested him purely as a spectacle, in which he

plays no part save a purely passive one. His relation to life is that of the Greek chorus, passing across the stage, crying "Woe, woe!"

Life has interested, entertained, and sometimes wearied him. He muses, philosophizes, utters the most profound observations upon life, art, and the mystery of things. He puts mankind and himself upon the dissecting-table.

Here is a nature so sensitive that it photographs every impression, an artistic temperament, a highly endowed organism; yet it produces nothing. The secret of this unproductiveness lies perhaps in a certain tendency to analyze and philosophize away every strong emotion that should lead to action. Here is a man in possession of two distinct selves, – the one emotional, active; the other eternally occupied in self-contemplation, judgment, and criticism. The one paralyzes the other. He defines himself as "a genius without a portfolio," just as there are certain ministers-of-state without portfolios.

In such a character many of us will find just enough of ourselves to make its weaknesses distasteful to us. We resent, just because we recognize the truth of the picture. Leon Ploszowski belongs unmistakably to our own times. His doubts and his dilettanteism are our own. His fine aesthetic sense, his pessimism, his self-probings, his weariness, his overstrung nerves, his whole philosophy of negation, – these are qualities belonging to this century, the outcome of our own age and culture.

If this were all the book offers us one might well wonder why it was written. But its real interest centres in the moment when the cultivated pessimist "without dogma" discovers that the strongest and most genuine emotion of his life is its love for another man's wife. It is an old theme; certainly two thirds of our modern French novels deal with it; we know exactly how the conventional, respectable British novel would handle it. But here is a treatment, bold, original, and unconventional. The character of the woman stands out in splendid contrast to the man's. Its simplicity, strength, truth, and faith are the antidote for his doubt and weakness. Her very weakness becomes her strength. Her dogmatism saves him.

The background of the book, its lesser incidents, are thoroughly artistic, its ending masterly in its brevity and pathos; here again is the distinguishing mark of genius, the power of condensation. The man who has philosophized and speculated now writes the tragedy of his life in four words: "Aniela died this morning." This is the culmination towards which his whole life has been moving; the rest is foregone conclusion, and matters but little.

One sees throughout the book the strong influence that other minds, Shakespeare notably, have produced upon this mind; here its attitude is never merely pessimistic. It does not criticise them, it has absorbed them.

One last word concerning this novel. It does not seek to formulate, or to preach directly. Its chief value and the keynote to its motive lie in the words that Sienkiewicz at the beginning puts into the mouth of his hero: —

"A man who leaves memoirs, whether well or badly written, provided they be sincere, renders a service to future psychologists and writers, giving them not only a faithful picture, but likewise *human documents* that may be relied upon."

A *human document*– the modern novel is this, when it is anything at all. If Mr. Crawford's canons of literary art are true, and we believe they are, they give us a standard by which to judge; he tells us that the heart in each man and woman means the whole body of innate and inherited instincts, impulses, and beliefs, which, when quiescent, we call Self, when roused to emotional activity, we call Heart. It is to this self, or heart, he observes, that whatever is permanent in the novel must appeal; and whatever does so must live and find a hearing with humanity "so long as humanity is human." If this be a test, we cannot doubt as to what will be the reception of "Without Dogma."

A few words concerning the novelist himself. The facts obtainable are of the most meagre kind. He was born in 1845, in Lithuania. The country itself, its natural and strongly religious and political

influences, its melancholy, seem to have left their strong, lasting impression upon him. He has a passionate fondness for the Lithuanian, and paints him and his surroundings most lovingly.

His student days were spent at Warsaw. He devoted himself afterward to literature, writing at first under a pseudonym. He does not seem to have won immediate recognition. He spent some years in California; a series of articles published in this connection in a Polish paper brought him into notice.

In 1880, various novelettes and sketches of his production were published in three volumes.

In 1884 were given to the Polish public the three historical novels which immediately gave their author the foremost place in Polish literature. It is a matter of pride that the first translation of these great works into English is the work of an American, and offered to the American public.

He is a prolific writer, and it would be impossible to attempt to give even the names of all his minor sketches and romances. Some of them have been translated into German, but much has been lost in the translation.

Sienkiewicz is still a contributor to journalistic literature. He has travelled much, and is a citizen of the world. He is equally at home in the Orient or the West, by the banks of the Dnieper, or beside the Nile. Probably there is scarcely a corner of Poland that he has not explored. He depicts no type of life that has not actually come under his own observation. The various social strata of his own country, the condition of its peasantry, the marked contrast between the simplicity of that life and the culture of the ecclesiastic and aristocratic bodies, the religious, poetic, artistic temperament of the people, – all these he paints in a life-like fashion, but always as an artist.

So much of the writer. Of the man Sienkiewicz there is little to be obtained. Like all great creative geniuses, he is so completely identified with his work that even while his personality lives in his creations it eludes them. He offers us no confidences concerning himself, no opinions or prejudices. He does not divert the reader with personalities. He sets before us certain groups of men and women, whom certainly he knows and loves, and has lived among. He sets them in motion; they become living, breathing creations; they assume relations in time and space; they speak and act for themselves. If there be a prompter he remains always behind the scenes. Admire or criticise or love the actors as you will, you cannot for a moment doubt that they are alive.

This is the supreme miracle of genius, – the fine union of dramatic instinct, the aesthetic sense, and an intense, vital realism; not the realism of the cesspool or the morgue, but the realism of the earth and sky, and of healthy human nature. We are inclined to believe that Henryk Sienkiewicz has answered an often discussed question that has much exercised the keenly critical intellect of this age. One school of thought cries out, "Let us have life as it is. Paint anything, but draw it as it is. Let the final test of all literary works be, 'Is it real and true?'"

To the romantic school quite another class of ideas appeals; to it much of the so-called realistic literature seems very bad, or merely "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." The profoundest utterances of realism do not impress it much in themselves. It insists that art has something to say to literature, that in this field as elsewhere holds good the law of natural selection of types and survival of the fittest.

While each school has its down-sittings and up-risings, its supporters and its critics, neither school has yet exhausted the possibilities of literature. The novel's aim is to depict Life, and life is neither all romance nor all realism, but a curious mixture of both. Man is neither a beast nor a celestial being, but a compound. Though he can crawl, and may have clinging to him certain brute instincts that may be the relics of his anthropoidal days, he has also, thank God, divine desires and discontents, and certain rudimentary wings. And neither school alone is competent to paint him as he is. The author of "La Bête Humaine" fails as completely as the visionary À Kempis. Neither realism nor romance alone will ever with its small plummet sound to its depths the human heart or its mystery; yet from the union of the two much perhaps might come.

We believe that just here lies the value of the novels of Henryk Sienkiewicz. He has worked out the problem of the modern novel so as to satisfy the most ardent realist, but he has worked it out upon great and broadly human lines. For him facts are facts indeed; but facts have souls as well

as bodies. His genius is analytic, but also imaginative and constructive; it is not forever going upon botanizing excursions. He paints things and thoughts human.

The greatest genius assimilates unconsciously the best with which it comes in contact, and by a subtle chemistry of its own makes new combinations. Shakespeare, Dante, Goethe, and the realists, as well as all the forces of nature, have helped to make Henryk Sienkiewicz; yet he is not any one of them. He is never merely imitative. Originality and imaginative fire, a style vivid and strong, large humor, a profound pathos, a strong feeling for nature, and a deep reverence for the forms and the spirit of religion, the breath of the true cosmopolitan united with the intense patriotism of the Pole, a great creative genius, – these are the most striking qualities of the work of this modern novelist, who has married Romance to Realism.

* * * * *

WITHOUT DOGMA

ROME, 9 January.

Some months ago I met my old friend and school-fellow, Jozef Sniatynski, who for the last few years has occupied a prominent place among our literary men. In a discussion about literature Sniatynski spoke about diaries. He said that a man who leaves memoirs, whether well or badly written, provided they be sincere, renders a service to future psychologists and writers, giving them not only a faithful picture of the times, but likewise human documents that can be relied upon. He seemed to think that most likely the novel of the future would take the form of diary; finally he asserted that anybody who keeps a diary works for the common good, and does a meritorious thing.

I am thirty-five, and do not remember ever having done anything for my country, for the reason, maybe, that after leaving the University, my life, with slight intervals, was spent abroad. This fact, so lightly touched upon, has given me, in spite of all my scepticism, many a bitter pang; therefore I resolved to follow my friend's advice. If this indeed means work, with some kind of merit in it, I will try to be of some use in this way.

I intend to be perfectly sincere. I enter upon the task, not only because of the above-mentioned reasons, but also because the idea pleases me. Sniatynski says that if a man gets accustomed to put down his thoughts and impressions it becomes gradually one of the most delightful occupations of his life. If it should prove the contrary, then the Lord have mercy on my diary; it would snap asunder like a string too tightly drawn. I am ready to do much for my community; but to bore myself for its sake, oh, no! I could not do it.

Nevertheless, I am resolved not to be discouraged by first difficulties, and shall give it a fair trial. "Do not adopt any style; do not write from a literary point of view," says Sniatynski. Easier said than done. I fully understand that the greater the writer, the less he writes in a purely literary style; but I am a *dilettante*, and have no command over any style. I know from experience that to one who thinks much and feels deeply, it often seems that he has only to put down his thoughts and feelings in order to produce something altogether out of the common; yet as soon as he sets to work he falls into a certain mannerism of style and common phraseology; his thoughts do not come spontaneously, and one might almost say that it is not the mind that directs the pen, but the pen leads the mind into common, empty artificiality. I am afraid of this for myself, for if I am wanting in eloquence, literary simplicity, or picturesqueness, I am not wanting in good taste, and my own style might become distasteful to myself, and thereby render my task impossible. But this I shall see later on. I begin my diary with a short introductory autobiography.

My name is Leon Ploszowski, and I am, as I said before, thirty-five years of age. I come from a wealthy family which has been able to preserve its fortune. As to myself I shall not increase it, and at the same time I am not likely to squander it. My position is such that there is no necessity for me to enter into competition with struggling humanity. As to expensive and ruinous pleasures, I am a sceptic who knows how much they are worth, or rather, knows that they are not worth anything.

My mother died a week after I was born. My father, who loved her more than his life, became affected with melancholia. Even after he recovered from this, at Vienna, he did not wish to return to his estates, as the memories associated with them rent his very soul; he left Ploszow under the care of his sister, my aunt, and betook himself in the year 1848 to Rome, which, during thirty-odd years, he never left once, so as to be near my mother's tomb. I forgot to mention that he brought her remains to Rome, and buried her on the Campo Santo.

We have our own house on the Babuino, called Casa Osoria, from our coat of arms. It looks more like a museum than anything else, as my father possesses no mean collections, especially from the early Christian times. In these collections his whole life is now absorbed. As a young man, he was very brilliant in appearance as well as in mind; his wealth and name added to this, all roads were open

to him, and consequently great things were expected from him. I know this from his fellow-students at Berlin. He was deeply absorbed in the study of philosophy, and it was generally believed his name would rank with such as Cieszkowski, Libelt, and others. Society, and his being a favorite in female circles, diverted him somewhat from scientific studies. In society he was known by the nickname of "Leon l'Invincible." In spite of his social success he did not neglect his philosophical researches, and everybody expected that some day he would electrify the world with a great work, and make his name illustrious. They were disappointed in their expectations.

Of the once so beautiful appearance there still remains up to this day one of the finest and noblest heads. Artists are of the same opinion, and not long ago one of them remarked that it would be difficult to find a more perfect type of a patrician head. As to his scientific career, my father is and remains a cultured and gifted nobleman-dilettante. I almost believe dilettantism to be the fate of all Ploszowskis, to which I will refer later on, when I come to write about myself. As to my father, there is in his desk a yellow manuscript about Triplicity in Nature. I perused it, and it did not interest me. I only remember a comparison between the transcendental belief of Christianity in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, and the natural triplicity of oxygen, hydrogen, and ozone, with many other analogous triplicities from absolute truth, goodness, and beauty, to the syllogism of the minor premise, the major premise, and the conclusion, – a quaint mixture of Hegel and Hoene-Wronski, and utterly useless. I am quite convinced that my father did not intend to have it published, if only for the reason that speculative philosophy had failed in him even before it was set aside by the world. The reason for this failure was the death of my mother. My father, who in spite of his nickname, "Leon l'Invincible," and reputation of conqueror of hearts, was a man of deep feelings and simply worshipped my mother, put many terrible questions to his philosophy, and not obtaining either answer or comfort, recognized its utter emptiness in the presence of a great sorrow. This must have been an awful tragedy of his life, since it almost shattered its foundations, – the brain and heart. His mind became affected, as I said before, and when he recovered he went back to his religious convictions. I was told that at one time he prayed night and day, knelt down in the street when he passed a church, and was carried away by his religious fervor to such an extent that he was looked upon by some as a madman, by others as a saint. It was evident he found more consolation in this than in his philosophical triplicities, for he gradually calmed down and began to lead a more rational life. His heart, with all his power for affection, turned towards me, and his aesthetic bent found employment in the study of early Christianity. The lofty, restless mind wanted nourishment. After his first year in Rome he took up archaeology, and by dint of hard study acquired a thorough knowledge of the antique.

Father Calvi, my first tutor and at the same time a great judge of Roman antiquities, gave him the final impulse towards investigation of the Eternal City. Some fifteen years ago my father became acquainted and subsequently on terms of friendship with the great Rossi, in whose company he spent whole days in the catacombs. Thanks to his extraordinary gifts he soon acquired such consummate knowledge of Rome as to astonish Rossi himself. Several times he began writing treatises on the subject, but never finished what he had begun. Maybe the completion of his collections took up too much of his time, but most likely the reason he will not leave anything behind him except his collections is that he did not confine himself to one epoch or any specialty in his researches. Gradually mediaeval Rome began to fascinate him as much as the first era of Christianity. There was a time when his mind was full of Orsinis and Colonnas; after that he approached the Renaissance, and was fairly captivated by it. From inscriptions, tombs, and the first traces of Christian architecture he passed to nearer times; from the Byzantine paintings to Fiesole and Giotto, from these to artists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, and so on; he fell in love with statues and pictures; his collections certainly increased, but the great work in Polish about the three Romes remained forever in the land of unfulfilled intentions.

As to these collections my father has a singular idea. He wants to bequeath them to Rome under the condition they should be placed in a separate gallery named after him, "Museum Osoria

Ploszowski." Of course his wishes will be respected. I only wonder why my father believes that in doing this he will be more useful to his community than by sending them to his own country.

Not long ago he said to me: "You perceive that scarcely anybody there would see them, and very few derive any benefit, whereas here the whole world can study them, and every individual that benefits thereby carries the benefit to other communities." It does not befit me to analyze how much family pride and the thought of having his name engraved in marble in the Eternal City has to do with the whole scheme. I almost think that such must be the case. As to myself, I am perfectly indifferent where the collections are to remain. But my aunt, to whom by the bye I am shortly going to pay a visit at Warsaw, is very indignant at the idea of leaving the collections out of the country, and as, with her, thought and speech go always together, she expresses her indignation in every letter. Some years ago she was at Rome, and they wrangled every day over the matter, and would have quarrelled outright had not the affection she has towards me subdued her temper.

My aunt is older than my father by several years. When my father, after his great sorrow, left the country, he gave up the Ploszow estate to her, and took instead the ready capital. My aunt has managed the property for thirty years, and manages it perfectly. She is of a rather uncommon character, therefore I will devote to her a few lines. At the age of twenty she was betrothed to a young man who died in exile just when my aunt was about to follow him abroad. From that time forth she refused all offers of marriage and remained an old maid. After my mother's death she went with my father to Vienna and Rome, where she lived with him, surrounding him with the tenderest affections, which she subsequently transferred to me. She is, in the full meaning of the word, *une grande dame*, somewhat of an autocrat, haughty and outspoken, with that self-possession wealth and a high position give, but withal the very essence of goodness and kindliness. Under the cover of abrupt manners she has an excellent and lenient disposition, loving not only her own family, as for instance my father and myself and her own household, but mankind in general. She is so virtuous that really I do not know whether there be any merit in it, as she could not be otherwise if she tried. Her charities are proverbial. She orders poor people about like a constable, and tends them like a Saint Vincent de Paul. She is very religious. No doubts whatever assail her mind. What she does, she does from unshaken principles, and therefore never hesitates in the choice of ways and means. Therefore she is always at peace with herself and very happy. At Warsaw they call my aunt, on account of her abrupt manners, *le bourreau bienfaisant*. Some people, especially among women, dislike her, but generally speaking she lives in peace with all classes.

Ploszow is not far from Warsaw, where my aunt owns a house in which she spends the winter. Every winter she tries to inveigle me there in the hope to see me married. Even now I received a mysteriously worded missive adjuring me to come at once. I shall have to go, as I have not seen her for some time. She writes that she is getting old and wishes to see me before she dies. I confess I do not always feel inclined to go. I know that my aunt's dearest wish is to see me married, therefore every visit brings her a cruel disappointment. The very idea of such a decisive step frightens me. To begin a new life when I am so tired of the old one! Finally, there is another vexatious element in my relations with my aunt. As formerly my father's friends looked upon him as a genius, so she persists in regarding me as one exceptionally gifted, from whom great things are to be expected. To allow her to remain of this opinion seems an abuse of her good faith; to tell her that nothing is to be expected from me would be a more likely conclusion, but at the same time inflict upon the dear old lady a cruel blow.

To my misfortune many of those near me share my aunt's opinion, and this brings me to the point of drawing a sketch of my own character, which is by no means an easy task, as my nature is rather a complicated one.

I brought with me into the world very sensitive nerves, nerves perfected by the culture of generations. During the first years of my childhood I remained under the care of my aunt; after her departure, according to the custom of our country, a nursery governess was engaged for me. As we lived in Rome, among foreign surroundings, and my father wished me to be well grounded in my own

language, he engaged a Polish governess. She is still with us as housekeeper at Babuino. My father also bestowed some pains upon me, especially after my fifth year. I used to go to his room to talk with him, and this developed my mind prodigiously, too much so perhaps for my age. Later on, when his studies and archaeologic researches took up his whole time, he engaged a tutor, Father Calvi. This was an old man, with a mind and faith exceedingly serene. He loved art beyond everything. I believe religion even reacted upon him through its beauty. In the galleries before the old masters, or listening to the music in the Sistine Chapel, he lost himself altogether. There was nothing pagan in these feelings, as they were not based upon sybaritism or sensual enjoyment. Father Calvi loved art with the pure, serene feeling as maybe a Da Fiesole, a Cimabue, or Giotto loved it. And he loved in all humility, as he himself had no gifts that way. I could not say which of the fine arts he loved best, but I believe he leaned mostly towards harmony, which responded to the harmony of his own mind.

Whenever I think of Father Calvi, I am reminded at the same time of the old man that stands beside Raphael's Saint Cecilia listening intently to the music of the spheres.

Between my father and the priest sprang up a friendship which lasted unto the latter's death. It was he who confirmed my father in his archaeologic researches, especially about Rome. There was another bond between these two, – their love for me. Both considered me as an exceptionally gifted child, and of a God knows what promising future. It strikes me at times that I formed for them a kind of harmony, – a rounding of and completion to the world in which they lived; and they loved me with the same absorbing passion with which they loved Rome and its antiquities. Such an atmosphere, such surroundings, could not fail to impress my mind. I was brought up in an original way. With my tutor, – sometimes with my father, – I visited galleries, museums, villas, ruins, catacombs, and the environs of Rome. Father Calvi was equally sensitive to the beauties of nature and to those of art, and taught me at an early age to understand poetic melancholy. The Roman Campagna, the harmony of the arch-line on the sky of the arches in the ruined aqueducts, the fine tracery of the pines, – I understood all this before I could read or had mastered the first rudiments of arithmetic. I was able to set English tourists right to whom the names of Carracci and Caravaggio caused confusion. I learned Latin early and without effort, from being familiar with the Italian language. I gave my opinion about Italian and foreign masters, – which, however unsophisticated, made both my father and my tutor look at each other in astonishment. I did not like Ribera, – there was too great a contrast of color in his pictures, and he frightened me a little; but I liked Carlo Dolce. In short, my tutor, my father, and his friends considered me a very prodigy; I heard myself praised, and it flattered my vanity. But, all the same, it was not the healthiest of educations; and my nervous system, developed too early, always remained very sensitive. It seems strange that these influences were neither so deep nor so lasting as might have been expected. That I did not become an artist is owing, may be, to a lack of gifts that way, – although my drawing and music masters opined differently; but how was it that neither my father nor the priest was able to imbue me with that love of art for art's sake? Have I a feeling for art? Yes. Is art a necessity of my life? Yes, again. But they loved it; I only feel it as a *dilettante*; it is a necessity in so far as it complements every kind of pleasant and delightful sensation. It is one of my delights, but not an all-absorbing passion; I should not like to live without it, but could not devote my whole life to it.

As the schools at Rome left much to be desired, my father sent me to a college in Metz, where I carried off honors and prizes with very little effort. A year before the last term, I ran away to join Don Carlos, and with Tristan's detachment wandered for some time about the Pyrenees; until my father, with the help of the consul in Burgos, found me, and I was sent back to Metz to be duly punished. The penalty was not a heavy one, as my father and the teachers were secretly proud of my escapade. A brilliant success at the examinations quickly earned me a full absolution.

Among my schoolfellows, whose sympathies were naturally with Don Carlos, I henceforth passed as a hero; and as I was at the same time one of the foremost pupils, my position as the first at school was beyond dispute. I was growing up with the conviction that later on, in a larger sphere, it

would be the same. This opinion was shared by my teachers and schoolfellows; and yet the fact is that many of my schoolfellows who at one time would not have dreamed of competing with me, occupy to-day in France high places in literary, scientific, and political spheres; whereas I, had I to choose a profession, should feel considerably perplexed. My social position is excellent. I possess independent means from my mother's side, shall inherit my father's fortune in time to come, and administer the Ploszow estate more or less wisely, as the case may be; but the very limitation of the work excludes all hope of distinguishing myself in life, or playing any prominent part in it.

I shall never be a great administrator or agriculturist; for though I do not mean to shirk my duties, I could not devote my whole life to them, – for the simple reason that my aspirations aim much higher. Sometimes I ask myself whether we Ploszowskis do not delude ourselves as to our abilities. But if such were the case, the delusion would be only personal; other people, strangers, could not be deceived in the same way. Besides, I know that my father is an extraordinarily gifted man. As to myself, I will not enter more fully on the subject, as it might appear mere boastfulness; nevertheless I have the conviction that I could be something infinitely greater than I am.

For instance, at Warsaw (my father and my aunt wished me to enter the university there) Sniatynski and I were fellow-students. We both were drawn towards literature, and tried our hand at it. I do not say I was looked upon as the more gifted of the two, but the truth is that my work then was considered better and more promising than Sniatynski's. Sniatynski has for some years past occupied a prominent position in literature, and I am still the greatly promising Pan Ploszowski, of whom here and there people are wont to say: "If he would only take up something!"

Ah! there is the rub, – "if he would!" But they do not seem to take it into account that one has to know how to will. I thought sometimes that if I had no means of subsistence I should have to work. Certainly I should have to do something in order to earn my bread; but even then I am firmly convinced I should not derive the twentieth part of advantage from my capacities. Besides, such men as Darwin or Buckle were rich; Sir John Lubbock is a banker; most of the known men in France are in easy circumstances. This proves that wealth is not a hindrance, but rather a help towards attaining a proper standing in the chosen field of labor. I confess that, as far as I am concerned, it has done me some service, as it preserved my character from many a crookedness poverty might have exposed it to. I do not mean by this that I have a weak character, – although struggle for existence might have made it stronger; but still I maintain that the less stony the road, the less chance of a fall. It is not owing to constitutional laziness, either, that I am a nullity. I possess alike a great facility for acquiring knowledge, and a desire for it; I read much, and have a good memory. Perhaps I could not summon energy enough for a long, slow work, but the greater facility ought to serve instead; and besides, there is no urgent necessity for me to write encyclopedias, like Littré. He who cannot shine with the steady light of a sun might at least dazzle as a meteor. But oh! that nothingness of the past, – the most probable nothingness of the future! I am growing peevish – and tired; and will leave off writing for to-day.

ROME, 10 January.

Last night, at Count Malatesta's reception, I heard by chance these two words: "l'improductivité Slave." I experienced the same relief as does a nervous patient when the physician tells him that his symptoms are common enough, and that many others suffer from the same disease. I have many fellow-sufferers, not only among other Slavs, a race which I know but imperfectly, but in my own country. I thought about that "improductivité Slave" all night. He had his wits about him who summed the thing up in two words. There is something in us, – an incapacity to give forth all that is in us. One might say, God has given us bow and arrow, but refused us the power to string the bow and send the arrow straight to its aim. I should like to discuss it with my father, but am afraid to touch a sore point. Instead of this, I will discuss it with my diary. Perhaps it will be just the thing to give it any value. Besides, what can be more natural than to write about what interests me? Everybody carries within him his tragedy. Mine is this same "improductivité slave" of the Ploszowskis. Not long ago,

when romanticism flourished in hearts and poetry, everybody carried his tragedy draped around him as a picturesque cloak; now it is carried still, but as a jaegervest next to the skin. But with a diary it is different; with a diary one may be sincere.

ROME, 11 January.

The few days which remain to me before my departure I will use in retrospects of the past, until I come to note down day after day the events of my present life. As I said before, I do not intend to write an autobiography; who and what I am, my future life will show sufficiently. I should not like to enter into minute details of the past, – it is a kind of adding number to number, and a summing up. I always hated the four rules of arithmetic, and especially the first. But I want to have a general idea of the total, so as to have a clearer view of myself. Therefore I go on with the mere outline.

After having finished my studies at the university I went to an agricultural school in France. The work there was easy enough, but it had no special attraction for me. I did it as one who knows that this special branch of knowledge will be useful to him, but at the same time feels that he lowers himself to it and that it does not respond either to his ambition or his faculties. I derived a twofold gain from my sojourn there. Agriculture became to me familiar enough to protect me from being cheated by any agents or bailiffs, and it strengthened my frame so that it could withstand the life I later on led in Paris.

The years following I spent either in Koine or in Paris, not to mention short stays at Warsaw, where my aunt summoned me now and then in order to introduce me to some special favorite of hers with a view to matrimony.

Paris and its life attracted me greatly. With the truly excellent opinion I had then of myself, with more confidence in my intelligence and the self-possession an independent position gives, I still played a very unsophisticated part on this scene of the world. I began by falling desperately in love with Mademoiselle Richemberg of the Comédie Française, and absolutely insisted upon marrying her. I will not dwell now upon the many tragicomic imbroglios, as I am partly ashamed of those times, and partly inclined to laugh at them. Still later on it happened that I took counterfeits for pure gold. The French women, and for the matter of that, my own countrywomen, of whatever class and in spite of all their virtues when young, remind me of my fencing lessons. As the fencer has his hour of practice with the foils so as to keep his hand in, so women practise with sentimental foils. As a mere youth, fairly good looking, I was sometimes invited to a passage of arms, and as I took the matter seriously, received many a scratch. They were not mortal wounds and healed quickly. Besides, everybody has to pay for his apprenticeship in this world, especially in a world like that. My time of probation was, comparatively speaking, a short one. Then came a period one might call "la revanche." I paid back in the same coin, and if now and then I was still taken in, it was with my eyes open to the fact.

Myself of a good social standing, I came to know all shades of society, from the old legitimist circles, where I was not a little bored, to the new aristocracy created by the Bonapartes and the Orléanists, representing the society, perhaps not of Paris, but let us say, of *Nice*. Dumas the Younger, Sardou, and others, take thence their counts, marquises, and princes, who, without historical traditions, have titles and money in plenty, and whose principal aim is to enjoy life. I frequented their salons mostly for the sake of their female element. They are very subtle, the women there, with highly strung nerves always in search for new pleasures, fresh sensations, and truly void of any idealism. They are often as corrupt as the novels they are reading, because their morality finds no support either in religion or tradition. But it is a brilliant world all the same. The hours of practice with the foils are so long there that they look more like days and nights, and the weapons are dangerous sometimes, as they are not blunted. There too I received a few painful lessons until I got my hand in. It would be a sign of mere vanity and still more of bad taste to write about my successes, and I will only say this, that I tried to keep alive the tradition of my father's youth.

The lowest circles of this world slightly merge into the higher sphere of the great *demi-monde.* This *demi-monde* is far more dangerous than appears on the surface because it is not in the least

commonplace. Its cynicism has a certain air of refinement and art. If I did not leave many feathers there it must be because my beak had acquired a certain curve and my claws had grown. Generally speaking of the life in Paris, a man who has passed through that mill feels rather exhausted, and what then of such as I, who leave only to go back again? It is only later on in life we begin to understand that triumphs like these are somewhat like the victories of Pyrrhus. My naturally strong constitution withstood this life, but my nerves are somewhat shattered.

Paris, though, possesses one superiority over other centres of civilization. I do not know of any other city in the world where the elements of art, science, and all kinds of human ideas seem to float in the air to be assimilated by the human brain. Almost unconsciously it imbibes not only the newest ideas in the sphere of intellect, but also loses some of its onesidedness, broadens out, becomes more civilized. I say again, civilized, because in Italy, Germany, and Poland, I met with brains and powerful brains too, but who would not recognize any light but their own, so onesided and barbarian that for one who did not want to sacrifice his own opinions, intercourse from an intellectual point of view was simply impossible.

In France and still more in Paris, similar manifestations have no existence. As a running stream smoothes and polishes the pebbles, rubbing them against each other, so the swift current of life rubs off the angles from the human mind. It is obvious that under such influences my mind became that of a civilized being, that can make due allowance for other people's opinions; I do not utter peacock cries when I hear of anything opposed to my views or something utterly new. It may be that such leniency and tolerance of all opinions leads finally to indifferentism and weakens the active principle in the human mind, but I could not be different now.

A certain mental current got hold of me and carried me along. If the social circles, salons, boudoirs, and clubs took up a considerable part of my time, they did not occupy it altogether. I made many acquaintances in the literary and artistic world, and lived their life, or rather I live it still. Prompted by innate curiosity I read very much, and as I have the faculty of assimilating what I read, I may say that I derived considerable benefit from it and am able to keep step with every intellectual movement of the time.

My consciousness of self is highly developed. At times I feel inclined to send that second self to the devil, that self which does not permit yielding to any sensation, but is always there, searching, criticising every action, feeling, delight, or passion. "Know thyself" may be a wise maxim, but to carry about one's self an ever watchful critic deadens the feeling, dividing as it were your soul in two parts. To exist in a state of mind like this is about as easy as for the bird to fly with one wing. Besides, selfconsciousness too much developed weakens the power of action. But for this, Hamlet would have made a hole in his uncle in the first act, and with the greatest composure taken possession of the throne.

As far as I am concerned, it sometimes protects me or saves me from heedless slips, yet more often tires me, preventing absolute concentration upon one point of action. I carry within me two beings, – the one that protests and criticises, the other leading only half a life, losing gradually all power of decision. I am afraid I shall never free myself from that yoke; on the contrary, the more my mind expands, the more minute will be the knowledge of self, and even on my deathbed I shall not leave off criticising the dying Ploszowski unless disease has fogged my brain.

I must have inherited from my father a synthetic mind, because I always try to generalize matters, and for that reason science attracts me more than philosophy. In my father's time philosophy embraced no more nor less than the whole universe and all being; consequently it had a ready answer for all questions. In our times it has become rational in so far as to confess that it has ceased to exist in the old meaning of the word and remains only as a philosophy of special scientific branches. Truly, when I come to think of it it seems that the human mind too has its tragedies, and it began by confessing its own powerlessness. As I write a personal diary I will treat these matters from a personal point of view. I am not a professed philosopher, because I am nothing by profession; but

as a thinking being I am interested in the new philosophic movement; I have been and am under its influence, and have a full right to speak about what entered the composition, and contributed to the creation, of my moral and intellectual being.

To begin with, I note down that my religious belief I carried still intact with me from Metz did not withstand the study of natural philosophy. It does not follow that I am an atheist. Oh, no! This was good enough in former times, when he who did not believe in spirit, said to himself, "Matter," and that settled for him the question. Nowadays only provincial philosophers cling to that worn-out creed. Philosophy of our times does not pronounce upon the matter; to all such questions it says, "I do not know!" and that "I do not know" sinks into and permeates the mind. Nowadays psychology occupies itself with close analysis and researches of spiritual manifestations; but when questioned upon the immortality of the soul it says the same, – "I do not know;" and truly it does not know, and it cannot know. And now it will be easier to describe the state of my mind. It all lies in these words: I do not know. In this – in the acknowledged impotence of the human mind – lies the tragedy. Not to mention the fact that humanity always has asked, and always will ask, for an answer, they are truly questions of more importance than anything else in the world. If there be something on the other side, and that something an eternal life, then misfortunes and losses on this side are as nothing. In this case we might exclaim with Hamlet: "Nay, then, let the devil wear black, for I'll have a suit of sables."

"I am content to die," says Renan; "but I should like to know whether death will be of any use to me."

And philosophy replies, "I do not know."

And man beats against that blank wall, and like the bedridden sufferer fancies, if he could lie on this or on that side, he would feel easier. What is to be done? Are we to abuse philosophy that, instead of building up new systems which, like a house of cards, fall at a touch, it has confessed its impotence, and begun to search for and classify manifestations within reach of the human intellect? Methinks that I and everybody else has a right to say: "Philosophy, I am struck by your common sense, admire your close analysis; but with all that, you have made me supremely wretched. By your own confession you have no answer for a question, to me of the greatest importance, and yet you had power enough to destroy that faith which not only cleared up all doubts, but soothed and comforted the soul. And do not say that, since you do not lay down the law, you permit me to adhere to my old beliefs. It is not true! Your method, your soul, your very essence is doubt and criticism. This, your scientific method, this scepticism, this criticism you have implanted in the soul till they have become a second nature. As with lunar caustic, you have deadened the spiritual nerves by the help of which one believes simply and without question, so that even if I would believe I have lost the power. You permit me to go to church if I like; but you have poisoned me with scepticism to such a degree that I have grown sceptical even with regard to you, – sceptical in regard to my own scepticism; and I do not know, I do not know. I torture myself, and am maddened by the darkness."

ROME, 12 January.

Yesterday I allowed myself to be carried away by my writing. But all the same it seems to me that I laid a finger upon the rottenness of my soul and that of humanity. There are times when I am indifferent to these questions; then again they seem to tear at me without mercy; all the more as those are matters kept within the privacy of the soul. It would be better to put them aside; but they are too important for that. We want to know what we are to expect, and arrange our life accordingly. I have tried to say to myself: "Stop, you will never leave that enchanted circle; why enter it at all?" I have every qualification to render myself a well-satisfied, cheerful animal; but I cannot always be satisfied with that. It is said the Slav temperament has a tendency towards mysticism. I have noticed that our greatest writers and poets end by becoming mystics. It is not surprising that lesser minds should be now and then troubled. As to myself I feel obliged to take notice of those inward struggles in order to get a faithful image of myself. Perhaps I feel also the want of justifying myself before my own conscience. For instance, with the great "I do not know" before me, I still observe the regulations of

the Church; yet do not consider myself a hypocrite. This would be the case if, instead of the "I do not know," I could say "I know there is nothing." But our scepticism is not an open negation; it is rather a sorrowful, anxious suspicion that perhaps there is nothing, – a dense fog around our minds that stifles the breath and hides from us the light. I therefore stretch out my hands towards that sun that maybe shines beyond the mist. I fancy that not I alone am in that position, and that of all those who go to church and mass on Sundays the prayers might be condensed in these words: "O God! lift the mist!"

I cannot write coldly or dispassionately about all this. I keep religious observances for the simple reason that I long to believe, and since the sweet teaching of my childhood tells me that faith is a gift of grace, I am waiting for that grace. I am waiting that it may be given unto me; that my soul may believe unquestioningly, even as it believed in childhood. Those are my motives; no self-interest prompts me; it would be much easier to be a cheerful, contented animal. Since I am justifying my outward semblance of piety, I have some other less noble and more practical reasons. From the days of my childhood I have been accustomed to keep certain rules, and they have grown into a habit. Henry the Fourth said Paris was well worth a mass; so say I that the peace of those nearest is worth a mass; people of my class, as a rule, observe religious prescriptions, and I should protest against the outward symbols only in such a case if I could find something more conclusive to say than "I do not know." I go to church because I am a sceptic in regard to my own scepticism. It is not a comfortable feeling, and my soul drags one wing along the earth. But it would be much worse with me if I always pondered over these questions so earnestly as I have done while writing these last pages. Fortunately for me this is not the case. I have mentioned already that at times I am indifferent to them. Life carries me along, and although in the main I know what to think of its hollow pleasures, I give myself up to it altogether, and then the moral "to be, or not to be" has no meaning for me. A strange thing, about the power of which not much has been said, is the influence of social suggestion on the mind. In Paris, for instance, I feel happier not only because the continual mill deafens me, – I am swallowed up by the surging masses, and my mind is diverted by tricks of the fencing ring, – but also because the people there, without being conscious of it, live as if it were worth their while to put all their energies into this life, and as if beyond there was nothing but a chemical process. My pulse begins to beat in unison with theirs; I feel myself in harmony with my surroundings; amuse myself or bore myself, conquer or am conquered, but enjoy a comparative rest.

ROME, BABUINO, 13 January.

I have only four days left before my departure, and will now sum up what I said about myself. I am an individual rather worn out, very sensitive, and of a highly nervous temperament. I have a strongly developed consciousness of self, seconded by comparative culture, and taken altogether, may consider myself an intellectually developed being.

My scepticism debars me from all firm convictions. I look, observe, criticise, sometimes fancy I get hold of some essential truth, but am ready always to doubt even that. I have already said all that was necessary in reference to religion. As to my social creed I am a conservative so far as a man in my position is bound to be, and so far as conservatism suits me. No need to mention that I am far from considering conservatism as a dogma, which no one is allowed to touch or to criticise. I am too much civilized to take a party view of either aristocracy or democracy. I leave that as a pastime to those who live in the country, or in remote places where ideas, like fashions, are some ten years late. From the time when privileges were done away with, the question has been closed; but in remoter parts, where the world remains more or less stagnant, it has become not so much a question of principle as rather a question of vanity and nerves. In regard to myself, I like well-bred people, – people with brains and nerves, and look for them where they are most readily found. I like them as I like works of art, fine scenery, and beautiful women. From an aesthetic point of view, I possess refined nerves, – too refined, perhaps, owing to my early training and a naturally impressionable temperament. This aesthetic sensitiveness gives me as many delights as torments, and renders me one great service: it preserves me from cynicism or otherwise extreme corruption, and serves me instead

of moral principle. I recoil from many things, not because they are wicked, but because they are ugly. From my aesthetic nerves I derive also a certain delicacy of feeling. Taken all in all, it seems to me that I am a man a little marred by life, decent enough though to say the truth, rather floating in mid-air because not supported by any dogma, either social or religious. I am also without an aim to which I could devote my life.

One word more about my abilities before concluding the synthesis. My father, my aunt, my colleagues, and sometimes strangers, consider them simply prodigious. I allow that my intellect has a certain glitter. But will the *improductivité Slave* scatter all the hopes invested in me? Considering all I have, or rather have not done up to this day, either for others or myself, I feel inclined to think that such will be the case. This confession costs me more than appears on the surface. My irony when I think of myself tastes bitter on the palate. There was something barren in the clay from which God formed the Ploszowskis, since on that soil everything springs up and grows so luxuriously, yet produces no fruit. Truly, if with this barrenness, this powerlessness to act, I possessed the abilities of a genius, it would be a strange kind of genius, – a genius without portfolio, as there are ministers of state without portfolio.

This definition, "a genius without portfolio" seems to fit me to perfection. I shall take out a patent of invention for the word. But the definition does not apply to me alone. Its name is legion. Side by side with the *improductivité Slave* goes the genius without portfolio; it is a pure product of the Slav soil. Once more I say its name is legion. I do not know another part of the world where so much ability is wasted, in which even those who bring forth something give so little, so incredibly little, in comparison with what God gave them.

ROME, BABUINO, 14 January.

Another letter from my aunt urging me to come. I am coming, I am coming, dear aunt, though God knows I am doing it out of love for you; otherwise I should greatly prefer to remain where I am. My father seems not well; from time to time he feels a strange numbness on the whole of his left side. At my urgent entreaties he has seen a physician, but I am quite sure the physic he received is safely stowed away in a cupboard, according to an old custom he has. Once he opened the mysterious receptacle and showed me a whole collection of bottles, pill-boxes, and powders, saying: "For mercy's sake! this would kill a strong man, let alone a sick one." Up to now, this quaint way of looking upon medicine has not done him any harm, but I am troubled about the future. Another reason for my unwillingness to go is my aunt's plan of campaign. Of course she is anxious to see me married. I do not know whether she has anything definite in view. God grant I may be wrong; but she does not deny the intention. "About an eligible *parti* like you," she writes, "there will be at once a war of the roses, you may be sure of that." I am tired and do not wish for any war, and least of all to end it like Henry VII. by a marriage. On the other hand, – I dare not tell my aunt, but may confess it to myself, – I do not like Polish women. I am thirty-five, and like other men that live much in society, I had my sentimental passages, among others, with Polish women, and from these encounters I carried away the impression that they are the most impossible and most wearying women in the world. I do not know whether, generally speaking, they are more virtuous than their French or Italian sisters; I only know that they are more pathetic. The very remembrance of it gives me a creepy sensation. I can understand an elegy over a broken pitcher when you behold the shards for the first time; but to go on with the same pathos over a much mended pitcher, looks more like a comic opera. A pleasant role that of the listener, whom courtesy bids to take it seriously.

Strange, fantastic women with fiery imagination and cold temperaments! In their sentiments there is neither cheerfulness nor even simplicity. They are in love with the outward forms of love, caring less for its intrinsic value. With French or Italian women after the first skirmishes, you may be sure of your "ergo." With a Pole it is different. Somebody said that if a man is mistaken and says two and two makes five, you may be able to set him right; a woman says two and two is a lamp, and you come against a blank wall. In a Polish woman's logic two and two may be not four, but a lamp,

love, hatred, a cat, tears, duty, scorn; in brief, you cannot foresee anything, calculate upon anything, or guard against anything. It may be, after all, because of these very pitfalls that their virtue is better guarded than that of other women, if only for the reason that the beleaguering forces get mortally tired. But what struck me, and what I resented most, is that those pitfalls, barricades, and the whole array of defence are not so much erected for the repulse of the enemy as to give them the sensation of warfare. I spoke of this in a roundabout way with a clever woman only half a Pole, for her father was an Italian.

She listened to me for a while, then said at last: —

"It seems to me you are very much like the fox looking at the dovecote. He does not like, and it makes him wroth, to see the doves dwelling so high, and unlike the hens, always on the wing. All you have said tells in favor of Polish women."

"How do you make that out?"

"The more a Polish woman seems intolerable as somebody else's wife, the more desirable she is to have for one's own."

She had driven me into a corner, and I could not find an answer. Perhaps she is right, and I look upon it from a fox's point of view. There is also not the slightest doubt that if I were to marry, especially a Pole, I not only should search for her among the high flying doves, but I should choose a perfectly white one.

But I am like the chickens when asked in what sauce they would like to be served; I do not want to be dished up at all. Now, to return to my grievance against you, dear ladies, you are before everything in love with love, and not with the lover. Every one of you is a queen in her own rights, and in this you differ from other women; every one seems to confer a boon and a favor in permitting herself to be loved; none agrees to be only an addition or completion of a man's life, who, besides matrimony, has some other aims in life. You want us to live for you, instead of living for us. Last, but not least, you love your children more than your husband. His final fate is that of a satellite turning forever round in the same orbit. I have seen this and noticed it very often in a general way; but now and then there happens to be found a pure diamond too among the chaff. No, my queens and princesses, permit me to worship you from a safe distance.

Fancy putting aside all other aims, all ideals, in order to burn incense every day at the shrine of a woman, and that woman one's own wife. No, dear ladies, that is not sufficient to fill a man's life.

Nevertheless, that second self sometimes mutters, "And what else is there for you to do? If, anybody it is you who are fittest for the sacrifice, for what are your aims or your intentions? No! the deuce and all! To change the whole tenor of one's life, renounce old habits, comforts, pleasures, it must be a great love, indeed, that could induce me to such a venture. Marriage means a most amazing act of faith in a woman, I could never summon courage enough to commit. No, most decidedly, I do not wish to be served up in any sauce whatever."

WARSAW, 21 January.

I arrived here to-day. I broke my journey at Vienna which made it less tiring, but my nerves do not let me sleep, so I take up my journal which has grown as a friend to me. What joy there was in the house at my arrival, and what a dear, kind soul that aunt of mine is! I do believe she is awake now for very joy. She could scarcely eat any dinner. When in the country at Ploszow, she is continually wrangling with her land-agent, Pan Chwastowski, a burly old nobleman who does not give in to her one whit. Sometimes their disputes reach to such a pitch that a catastrophe seems imminent; then suddenly my aunt relaxes, falls to with an appetite and eats her dinner with a certain determination. To-day she had only the servants to scold, and that was not sufficient to give her an appetite. She was in capital spirits though, and the loving glances she bestowed on me beggar description. In intimate circles I am called my aunt's fetich, which makes her very angry.

Of course my fears and presentiments have not deceived me. There are not only plans, but also a definite object. After dinner my aunt is in the habit of walking up and down the room, and often

thinks aloud. Therefore, in spite of the mystery she deems fit to surround herself with, I heard the following monologue: —

"He is young, handsome, rich, intelligent; she would be a fool if she did not fall in love with him at once."

To-morrow I am to go to a picnic the gentlemen are giving for the ladies. They say it is going to be a grand entertainment.

WARSAW, 25 January.

I am often bored at balls. As a *homo sapiens* and an *éligible parti*, I abhor them; as an artist, that is, artist without portfolio, I now and then like them. What a splendid sight, for instance, that broad staircase well lit up, where, amid a profusion of flowers the women ascend to the ball-room. They all appear tall, and when not seen from below (because the training robes destroy the illusion) they remind one of the angels on Jacob's ladder. I like the motion, the light, the flowers, and the gauzy material which enwraps the young girls as in a soft mist; and then those shoulders, necks, and arms which released from the warm cloaks seem at once to grow firm and crisp as marble. My sense of smell, too, is gratified, for I delight in good perfumes.

The picnic was a great success. To give Staszewski his due, he knows how to arrange these things. I arrived together with my aunt, but lost sight of her in the entrance hall, for Staszewski himself came down to lead her upstairs. The dear old lady had on her ermine cloak she uses on great occasions, and which her friends call her robe of state. When I entered the ballroom I remained near the door and looked around. What a strange sensation when, after a long interval, one comes back to once familiar scenes. I feel I am a part of them, and yet I look at them and criticise them as if I were a stranger. Especially the women attracted my attention, – I must admit, fastidious as I am, that our society is very choice. I saw pretty faces and plain faces, but all stamped with the same well-bred refinement. The necks and shoulders, in spite of the softly rounded contours, simply reminded me of Sevres china. There is a restful elegance, something daintily finished, in all of them. Truly, they do not imitate Europe, – they are Europe.

I remained there about a quarter of an hour indolently musing which of all these dainty damsels my aunt had chosen for me, when Sniatynski and his wife came up. I had seen him only a few months ago at Rome, and had known her, too, for some time. I like her very much; she has a sweet face and belongs to those exceptional Poles that do not absorb their husband's whole life, but surrender their own. Presently a young girl slipped in between us, and while greeting Pani Sniatynska, put out a small hand encased in a white kid glove and said: —

"Don't you know me, Leon?"

I felt slightly perplexed at this question, for indeed I did not know who it was that greeted me thus familiarly; but not wishing to seem rude, I smiled and pressed the little hand, saying, "Of course I do." I must have looked a little foolish because, presently Pani Sniatynska burst out laughing and said, "But he does not recognize you; it is Aniela P."

Aniela, my cousin! No wonder I did not recognize her. The last time I saw her, some ten or eleven years ago at Ploszow, she wore a short frock and pink stockings. I remember the midges had stung her about the legs, and she stamped on the ground like a little pony. How could I dream that these white shoulders, this breast covered with violets, this pretty face with the dark eyes, in short, this girl in the full bloom of maidenhood, was the same as the little wagtail on thin feet I had known formerly. How pretty she had grown; a fine butterfly had come from that chrysalis. I renewed my greeting very heartily. Afterwards when the Sniatynskis had left us she told me that my aunt and her mother had sent her to fetch me. I offered my arm and we went across the room.

All at once it burst in upon me. It was she, Aniela, my aunt had in her mind. That then was the secret, the surprise meant for me. My aunt always used to be fond of her, and troubled herself not a little over Pani P.'s financial difficulties. I only wondered why these ladies were not stopping with my aunt; but I did not ponder over it long; I preferred to look at Aniela, who naturally interested

me more than the average girl. As we had to make our way to the other end of the room and the crush was great, I had ample time for conversation and scrutiny. Fashion this year has it that gloves should be worn halfway up the elbow, so I noticed that the arm which rested on mine had a slightly dusky shade, covered as it was with a light down. And yet she could not be called a brunette. Her hair is a light brown with a gleam of bronze. Her eyes are light too, but appear dark, shaded as they are by long eyelashes; the eyebrows, on the contrary, are dark and very pretty. The characteristic of this little head with the low brow is that exuberance of hair, eyebrows, eyelashes, and that down, which on the face is very slight. This at some future time may spoil her beauty, but at present she is so young that it points only to an exuberance of organism, and shows that she is not a doll, but a woman full of warm, active life.

I do not deny that, fastidious as are my nerves and not easily thrilled, I fell under a spell. She is my type exactly. My aunt, who, if she ever heard about Darwin would call him a wicked writer, has unconsciously adopted his theory of natural selection. Yes, she is my type. They have baited the hook this time with a dainty morsel.

An electric current seemed to pass from her arm into mine. Besides I noticed that she too seemed pleased with me, and that naturally raises one's spirits. My scrutiny from an artistic point of view proved highly satisfactory. There are faces that seem to be a translation from music or poetry into human shape. Such a face is Aniela's. There is nothing commonplace about it. As children are inoculated for small-pox so the upper classes inoculate modesty in their girls; there is something so very innocent in this face, but through that very innocence peeps out a warm temperament. What a combination! – as if some one said, "An innocent Satan!"

Unsophisticated as Aniela is, she is yet a little bit of a coquette, and quite conscious of her attractions. Knowing for instance that she has beautiful eyelashes, she very often drops her eyes. She has also a graceful way of lifting her head and looking at the person she is speaking to. In the beginning she was slightly artificial, from shyness I fancy, but soon afterwards we chatted together as if we had never been separated since those times at Ploszow. My aunt is highly amusing with her absentmindedness, but I should not care to have her for a fellow-conspirator. Scarcely had we approached the two elderly ladies and I exchanged greetings with Aniela's mother, when my aunt, noticing my animation, turned to her companion and said aloud, "How pretty she looks in those violets! It was, after all, a happy thought that he should see her the first time at a ball."

Aniela's mother grew very confused, and so did Aniela, and the truth began to dawn upon me why it was the ladies were not staying with my aunt. This had been Pani P.'s idea; she and my aunt had been plotting together. I suppose Aniela had not been taken into confidence, but thanks to female perspicacity could not help guessing how matters stood.

To put an end to the embarrassing situation I turned to her and said, "I warn you that I am not very proficient at dancing, but as they will carry you off any moment, will you grant me a waltz?"

Aniela for all answer handed me her tablets and said resolutely, "Put down as many as you like."

I confess that I do not like the rôle of a puppet pulled by a string, therefore I resolved to take an active part in the old ladies' politics. I took the tablets and wrote, "Did you understand that they want us to marry?"

Aniela read it and changed color. She remained silent for a moment, as if not trusting her voice, or hesitating what to say; at last she lifted her eyelashes and looking straight into my eyes she replied, "Yes."

It was now her turn to question me, not in words but with her eyes. I already knew I had made a favorable impression on her, and if she had an inkling of the truth her mind must needs dwell a good deal on me. I interpreted the look of her eyes thus: "I am aware my mother and my aunt want us to become acquainted, to know each other well. And you?"

Instead of an answer I put my arm around her waist, and lightly drawing her towards me, led her into the mazes of a waltz. I remembered my fencing practice.

A mute answer could not but stir up fancies in a girl's mind, especially after what I had written on the tablets. I thought to myself: "What harm is there if her fancy turns into my direction? As far as I am concerned I shall not go a step further than I intend, and if her fancy travels further I cannot help it." Aniela dances exquisitely, and she danced this waltz as a woman should, with a certain vehemence and self-abandon at the same time. I noticed that the violets on her breast rose and fell far quicker than the quiet step of the dance warranted. I understood that she felt agitated. Love is a law of nature, kept under control by a careful bringing-up. But once the girl is told that she may love this one or that, the chance is she will obey very readily. Aniela evidently expected that after I had been bold enough to write those few words I would allude to it further, but I kept aloof on purpose to leave her in suspense.

I wished also to look at her from a distance. Decidedly she is my type. Women of that kind have a special attraction for me. Oh, if only she were thirty, and not a girl they expect me to marry!

WARSAW, 30 January.

They have come to stay with us. Yesterday I spent all the day with Aniela. She has more pages to her soul than most girls at her age. On many of these pages the future will write, but there is room for many beautiful things. She feels and understands everything, and is an excellent listener, and follows the conversation with her large, intelligent eyes. A woman that can listen possesses one more attraction, because she flatters man's vanity. I do not know whether Aniela is conscious of this, or whether it be her womanly instinct. Maybe she has heard so much about me from my aunt that she deems every word I say an oracle. She is decidedly not without coquetry. To-day I asked her what she wished for most in life. She answered, "To see Rome;" then her eyelashes fell, and she looked indescribably pretty. She sees that I like her, and it makes her happy. Her coquetry is charming, because it comes straight from a delighted heart, and tries to please the chosen object. I have not the slightest doubt that her heart is fluttering towards me, as a moth flutters into the candle. Poor child! she feels the elders have given their mute consent, and she obeys only too willingly. I can watch the process from hour to hour.

Perhaps I ought to inquire of myself, "If you do not want to marry her, why are you trying to make her love you?" But I do not choose to answer that question. I feel at peace here, and restful! After all, what is it I am doing? I try not to appear more foolish or disagreeable or less courteous than I am by nature, that is all.

Aniela appeared to-day at breakfast in a loose sailor-dress, which only just betrayed the outline of her shape, and she looked bewitching. Her eyes were still full of dreaminess and sleep. It is something wonderful what an impression she is making on me.

31 January.

My aunt is giving an entertainment in honor of Aniela. I am paying visits and leaving cards right and left. I called upon the Sniatynskis, and sat with them for a long time, because I feel there at home. Sniatynski and his wife are always wrangling with each other, but their life is different from that of most other married people. As a rule, it happens when there is one cloak, each tries to get possession of it; these two dispute because he wishes her to have it, and she wants it all for him. I like them immensely, – it is so refreshing to see there is still happiness out of novels. With all that, he is so clever; as sensitive as a Stradivarius violin, and quite conscious of his happiness. He wanted it, and has got it. I envy him. I always used to like his conversation. They offered me some black coffee; it is only at literary people's houses one can get such coffee. He asked me what I thought of Warsaw after so long an absence. There was also some talk about the ball, especially from the lady's part. She seems to guess something about my aunt's plans, and wants to have one of her rosy fingers in the pie, – especially as she comes from the same part of the country as Aniela.

We touched personal matter very slightly, but had a lively discussion about society in general. I told him what I thought about its refinement; and as Sniatynski, though he criticises it himself mercilessly, is always greedy to hear its praises sung, it put him into capital spirits.

"I like to hear you say so," he remarked, "as you have so many chances to make comparisons, and are rather inclined to look at the world from a pessimist's point of view."

"I do not know whether what I just said does not lean that way."

"How do you prove that?" asked Sniatynski, quickly.

"You see, refined culture might be compared to cases with glass and china, upon which is written, 'Fragile.' For you, a spiritual son of Athens, for me and a few others, it is pleasant to be in touch with it; but if you want to build anything on such foundation, you will find the beams coming down on your head. Don't you think those refined *dilettanti* of life are bound to get the worst in a struggle with a people of strong nerves, a tough skin, and iron muscles?"

Sniatynski, who is very lively, jumped up and walked about the room, then rushed at me impetuously. "You have seen only one side of the picture, and not the best one, either; do not think there is nothing more to be seen. You come from abroad, and pronounce judgment upon us as if you had lived here all your life."

"I do not know what else there may be, but I know that nowhere in the world is there such a vast difference between the classes. On one side, the most refined culture, – over-refined, if anything; on the other, absolute barbarism and ignorance."

A long discussion followed, and it was dusk before I left them. He said if I came oftener to see them, he would show me the connecting link between the two classes, introduce me to men who were neither over-refined, ignorant, nor sickening with dilettantism, but strong men, who knew what they wanted, and were going straight for it.

When I was going away, Sniatynski called out after me:

"From such as you nothing good will come, but your children may be men; but you and such like must lose every penny you possess, otherwise even your grandchildren will do nothing useful."

I still think that on the whole I was right. I have taken special notice of this conversation, as this discrepancy has occupied my thoughts ever since my arrival. The fact is that between the classes there is a vast gulf that precludes all mutual understanding, and makes simultaneous efforts simply impossible. At least, I look upon it in that light. Sèvres china and common clay, – nothing between; one *très fragile*, the other, Ovidius's "rudis indigestaque moles." Of course Sèvres china sooner or later breaks, and from the clay the future may mould anything it likes.

2 February.

Yesterday my aunt's entertainment took place. Aniela was the cynosure of every eye. Her white shoulders peeping out from a cloud of muslin, gauze, or whatever it is called, she looked like a Venus rising from the foam. I fancy it is already gossiped about that I am going to marry her. I noticed that her eyes often strayed in my direction, and she listened to her partners with an absent, distracted expression.

Guileless child! she cannot hide the truth, and shows so plainly what is going on in her heart that I could not help seeing it, unless I were blind. And she is so humble and quietly happy when I am with her! I like her immensely, and begin to waver. Sniatynski is so happy in his home life! It is not the first time I have asked myself whether Sniatynski be more foolish or wiser than I. Of the many problems of life, I have not solved one. I am nothing; scepticism is sapping my whole system; I am not happy, and am very tired. He, with less knowledge than I, does useful work, has a good and handsome wife, the rogue! and his very philosophical principles, adapted to life, help to make him happy. No, it must be acknowledged, it is I who am the more foolish of the two.

The keynote of Sniatynski's philosophy is found in his dogmas of life. Before he was married he said to me: "There are two things I never approach with scepticism, and do not criticise: to me as a literary man, the community is a dogma; as a private individual, the beloved woman." I thought to myself then: "My mind is bolder, – it analyzes even that." But I see now that this boldness has not led me to anything. And how lovely she is, – that little dogma of mine with the long eyelashes! Decidedly, I am going the way I did not mean to go. The singular attraction which draws me towards

her cannot be explained by the law of natural selection. Ho! there is something more, and I know what it is. She loves me with all the freshness of her honest heart, as I was never loved before. How different from the fencing practice of former years, when thrusts were dealt or guarded against! The woman who is much liked, and who in her turn loves, is sure to win in the end if she perseveres.

"The stray bird," says the poet Slowacki, "comes back to his haven of rest and peace all the more eagerly after the lonesomeness of his stormy flight. Nothing takes so firm a hold upon a man's heart as the consciousness that he is loved."

A few pages before, I wrote God knows what about Polish women; but if any one fancies that for the sake of a few written sentences I feel myself bound to pursue a certain course, he is vastly mistaken.

How that girl satisfies my artistic taste is simply wonderful. After the ball, came the pleasantest moment when, everybody gone, we sat down and had some tea. Wanting to see how the world looked outside, I drew back the heavy curtains. It was eight o'clock in the morning and a flood of daylight poured into the room. It was so perfectly blue, seen by the glare of the lamps, that it reminded me of the Capri grotto. And there stood Aniela, with that blue haze around her white shoulders. She looked so lovely that all my resolutions tottered and fell to pieces; I felt positively grateful to her for this glimpse of beauty, as if it were her doing. I pressed her hand more tenderly than I had ever done before when saying good-night to her.

"Good-morning, you mean, not good-night, – good-morning."

Either I am blind and deaf or her eyes and voice expressed: "I love you, I love you."

I do the same – almost.

My aunt looking at us gave a low grunt of contentment. I saw tears shining in her eyes.

To-morrow we leave here for Ploszow.

PLOSZOW, 5 February.

This is my second day in the country. We had a splendid drive. The weather was clear and frosty. The snow creaked under the runners of the sledge and glittered and sparkled in the fields. Towards sunset the vast plain assumed pink and purple shades. The rooks, cawing and flapping their wings, flew in and out the lime trees. Winter, the strong, homely winter, is a beautiful thing. There is a certain vigor in it, and dignity, and what is more, so much sincerity. Like a true friend, who, regardless as to consequences, hurls cutting truths, it smites you between the eyes without asking leave. By way of compensation it bestows upon you some of its own vigor. We were all of us glad to leave the town – the elder ladies, that their pet scheme might be brought to a climax by closer companionship; I, because I was near Aniela; she, maybe for the same reason, felt happy too. She bent down several times to kiss my aunt's hands, apropos of nothing, out of sheer content. She looked very pretty in a long, fluffy boa and a coquettish fur cap, from under which the dark eyes and the almost childish face peeped forth.

How young she looks.

I feel at home in Ploszow, it is so quiet and restful; and I like the huge, old-fashioned chimneys. The woods are to my aunt as the apple of her eye, but she does not grudge herself fuel; and big logs, which are crackling and burning there from morning until night, make it look bright and cheerful. We sat around the fire the whole afternoon. I brought out some of my reminiscences, and told them about Rome and its treasures. The three women listened with such devoutness that it made me feel ridiculous in my own eyes. From time to time, while I was talking, my aunt cast a searching glance at Aniela to see whether she expressed enough admiration. But there is too much of that already. Yesterday she said to me: —

"Another man might spend there his whole life and not see half the beautiful things you do."

My aunt added with dogmatic firmness, —

"I have always said so."

It is as well that there is not another sceptic here, for his presence would embarrass me not a little.

A certain dissonant chord in our little circle is Aniela's mother. The poor soul has had so many sorrows and anxieties that her cheerfulness, if ever she had any, is a thing of the past. She is simply afraid of the future, and instinctively suspects pitfalls even in good fortune. She was very unhappy in her married life, and afterwards has had continual worries about her estate, which is very much involved. In addition to all this she suffers from nervous headaches.

Aniela belongs to that category of women who never trouble themselves about money matters. I like her for that, for it proves that she thinks of higher things. For the matter of that, everything in her pleases and delights me now.

Tenderness grows on the soil of attraction by the senses, as quick as flowers after a warm rain. To-day, in the morning, I saw the maid carrying up her gown and boots; this moved me very much, especially the little, little boots, as if the wearing of them was the crown of all virtues in Aniela.

PLOSZOW, 8 or 9 February.

My aunt has taken up her visual warfare with Pan Chwastowski. This is such an original habit of hers that I must describe one of their disputes. The dear lady can evidently not exist without it, or at least not enjoy her dinner; Chwastowski, again, who, by the bye, is an excellent manager, is a compound of brimstone and saltpetre, and does not allow anybody to thwart him; therefore the quarrels sometimes reach the acute state. When entering the dining-room they eye each other with suspicious glances. The first shot is fired by my aunt while eating her soup.

"It is a very long time, Pan Chwastowski, since I heard anything about the winter crops, and Pan Chwastowski, instead of giving me the information, speaks about anything but what I want to know."

"They were very promising in autumn, my lady; now they are covered by a yard or two of snow, – how am I to know the state they are in? I am not the Lord Almighty."

"I beg of you, Pan Chwastowski, not to take the Lord's name in vain."

"I do not look under His snow, therefore do not offend Him."

"Do you mean to insinuate that I do?"

"Most certainly."

"Pan Chwastowski, you are unbearable."

"Oho! bearable enough because he bears a great deal."

In this or that way the screw goes round. There is scarcely a meal but they have some differences. Then my aunt at last subsides, and seems to wreak the remnants of her anger on the dinner. She enjoys a hearty appetite. As the dinner goes on she gradually brightens up and recovers her usual spirits. After dinner, I offer my arm to Aniela's mother, my aunt accepts Pan Chwastowski's, and presently they sip their black coffee in peace and perfect amity. My aunt inquires after his sons, and he kisses her hands. I saw those sons of his when they were at the university, and I hear they are promising young men, but great radicals.

Aniela used to get frightened at first at these prandial disputes, until I gave her the clue to the real state of things. So now when the first signal of battle is given, she looks at me slyly from under those long lashes, and there is a little smile lurking in the corners of her mouth. She is so pretty then I feel tempted to take her in my arms. I have never met a woman with such delicate veins on her temples.

12 February.

Truly a metamorphosis of Ovidius on the earth and within me! The frost has gone, the fine weather vanished, and there is Egyptian darkness. I cannot describe it better than by saying the weather is foul. What an abominable climate! In Rome, at the worst, the sun shines at intervals half a dozen times a day; here lamps ought to be lit these two days. The black, heavy mist seems to permeate one's thoughts, and paint them a uniform gray. My aunt and Pan Chwastowski were more intent than usual upon warfare. He maintained that my aunt, by not allowing the woods to be touched, causes the timber to spoil; my aunt replied that others did their best to cut down all the timber, and not a

bit of forest would soon be left in the country. "I am getting old; let the trees grow old too." This reminds me of the nobleman of vast possessions who only allowed as much land to be cultivated as to where the bark of his dog could be heard.

Aniela's mother, without intending it, gave me to-day a bad quarter of an hour. Alone with me in the conservatory, she began telling me, with maternal boastfulness, that an acquaintance of mine, a certain Pan Kromitzki, had made overtures for Aniela's hand.

I had a sensation as if somebody tried to remove a splinter from my flesh with a fork. As the blue waves of light had stirred up within me a tender feeling for Aniela, – although it was no merit of hers, – so now the wooing of such a man as Kromitzki threw cold water upon the nascent affections. I know that ape Kromitzki, and do not like him. He comes from Austrian Silesia, where it seems they had owned estates. In Rome he used to say that his family had borne the title of count already in the fifteenth century, and at the hotels put himself down as "Graf von Kromitzki." But for his small, black eyes, not unlike coffee-berries, and his black hair, his head looks as if cut out from a cheese-rind, – for such is his complexion. He reminds me of a death's-head, and I simply have a physical loathing for him. Ugh! how the thought of him in connection with Aniela has spoiled her image. I am quite aware that she is in no way responsible for Kromitzki's intentions; but it has damaged her in my eyes. I do not know why her mother should think it necessary to tell me these details; if it be a warning, it has missed its aim. She must have some grand qualities, this Pani P., since she has managed to steer her life through so many difficulties, and at the same time educated her daughter so well; but she is clumsy and tedious with her headaches and her macaronism.

"I confess," she said, "that the alliance suited me. At times I almost break down under the weight of troubles. I am a woman with little knowledge of business, and what I acquired I have paid for with my health; but I had to think of my child. Kromitzki is very clever. He has large concerns at Odessa, and is at present engaged in some large speculations in naphtha at Baku, or some such place, 'que sais-je.' It seems there is some difficulty about his not being a Russian subject. If he married Aniela he might clear the estate; and as an extensive landowner he would have no difficulty in getting naturalized."

"What does Aniela say to this?" I asked impatiently.

"She does not care for him, but is a good and obedient child. I am anxious to see her married before I die."

I did not care to prolong the conversation, which irritated me more than I can tell; and though I understand well enough, if that match has not been arranged, it was Aniela's doing, yet I feel aggrieved that she should allow a man like that even to look at her. For me this would be a mere question of nerves. I forget, however, that others are not constituted like me, and that Kromitzki, in spite of his cadaverous face, passes among women as a good-looking man.

I wonder what his affairs are. I forgot to ask whether he is at Warsaw; most likely he is, as he goes there every winter. As to his business, it may be very magnificent, but I doubt whether it be on a solid basis. I am not a speculator, and could not for the life of me transact a stock-exchange affair; but I am shrewd enough to know it. Besides I am a close observer, and quick to draw conclusions. Therefore I do not believe in noblemen with a genius for speculation. I am afraid Kromitzki's is neither an inherited nor innate quality, but a neurosis driving him into a certain direction. I have seen examples of that kind. Now and then blind fortune favors the nobleman-speculator, and he accumulates wealth; but I have not seen one who did not come to grief before he died.

Capacities such as these are either inherited or acquired by early training. Chwastowski's boys will be able to do something in that way because their father lost by accident all his fortune, and they have to make a fresh start. But he who with ready capital, without commercial tradition or professional knowledge, embarks upon commerce, is bound to come to grief. Speculation cannot be based upon illusions, and there is too much of that in the speculations of our noblemen. Upon the whole, I wish Pan von Kromitzki every luck!

14 February.

Pax! pax! pax! The painful impression has vanished. What keen perceptions Aniela has! I endeavored to be cheerful, though I felt out of spirits, and I do not think there was any perceptible change in my behavior; yet she perceived a change at once. To-day, when we looked at the albums and were alone, – which happens pretty often, on purpose I suppose, – she grew embarrassed and changed color. I saw at once she wanted to say something, and did not dare. For a single moment the mad thought flashed across my brain that she was about to confess her love for me. But as quick as the thought, I remembered it was a Polish girl I had before me. A mere chit of a girl – I beg her pardon, a young princess, – would rather die than be the first to confess her love. When asked she gives her assent rather as a favor. Besides, Aniela very quickly corrected my mistake; suddenly closing the album she said in a hesitating voice: "What is the matter with you, Leon? There is something the matter, is there not?"

I began assuring her at once that there was nothing the matter with me, and to laugh away her perturbation; but she only shook her head and said: "I have seen that something was amiss these last two days. I know that men like you may be easily offended, and I have asked myself whether anything I might have done or said – " Her voice shook a little, but she looked straight at me.

"I have not hurt you, have I?"

There was a moment I felt tempted to say, "If there is anything wanting to my happiness it is you, Aniela, only you;" but a sudden terror clutched me by the hair. Not terror of her, but of the consequences that might follow. I took her hand, kissed it, and said in the most cheerful voice I could assume, "You are a good and dear girl; do not mind me, – there is nothing whatever the matter; besides, you are our guest, and it is I who ought to see that you are comfortable."

And I kissed again her hand, both hands in fact. All this could be still put down to cousinly affection, – human nature is so mean that the consciousness that there was still a door through which I could escape lent me courage. I call this feeling mean for the very reason that I am not responsible to anybody except to myself, and myself I cannot deceive. Yet I feel that even to myself I shall not give a strict account, because in so far as my relations to Aniela are concerned I am carried away by my sensations. I still feel on my lips the touch of her hand, – and my desires are simply without limit. Sooner or later I shall myself close that door through which I could still escape. But could I still escape? Yes, if some extraneous circumstances came to my aid.

In the meanwhile she loves me, and everything draws me towards her. To-day I asked myself, "If it is to be, why put it off?" I found a ready answer: "Because I do not want to lose any of my present sensations; the sudden thrills, the charm of the words unspoken, the questioning glances, the expectations. I wish to spin out the romance to the very end. I found fault with women that they preferred the semblance of love to love itself, and now I am quite as anxious not to lose any of its outward manifestations. But as one gets more advanced in years one attaches greater importance to these things; and besides, I am an Epicurean in my sensations."

After the above conversation with Aniela, we both recovered our spirits. During evening I helped her in the cutting out of lampshades, which gave me the opportunity to touch her hands and dress. I hindered her with the work and she became as gay as a child, and in a child's quick, plaintive voice called out, "Aunty, Leon is very naughty."

14 February.

Ill luck would have it that I accepted an invitation to attend a meeting at Councillor S.'s, who always tries to bring together representatives of all shades and opinions, and over a cup of tea and a sandwich to bring about a mutual understanding. As a man almost continually living abroad, I came to this meeting to find out what was going on in the minds of my countrymen and listen to their reasonings. The crush was very great, which made me feel uncomfortable, and at the same time happened what usually happens at large gatherings. Those of the same shade of opinion congregated in separate rooms to pay each other compliments and so forth. I was made acquainted with various

councillors and representatives of the press. In other countries, there is a considerable difference between writers and journalists. The first is considered an artist and a thinker, the latter, a mere paragraph-monger – I cannot find a better word. Here there is no such distinction, and men of both occupations are known under the same collective name as literary men. The greater part of them follow both avocations, literature and journalism. Personally, they are more refined than the journalists I met abroad. I do not like the daily press, and consider it as one of the plagues sent down to torment humanity. The swiftness with which the world becomes acquainted with current events is equal to the superficiality of the information, and does not compensate for the incredible perversion of public opinion, as any one who is not prejudiced must perceive. Thanks to the daily press, the sense which knows how to sift the true from the false has become blunted, the notions of right and wrong have well-nigh disappeared, evil stalks about in the garb of righteousness, and oppression speaks the language of justice; in brief, the human soul has become immoral and blind.

There was, among others, also Stawowski, who is considered a leader among the advanced progressists. He spoke cleverly, but appeared to me a man suffering from a two-fold disease: liver, and self. He carries his ego like a glass of water filled to the brim, and seems to say, "Take care, or it will spill." This fear, by some subtle process, seems to communicate itself to his audience to such an extent that nobody dares to be of a different opinion. He has this influence over others because he believes in what he says. They are wrong, those who consider him a sceptic. On the contrary, he is of the temperament which makes fanatics. Had he been born a hundred years ago and been a judge, he would have sentenced people to have their tongues cut out for uttering blasphemy. Born as he is in the more enlightened times, he hates what he would have loved then; but essentially it is the same man.

I noticed that our conservatives crowded round Stawowski, not so much out of curiosity to hear what he said as rather with a certain watchful coquetry. Here, and maybe in other countries, this party has little courage. They looked at the speaker with insinuating smiles, as if they would say: "Although conservatives, nevertheless – " Ah! that "nevertheless" was like an act of contrition, a kind of submission. This was so evident that I who am a sceptic as to all party spirit, began to contradict Stawowski, not as a representative of any party, but simply as a man who is of a different opinion. My audacity excited some astonishment. The matter in question was the position of the working-men. Stawowski spoke of their hopeless condition, their weakness and incapacity for defending themselves; the audience which listened to his words grew every minute larger, when I interrupted: —

"Do you believe in Darwin's theory, the survival of the fittest?"

Stawowski, who is a naturalist by profession, took up the challenge at once.

"Of course I do," he said.

"Then allow me to point out to you that you are inconsequent. If I, as a Christian, care for the weak and defenceless, I do so by the doctrine of Christ; but you, from a standpoint of a struggle-for-life existence, ought to see it in a different light: they are weak, they are foolish, consequently bound to succumb; it is a capital law of nature, – let the weaker go to perdition. Why is it you do not take it this way? please explain the contradiction."

Whether Stawowski was taken aback by the unexpected opposition, or whether he really had never put the two things together, the fact was that he was at a loss for a ready answer, grew confused, and did not even venture upon the expression "altruism," which, after all, says very little.

The hero of the evening worsted, the conservatives came over to me in a body, and I might have become the hero now; but it was getting late, I was bored, and wanted to get back to Ploszow. Gradually the others too began to disperse. I was already in my fur coat and searching for my eyeglasses, that had slipped between the coat and furs, when Stawowski, who evidently had found his answer, came up to me and said: —

"You asked why – "

I, still searching for the eyeglasses and rather put out, said impatiently: —

"Plainly speaking, the question does not interest me very much. It is getting late and everybody is leaving; besides I can guess what you are going to say, therefore permit me to wish you good-night."

I fancy I have made an enemy of the man, especially by my last remark.

It was one o'clock when I arrived at Ploszow, and there a pleasant surprise awaited me; Aniela was sitting up to make some tea for me. I found her in the dining-room, still fully dressed, with the exception of her hair, which was done up for the night. From the intense delight I felt in seeing her thus unexpectedly, I perceived how deeply she had entered into my heart. What a dear girl she is, and how pretty she looks with the tresses coiled low down her neck. And to think that I have only to say the word and in a month or two I might have the right to undo those tresses and let them fall on her shoulders. I cannot think of it quietly. It seems past all belief that happiness should be so easy to get.

I began to scold her a little for sitting up so late, and she replied: —

"But I was not in the least sleepy, and begged mamma and aunty to let me sit up for you. Mamma would not allow it, said it was not proper; but I explained to her that we were cousins, and that makes all the difference. And do you know who took my part? – auntie."

"Dear aunt! You will take some tea with me, will you not?"

I watched her handling the cups with those deft, graceful fingers, and felt a desire to kiss them.

She looked at me now and then, but upon meeting my eyes her eyelashes drooped. Presently she inquired how I had spent the evening, and what impressions I had carried away. We spoke in a low voice, though the sleeping-rooms were far enough away to make it unnecessary. There was such confidence and heartiness in our intercourse as among relatives who are fond of each other.

I told her what I had seen and noticed, as one tells a friend. I spoke about the general impression the society of the country makes upon a man that has chiefly lived abroad. She listened quietly with wide-open eyes, happy to be thus taken into confidence. Then she said: —

"Why do you not write about all that, Leon? That I do not think of such things is not to be wondered at; but nobody else here has thoughts like these."

"Why do I not write?" I replied. "There are many reasons for it. I will explain to you some time; one of them is that I have nobody near me who, like you, says: 'Leon, why do you not do something?'"

After this we both became silent. I had never seen Aniela's lashes veil her eyes so closely, and I could almost hear the beating of her heart.

And indeed she had a right to expect me to say: "Will you remain with me always and put the same question?" But I found such a keen delight in skirting the precipice before making the final plunge, and feeling that heart palpitating almost in my hand that I could not do it.

"Good-night," I said, after a short time.

And that angelic creature gave not the slightest sign that she had met with a disappointment. She rose, and with the least touch of sadness in her voice, but no impatience, replied: "Good-night."

We shook hands and parted for the night. My hand was already on the latch, when I turned round and saw her still standing near the table.

"Aniela! Tell me," I said, "do you not think me a fantastic kind of man, full of whims and fancies?"

"Oh, no, not fantastic; sometimes I think you a little strange, but then I say to myself that men like you are bound to be different from others."

"One question more; when was it you thought me strange the first time?"

Aniela blushed to the tips of her ears. How pretty she looked with the pink flame spreading over her face and neck.

"No, I could not tell you."

"Then let me guess, and if I am right say yes. It is a single word."

"What word?" she asked, with increased confusion.

"Tablets. Yes, or no?"

"Yes," said Aniela, with drooping eyes.

"Then I will tell you why I wrote those words. First, because I wanted a link connecting us together, a little secret shared by both of us, and also – "

I pointed at the flowers the gardener had brought from the hot-house.

"You know flowers want light to bring out all their beauty, and I wanted plenty of light for our atmosphere."

"I cannot always follow you," she said, after a momentary silence, "but I trust you, yes, and believe in you."

We remained once more silent; I pressed her hand again, saying good-night. We stopped near the door, and our eyes met. The waters begin to rise and to rise. They will overstep their boundary any moment.

23 February.

The human being, like the sea, has his ebb and flood tides. To-day my will, my energy, the very action of life are at a very low tide. It came upon me without warning, a mere matter of nerves. But for that very reason my thoughts are full of bitterness. What right have I, a man physically worn out and mentally exhausted, to marry at all? Involuntarily the words of Hamlet come in my mind: "Get thee to a nunnery; why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners?" I shall not bury myself within cloister walls. The future sinners will be like me, all nerves, oversensitive, not fit for any practical life, – in fact, artists without portfolios. But the deuce take it, it is not they, but Aniela I am thinking of. Have I a right to marry her, – to link that fresh budding life, full of simple faith in God and the world, to my doubts, my spiritual impotence, my hopeless scepticism, my criticism and nerves? What will be the result of it for her? I cannot regain another spiritual youth, and even at her side cannot find my old self; my brains cannot change, or my nerves grow more vigorous, – and what then? Is she to wither at my side? It would be simply monstrous. I to play the part of a polypus that sucks the life-blood of its victims in order to renew its own life! A heavy cloud weighs on my brain. But if such be the case why did I allow it to go so far? What have I been doing ever since I met Aniela? Playing on her very heartstrings to bring forth sweet music. And yet, what for me was "Quasi una fantasia" may prove to her "Quasi un dolore." Yes, I have played on that sensitive instrument from morning until night; and what is more, I feel that in spite of my self-upbraidings, I shall do the same to-morrow and the days following, for I cannot help it; she attracts me more than any woman I ever met, I desire her above all things – I love her!

Why delude myself any longer? – I love her!

What is to be done? Must I go away back to Rome? That means a disappointment and sorrow for her; for who knows how deeply rooted her feelings may be? To marry her is the same as to sacrifice her for myself, and make her life unhappy in another way. A truly enchanted circle! Only people of the Ploszowski species ever get into such dilemmas. And there is devilish little comfort in the thought that there are more such as I, or that their name is legion.

Whether the species be gradually dying out, as badly fitted for the struggle of life, remains to be seen; for in addition to an incapacity for life, there is ill luck as well. I might have met such an Aniela ten years ago, when my sails were not, as now, worn to shreds and patches.

If that honest soul, my aunt, knew how, with the best of intentions, she brought me to this pass, she would be truly grieved. There was tragedy enough in my life, – the consciousness of utter failure, the dark mist in which my thoughts were straying; now there is a new, – to be, or not to be; but no, it is far worse than that!

26 February.

Yesterday I went again to Warsaw by appointment, to meet a certain Pan Julius Keo, on whose estates I lodged part of the capital I inherited from my mother. Pan Julius Keo wants to pay off the mortgage, and asked me to meet him at a fixed time; and I waited for him the whole day. The devil take their ways of managing any business in this country! He will make five other appointments, and

not keep one. He is very rich, wants to get rid of the mortgage, and is able to pay it off any time; and yet – such is our way of transacting business.

From my own observations I long since came to the conclusion that in money matters we are the most flighty and unbusinesslike people in the world. I, who like to go to the root of matters, often pondered over this phenomenon.

According to my ideas, this is the result of the purely agricultural occupation of the people. Commerce was in the hands of the Jews, and these could not teach us accuracy; the cultivator of the soil is unreliable because the soil is unreliable, he is unpunctual because nature has no punctuality. Working in the soil, they gradually take some of its characteristics, which enters into their moral being, and in the course of time becomes an inherited defect.

The knowledge of cause and effect does not restore me to an equable temper. I had to tear myself away from Aniela for a whole day, and what is more, shall have to go through the some process a few days hence; but it cannot be helped. In my aunt's house I found visiting-cards from Kromitzki, – one for me and two for the elder ladies. I was afraid he might take it into his head to pay us a visit at Ploszow; to avoid that, I went out to leave my card on him. Unfortunately for me, he was at home, and I had to stay half an hour. He began his conversation by telling me that he had promised to call at Ploszow; to which I replied that we had gone there merely for a few days, and would be back in town almost immediately. He asked after Aniela's mother, and very guardedly after Aniela herself. He evidently wanted to impress me with the fact that he inquired as a mere acquaintance. I am so impressionable that even this gave me a twinge; how I loathe that man! I fancy the Tartars under Batu Khan must have played many pranks in what is to-day Austrian Silesia, when looting the country after the battle of Liegnitz. That those black eyes, like roasted coffee-berries, did not come from Silesian ancestors, I have not the slightest doubt.

He was exceedingly polite to me, because I am rich. It is true, he wants nothing from me, – I do not give him anything, and my being rich is of no advantage to him; but as a financier he worships money. We spoke about the difficulties in which Aniela's mother was and is still involved. According to Kromitzki, a great deal of her fortune might still be saved if she would part with the estate. Kromitzki looks upon the reluctance to part with ancestral lands as a mere fad. He said he might be able to understand it if she had the means to prevent it, but as the case stood it was mere sentimentality.

He is very talkative, and discussed at some length our national idiocy. Money was lying on the pavement, to be had for the picking up. His father, like other noblemen, had left scarcely any fortune; when all debts were cleared off there remained a paltry hundred thousand florins, and the world knew how he, Kromitzki, stood at present.

"If that business in Turkestan comes off, I shall be able to wind up my affairs. The Jews and Greeks have made millions in the contract business; why should not we be able to do as well? I do not put myself as an example; but I say, why should we not? There is room for everybody, – why not go in for it?"

According to my opinion, Kromitzki has a certain aptness for business, but is foolish in a general sense. That we are shiftless, everybody knows that; and that here and there somebody makes a fortune by contracts, I can well believe; but the greater part of the people must work at home, and not look for millions from contracts in Turkestan.

May God save Aniela from an alliance with that man. He may have some good qualities, but he belongs to a different moral type. If there be a worse fate in store for her, ought I to hesitate any longer?

28 February.

The elder ladies seem uneasy that the affair is not going on as speedily as they had fancied; my aunt, who is of an impatient temper, must chafe inwardly not a little. But the expression of happiness on Aniela's face soothes them, and allays their fears. I can read in her eyes endless trust and thorough

belief in me. She fills my thoughts so that I cannot think of anything but her. I desire her more and more, and do not want to play upon her feelings any longer, – I want her.

4 March.

This day has been to me of so much importance that I am obliged to muster all my calmness and self-possession to put down everything in its proper order. Nevertheless, I cannot contain myself. The die is cast, or as good as cast. I could not have gone on quietly, had I not put that down.

And now I can begin. Sniatynski and his wife arrived here towards noon, for an early dinner. He had to go back, as a new play of his is coming out at the theatre. However happy we may be in our rural seclusion, we are always delighted to see them. Aniela is great friends with Pani Sniatynska, and I suppose there will be an exchange of confidences. Pani Sniatynska guessed at the state of things, and tried to put her hand to the wheel, to make the cart go a little faster. She had only just arrived, when she said to my aunt: —

"How lovely and peaceful everything is here! No wonder the young people there do not pine after the dissipations of town."

We both, Aniela and I, understood perfectly well that Pani Sniatynska, calling us the young people, was not referring only to our age. Besides, she repeated the same thing several times during dinner: "the young people," "the young couple," as if making a pointed difference between us two and the elder ladies. But there was such real sympathy for us in the friendly eyes; such a pricking up of her little ears to hear what we were saying to each other; and the little woman looked so charming withal that I forgive her readily her good-natured meddling. I have arrived at such a state of infatuation that this coupling of our names rather gladdens than irritates me. Aniela too seemed to hear it with pleasure. In her efforts to please the Sniatynskis and the attentions she bestowed on them during dinner, she truly looked like a young bride, who receives dear visitors for the first time in her new home. At the sight of this my aunt's heart seemed to swell, and she said many kind and polite things to both Sniatynskis. I noticed a wonderful thing, which I should not believe had I not seen it with my own eyes. Pani Sniatynska blushes up to her ears when anybody praises her husband! To blush with pleasure when her husband is praised after eight years of married life! Surely, I committed an egregious mistake writing as I did about Polish women.

The dinner passed off very pleasantly. A married couple, like these two, are born matchmakers. The very sight of them sets people thinking: "If married life is like that, let us go and commit matrimony." I at least saw it for the first time in a quite different light, – not as the prose of life, a commonplace, more or less skilfully disguised indifference, but as a thing to be desired.

Aniela evidently read our future in the same light; I saw it in her eyes shining with happiness.

After dinner I remained in the dining-room with Sniatynski, who liked a quiet talk over a glass of cognac after his coffee. The elder ladies went to the drawing-room, and Aniela took Pani Sniatynska upstairs to show her some photographs of Volhynia. I questioned Sniatynski about his new play, the fate of which seemed to make him a little anxious. Our conversation drifted on to those times when we both tried our sprouting wings. He told me how afterwards, step by step, he had worked his way upward; how he had been full of doubts, and still doubted his power, in spite of having acquired a certain reputation.

"Tell me," I asked, "what do you do with your fame?"

"How do you mean what I do with my fame?"

"For instance, do you wear it as a crown on your head, or as a golden fleece round your neck? do you put it over your writing-desk, or hang it up in your drawing-room? I only ask as a man who has no idea what to do with it if he once obtains it?"

"Let us suppose I have won it; the man must be deuced ill-bred mentally either to wear the so-called fame as an ornament or to put it up for show. I confess that at first it gratifies one's vanity; but only a spiritual parvenu would find it sufficient to fill the whole life, or take the place of real happiness. It is quite another thing to be conscious you are doing good work; that the public appreciates it, and

that your work calls forth an echo in other minds, – a public man has the right to feel pleased with that. But as to feeling gratified when somebody, looking more or less foolish, comes up and says: 'We are indebted to you for so much pleasure;' or, when a dinner does not agree with me, our daily press remarks: 'We communicate to our readers the sad news that our famous XX suffers from a stomachache,' – pshaw! what do you take me for, that such a thing could give me satisfaction?"

"Listen," I said, "I am not inordinately vain; but I confess that, when people speak of my extraordinary talents, and regret that I make not a better use of them, it flatters me; and though I feel more than ever my uselessness, it gives me pleasure; humankind is fond of approbation."

"That is because you pity yourself, and in that you are quite right. But you are turning away from the question. I do not say that it would give one pleasure to be called an ass."

"But the public esteem that goes hand in hand with fame?"

Sniatynski, who is very lively and always walks about the room, sitting down on any table or chair, now sat on the window-sill, and replied: —

"Public esteem? You are wrong there, old fellow; there is no such thing. Ours is a strange society, dominated by a pure republican jealousy. I write plays, work for the stage; very good. I have gained a certain reputation; better still. Now, these plays excite the jealousy, – of another playwright, you think? Not at all; it is the engineer, the bank clerk, the teacher, the physician, the railway official, – in short, people who never wrote a play in their lives, – that envy you. All these in their intercourse will show that they do not think much of you, will speak slightingly of you behind your back, and belittle you on purpose, so as to add an inch or two to their own height. 'Sniatynski? who is he? Yes, I remember; he dresses at the same tailor as I.' Such is fame, my dear fellow."

"But if must be worth something, since people risk their lives for it?"

Sniatynski grew thoughtful, and replied with a certain gravity: —

"In private life it is worth something; you can make a footstool of it for the woman you love."

"You will gain a new fame by this definition."

Sniatynski rushed at me with lively impetuosity.

"Yes, yes; put all your laurels into a cushion, go to the dear one, and say to her: 'This for which people risk their lives; this which they consider supreme happiness, appreciate more than wealth, – I have got it, striven for it; and now put your dear feet on it at once.' If you do this, you will be loved all your life. You wanted to know what fame is good for, and there you are."

Further discussions were cut short by the entrance of Pani Sniatynska and Aniela. They were dressed for going out to the hot-houses. What an imp of mischief lurks in that little woman. She came up to her husband to ask his permission to go out, which he granted, insisting only that she should wrap herself up warm; she turned to me and said with a roguish smile, —

"You will let Aniela go, will you not?"

That Aniela should blush furiously was only natural, but that I, an old stager, a razor sharpened against the strops of so many experiences, should have betrayed so much confusion, I cannot forgive myself. But, putting on a semblance of self-possession, I went up to Aniela, and raising her hand to my lips, said: —

"It is Aniela who gives orders at Ploszow, and I am her humble subject."

I should have liked to take Sniatynski with me and join the excursion, but refrained. I felt a want to speak about Aniela, my future marriage, and I knew that sooner or later Sniatynski himself would broach the question. I gave him an opening after the ladies had left us by saying: —

"And do you still believe as firmly as ever in your life-dogmas?"

"More than ever, or rather, the same as ever. There is no expression more worn to tatters than the word 'love;' one scarcely likes to use it; but between ourselves, I tell you; love in the general meaning, love in the individual sense does not permit of criticism. It is one of the canons of life. My philosophy consists in not philosophizing about it at all, – and the deuce take me if for the matter of

that, I consider myself more foolish than other people. With love, life is worth something; without, it is not worth a bag of chaff."

"Let us see what you have to say about individual love, – or better still, put in its place woman."

"Very well, let it be woman."

"My good friend, do you not perceive on what brittle foundation you are building human happiness?"

"On about as brittle a foundation as life, – no more nor less!"

I did not want to drift into a discussion of life and death, and pulled Sniatynski up.

"For mercy's sake, do not generalize about individual happiness. You chanced to find the right woman, another might not."

He would not even listen to that. According to his view, ninety out of a hundred were successful. Women were better, purer, and nobler than men.

"We are rascals all, in comparison with them!" he shouted, waving his arms and snaking his leonine mane. "Nothing but rascals! It is I who say it, – I, who study mankind closely, if only for the reason that I am a playwright."

He was sitting astride on his chair, attacking me, as it were, with the chairback, and went on with his usual impetuosity: —

"There are, as Dumas says, apes from the land of Nod, who know neither curb nor bridle; but what are eyes given for but to see that you do not take to wife an ape from Nod? Generally speaking a woman does not betray her husband nor deceive him, unless he himself corrupts her heart, tramples on her feelings, or repulses and estranges her by his meanness, his selfishness, narrowness, and his miserable, worthless nature. You must love her! Let her feel that she is not only your female, but the crown of your head, as precious as your child and friend; wear her close to your heart, let her feel the warmth of it, and you may rest in peace; year after year she will cling closer to you, until you two are like Siamese twins. If you do not give her all that, you pervert her, estrange her by your worthlessness, – and she will leave you. She will leave you as soon as she sees nobler hands stretched out for her; she is forced to do it, as this warmth, this appreciation, are as necessary to her life as the air she breathes."

He charged me with the chairback as with a battering ram. I retreated before him until we had come close to the window; there he jumped up.

"How blind you are! In presence of such social drought, such utter absence of general happiness as stamps our time, not to grasp this felicity that is within reach! Shiver on the forum, and not light a fire at home! Idiotism can go no farther! I tell you plainly, go and get married."

He pointed through the window at Aniela, who with his wife was coming back from the hot-houses, and added: "There is your happiness. There it patters in fur boots on the frozen snow. Take her by weight of gold, by weight in carats rather! You simply have no home, not only in a physical sense, but in a moral, intellectual meaning; you have no basis, no point of rest, and she will give you all that. But do not philosophize her away as you have philosophized away your abilities and your thirty-five years of life!"

He could not have told me anything better, nobler, or what chimed in more with my own desires. I pressed his hands and replied: —

"No, I will not philosophize her away, because I love her."

Upon this the ladies entered, and Pani Sniatynska observed: —

"We heard some disputes when we were leaving, but I see peace is restored. May I ask what you have been discussing?"

"Woman, madame," I said.

"And what was the result?"

"As you see, a treaty of peace sealed by a grasp of the hand, and something further may come of it in the course of time."

The sledge was already waiting at the door. The short day was drawing to its close, and they had to go back; but as the weather was calm, and the snow on the drive as smooth as a parquetted floor, we resolved, Aniela and I, to accompany them as far as the high-road.

And so we did. After having said good-by to our charming visitors, we went slowly homeward. It was already dusk; in the dim light I could still see Aniela's face. She seemed moved, perhaps had opened her heart to Pani Sniatynska, and even now hoped for the long deferred word. It was almost burning on my tongue; but, oh, wonder! I who never yet had lost all my self-possession, I who was used to play upon heartstrings, who at a fencing match of that kind, if not cleverly, at least with perfect composure guarded myself against the most masterly strokes, I was as deeply moved as a lad in his teens. What a difference from former sentiments. I was afraid I could not find words to express myself, – and remained silent.

Thus in silence we approached the veranda. The snow was slippery; I offered her my arm, and when she leaned on it I felt how all my desires were centred in her. The feeling grew so intense that it thrilled my nerves like electric sparks. We entered the hall. There was nobody there; not even the lamps were lit, the only light came in fitful gleams from the open stoves. In this half-light and in silence I began to relieve Aniela of her furs, when suddenly the warmth emanating from her body seemed to enter into my veins; I put my arm around her, and drawing her close to me I pressed my lips on her brow.

It was done almost unconsciously, and Aniela must have been greatly startled, for she made not the slightest resistance. Presently a footstep became audible; it was the servant with the lamps. She went upstairs, and I, deeply moved, entered the dining-room.

To every man who is ever so little enterprising, similar events occur in the course of life. I am no exception, but, as a rule, I always kept the mastery over myself. Now it was different. Thoughts and sensations whirled across my brain like leaves before a gale. Fortunately the dining-room was empty; my aunt and Aniela's mother were in the drawing-room, where I joined them after a while. My thoughts were so far away that I scarcely heard what they were saying to me. I felt restless. I seemed to see Aniela sitting in her room, pressing her hands to her temples, trying to realize what it all meant. Soon Aniela herself came down. I felt relieved, as I had feared she might not come down again for the evening. She had two burning spots on either side of her face, and eyes bright as if from recent slumber. She had tried to cool her face with powder; I saw the traces on her left temple. The sight of her moved me; I felt that I loved her deeply.

Presently she stooped over some needlework. I saw that her breath came and went irregularly, and once or twice I intercepted a quick glance full of unsettled questions and trouble.

In order to set her mind at rest I thrust myself into the conversation of the elder ladies, who were speaking about Sniatynski, and said: —

"Sniatynski considers me a kind of Hamlet, and says I philosophize too much; but I am going to show him that he is mistaken, and that not later than to-morrow."

I laid some stress on the "to-morrow," and Aniela caught the meaning, for she gave me a long look; but my aunt, all unconscious, asked: —

"Are you going to see him to-morrow?"

"We ought to go and see his play, and if Aniela agrees we will all go to-morrow."

The dear girl looked at me shyly but trustingly, and said, with indescribable sweetness: —

"I will go with great pleasure."

There was a moment when I could scarcely contain myself, and felt I ought to speak there and then; but I had said "to-morrow," and refrained.

I feel like a man who shuts his eyes and ears before taking the final plunge. But I really think it is a costly pearl I shall find at the bottom of the deep.

CASA OSORIA, 6 March.

Yesterday I arrived at Rome. My father is not quite so bad as I had feared. His left arm and the left side of his body are almost paralyzed, but the doctor tells me his heart is not threatened, and that he may live for years.

7 March.

I left Aniela in doubt, expectation, and suspense. But I could not do otherwise. The day following the Sniatynskis' visit, the very day I was going to ask Aniela to be my wife, I received a letter from my father telling me about his illness.

"Make haste, dear boy," he wrote, "for I should like to see you before

I die, and I feel my bark very close to the shore."

After the receipt of such a letter I took the first train, and never stopped until I reached Rome. When leaving Ploszow I had very little hope to find my father alive. In vain my aunt tried to comfort me, saying if things were so bad he would surely have sent a telegram instead of a letter.

I know my father's little oddities, among which is a rooted dislike to telegrams. But my aunt's composure was only put on, at the bottom she felt as frightened as myself.

In the hurry, the sudden shock, and under the horror of my father's likely death, I could not speak of love and marriage. It seemed against nature, almost a brutal thing, to whisper words of love, not knowing whether at the same time my father might not be breathing his last. They all understood that, and especially Aniela.

"I will write to you from Rome," I said before starting; to which she replied: "May God comfort you first."

She trusts me altogether. Rightly or wrongly, I have the reputation of fickleness in regard to women, and Aniela must have heard remarks about it; maybe it is for that very reason the dear girl shows such unbounded confidence in me. I understand, and can almost hear the pure soul saying: "They wrong you, – you are not fickle; and those who accuse you of fickleness do not know what love means, and did not love you as truly and deeply as I love you."

Perhaps I am a little fickle by nature, and this disposition, developed under the influence of the barren, empty, worthless sentiments I met with in the world, – this might have dried up my heart and corrupted it altogether; in which case Aniela would have to pay for the sins of others. But I believe the case is not hopeless, and the blessed physician has not come too late. Who knows whether it be ever too late, and that the pure, honest love of a woman does not possess the power to raise the dead? Perhaps, too, the masculine heart has a greater power of recuperation. There is a legend about the rose of Jericho, which, though dry to the core, revives and brings forth leaves when touched by a drop of dew. I have noticed that the male nature has more elasticity than the female. A man steeped in such utter corruption that half of its venom would cover the woman with moral leprosy is able to throw off the contagion, and recover easily not only his moral freshness, but even a certain virginity of heart. It is the same with the affections. I have known women whose hearts were so used up that they lost every capacity of loving, even of respecting anything or anybody. I have never known men like that. Decidedly, love cleanses our hearts. Definitions like these sound strange from a sceptic's pen; but in the first place I have no more belief in my doubts than I have in any other kind of assertions, axioms, and observations which serve general humanity as a basis of life. I am ready to admit at any moment that my doubts are as far removed from the essence of things as are these axioms. Secondly, I am writing now under the influence of my love for Aniela, who, maybe, does not know herself how wisely she is acting, and how by that very trust in me she has secured a powerful hold on my affections. Lastly, whenever I speak of love, or any other principle of life, I speak and write of it as it appears to me in the present. What my opinion about it will be to-morrow, I do not know. Ah, if I but knew that whatever view I take or principle I confess would withstand the blasting scepticism of to-morrow or the days following, I would make it my canon of life, and float along with sails unfurled, like Sniatynski, in the light, instead of groping my way in darkness and solitude.

But I do not intend to go back now to my inner tragedy. As to love in general, from the standpoint of a sceptic in regard to the world and its manifestations, I might say with Solomon, "Vanitas vanitatum;" but I should be utterly blind did I not perceive that of all active principles this is the most powerful, – so powerful indeed that whenever I think of it or my eyes roam over the everlasting ocean of all-life, I am simply struck with amazement at its almightiness. Though these are known things, as much known as the rising of the sun and the tides of the ocean, nevertheless they are always wonderful.

After Empedocles, who divined that Eros evolved the worlds from Chaos, metaphysics have not advanced one step. Only death is a power equally absolute; yet in the eternal struggle between the two, love is the stronger; love conquers death by night and day, conquers it every spring, follows death step by step, throwing fresh grain into the gulf it creates. People occupied with every-day affairs forget or do not wish to remember that they are love's servants. It is strange when we come to think of it that the warrior, the chancellor of state, the cultivator of the soil, the merchant, the banker, in all their efforts, which apparently have nothing to do with love, are merely furthering its ends; that is, they serve the law of nature which bids the man to stretch out his arms for the woman. A mad paradox it would seem to a Bismarck if he were told that the final and only aim of all his endeavors is to further the love of Hermann and Dorothea. It seems even to me a paradox; and yet Bismarck's aim is the consolidation of the German empire, and this can be achieved only through Hermann and Dorothea. What else, then, has a Bismarck to do but to create by the help of politics and bayonets such conditions that Hermann and Dorothea may love each other in peace, unite in happiness, and bring up new generations?

When at the university I read an Arabian ghazel in which the poet compares the power of love to that of infernal torments. I forget the name of the poet, but the idea remained in my memory. Truly, love is the one power that lasts for all times, holds the world together, and creates new worlds.

10 March.

To-day I tore up three or four letters to Aniela. After dinner, I went into my father's room to talk with him about my aunt's plans. I found him looking through a lens at some epilichnions with the earth still adhering to them, he had received from the Peloponnesus. How splendid he looked in that light coming through stained windows in the large room full of Etruscan vases, statues more or less mutilated, and all kinds of Greek and Roman treasures. Among these surroundings his face reminded me of a divine Plato or of some other Greek sage. When I entered he interrupted his work, listened attentively to what I had to say, and then asked, "Do you hesitate?"

"No, I do not hesitate, but I am reflecting. I want to know why I want it."

"Then I will tell you this; I was once like you, inclined to analyze not only my own feelings but all manifestations of life. When I came to know your mother I lost that faculty at once. I knew one thing only, that I wanted her, and did not care to know anything else. Therefore if you have a like powerful desire, marry. I express myself wrongly, for if you wish it very much you will do it without anybody's help or advice, and be as happy as I was until your mother died."

We remained silent for some time. If I were to apply my father's words closely to my own case, I should feel small comfort. I love Aniela, there is no doubt; but I have not arrived yet at a state that precludes all reflection. But I do not consider this as a bad sign; it simply means that I belong to a generation that has gone a step farther on the way to knowledge.

There are always two persons within me, – the actor, and the spectator. Often the spectator is dissatisfied with the actor, but at present they both agree.

My father was the first to interrupt the silence.

"Tell me what she is like."

Since a description is an unsatisfactory way of painting a portrait, I showed my father a large and really excellent photograph of Aniela, at which he looked with the keenest interest. I was no less interested in the study of his face, in which I saw not only the roused artist, but also the refined

connoisseur of female beauty, the old Leon *l'Invincible*. Resting the photograph on the poor hand half paralyzed, he put on his eyeglass with the right, and then holding the likeness at a longer or shorter distance he began to say: "But for certain details, the face is like one of those Ary-Schaeffer liked to paint. How lovely she would look with tears in her eyes. Some people dislike angelic faces in women, but I think that to teach an angel how to become a woman is the very height of victory. She is very beautiful, very uncommon looking. 'Enfin, tout ce qu'il y a de plus beau au monde – c'est la femme.'"

Here he fumbled with his eyeglass, and then added: "Judging by the face, or rather by the photograph (sometimes one makes mistakes, but I have had some practice), hers is a thoroughly loyal nature. Women of this type are in love with the whiteness of their plumage. God bless you, my boy! I like her very much, this Aniela of yours. I used to be afraid you might end by marrying a foreigner – let it be Aniela."

I came up close to him and he put his arm round my neck.

"I should like to see my future daughter before I die."

I assured him that he would certainly see her shortly. Then I unfolded my plans of bringing Aniela and her mother over to Rome. After a betrothal by letter I might expect as much, and the ladies would not refuse, if only out of consideration for my father. In this case the marriage ceremony would take place at Rome, and that very soon.

My father was delighted with the plan; old and sick people like to see around them life and motion. I knew that Aniela would be pleased with this turn of affairs, and let my thoughts dwell upon it with more and more pleasure. Within a few weeks everything would be settled. Such quick decision would be against my nature, but the very idea that I could exert myself if I wished raised my spirits. I already saw myself escorting Aniela about Rome. Only those who live there understand what a delight it is to show to anybody the endless treasures of that city, – a much greater delight when the somebody is the beloved woman.

Our conversation was interrupted by a visit from Mr. and Mrs. Davis, who come every day to see my father. He is an English Jew, and she an Italian nobleman's daughter who married him for the sake of his wealth. Mr. Davis himself is a valetudinarian, who took out of his life twice as much as his poor organization could bear. He is ill, threatened with softening of the brain, indifferent to everything that goes on around him, – one of those specimens of mankind one meets at hydropathic establishments. Mrs. Davis looks like a Juno; her eyebrows meet on her forehead, and she has the figure of a Greek statue. I do not like her; she reminds me of the leaning tower at Pisa, – leans but does not fall. A year ago I paid her some attentions; she flirted with me outrageously, that was all. My father has a singular weakness for her; I thought at times he was in love with her. At any rate, he admires her from a thinker and artist's point of view; for beautiful she is, – there can be no two opinions as to that, – and of more than average intelligence. Their conversations, which my father calls "causeries Romaines," are endless, and they never seem to get tired of them; maybe these discussions about life's problems with a beautiful woman appear Italian to him, poetical, and worthy of the times of the Renaissance. I very seldom take part in these conversations because I do not believe in Mrs. Davis' sincerity. It seems to me that her intellect is merely a matter of brain, and not of soul, and that in reality she does not care for anything except her beauty and the comforts of life. I have often met women who seem full of lofty aspiration; upon closer acquaintance it seems that religion, philosophy, art, and literature, are only so many items of their toilet. They dress themselves in either as it suits their style of beauty. I suppose it is the same with Mrs. Davis; she drapes herself in problems of life, sometimes in Greek and Roman antiquities, in the Divina Commedia, or the Renaissance, the churches, museums, and so forth. I can understand a powerful intellectual organism making itself the centre of the universe; but in a woman, and one who is bent upon futile things, it is mere laughable egoism and vanity.

I ask myself what makes Mrs. Davis so fond of my father; and I fancy I know the reason. My father, with his fine head of a patrician philosopher, and his manners reminding one of the eighteenth

century, is for her a kind of *objet d'art*, and still more, a grand intelligent mirror, in which she can admire her own beauty and cleverness; besides, she feels grateful that he never criticises her, and likes her very much. Upon this basis has sprung up a friendship, or rather a kind of affection for my father which gradually has become a necessity of her life. Moreover, Mrs. Davis has the reputation of a coquette, and coming here to see my father every day, she says to the world: "It is not true; this old man is seventy, and nobody can suspect me of flirting with him, and yet I show him more attentions than to any one else." Finally, though she herself comes from an old family, Mr. Davis, in spite of his wealth, is a mere nobody, and their friendship with my father strengthens their position in society. There was a time when I asked myself whether these daily visits were not partly for my sake – and who knows? At any rate, it is not my qualities which attract her, nor any real feeling on her part. But she feels that I do not believe in her, and this irritates her. I should not wonder if she hated me, and yet would like to see me at her feet. I might have been, for she is a splendid specimen of the human species; I would have been, if only for the sake of the meeting eyebrows and the Juno shoulders, – but at a price she does not feel inclined to pay.

Soon after the arrival of Mr. and Mrs. Davis my father began a philosophical discussion, which, going from one question to another, concluded with an analysis of human feelings. Mrs. Davis made several very shrewd remarks. From the studio we went to the terrace overlooking our gardens. It is only the tenth of March, and here spring is at its best. This year everything is much advanced, – fierce heat in the daytime, the magnolias covered with snow-white blossoms, and the nights as warm as in July. What a different world from that of Ploszow. I breathe here with all my lungs.

Mrs. Davis on the terrace with the moon shining upon her was beautiful as a Greek dream. I saw she was under the influence of that indescribable Roman night. Her voice was softer, even, and more mellow than usual. Perhaps even now she only thinks of herself, is impressed because it is herself who feels it, dresses herself in moonbeams, restfulness, and magnolia scent as in a new shawl or bonnet. But all the same the dress suits her splendidly. Were it not that my heart is full of Aniela, I should fall under the spell of the picture. Besides this, she said things which not many could have conceived.

All the same, whenever I am present at these *causeries Romaines* I have always a feeling that my father, I, such as Mrs. Davis, and generally speaking, all the people of the so-called upper classes do not live a true, real life. Below us something is always going on, something always happens; there is the struggle for life, for bread, – a life full of diligent work, animal necessities, appetites, passions, every-day efforts, – a palpable life, which roars, leaps, and tumbles like ocean waves; and we are sitting eternally on terraces, discussing art, literature, love, woman, strangers to that other life far removed from it, obliterating, out of the seven, the six work-days. Without being conscious of it, our inclinations, nerves, and soul are fit only for holidays. Immersed into blissful dilettantism as in a warm bath, we are half awake, half dreaming. Consuming leisurely our wealth, and our inherited supply of nerves and muscles, we gradually lose our foothold upon the soil. We are as the down, carried away by the wind. Scarcely do we touch ground, when the real life pushes us back, and we draw aside; for we have no power of resistance.

When I think of it I see nothing but contradictions in us. We consider ourselves the outcome and highest rung of civilization, and yet have lost faith in ourselves; only the most foolish believe in our *raison d'être.* We look out instinctively for places of enjoyment, gayety, and happiness, and yet we do not believe in happiness. Though our pessimism be wan and ephemeral as the clouds from our Havanas, it obscures our view of wider horizons. Amidst these clouds and mists we create for ourselves a separate world, a world torn off from the immensity of all life, shut up within itself, a little empty and somnolent. If this merely concerned the aristocracy, whether by descent or wealth, the portent would be less weighty. But to this isolated world belong more or less all those who boast of a higher culture, – men of science, literature, and art. This world does not dwell within the very marrow of life, but parting from it creates a separate circle; in consequence withers within itself and does not help in softening down the animalism of those millions which writhe and surge below.

I do not speak as a reformer, because I lack the strength. Besides, what matters it to me? Who can avoid the inevitable? But at times I have the dim presentiment of a terrible danger which threatens the cultured world. The great wave which will wash us from off the surface of the earth will carry off more than that one which washed away hairpowder and shirtfrills. It is true that to those who perished then it seemed that with them the whole civilization was perishing.

In the mean while it is pleasant to sit on moonlit terraces and talk in subdued tones about art, love, and woman, and look at the divine profile of such a woman as Mrs. Davis.

10 March.

Mountains, towers, rocks, the further they recede from our view, appear as a mere outline through a veil of blue haze. There is a kind of psychical blue haze that enfolds those who are removed from us. Death itself is a removal, but the chasm is so wide that the beloved ones who have crossed it disappear within the haze and become as beloved shadows. The Greek genius understood this when he peopled the Elysian fields with shadows.

But I will not enlarge upon these mournful comparisons, especially when I want to write about Aniela. I am quite certain my feelings towards her have not changed, but I seem to see her a long distance off, shrouded in a blue haze and less real than at Ploszow. I do not feel her through my senses. When I compare my present feelings with those I had at Ploszow, she is more of a beloved spirit than a desired woman. From a certain point of view it is better, as a desired woman might be even such a woman as Mrs. Davis; but on the other hand this is not one of the reasons that have prevented me from writing to Aniela. Doubtless that profile of Mrs. Davis which I still see before me is a mere passing impression. When I compare these two women my feeling for the other becomes very tender; and yet I leave her in cruel suspense and uncertainty.

To-day my father wrote to my aunt, setting her mind at rest as to his health, and I added a postscript from myself, sending kind regards to Aniela and her mother. I could not say much in a few lines, but I might have promised them a longer letter. Such a promise would have comforted Aniela and the elder ladies. I did not do it because I could not. To-day my spirits are at a very low ebb. My wish for another life, and my trust in the future have retreated into the farthest distance; I can see them no more, see only the barren, sandy wilderness. I cannot get rid of the idea that I can only marry Aniela if I can conscientiously believe that our union would lead to mutual happiness. I cannot represent it otherwise to Aniela without uttering a lie; for I have none of that belief, and instead of it an utter hopelessness almost a dislike of life. She is ill at ease with longing and uncertainty, but I am worse, all the more so because I love her.

11 March.

Mrs. Davis, to whom, during our *causerie* on the moonlit terrace, I unfolded my view as to the all-powerfulness of love, more or less as I have written it down, called me Anacreon, and advised me to crown my head with vine leaves, and then said more soberly, "If such be your opinions, why play the part of pessimist? Belief in such a deity ought to make any man happy."

Why? I did not tell her, but I know why. Love conquers death, but saves from it only the species. What matters it to me that the species be preserved, when I, the individual, am sentenced to a merciless, unavoidable death? Is it not rather a refined cruelty that the very affections, which can be felt only by the individual, should serve the future of the species only? To feel the throbbing of an eternal power, and yet to die, – that is the height of misery. In reality there exists only the individual; the species is an abstract idea, and in comparison to the individual, an utter Nirvana. I understand the love for a son, a grandson, a great grandson, – for the individual, in fact, that is sentenced to perish, – but to profess love for one's species one needs be insincere, or a fanatical sectarian. I can understand now how centuries after Empedocles there came Schopenhauer and Hartmann.

My brain feels as sore as the back of the laborer who carries burdens beyond his strength. But the laborer stooping to his work earns his daily bread and is at peace.

I still seem to hear Sniatynski's words: "Do not philosophize her away, as you have philosophized away your abilities and your thirty-five years of life." I know it leads to nothing, I know it is wrong, but I do not know how not to think.

13 March.

My father died this morning. He was ill only a few hours.

PELI, VILLA LAURA, 22 March.

Death is such a gulf, and though we know that all have to go thither, yet when it swallows up one of our dear ones, we who remain on the brink are torn with fear, sorrow, and despair. On that brink all reasoning leaves us, and we only cry out for help which cannot come from anywhere. The only solace and comfort lies in faith, but he who is deprived of that light gets well-nigh maddened by the impenetrable darkness. Ten times a day it seems to me impossible, too horrible, that death should be the end of everything, – and then again, a dozen times I feel that such is the case.

23 March.

When I arrived from Ploszow I found my father so much better that it never even entered my mind that the end could be so near. What strange twists there are in the human mind. God knows how sincerely I rejoiced when I found my father so much better than I had thought, and yet because throughout that anxious journey I had fancied him sick unto death, and already saw myself kneeling at his coffin, I was sorry for my wasted anxieties. Now the memory of this fills me with keen remorse.

How thoroughly unhappy is the individual whose heart and soul have lost their simplicity. Thus not less bitter, not less of a reproach is the remembrance that at my father's deathbed there were two persons in me: one of them the son full of anguish, who gnawed his hands to keep back his sobs; the other the philosopher, who studied the psychology of death. I am unutterably unhappy because my nature is an unhappy one.

My father died with full consciousness. Saturday evening he felt a little worse. I sent for the doctor, that he might be at hand in case we should want him. The doctor prescribed some physic, and my father, according to his habit, disputed the point, demonstrating that the physic would bring on a stroke. The doctor calmed my fears, and said though there was always fear of another stroke, he saw no immediate danger, and that my father most likely would live for many years to come. He repeated the same to the patient, who, hearing of the many years to come, incredulously shook his head and said: "We will see." As he has always been in the habit of contradicting his doctors, and proving to them that they know nothing, I did not take his words seriously. Towards ten at night, when taking his tea, he suddenly rose and called out: —

"Leon, come here, quick!"

A quarter of an hour later he was in his bed, and within an hour he was dying.

24 March.

I am convinced that people preserve their idiosyncracies and originality to the last minute of their life. Thus my father, in the solemn dignity of thoughts at the approaching end, still showed a gratified vanity that he, and not the doctor, had been right, and that his unbelief in medicine was well founded. I listened to what he said, and besides, read his thoughts in his face. He was deeply impressed with the importance of the moment; there was also curiosity as to the future life, – not a shadow of doubt as to its existence, but rather a certain uneasiness about how he would be received, joined to an almost unconscious, unsophisticated belief that he would not be treated as a mere nobody in particular. I shall never die like this, because I have no basis to uphold me in the hour of death. My father parted with his life in absolute faith and the deep contrition of a true Christian. At the moment when he received the last sacraments he was so venerable, so purely saintly, that his image will remain with me always.

How futile, how miserable, appears to me my scepticism in presence of that immense power of faith that, stronger even than love, triumphs over death at the very moment when it extinguishes life. After having received the last sacraments, a great tenderness took possession of him. He grasped

my hand strongly, almost convulsively, and did not let it go again, as if through me he wanted to hold fast to life. And yet it was neither fear nor despair that moved him, he was not in the least afraid. Presently I saw the eyes riveted upon my face grow dim and fixed, his forehead became moist, as if covered by a gentle dew; he opened his mouth several times as if to catch his breath, – sighed deeply once more, – and died.

I was not present at the embalming of the body, – I had not the strength; but after that I did not leave the dear remains for a minute, out of fear they might treat him as a thing of no consequence. How truly awful are those last rites of death, – the whole funereal paraphernalia, the candles, the misericordia, with the covered faces of the singers. It still clings to my ears, the "Anima ejus," and "Requiem aeternam." There breathes from it all the gloomy, awful spirit of Death. We carried the remains to Santa Maria Maggiore, and there I looked for the last time at the dear, grand face. The Campo Santo looks already like a green isle. Spring is very early this year. The trees are in bloom and the white marble monuments bathed in sunshine. What an awful contrast, the young, nascent life, the budding trees, the birds in full song, – and a funeral. Crowds of people filled the cemetery, for my father was known for his benevolence in Rome as much as my aunt is at Warsaw. All these people so full of life, as if reflecting the joys of spring, jarred upon my feelings. Crowds, especially in Italy, consider everything as a spectacle got up for their special benefit, and even now their faces betrayed more curiosity to see a grand funeral than any sympathy. Human selfishness knows no limit, and I am convinced that even people morally and intellectually educated, when following a funeral, feel a kind of unconscious satisfaction that this has happened to somebody else, and it is not they who are to be interred.

My aunt arrived, as I had summoned her by telegram. She, from the standpoint of faith, looks upon death as a change essentially for the better; therefore received the blow with far more calmness than I. This did not prevent her from, shedding bitter tears at her brother's coffin.

Afterwards she spoke to me long and tenderly, – a conversation full of exceeding goodness, I took much amiss at the time, for which I am sorry now. She did not mention Aniela's name, – spoke only of my future loneliness, and insisted upon my coming to Ploszow; where, surrounded by tender hearts, especially the one old heart which loved me beyond everything on earth, I would feel less sad. I saw in all this only her desire to continue her matchmaking; and in presence of my recent bereavement this seemed to me improper, and irritated me very much. I felt not inclined to think of the life before me, nor of love-speeches or weddings, with the shadow of death across my path. I refused peremptorily, even curtly; told my aunt I was going away, – most likely to Corfu, then would come back to Rome in order to arrange my father's affairs, and after that would come to Ploszow.

She did not insist upon having her own way. Feeling deeply for me, she was even more gentle than usual, and left Rome three days after the funeral. I did not go to Corfu; instead of that, Mr. and Mrs. Davis carried me off to their villa at Peli, where I have been now for several days. Whether Mrs. Davis is sincere or not I do not know, and will not even enter upon that now; I know only that no sister could have shown more sympathy and solicitude. With a nature poisoned by scepticism, I am always prone to suspect and misjudge those around me; but if it should be proved that I misjudged this woman, I should feel truly guilty, – because her goodness to me is quite extraordinary.

26 March.

My windows look out upon the vast blueness of the Mediterranean, encompassed by bands of a darker blue on the far horizon. Close to the villa, the crisped waves glitter like fiery scales; in the distance, the sea is glassy and still, as if lulled to sleep in its blue veil. White lateen sails flash in the sun, and once a day a steamer from Marseilles for Genoa passes hence, dragging in her wake woolly coils of smoke that hang over the sea like a dark cloud, until it gradually dissolves and disappears. The restfulness of the place is indescribable. Thoughts dissolve like yonder black cloud between the blue sky and azure sea, and life is a blissful vegetation.

I felt very tired yesterday, but to-day I inhale with eager lungs the fresh sea-breezes, that leave a salty taste on my lips. Say what they like, the Riviera is one of the gems of God's creation. I fancy to myself how the wind whistles at Ploszow; the sudden changes from mild spring weather to wintry blasts; the darkness, sleet, and hail, with intermittent gleams of sunshine. Here the sky is transparent and serene; the soft breeze which even now caresses my face comes through the open window together with the scent of heliotropes, roses, and mignonette. It is the enchanted land, where the orange blossoms, and also an enchanted palace; because everything that millions can buy, combined with the exquisite taste of Mrs. Davis, is to be found in this villa. I am surrounded by masterworks of art, – statues, pictures, matchless specimens of ceramics, chased works by Benvenuto. Eyes feast on nature, feast on art, and do not know where to dwell longest, – unless it be on the splendid pagan, the mistress of all these splendors, and whose only religion is beauty.

But is it quite just to call her a pagan? because, I say again, whether sincere or not, she shares my sorrows and tries to soothe them. We talk for hours about my father, and I have often seen tears in her eyes. Since she found out that music acts soothingly upon my mind, she plays for hours, and often until late at night. Sometimes I sit in my room in the dark, look absently at the sea riddled by a silver network, and listen to the sounds of her music mingling with the splashing of the waves. I listen until I feel half distracted, half sleepy, – until in sleep I forget the real life, with all its sorrows.

29 March.

I do not even feel inclined to write every day. We are reading together the Divina Commedia, – or rather, its last part. There was a time when I felt more attracted by the awful plasticity of the Inferno. Now I like to plunge into the luminous mist, peopled with still more luminous spirits, of the Dantesque heaven. At times it seems as if amid all that radiance I see the dear, familiar features, and my sorrow becomes almost sweet to me. I never before understood the exceeding beauty of heaven. Never has human mind taken such a lofty flight, encompassed such greatness, or borrowed such a slice from infinity as in this sublime, immortal poem. The day before yesterday and the two days following, we read it together in the boat. We usually go out a long distance, and when the sea is quite still I furl the sail; and we read, rocked by the waves, – or rather, she reads and I listen. Surrounded by the glories of the sunset, far from the shore, with the most beautiful woman reading to me Dante, I was under a delusion, that I had been transferred to another world.

30 March.

At times the sorrow that seemed to be lulled to sleep wakes up with renewed force. I feel then as if I wanted to fly hence.

VILLA LAURA, 31 March.

To-day I thought a great deal about Aniela. I have a strange feeling, as if lands and seas divided us. It seems to me as if Ploszow were a Hyperborean island somewhere at the confines of the world. We have delusions of that kind when personal impression takes the place of tangible reality. It is not Aniela who is far from me, it is I who go farther and farther away from the Leon whose heart and thoughts were once so full of her. This does not mean that my feelings for her have vanished. By close analysis I find they have only changed in their active character. Some weeks ago, I loved her and wanted something; I love her still, but want nothing. My father's death has scattered the concentration of the feelings. It would be the same, for instance, had I begun some literary work, and some unfortunate accident interrupted the even flow of my thoughts. But that is not all. Not long ago, all the faculties of my mind were strung to their highest pitch; now, under the influence of a heavy sorrow, a soft atmosphere, and the gently rocking sea, they have relaxed. I live, as I said before, the life of a plant; I rest as one rests after a long fatigue, and as if immersed in a warm bath. Never did I feel less inclined to any kind of exertion; the very thought of it gives me pain. If I had to choose a watchword, it would be, "Do not wake me." What will happen when I wake up, I do not know. I am sad now, but not unhappy; therefore I do not want to wake up, and do not consider it my duty. It

is even difficult to me to recall the image of the Ploszowski who fancied himself bound to Aniela. Bound, – why? by what reason? What has happened between us?

A slight, almost imperceptible kiss on the forehead, – a caress which, among near relations, can be put down to brotherly affection. These are ridiculous scruples. I have broken ties far different from these without the slightest twinge of conscience. Were she not a relation, it would be a different matter. It is true, she understood it in a different way, and so did I at the time, – but let it pass. One prick of conscience more or less, what does it matter? We do worse things continually, to which the disappointment I caused Aniela is mere childishness. Conscience that can occupy itself with such peccadilloes must have nothing else to do. There is about the same proportion of such kinds of crime to real ones as our conversations on the terrace to real life.

Upon the whole, I do foresee what will happen; but I want to be left in peace at present and not think of anything. "Do not wake me." To-day it was determined that we ought to leave Peli as soon as the hot weather sets in, – perhaps in the middle of April, – and go to Switzerland. Even that terrifies me. I fancy Mrs. Davis will have to place her husband under restraint; he shows symptoms of insanity. He says not a word for whole days, but sits staring either at the floor or at his finger-nails; he is afraid they will come off. These are with him the consequences of a wild life and narcotics.

I leave off writing as it is our time for sailing.

2 April.

Yesterday there was a thunderstorm. A strong southern wind drove the clouds along as a herd of wild horses. It pulled and tore, chased and scattered them, then got them under and threw them with a mighty effort upon the sea, which darkened instantly as man in wrath, and began in its turn to send its foam aloft, – a veritable battle of two furies, which, battering each other, produce thunder and lightning flashes. But all this lasted only a short time. We did not go out to sea, as the waves were too rough. Instead of it we looked at the storm from the glazed balcony, and sometimes looked at each other. It is no use deluding myself any longer; there is something going on between us, – a subtle change in our relations to each other. Neither of us has said a word or overstepped the boundary line of friendship; neither has confessed to anything, and yet speaking to each other we feel that our words serve only to disguise our thoughts. It is the same when we are in the boat, reading together, or when I listen to her music. All our acts seem mere shadows, – an outward form that hides the real essence of things, with its face still veiled, but following us wherever we go. Neither of us has given it a name; but we both feel its presence. Manifestations like these take place probably every time man and woman begin to influence each other. I could not tell exactly when it began; but I confess it did not come upon me quite unexpectedly.

I accepted their hospitality because Mrs. Davis was my father's friend; and it was she who, after his death, showed me more sympathy than any one else in Rome. I have so much consciousness of self, am so able to divide myself, that soon after my arrival here, in spite of my heavy sorrow I had the presentiment that our mutual relation would undergo a change. I hated myself that so soon after my father's death I should harbor thoughts like these; but they were there. I find now that my presentiments were right. If I said that the changed relation has still its face veiled, I meant to say that I do not know exactly when the veil will be torn asunder, and I am under the spell of expectation. I should be unsophisticated indeed, if I supposed she were less conscious of all this than I. She is probably more so. Most likely she is guiding all these changes; and everything that is happening happens according to her wishes and cool reflection. Diana the Huntress is spreading her net for the game! But what does it matter to me? what is there for me to lose? As nearly every man, I am that kind of game which allows itself to be hunted for the purpose of turning at a given moment against the hunter. In such circumstances we all have energy enough. In a hand-to-hand fight, like this, the victory rests always with us. I know perfectly well that Mrs. Davis does not love me, any more than I love her. We simply react upon each other through our pagan nature, our sensuous and artistic instincts.

With her it is also a question of vanity, – the worse for her, as it may lead her whither love leads. I shall not go too far. In my feeling for her there is neither affection nor tenderness, – nothing but rapture at the sight of nature's masterwork, and the attraction natural in a man when that masterwork is a woman. My father said that the height of victory would be to change an angel into a woman; I maintain that it is no less a triumph to feel around one's neck the arms, palpitating with life, of a Florentine Venus.

As far as beauty goes she is the highest expression of whatever the most exalted imagination is able to conceive. She is a Phryne. It would turn most men's heads to see her in a tight-fitting riding-habit that shows the outline of her figure as beautiful as that of a statue. In the boat, reading Dante, she looked like a Sybil, and one could understand a Nero's sacrilegious passion. Hers is an almost baleful beauty. Only the joining eyebrows make her appear a woman of our times, and this makes her all the more irritating. She has a certain habit of pushing back her hair by putting both hands at the back of her head; then her shoulders are raised; the whole shape acquires a certain curve, and the breast stands firmly out, – and one feels a desire to carry her off in one's arms from everybody's eyes.

In each of us there is a hidden Satyr. As to myself, as I said already, I am highly impressionable; therefore, when I think of it, that there is something going on between me and this live statue of a Juno, that some mysterious power pushes us towards each other, – my head is in a whirl, and I ask myself what would I wish for more perfect than this.

3 April.

As much as ever woman can show kindness and sympathy to a friend in trouble, she has shown to me. And yet, strange to say, all this kindness has upon me the effect of moonlight, – radiance without warmth; she possesses perfection of form, but there is no soul; with her all is premeditation, but not nature. There speaks again the sceptic; but I shall never be so intoxicated as to lose my capacity of observation. If this divinity were kind, she would be kind to everybody. Thus, for instance, the way she treats her husband is enough to destroy any illusion as to her heart. The unfortunate Davis is such a bloodless creature that he feels chilly in the hottest sunshine, and oh! so chilly at her side. I never noticed in her the slightest sign of compassion for his misery. He simply does not exist, for her. This millionnaire, in the midst of all his wealth, is so poor that it would rouse any one's pity. He is apparently indifferent to everything; and yet the human being, with ever so little consciousness, feels kindness. The best proof of it is that Davis feels grateful to me because I speak to him now and then about his health.

Perhaps it is the instinctive attraction of the weaker towards the stronger organism. When I look at that face as white as chalk, no bigger than my fist, those feet like walking-sticks, and that shrunken figure, wrapped up in a plaid during the hottest of weathers, I am truly sorry for him. But I will not make myself out better than I am. I may pity the man; but compassion will not stand in my way. It has often struck me that, when woman is in question, man becomes pitiless; it is still a remnant of the animal instinct that fights to the uttermost for the female. In such a fight between human beings, whatever shape it takes, the weaker goes to the wall. Even honor is no curb; it is only religion that condemns it absolutely.

12 April.

I have not written for nearly ten days. The veil was rent a week ago. I always suspected the sea would help us to an understanding. Women like Laura never forget the fitting background. If they do charitable deeds because it enhances their beauty, the more they want beauty when they fall. Joined to this is their passion for anything out of the common, which does not spring from the poetical faculties of their mind, but from a desire to adorn themselves. I have not so lost my head as not to be able to judge Laura, though really I do not know whether she has not the right to be what she is, and to think the sun and stars are made on purpose for her adornment. Absolute beauty, in the nature of things, must be essentially egotistic, and subject everything to its rule. Laura is the very incarnation

of beauty, and nobody has the right to ask anything else from her than to be always and everywhere beautiful; at least, I do not ask for more.

Thanks to my skill in seamanship, we can be alone on our excursions. A week ago, on a sultry day, Laura expressed a wish to go out in the boat. Like a Hecate, she exults in heat. A gentle breeze drove us a long distance from the shore, and then the wind fell. The lateen sail hung motionless from the mast. The rays of the sun, reflected from the glassy surface of the water, increased the heat, although it was late in the afternoon. Laura threw herself on the Indian matting, and resting her head against the cushions, remained motionless, all in a red glow, from the sun filtering through the awning. A strange laziness had taken possession of me, and at the same time the sight of this woman with her Greek form that showed through the clinging drapery sent a thrill of admiration through my veins. Her eyes were veiled, the lips slightly parted; her whole presence expressed powerlessness, and seemed to say, "I am weak."

We came back late to the villa, and the return will remain for a long time in my memory. After a sunset in which sky and earth seemed to be wedded in a splendor without limit and without division, there came a night of such beauty as I had never seen on the Riviera. From the vast deep rose the immense red orb of the moon, which filled the air with a mellow light, and at the same time made a broad, luminous path on the sea, on which we glided towards the shore. There was a gentle swell on the water, like a heaving sigh. From the little harbor the voices of the Ligurian fishermen, singing a chorus, came up to us. A light breeze from the shore wafted towards us the scent of orange-blossoms. Although not prone to let myself be carried away by my sensations, I was under the spell of this unutterable sweetness that floated over land and sea, and clung like dew to soul and body.

From time to time my eyes rested upon the Helen-like woman whose white draperies glistened in the moonlight, and I fancied myself living in ancient Greece, and that we were floating somewhere, maybe towards the sacred olive groves where the Eleusinian mysteries were enacted. Our rapture did not seem any more a rapture of the senses, but a cult, a mystic alliance with that night, that spring, and all nature.

15 April.

The time fixed for our departure has arrived, but we do not depart. My Hecate does not fear the sun, Mr. Davis likes it, and as far as I am concerned, whether here or in Switzerland is a matter of indifference.

A strange thought has taken hold of me; I almost shrink from it, but nevertheless will confess: It seems to me that a Christian soul, though the spring of faith be dried up therein, cannot live altogether on the mere beauty of form. This means more sorrow in store for me; if the thought proves true the whole basis of my life falls to the ground. We are beings of a different culture. Our souls are full of Gothic arches, pinnacles, twisted traceries we cannot shake off, and of which Greek minds knew nothing. Our minds shoot upward; theirs, full of repose and simplicity, rested nearer the earth. Those of us in whom the spirit of Hellas beats more powerfully consider the beautiful a necessity of life, and search after it eagerly, but instinctively demand that Aspasia should have the eyes of Dante's Beatrice. A similar longing is planted within me. When I think of it, that a beautiful human animal like Laura belongs to me and will belong as long as I wish it, a twofold joy gets hold of me, – the joy of the man and the delight of the artist; and yet there is a want and something missing. On the altar of my Greek temple there is a marble goddess; but my Gothic shrine is empty. I admit that in her I have found something bordering upon the perfect, and I defend myself from a suspicion that this perfection throws a big shadow. I thought once that Goethe's words, "You shall be like unto gods and beasts," embraced all life and were the highest expression of his wisdom; now, when I follow the commandment, I feel that he omitted the angel.

17 April.

Mr. Davis came into the room when I was sitting at Laura's feet, my head leaning against her knees. His bloodless face and dim eyes showed no feeling beyond indifferent sullenness. In his soft

slippers embroidered with Indian suns, he shuffled across the room, and into the library. Laura looked magnificent, her eyes flashing with unrestrained wrath. I rose and awaited what would happen. A thought crossed my mind that Mr. Davis might come back, a revolver in his hand. In such a case I should have pitched him through the window, revolver, plaid, and Indian slippers. But he did not come back; I waited a long time in vain. I do not know what he was doing there; whether he was thinking over his misery, weeping, or perfectly indifferent. We all three met again at lunch, and he was sitting there as if nothing unusual had happened. Perhaps it was my fancy that made me think that Laura looked menacingly at him, and also that his apathetic expression was even more mournful than usual. I confess that such a tame ending of the business is the most painful to me. I am not one to provoke a quarrel, but ready to answer for my deeds; finally, I would rather the man were not so defenceless, such a small, miserable creature. I have a nasty feeling, as if I had knocked down a cripple, and never yet felt so disgusted with myself.

We went out in the boat as usual. I did not want Laura to think I was afraid of Davis; but there we had our first quarrel. I confessed to her my scruples and she laughed at them. I said to her plainly, —

"The laughter does not become you; and remember, you may do most things, but not what is not becoming."

There was a deep frown on the meeting eyebrows, and she replied bitterly, —

"After what has passed between us, you may insult me even with more impunity than you could Davis."

After such a reproach there remained nothing else but to ask her forgiveness; and presently, harmony being restored, Laura began to talk about herself. I had another instance of her cleverness. Generally the women I have known intimately showed a desire to tell me their life. I do not blame them for it; it shows that they feel the need to justify themselves in their own eyes and ours. We men do not. Yet I never met a woman either so clever as not to overstep the artistic proportions in her confession, or so sincere as not to tell lies in order to justify herself. I call to witness all men who when the occasion occurs may verify how wonderfully similar all these cases of going astray are, and consequently how tedious. Laura, too, began to talk about herself with a certain eager satisfaction, but only in this respect did she follow the beaten track of other fallen angels. In what she told me there was a certain posing for originality, but she was certainly not posing as a victim. Knowing she had to deal with a sceptic, she did not want to call forth a smile of incredulity. Her sincerity was skirting upon the bold, almost the cynical, one might say, were it not that to her it is a system of life in which aestheticism has taken the place of ethics. She prefers simply a life in the shape of an Apollo to that of humpbacked Pulcinello; that is her philosophy. She had married Davis not so much for his wealth as for the purpose of making her life as beautiful as lay in human power, – beautiful not in the common meaning of the word, but in the highest artistic sense. Besides she did not consider she had any duties toward her husband, as she had never even pretended to love him; she had for him as much pity as repugnance, and as he was indifferent to everything, he was of no more account than if he were dead. She added that she did not take account of anything that was contrary to her ideas of a purely beautiful and artistic life. Regard for society she had very little, and who thought otherwise of her would be utterly wrong. She had felt friendship for my father, not because of his social position, but because she had looked upon him as a masterwork of nature. As to myself, she had loved me for a long time. She understood perfectly that I would have prized her more had the victory been less easy, but she did not care to bargain when her happiness was at stake.

This kind of principles, announced by that perfect mouth in a soft voice full of metallic vibrations, gave me a strange sensation. While speaking to me she drew her draperies close to her as if to make room for me at her side. At times her eyes followed the motions of the sea-gulls circling above our heads, then again they rested keenly upon my face as if she wanted to read the impression her words had made upon me. I listened to her words with a certain satisfaction, as they proved to me that I had judged her pretty correctly. Yet there was something in them quite new to me. I had always

rendered her justice as to her cleverness, but I thought her acts were the instinctive outcome of her nature. I had never supposed her capable of inventing a whole system in order to support and justify the impulses of her nature. This showed her in a somewhat nobler light, as it proved that where I had suspected her of more or less mean calculation, she only acted according to her own principles, – maybe bad, even terrible, but always principles. For instance, I had suspected her of wanting to marry me after Davis's death, – she proved me utterly in the wrong. She herself began to talk about it. She confessed that if I were to ask her for her hand she might not be able to refuse me, as she loved me more than I believed (here as I am a living man I saw a warm blush mounting to her neck and brow), but she knew this would never happen; sooner or later I would leave her with a light heart, – but what of that? If she dipped her hand into the water and felt the refreshing coolness, should she refuse herself this delight because the sun would suck the cool moisture?

Saying this she bent over the gunwale, which showed her figure in all its immaculate perfection, and after plunging her hands into the water, she stretched them out to me moist and pink and gleaming in the sunshine. I took hold of the hands, and she, as if echoing my sensations, said in a caressing voice, "Come."

20 April.

I did not see Laura the whole of yesterday, as she was not well. She had caught a chill sitting out late on the balcony, and it had affected her teeth. What a nuisance! Fortunately the day before yesterday a doctor arrived who is to remain in attendance upon Mr. Davis; otherwise I should not have a soul to speak to. He is a young Italian, small of stature, very dark, with an enormous head and very sharp eyes. He seems very intelligent. It is evident that from the very first he has grasped the situation, and found it very natural, for without hesitation he addressed me as the master of the house. I could not help laughing when he came this morning and asked me whether he could see the countess so that he might prescribe for her. They have some very quaint notions in this country. Usually, when a married woman is suspected to belong to somebody else, the world is in arms to hunt and run her down, often with thoughtless cruelty. Here, on the contrary, they worship at the altar of love, and one and all take sides with and plot for the lover. I told the doctor I would see whether the countess would see him. I penetrated into Laura's sanctum. She received me unwillingly, because her face is a little swollen, and she did not wish me to see her in that state. And in truth her face reminded me of my old drawing lessons. I noticed even then that with a modern face one may commit inaccuracies, change this or that, and provided the expression, the idea of the face remain intact, the likeness will not suffer. It is quite a different thing drawing from the antique; the slightest inaccuracy, the least deviation, destroys the harmony of the face and makes it different altogether. I had an example in Laura. The swelling was very slight, – I scarcely noticed it as she obstinately turned the sound part of her face to me; but as her eyes were a little reddened, the eyelids heavier than usual, it was not the same face, perfect in its harmony and beauty. Of course I did not let her see this, but she received my greeting half-disturbed, as if troubled with a bad conscience. Evidently according to her principles toothache is a mortal sin.

Queer principles these, anyway! I too have the soul of an ancient Greek, but beyond the Pagan there is something else in me. Laura will be sometime very unhappy with her philosophy. I can understand that one may make a religion of beauty in a general sense, but to make a religion of one's own beauty is to prepare great unhappiness for ourselves. What kind of religion is that which a simple toothache undermines, and a pimple on the nose shatters into ruin?

25 April.

We shall have to leave for Switzerland, for the heat is almost unbearable. Besides the heat, there is the Sirocco, that comes now and then like a hot breath from Africa. The sea-breezes somewhat mitigate the fierceness of this visitor from the desert, but it is none the less very disagreeable.

The Sirocco acts injuriously on Mr. Davis. The doctor watches him closely lest he should take opium, and consequently become either very irritable or else quite stupefied. I notice that in his

greatest fits of anger he is afraid of Laura and myself. Who knows whether a homicidal mania is not already germinating in the half-insane brain? or maybe he is afraid we are going to kill him. Generally speaking, my relation with him is one of the darkest sides of the part I am enacting. I say one of the darkest, because I am fully aware that there is more than one. I should not be my own self if I did not perceive that my soul not only is stagnating, but is getting swiftly corrupted in the arms of that woman. I cannot even express what loathing, what bitterness and pangs of conscience, it caused me at first that I should have plunged myself into the depth of sensuous raptures so soon after the death of my father. It was not only my conscience, but also the delicacy of feelings which I undoubtedly possess, that revolted against it. I felt this so deeply that I could not write about it. I have grown more callous since. I still reproach myself from time to time, and seriously reflect, but the feeling has lost its poignancy.

As to Aniela, I try to forget her, because the memory is troublesome, or rather I cannot arrive at a clear understanding as to the whole Ploszow episode. At times I feel inclined to think that I was not worthy of her; at others, that I made an ass of myself over a girl like dozens of others. This irritates my vanity, and makes me feel angry with Aniela. One moment I feel an unsavory consciousness of guilt in regard to her, in another the offence appears to me futile and childish. Taken altogether, I do not approve of the part I played at Ploszow, nor do I approve of the part I am playing here. The division between right and wrong is becoming more and more indistinct within me, and what is more I do not care to make it clearer. This is the result of a certain apathy of mind, which again acts as a sleeping draught; for when the inward struggle tires me out I say to myself: "Suppose you are worse than you were – what of that? Why should you trouble about anything?"

Then I see another change in myself. Gradually I have got used to what at first chafed my honor, – the insulting of the crippled man. I notice that I permit myself hundreds of things I would not do if Davis, instead of being physically and mentally afflicted, were an able-bodied man capable of defending his own honor. We do not even take the trouble of going out to sea. I never even imagined that my sensitiveness could become so blunted. It is very easy to say to myself: "What does the wretched Eastern matter to you?" But verily I cannot get rid of the thought that my black-haired Juno is no Juno at all, – that her name is Circe, and her touch changes men (as one might say in correct mythological language) into nurslings of Eumaeus.

And when I ask myself as to the cause, the answer shatters many of my former opinions. It is this: our love is a love of the senses, but not of the soul. The thought again comes back that we, the outcome of modern culture, cannot be satisfied with it. Laura and I were like unto gods and beasts with humanity left out. In a proper sense our feelings cannot be called love; we are desirable to each other, but not dear. If we both were different from what we are, we might be a hundred times more unhappy, but I should not have the consciousness that I am drawing near the shelter of Eumaeus. I understand that love merely spiritual remains a shadow, but love without spiritualism becomes utter degradation. It is another matter that some people touched by Circe's wand may find contentment in their degradation. It seems a sad thing and very strange that I, a man of the Hellenic type, should write thus. Scepticism even here steps in, and in regard to Hellenism I begin to have my doubts whether life be possible with those worn-out forms; and as I am always sincere, I write what I think.

30 April.

Yesterday I received a letter from my aunt. It was sent after me from

Rome and dated two weeks back. I cannot understand why they kept it so long at Casa Osoria. My aunt was sure I had gone to Corfu, but thought

I might have returned by this, and writes thus: —

"We have been expecting to hear from you for some time, and are looking out with great longing for a letter. I, an old woman, am too deeply rooted in the soil to be easily shaken, but it tells upon Aniela. She evidently expected to hear from you, and when no letter came either from Vienna or Rome, I saw she felt uneasy. Then came your father's death. I said then, in her presence, that you

could not think now of anything but your loss; by and by you would shake off your trouble and return to your old life. I saw at once that my words comforted her. But afterwards, when week passed after week and you did not send us a single line, she grew very troubled, mostly about your health, but I fancy because she thought you had forgotten her. I, too, began to feel uneasy, and wrote 'poste restante' to Corfu, as we had agreed. Not getting any reply, I am sending another letter to your house at Rome, because the thought that you may be ill makes us all very unhappy. Write, if only a few lines; and, Leon, dear, pull yourself together, shake off that apathy, and be yourself again. I will be quite open with you. In addition to Aniela's troubles, somebody has told her mother that you are known everywhere for your love affairs. Fancy my indignation! Celina was so put out that she repeated it to her daughter, and now the one has continual headaches, and the other, poor child, looks so pale and listless that it makes my heart bleed. And she is such a dear girl, and as good as gold. She tries to look cheerful so as not to grieve her mother; but I am not so easily deceived, and feel deeply for her. My dearest boy, I did not say much to you at Rome, because I respected your affliction; but a sorrow like that is sent by God, and we have to submit to His will and not allow it to spoil our life. Could you not write a few words to give us some comfort, – if not to me, at least to the poor child? I never disguised it from you that my greatest wish was to see you two happily married if it were in a year or two, as Aniela is a woman in a thousand. But if you think otherwise it would be better to let me know it in some way. You know I never exaggerate things, but I am really afraid for Aniela's health. And then there is her future to be thought of. Kromitzki calls very frequently upon the ladies, evidently with some intentions. I wanted to dismiss him without ceremony, especially as I have my suspicions that it was he who spread those tales about you; but Celina solemnly entreated me not to do this. She is quite distracted, and does not believe in your affection for Aniela. What could I do? Suppose her motherly instinct is right, after all? Write at once, my dear Leon, and accept the love and blessing of the old woman who has only you now in the world. Aniela wanted to write to you a letter of condolence after your father's death, but Celina did not let her, and we had a quarrel over this. Celina is the best of women, but very provoking at times. Kind greetings and love from us all. Young Chwastowski is establishing a brewery on the estate. He had some money of his own, and the rest I lent him."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.