

# GUY DE MAUPASSANT

THE WORKS OF GUY DE  
MAUPASSANT, VOLUME 5

Ги д. Мопассан

**The works of Guy de  
Maupassant, Volume 5**

«Public Domain»

**Мопассан Г. д.**

The works of Guy de Maupassant, Volume 5 / Г. д. Мопассан —  
«Public Domain»,

# Содержание

INTRODUCTION	5
UNE VIE	7
I	8
II	15
III	18
IV	25
V	33
VI	39
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	43

# Guy de Maupassant

## The works of Guy de Maupassant, Vol. 5 Une Vie and Other Stories

### INTRODUCTION

By Edmund Gosse

The most robust and masculine of recent French novelists is a typical Norman, sprung from an ancient noble family, originally of Lorraine, but long settled in the Pays de Caux. The traveler from England towards Paris, soon after leaving Dieppe, sees on his left hand, immediately beyond the station of St. Aubin, a handsome sixteenth-century house, the Château de Miromesnil, on a hill above the railway. Here, surrounded by the relics of his warlike and courtly ancestors, Henri René Albert Guy de Maupassant was born on the 5th of August, 1850. He was early associated with the great Norman master of fiction, Gustave Flaubert, who perceived his genius and enthusiastically undertook the training of his intelligence. Through 1870 and 1871 the young man served in the war as a common soldier. He was somewhat slow in taking up the profession of letters, and was thirty years of age before he became in any degree distinguished. In 1879 the Troisième Théâtre Français produced a short play of his, *Histoire du Vieux Temps* (An Old-World Story), gracefully written in rhyme, but showing no very remarkable aptitude for the stage.

It was in 1880 that De Maupassant was suddenly made famous by two published volumes. The one was a volume of Verses (*Des Vers*), twenty pieces, most of them of a narrative character, extremely brilliant in execution, and audacious in tone. One of these, slightly exceeding its fellows in crudity, was threatened with a prosecution in law as an outrage upon manners, and the fortune of the volume was secured. The early poems of De Maupassant like those of Paul Bourget, are not without sterling merit as poetry, but their main interest is that they reflect the characteristics of their author's mind. Such pieces as "Fin-d'Amour," and "Au Bord de l'Eau," in the 1880 volume, are simply short stories told in verse, instead of in prose. In this same year, Guy de Maupassant, who had thrown in his lot with the Naturalist Novelists, contributed a short tale to the volume called *Les Soirées de Médan*, to which Zola, Huysmans, Hennique, Céard and Paul Alexis also affixed their names. He was less known than any of these men, yet it was his story, *Boule de Suif* (Lump of Suet, or Ball of Fat), which ensured the success of the book. This episode of the war, treated with cynicism, tenderness, humor and pathos mingled in quite a new manner, revealed a fresh genius for the art of narrative. There was an instant demand for more short stories from the same pen, and it was soon discovered that the fecundity and resource of the new writer were as extraordinary as the charm of his style and the objective force of his vision.

It is unnecessary to recount here the names of even the chief of De Maupassant's stories. If we judge them merely by their vivacity, richness and variety, they are the best short tales which have been produced anywhere during the same years. But it is impossible not to admit that they have grave faults, which exclude them from all possible recommendation to young and ingenuous readers. No bibliography of them can be attempted, the publishers of M. Guy de Maupassant having reprinted his lesser stories so frequently, and with such infinite varieties of arrangement, that the positive sequence of these little masterpieces has been hopelessly confused. Three stories in particular, however, may be mentioned, *La Maison Tellier*, 1881; *Les Sœurs Rondoli*, 1884, and *Miss Harriett*, 1885, because the

collections which originally bore these names were pre-eminently successful in drawing the attention of the critics to the author's work.

It was not until he had won a very great reputation as a short story-teller, that De Maupassant attempted a long novel. He published only six single volume stories, all of which are included in the present edition. The first was *Une Vie* (A Life), 1883, a very careful study of Norman manners, highly finished in the manner of Flaubert, whom he has styled "that irreproachable master whom I admire above all others." In certain directions, I do not think that De Maupassant has surpassed *Une Vie*, in fidelity to nature, in a Dutch exactitude of portraiture, in a certain distinction of tone; it was the history of an unhappy gentlewoman, doomed throughout life to be deceived, impoverished, disdained and overwhelmed. *Bel-Ami*, 1885, which succeeded this quiet and Quaker-colored book, was a much more vivid novel, an extremely vigorous picture of the rise in social prominence of a penniless fellow in Paris, without a brain or a heart, who depends wholly upon his impudence and his good looks. After 1885 De Maupassant published four novels — *Mont-Oriol*, 1887; *Pierre et Jean*, 1888; *Fort comme la Mort* (As Strong as Death, or The Ruling Passion), 1889; and *Nôtre Cœur* (Our Heart), 1890.

Of these six remarkable books, the *Pierre et Jean* is certainly the most finished and the most agreeable. In *Mont-Oriol*, a beautiful landscape of Auvergne mountain and bath enshrines a singularly pessimistic rendering of the adage "He loved and he rode away." Few of the author's thoughtful admirers will admit that in *Fort comme la Mort* he has done justice to his powers. In *Nôtre Cœur* he has taken up one of the psychological problems which have hitherto lain in the undisputed province of M. Bourget, and has shown how difficult it is in the musky atmosphere of fashionable Paris for two hearts to recover the Mayday freshness of their impulses, the spontaneous flow of their illusions; he displays himself here in a new light, less brutal than of old, more delicate and analytical. With regard to *Pierre et Jean*, it would be difficult to find words wherewith to describe it and its relation to the best English fiction more just or more felicitous than those in which Mr. Henry James welcomed its first appearance: — "*Pierre et Jean* is, so far as my judgment goes, a faultless production... It is the best of M. de Maupassant's novels, mainly because M. de Maupassant has never before been so clever. It is a pleasure to see a mature talent able to renew itself, strike another note, and appear still young... The author's choice of a *milieu*, moreover, will serve to English readers as an example of how much more democratic contemporary French fiction is than that of his own country. The greater part of it — almost all the work of Zola and of Daudet, the list of Flaubert's novels, and the best of those of the brothers De Goncourt — treat of that vast, dim section of society, which, lying between those luxurious walks on whose behalf there are easy suppositions and that darkness of misery which, in addition to being picturesque, brings philanthropy also to the writer's aid, constitutes really, in extent and expressiveness, the substance of every nation. In England, where the fashion of fiction still sets mainly to the country-house and the hunting-field, and yet more novels are published than anywhere else in the world, that thick twilight of mediocrity of condition has been little explored. May it yield triumphs in the years to come!"

The great merit of M. de Maupassant as a writer is his frank and masculine directness. He sees life clearly, and he undertakes to describe it as he sees it, in concise and vigorous language. He is a realist, yet without the gloominess of Zola, over whom he claims one great advantage, that of possessing a rich sense of humor, and a large share of the old Gallic wit. His pessimism, indeed, is inexorable, and he pushes the misfortune, or more often the degradation, of his characters to its extreme logical conclusion. Yet, even in his saddest stories, the general design is rarely sordid. For a long while he was almost exclusively concerned with impressions of Normandy; a little later he became one of the many painters of Paris. Then he traveled widely, in the south of Europe, in Africa; wherever he went he took with him a quick and sensitive eye for the aspects of nature, and his descriptive passages, which are never pushed to a tiresome excess of length, are often faultlessly vivid. He attempted, with a good deal of cleverness, to analyze character, but his real power seems to lie in describing, in a sober style and with a virile impartiality, the superficial aspects of action and intrigue.

# **UNE VIE**

**(A WOMAN'S LIFE)**

## I

Jeanne, having finished her packing, went to the window, but it had not stopped raining.

All night long the downpour had pattered against the roofs and the window-panes. The low, heavy clouds seemed as though they had burst, and were emptying themselves on the world, to reduce it to a pulp and melt it as though it were a sugar-loaf. A hot wind swept by in gusts; the murmur of the overflowing gutters filled the empty streets, and the houses, like sponges, absorbed the moisture which, penetrating to the interior, made the walls wet from cellar to attic.

Jeanne, who had left the convent the day before, free at last and ready for all the happiness of a life of which she had dreamed for so long, feared that her father would hesitate about starting if the weather did not clear up, and, for the hundredth time since the morning, she studied the horizon.

Looking round, she saw that she had forgotten to put her almanac in her traveling bag. She took from the wall the little card which bore in the center of a design, the date of the current year 1819 in gilt letters, and crossed out with a pencil the first four columns, drawing a line through each saint's name till she came to the second of May, the day she had left the convent.

A voice outside the door called: "Jeannette!"

Jeanne answered: "Come in, papa." And her father appeared.

The Baron Simon-Jecques Le Perthuis des Vauds was a gentleman of the old school, eccentric and good-hearted. An enthusiastic follower of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, he had a loving tenderness for all nature; for the fields, the woods, and for animals. An aristocrat by birth, he hated '93 by instinct; but of a philosophical temperament and liberal by education, he loathed tyranny with an inoffensive and declamatory hatred. The strongest, and at the same time the weakest, trait in his character was his generosity; a generosity which had not enough arms to caress, to give, to embrace; the generosity of a creator which was utterly devoid of system, and to which he gave way with no attempt to resist his impulses, as though part of his will were paralyzed; it was a want of energy, and almost amounted to a vice.

A man of theories, he had thought out a whole plan of education for his daughter, wishing to make her happy and good, straightforward and affectionate. Till she was twelve years old she had stayed at home; then, in spite of her mother's tears, she was sent to the Sacred Heart Convent. He had kept her strictly immured there, totally ignorant of worldly things, for he wished her to return to him, at the age of seventeen, innocent, that he might himself immerse her in a sort of bath of rational poetry; and, in the fields, surrounded by the fertile earth, he meant to instruct her, and enlighten her by the sight of the serene laws of life, the innocent loves and the simple tenderness of the animals.

And now she was leaving the convent, radiant and brimful of happiness, ready for every joy and for all the charming adventures that, in the idle moments of her days and during the long nights, she had already pictured to herself.

She looked like a portrait by Veronese, with her shining, fair hair, which looked as though it had given part of its color to her skin, the creamy skin of a high-born girl, hardly tinted with pink and shaded by a soft velvety down, which could just be seen when she was kissed by a sun-ray. Her eyes were blue, an opaque blue, like the eyes of a Dutch china figure. On her left nostril was a little mole, another on the right side of her chin, where curled a few hairs so much like the color of the skin that they could hardly be seen. She was tall, with a well-developed chest and supple waist. Her clear voice sometimes sounded too shrill, but her merry laugh made everyone around her feel happy. She had a way of frequently putting both hands to her forehead, as though to smooth her hair.

She ran to her father, put her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Well, are we going to start?" she asked.

He smiled, shook back his white hair, which he wore rather long, and pointing towards the window:



"How can you think of traveling in such weather?" he said.

Then she pleaded coaxingly and affectionately, "Oh, papa, please do let us start. It will be fine in the afternoon."

"But your mother will never consent to it."

"Oh, yes, I promise you she shall; I will answer for her."

"Well, if you can persuade your mother, I am quite willing to start."

She hastened towards the baroness's room, for she had looked forward to this day with great impatience. Since she had entered the convent she had not left Rouen, as her father would allow no distracting pleasures before the age he had fixed. Only twice had she been taken to Paris for a fortnight, but that was another town, and she longed for the country. Now she was going to spend the summer on their estate, Les Peuples, in an old family château built on the cliff near Yport; and she was looking forward to the boundless happiness of a free life beside the waves. And then it was understood that the manor was to be given to her, and that she was to live there always when she was married; and the rain which had been falling incessantly since the night before was the first real grief of her life.

In three minutes she came running out of her mother's room, crying:

"Papa! papa! Mamma is quite willing. Tell them to harness the horses."

The rain had not given over in the least, in fact, it was coming down still faster when the landau came round to the door. Jeanne was ready to jump in when the baroness came down the stairs, supported on one side by her husband, and on the other by a tall maid, whose frame was as strong and as well-knit as a boy's. She was a Normandy girl from Caux, and looked at least twenty years old, though she really was scarcely eighteen. In the baron's family she was treated somewhat like a second daughter, for she was Jeanne's foster-sister. She was named Rosalie, and her principal duty consisted in aiding her mistress to walk, for, within the last few years, the baroness had attained an enormous size, owing to an hypertrophy of the heart, of which she was always complaining.

Breathing very hard, the baroness reached the steps of the old hotel; there she stopped to look at the court-yard where the water was streaming down, and murmured:

"Really, it is not prudent."

Her husband answered with a smile:

"It was you who wished it, Madame Adélaïde."

She bore the pompous name of Adélaïde, and he always prefaced it by "Madame" with a certain little look of mock-respect.

She began to move forward again, and with difficulty got into the carriage, all the springs of which bent under her weight. The baron sat by her side, and Jeanne and Rosalie took their places with their backs to the horses. Ludivine, the cook, brought a bundle of rugs, which were thrown over their knees, and two baskets, which were pushed under their legs; then she climbed up beside old Simon and enveloped herself in a great rug, which covered her entirely. The concierge and his wife came to shut the gate and wish them good-bye, and after some parting instructions about the baggage, which was to follow in a cart, the carriage started.

Old Simon, the coachman, with his head held down and his back bent under the rain, could hardly be seen in his three-caped coat; and the moaning wind rattled against the windows and swept the rain along the road.

The horses trotted briskly down to the quay, passed the row of big ships, whose masts and yards and ropes stood out against the gray sky like bare trees, and entered the long Boulevard du Mont Riboudet. Soon they reached the country, and from time to time the outline of a weeping-willow, with its branches hanging in a corpse-like inertness, could be vaguely seen through the watery mist. The horses' shoes clattered on the road; and the four wheels made regular rings of mud.

Inside the carriage they were silent; their spirits seemed damped, like the earth. The baroness leaned back, rested her head against the cushions, and closed her eyes. The baron looked out

mournfully at the monotonous, wet fields, and Rosalie, with a parcel on her knees, sat musing in the animal-like way in which the lower classes indulge. But Jeanne felt herself revive under this warm rain like a plant which is put into the open air after being shut up in a dark closet; and the greatness of her joy seemed to prevent any sadness reaching her heart. Although she did not speak, she wanted to sing and to put her hand outside and drink the water with which it would be filled; and the desolate look of the country only added to the enjoyment she felt at being carried along so swiftly, and at feeling herself sheltered in the midst of this deluge.

Under the ceaseless rain a cloud of steam rose from the backs of the two horses.

The baroness gradually fell asleep; her face, surrounded by six stiff curls, sank lower and lower, though it was partly sustained by the three big waves of her neck, the last curves of which lost themselves in the amplitude of her chest. Her head, raised by each respiration, as regularly sank again; her cheeks puffed out, and from her half-opened lips issued a deep snore. Her husband leaned over towards her and softly placed in her hands, crossed on her ample lap, a leather pocket-book. The touch awoke her, and she looked at the object in her lap with the stupefied look of one suddenly aroused from sleep. The pocket-book fell and opened, and the gold and bank-notes it contained were scattered all over the carriage. That woke her up altogether, and the light-heartedness of her daughter found vent in a burst of laughter.

The baron picked up the money and placed it on her knees.

"There, my dear," he said. "That is all that is left of the farm at Eletot. I have sold it to pay for the doing up of Les Peuples as we shall live there so much now."

She counted the six thousand, four hundred francs, and put them quietly into her pocket.

It was the ninth farm that they had sold out of the thirty-one left them by their parents; but they still had about twenty thousand livres a year coming in from property which, well-managed, would have easily brought in thirty thousand francs. As they lived quietly, this income would have been amply sufficient for them, if their lavish generosity had not constantly exhausted their supplies. It drained their money from them as the sun draws water from a swamp. The gold melted, vanished, disappeared. How? No one knew. One of them was always saying: "I don't know how it is, but I have spent a hundred francs to-day, and I haven't anything to show for it."

To give was one of the great joys of their existence, and they perfectly understood each other on this point in a way that was at once grand and touching.

Jeanne asked: "Is my château looking beautiful now?"

"You will see, my child," answered the baron, gaily.

Little by little the violence of the storm diminished; soon there was nothing more than a sort of mist, a very fine drizzling rain. The arch of the clouds seemed to get higher and lighter; and suddenly a long oblique sunbeam fell on the fields. Through the break in the clouds a streak of blue sky could be seen, and then the rift got bigger as though a veil were being drawn back, and a beautiful sky of a pure deep blue spread itself out over the world. There was a fresh mild breeze like a happy sigh from the earth, and from the gardens and woods came now and again the merry song of a bird drying his wings.

The evening was drawing in; everyone inside the carriage, except Jeanne, was asleep. Twice they had stopped at an inn, to rest the horses and give them water and corn. The sun had set, and in the distance the bells were ringing; in a little village the lamps were being lighted, and the sky was studded with stars. Sometimes the lights of a homestead could be seen, their rays piercing the darkness; and, all at once among the fir-trees, behind a hill, the large, red, sleepy moon arose.

It was so mild that the windows were left down, and Jeanne, tired of dreaming, and her stock of happy visions exhausted, was now sleeping. Sometimes the numbness caused by resting too long in one position aroused her, and she looked outside and saw the trees fly past her in the clear night, or some cows, lying in a field, raise their heads at the noise of the carriage. Then she settled herself in a fresh position, and tried to continue an interrupted dream, but the continual rumbling of the

carriage sounded in her ears, confusing her thoughts, and she shut her eyes again, her mind feeling as tired as her body.

At last the carriage stopped, and men and women came to the doors with lanterns in their hands. They had arrived, and Jeanne, suddenly awakened, sprang out, while her father and Rosalie, lighted by a farmer, almost carried in the baroness; she was quite worn out, and, catching her breath, she kept saying in a weak little voice: "Ah, my children! what shall I do?" She would have nothing to eat or drink, but went to bed and fell asleep at once.

Jeanne and the baron had supper alone. They smiled when their glances met, and, at every moment, took each other's hands across the table; then, both of them filled with a childish delight, they went over the manor which had just been put in thorough repair.

It was one of those big, high, Normandy houses generally built of white stone which turns gray, and which, large enough to accommodate a regiment, have something of the farm about them as well as the château.

An immense hall, going from end to end, divided the house into two parts, its large doors opening opposite each other. A double staircase bestrode this entrance hall leaving the center empty, and, meeting at the height of the first floor, formed a sort of bridge. On the ground-floor, to the right, was the huge drawing-room hung with tapestry with a design of birds and flowers. All the furniture was in tapestry, the subjects of the designs being taken from La Fontaine's fables. Jeanne was delighted at recognizing a chair she had liked when she was quite a child, and which represented the history of the Fox and the Stork. The library, full of old books, and two other rooms, which were not used, came next to the drawing-room. On the left were the dining-room, which had been newly wainscoted, the linen-press, the pantry, the kitchen, and a little room with a bath in it.

A corridor ran the whole length of the first story, the ten doors of as many rooms opening on to it, and Jeanne's room was quite at the end, on the right. The baron had just had it freshly furnished by simply using some hangings and furniture that had been stored away in a garret. Very old Flemish tapestry peopled the room with strange characters, and when she saw the bed Jeanne gave a cry of delight. At the four corners four birds of carved oak, quite black and polished till they shone, supported the bed, looking as though they were its guardians. The sides were decorated with two large garlands of carved flowers and fruit; and the four bed-posts, finely fluted and crowned with Corinthian capitals, supported a cornice of entwined roses and cupids. It was a monumental couch, and yet was very graceful, despite the somber appearance of the wood darkened by age. The counterpane and canopy, made of old dark blue silk, starred here and there with great *fleurs de lis* embroidered in gold, sparkled like two firmaments.

When she had finished admiring the bed, Jeanne, raising her light, examined the tapestry, trying to discover the subject of the design.

A young nobleman and a young lady, dressed in the strangest way in green, red, and yellow, were talking under a blue tree on which white fruit was ripening. A big rabbit of the same color as the fruit was nibbling a little gray grass. Just above the figures, in a conventional distance, five little round houses with pointed roofs could be seen, and up at the top, nearly in the sky, was a red wind-mill. Great branches of flowers twined in and out over the whole.

The next two panels were very like the first, except that out of the houses came four little men, dressed in Flemish costume, who raised their heads to heaven as if to denote their extreme surprise and anger. But the last set of hangings depicted a drama. Near the rabbit, which was still nibbling, the young man was stretched out, apparently dead. The young lady, with her eyes fixed on him, was thrusting a sword into her breast, and the fruit on the tree had become black.

Jeanne was just giving up trying to understand it when she discovered in a corner a microscopic animal, which the rabbit could have eaten as easily as a blade of grass, and which was meant for a lion. Then she recognized the misfortunes of Pyramis and Thisbe; and, although she smiled at the simplicity of the designs, she felt happy at being surrounded by these pictures which would always

accord with her dearest hopes; and at the thought that every night this antique and legendary love would watch over her dreams.

The rest of the furniture was of the most different styles, and bore the traces of many generations. A superb Louis XVI chest of drawers, bound with polished brass, stood between two Louis XV armchairs which were still covered with their original brocaded silk. A rosewood *escritoire* was opposite the mantelpiece, on which, under a glass shade, was a clock made in the time of the Empire. It was in the form of a bronze bee-hive hanging on four marble columns over a garden of gilded flowers. On a small pendulum, coming out of the hive through a long slit, swung a little bee, with enamel wings, backwards and forwards over the flowers; the dial was of painted china and was let into the side of the hive. It struck eleven, and the baron kissed his daughter and went to his own room.

Then Jeanne regretfully went to bed, giving a last look round her room before she put out her candle. Only the head of the bed was against the wall, and on the left was a window through which a stream of moonlight entered, making a pool of light on the floor, and casting pale reflections on the walls over the motionless loves of Pyramis and Thisbe. Through the other window, opposite the foot of the bed, Jeanne could see a big tree bathed in a soft light. She turned over and closed her eyes, but after a little while opened them again, for she still seemed to feel the jolting of the carriage, and its rumbling was yet in her ears.

For some time she lay quite still, hoping thus to soon fall asleep, but the restlessness of her mind communicated itself to her body, and at last she got out of bed. With her arms and feet bare, in her long chemise, which made her look like a phantom, she crossed the flood of light on the boards, opened her window and looked out.

The night was so clear that everything could be seen as plainly as in broad daylight; and the young girl recognized all the country she had so loved as a child.

First of all, just opposite her, was a big lawn looking as yellow as gold under the light of the night. There were two enormous trees before the *château*, a plane-tree to the north, a linden to the south, and quite at the end of the grass, a little thicket ended the estate which was protected from the hurricanes by five rows of old elms twisted, torn, and sloped like a roof, by the sea wind which was constantly blowing.

This kind of park was bounded on the right and left by two long avenues of immense poplar-trees (called *peuples* in Normandy) which separated the squire's residence from the two farms adjoining, one of which was occupied by the Couillards, the other by the Martins. These *peuples* had given the names to the *château*.

Beyond this enclosure lay a large piece of uncultivated ground covered with gorse, over which the wind rustled and blew day and night. Then the coast suddenly fell a hundred yards, forming a high, white cliff, the foot of which was washed by the sea; and Jeanne gazed at the vast, watery expanse whose waves seemed to be sleeping under the stars.

In this repose of nature, when the sun was absent, the earth gave out all her perfumes. A jasmine, which had climbed round the lower windows, exhaled its penetrating fragrance which united with the subtler odor of the budding leaves, and the soft breeze brought with it the damp, salt smell of the seaweeds and the beach.

At first the young girl gave herself up to the pleasure of simply breathing, and the peace of the country calmed her as would a cool bath. All the animals which wake at evening-time, and hide their obscure existence in the peacefulness of the night, filled the clear darkness with a silent restlessness. Great birds fled silently through the air like shadows; the humming of invisible insects could be heard, and noiseless races took place across the dewy grass or along the quiet sandy roads. The short monotonous croak of the frogs was the only sound that could be distinguished.

It seemed to Jeanne that her heart was getting bigger, becoming full of whisperings like this clear evening, and of a thousand wandering desires like these nocturnal insects whose quivering life

surrounded her. An unconscious sympathy drew her towards this living poetry and she felt that joy and happiness were floating towards her through the soft white night, and she began to dream of love.

Love! For two years she had been anxiously awaiting the time when it would come to her, and now she was free to love, she had only to meet – him! What should he be like? She did not know, and did not trouble herself even to think about it. *He* would be *himself*, that was enough. She only knew that she should adore him with her whole heart, and that he would love her with all his strength, and she pictured herself walking with him on evenings such as this, under the luminous glow of the stars. They would walk hand in hand, pressing close to one another, listening to the beating of their hearts, mingling their love with the sweet clearness of the summer nights, and so united that by the simple power of their love, they would easily divine each other's inmost thoughts. And that would endure indefinitely, in the serenity of an indestructible affection.

Suddenly she fancied he was there – close to her; and a vague feeling of sensuality swept over her from head to foot. She unconsciously pressed her arms against her breast, as if to clasp her dream to her; and something passed over her mouth, held out towards the unknown, which almost made her faint, as if the springtide wind had given her a kiss of love.

All at once, on the road behind the château, she heard someone walking in the night, and in the rapture of her love-filled soul, in a transport of faith in the impossible, in providential hazards, in divine presentiment, in the romantic combinations of Fate, she thought: "If it should be he!" She anxiously listened to the steps of the traveler, sure that he would stop at the gate to demand hospitality. But he had passed by and she felt sad, as though she had experienced a deception; then after a moment she understood the feverish excitement of her hopes, and smiled at her own folly.

A little calmer, she let her thoughts float down the stream of a more reasonable reverie, trying to pierce the shadows of the future and planning out her life.

She would live here with him, in their quiet château overlooking the sea. She would have two children, a son for him, and a daughter for herself, and she pictured them running on the grass between the plane-tree and the linden, while their father and mother followed their movements with proud eyes, sometimes exchanging looks full of love above their heads.

She stayed dreaming until the moon had finished her journey across the sky, and began to descend into the sea. The air became cooler. Towards the east the horizon was getting lighter. A cock crowed in the farm on the right, others answered from the farm on the left, their hoarse notes, coming through the walls of the poultry-houses, seeming to be a long way off, and the stars were disappearing from the immense dome of the sky which had gradually whitened. The little chirp of a bird sounded; warblings, timid at first, came from among the leaves; then, getting bolder, they became vibrating, joyous, and spread from branch to branch, from tree to tree. Jeanne suddenly felt a bright light; and raising her head, which she had buried in her hands, she shut her eyes, dazzled by the splendor of the dawn.

A mountain of crimson clouds, partly hidden by the avenue of poplars, cast a red glow over the awakened earth, and, breaking through the bright clouds, bathing the trees, the plain, the ocean, the whole horizon, in a fiery light, the blazing orb appeared.

Jeanne felt mad with happiness. A delirious joy, an infinite tenderness before the splendor of nature filled her heart. It was her sunrise! her dawn! the beginning of her life! the rising of her hopes! She stretched out her arms towards the radiant space, with a longing to embrace the sun; she wanted to speak, to cry aloud something divine like this day-break; but she remained dumb in a state of impotent ecstasy. Then, laying her forehead on her hands, her eyes filled with tears, and she cried for joy.

When she again raised her head the glorious colors of the dawning day had already disappeared. She felt calmer and a little tired and chilled. Leaving the window open, she threw herself on the bed, mused for a few minutes longer, then fell into such a sound sleep that she did not hear her father calling her at eight o'clock, and only awoke when he came into her room.

He wanted to show her the improvements that had been made in the château; in *her* château.

The back of the house was separated from the village road, which half-a-mile further on joined the high road from Havre to Fécamp, by a large sort of court planted with apple-trees. A straight path went across it leading from the steps of the house to the wooden fence, and the low, thatched out-houses, built of flints from the beach, ran the whole length of two sides of the court, which was separated from the adjoining farms by two long ditches.

The roof of the château had been repaired, the woodwork restored, and the walls mended; all the inside of the house had been painted and the rooms had fresh hangings, and on the old decaying gray walls the snowy shutters and the new plaster stood out like white stains. One of Jeanne's windows was in the front of the house, which looked out over the little wood and the wall of wind-torn elms, on to the sea.

Arm in arm Jeanne and the baron went all over the château without missing a single corner, and then they walked slowly along the long poplar avenues which enclosed the park, as it was called. The grass had grown under the trees, making a green carpet, and the grove at the bottom was delightfully pretty with its little winding paths, separated by leafy walls, running in and out.

Jeanne was startled by a hare springing suddenly across their path; it ran down the slope and made off towards the cliff, among the rushes.

After breakfast, Madame Adélaïde went to lie down as she had not yet recovered from the fatigue of the journey, and the baron proposed that he and Jeanne should walk to Yport. They set off, going through the hamlet of Etouvent in which was situated Les Peuples, and three peasants saluted them as if they had known them all their lives.

They entered the sloping woods which go right down to the sea, and soon the village of Yport came in sight. The women, sitting at their doors mending clothes, looked up as they passed. There was a strong smell of brine in the steep street with the gutter in the middle and the heaps of rubbish lying before the doors. The brown nets to which a few shining shells, looking like fragments of silver, had clung, were drying before the doors of huts whence came the odors of several families living in the same room, and a few pigeons were looking for food at the side of the gutter. To Jeanne it was all as new and curious as a scene at a theater.

Turning a sharp corner, they suddenly came upon the smooth opaque blue sea, and opposite the beach they stopped to look around.

Boats, with sails looking like the wings of white birds, were in the offing; to the right and left rose the high cliffs; a sort of cape interrupted the view on one side, while on the other the coast-line stretched out till it could no longer be distinguished, and a harbor and some houses could be seen in a bay a little way off. Tiny waves fringing the sea with foam, broke on the beach with a faint noise, and some Normandy boats, hauled up on the shingle, lay on their sides with the sun shining on their tarred planks; a few fishermen were getting them ready to go out with the evening tide.

A sailor came up with some fish to sell, and Jeanne bought a brill that she insisted on carrying home herself. Then the man offered his services if ever they wanted to go sailing, telling them his name, "Lastique, Joséphin Lastique," over and over again so that they should not forget it. The baron promised to remember him, and then they started to go back to the château.

As the large fish was too heavy for Jeanne, she passed her father's stick through its gills, and carrying it between them, they went gaily up the hill, with the wind in their faces, chattering like two children; and as the brill made their arms ache, they let it drop lower and lower till its big tail swept along the grass.

## II

A delightful life of freedom began for Jeanne. She read, dreamed, and wandered about all alone, walking slowly along the road, building castles in the air, or dancing down the little winding valleys whose sloping sides were covered with golden gorse. Its strong, sweet odor, increased by the heat, intoxicated her like a perfumed wine, while she was lulled by the distant sound of the waves breaking on the beach. When she was in an idle mood she would throw herself down on the thick grass of the hill-side, and sometimes when at the turn of a road she suddenly caught a glimpse of the blue sea, sparkling in the light of the sun, with a white sail at the horizon, she felt an inordinate joy, a mysterious presentiment of future happiness.

She loved to be alone with the calm beauty of nature, and would sit motionless for so long on the top of a hill, that the wild rabbits would bound fearlessly up to her; or she would run swiftly along the cliff, exhilarated by the pure air of the hills, and finding an exquisite pleasure in being able to move without fatigue, like the swallows in the air and the fish in the water.

Very fond of bathing, and strong, fearless, and unconscious of danger, she would swim out to sea till she could no longer be perceived from the shore, feeling refreshed by the cool water, and enjoying the rocking of its clear blue waves. When she was a long way out, she floated, and, with her arms crossed on her breast, gazed at the deep, blue sky, against which a swallow or the white outline of a sea-gull could sometimes be seen. No noise could be heard except the far away murmur of the waves breaking on the beach, and the vague, confused, almost imperceptible sound of the pebbles being drawn down by the receding waves. When she went out too far, a boat put off to bring her in and she would return to the château pale with hunger, but not at all tired, with a smile on her lips, and her eyes dancing with joy.

The baron was planning great agricultural improvements; he wanted to make experiments, to try new machines, to acclimatize foreign plants, and he passed part of his time talking to the peasants, who shook their heads and refused to believe in his ideas.

He often went on the sea with the sailors of Yport, and when he had seen the caves, the springs, and the rocks that were of any interest in the neighborhood, he fished like a common seaman. On windy days, when the breeze filled the sails and forced the boat over till its edge touched the water, and the mackerel-nets trailed over the sides, he would hold a slender fishing-line, waiting with anxiety for the bite of a fish. Then he went out in the moonlight to take up the nets set the night before (for he loved to hear the creaking of the masts, and to breathe the fresh night air), and, after a long time spent in tacking about to find the buoys, guided by a ridge of rocks, the spire of a church, or the light-house at Fécamp, he liked to lie still under the first rays of the rising sun, which turned into a glittering mass the slimy rays and the white-bellied turbot which lay on the deck of the boat.

At every meal, he gave a glowing account of his excursions, and the baroness, in her turn, would tell him how many times she had walked up and down the long poplar-avenues on the right next to the Couillards's farm, the other one not having enough sun on it.

She had been advised to "take exercise," and she walked for hours together. As soon as the sun was high enough for its warmth to be felt she went out, leaning on Rosalie's arm, and enveloped in a cloak and two shawls, with a red scarf on her head and a black hood over that.

Then she began a long, uninteresting walk from the corner of the château to the first shrubs of the wood and back again. Her left foot, which dragged a little, had traced two furrows where the grass had died. At each end of the path she had had a bench placed, and every five minutes she stopped, saying to the poor, patient maid who supported her: "Let us sit down, my girl; I am a little tired."

And at each rest she left on one or other of the benches first the scarf which covered her head, then one shawl, then the other, then the hood, and then the cloak; and all these things made two big bundles of wraps, which Rosalie carried on her free arm, when they went in to lunch.

In the afternoon the baroness recommenced her walk in a feebler way, taking longer rests, and sometimes dozing for an hour at a time on a couch that was wheeled out of doors for her. She called it taking "her exercise," in the same way as she spoke of "my hypertrophy."

A doctor she had consulted ten years before because she suffered from palpitations, had hinted at hypertrophy. Since then she had constantly used this word, though she did not in the least understand what it meant, and she was always making the baron, and Jeanne, and Rosalie put their hands on her heart, though its beatings could not be felt, so buried was it under her bosom. She obstinately refused to be examined by any other doctor in case he should say she had another malady, and she spoke of "her hypertrophy" so often that it seemed as though this affection of the heart were peculiar to her, and belonged to her, like something unique, to which no one else had any right. The baron and Jeanne said "my wife's" or "mamma's hypertrophy" in the same way as they would have spoken of her dress or her umbrella.

She had been very pretty when she was young, and as slender as a reed. After flirting with the officers of all the regiments of the Empire, she had read *Corinne*, which had made her cry, and, in a certain measure, altered her character.

As her waist got bigger her mind became more and more poetical, and when, through her size, she had to remain nearly all day in her armchair, she dreamed of love adventures, of which she was always the heroine; always thinking of the sort she liked best, like a hand-organ continually repeating the same air. The languishing romances, where they talk about captives and swallows, always made her cry; and she even liked some of Béranger's coarse verses, because of the grief they expressed. She would sit motionless for hours, lost in thought, and she was very fond of *Les Peuples*, because it served as a scene for her dreams, the surrounding woods, the sea, and the waste land reminding her of Sir Walter Scott's books, which she had lately been reading.

On rainy days she stayed in her room looking over what she called her "relics." They were all her old letters; those from her father and mother, the baron's when she was engaged to him, and some others besides. She kept them in a mahogany escritoire with copper sphinxes at the corners, and she always used a particular tone when she said: "Rosalie, bring me my souvenir-drawer."

The maid would open the escritoire, take out the drawer, and place it on a chair beside her mistress, who slowly read the letters one by one, occasionally letting fall a tear.

Jeanne sometimes took Rosalie's place and accompanied her mother's walks, and listened to her reminiscences of childhood. The young girl recognized herself in these tales, and was astonished to find that her mother's thoughts and hopes had been the same as hers; for every one imagines that he is the first to experience those feelings which made the hearts of our first parents beat quicker, and which will continue to exist in human hearts till the end of time.

These tales, often interrupted for several seconds by the baroness's want of breath, were told as slowly as she walked, and Jeanne let her thoughts run on to the happy future, without waiting to hear the end of her mother's anecdotes.

One afternoon, as they were resting on the seat at the bottom of the walk, they saw a fat priest coming towards them from the other end of the avenue. He bowed, put on a smiling look, bowed again when he was about three feet off, and cried:

"Well, Madame la baronne, and how are we to-day?"

He was the curé of the parish.

The baroness, born in a philosophical century and brought up in revolutionary times by a father who did not believe very much in anything, did not often go to church, although she liked priests with the sort of religious instinct that most women have. She had forgotten all about the Abbé Picot, her curé, and her face colored when she saw him. She began to make excuses for not having gone to see him, but the good-natured priest did not seem at all put out. He looked at Jeanne, complimented her on her good looks, sat down, put his hat on his knees, and wiped his forehead.



He was a very fat, red-faced man, who perspired very freely. Every minute he drew an enormous, checked handkerchief from his pocket and wiped his face and neck; but he had hardly put it back again when fresh drops appeared on his skin and, falling on his cassock, made the dust on it into little, round spots. He was a true country-priest, lively and tolerant, talkative and honest. He told anecdotes, talked about the peasants, and did not seem to have noticed that his two parishioners had not been to mass; for the baroness always tried to reconcile her vague ideas of religion to her indolence, and Jeanne was too happy at having left the convent, where she had been sickened of holy ceremonies, to think about going to church.

The baron joined them. His pantheistic religion made him indifferent to doctrine, and he asked the abbé, whom he knew by sight, to stay to dinner. The priest had the art of pleasing every one, and thanks to the unconscious tact that is acquired by the most ordinary men called by fate to exercise any moral power over their fellow creatures, and the baroness, attracted perhaps by one of these affinities which draw similar natures together, paid every attention to him, the fat man's sanguine face and short breath agreeing with her gasping obesity. By the time dessert was placed on the table he had begun telling funny stories, with the *laissez-aller* of a man who had had a good dinner in congenial society.

All at once, as though a good idea had just occurred to him, he exclaimed:

"Oh, I have a new parishioner I must introduce to you, M. le Vicomte de Lamare."

The baroness, who had all the heraldry of the province at her finger ends, asked:

"Does he belong to the family of Lamare de l'Eure?"

The priest bowed:

"Yes, madame; he is the son of the Vicomte Jean de Lamare, who died last year."

Then Madame Adélaïde, who loved the aristocracy above everything, asked a great many questions, and learnt that the young man had sold the family château to pay his father's debts, and had come to live on one of the three farms that he owned at Etouvent.

This property only brought in about five or six thousand livres a year, but the vicomte was of a foreseeing, economical disposition and meant to live quietly for two or three years, so that he might save enough to go into society and marry well, without having to get into debt or mortgage his farms.

"He is a charming young fellow," added the curé; "and so steady, so quiet. But he can't find many amusements in the country."

"Bring him to see us, M. l'Abbé," said the baron; "he might like to come here sometimes." And then the conversation turned to other subjects.

When they went into the drawing-room the priest asked if he might go out into the garden, as he was used to a little exercise after meals. The baron went out with him, and they walked backwards and forwards the whole length of the château, while their two shadows, the one thin, and the other quite round and looking as though it had a mushroom on its head, fell sometimes before and sometimes behind them, according as they walked towards the moon or turned their backs on it. The curé chewed a sort of cigarette that he had taken from his pocket; he told the baron why he used it in the plain speech of a countryman:

"It is to help the digestion; my liver is rather sluggish."

Looking at the sky where the bright moon was sailing along, he suddenly said:

"That is a sight one never gets tired of."

Then he went in to say good-bye to the ladies.

### III

The next Sunday the baroness and Jeanne went to mass out of deference to their curé, and after it was over they waited to ask him to luncheon for the following Thursday. He came out of the vestry with a tall, good-looking, young man who had familiarly taken his arm.

As soon as he saw the two ladies he gave a look of pleased surprise, and exclaimed:

"What a lucky thing! Madame la baronne and Mlle. Jeanne, permit me to present to you your neighbor, M. le Vicomte de Lamare."

The vicomte bowed, expressed the desire he had long felt to make their acquaintance, and began to talk with the ease of a man accustomed to good society. His face was one that women raved about and that all men disliked. His black, curly hair fell over a smooth, bronzed forehead, and long, regular eyebrows gave a depth and tenderness to his dark eyes. Long, thick lashes lent to his glance the passionate eloquence which thrills the heart of the high-born lady in her boudoir, and makes the poor girl, with her basket on her arm, turn round in the street, and the languorous charm of his eyes, with their whites faintly tinged with blue, gave importance to his least word and made people believe in the profoundness of his thought. A thick, silky beard hid a jaw which was a little heavy.

After mutual compliments he said good-bye to the ladies; and two days afterwards made his first call at the château.

He arrived just as they were looking at a rustic-seat, placed only that morning under the big plane-tree opposite the drawing-room windows. The baron wanted to have another one under the linden to make a pair, but the baroness, who disliked things to be exactly symmetrical, said no. The vicomte, on being asked his opinion, sided with the baroness.

Then he talked about the surrounding country, which he thought very "picturesque," and about the charming "bits" he had come across in his solitary walks. From time to time his eyes met Jeanne's, as though by chance; and she felt a strange sensation at these sudden looks which were quickly turned away and which expressed a lively admiration and sympathy.

M. de Lamare's father, who had died the year before, had known an intimate friend of M. des Cultaux, the baroness's father, and the discovery of this mutual acquaintance gave rise to endless conversation about marriages, births, and relationships. The baroness, with prodigious feats of memory, talked about the ancestors and descendants of numerous families, and traversed the complicated labyrinths of different genealogies without ever losing herself.

"Tell me, vicomte, have you ever heard of the Saunoys de Varfleur? Gontran, the elder son, married Mademoiselle de Coursil, one of the Coursil-Courvilles; and the younger married a cousin of mine, Mademoiselle de la Roche-Aubert, who was related to the Crisanges. Now, M. de Crisange was an intimate friend of my father, and no doubt knew yours also."

"Yes, madame; was it not the M. de Crisange who emigrated, and whose son ruined himself?"

"That is the very man. He had proposed for my aunt after the death of her husband, the Comte d'Eretry, but she would not accept him because he took snuff. By the way, do you know what has become of the Viloises? They left Touraine about 1813, after a reverse of fortune, to go and live in Auvergne; and I have never heard anything of them since."

"I believe, madame, that the old marquis was killed by a fall from a horse, leaving one daughter married to an Englishman, and the other to a rich merchant who had seduced her."

Names they had heard their parents mention when they were children returned to their minds, and the marriages of these people seemed as important to them as great public events. They talked about men and women they had never seen as if they knew them well, and these people, living so far away, talked about them in the same manner, and they felt as though they were acquainted with each other, almost as if they were friends, or relations, simply because they belonged to the same class and were of equal rank.

The baron was rather unsociable, his philosophic views disagreeing with the beliefs and prejudices of the people of his own rank, did not know any of the families living near, and asked the vicomte about them.

"Oh, there are very good families around here," answered M. de Lamare, in the same tone as he would have said that there were not many rabbits on the hills, and he entered into details about them.

There were only three families of rank in the neighborhood; the Marquis de Coutelier, the head of the Normandy aristocracy; the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Briseville, people who were very well-born but held themselves rather aloof; and lastly, the Comte de Fourville, a sort of fire-eater who was said to be worrying his wife to death, and who lived in the Château de la Vrillotte, which was built on a lake, passing his time in hunting and shooting. A few parvenus had bought property in the neighborhood, but the vicomte did not know them.

He rose to go, and his last look was for Jeanne as though he would have made his adieu to her specially friendly and tender.

The baroness thought him charming and very *comme il faut*, and the baron remarked that he was a very well-educated man. He was asked to dinner the following week, and after that he visited the château regularly.

Generally he came about four o'clock, joined the baroness in "her avenue," and insisted on her leaning on his arm to take "her exercise." When Jeanne was at home she supported her mother on the other side and all three walked slowly up and down the long path. He did not talk to the young girl but often his dark, velvety eyes met Jeanne's, which were like blue agate.

Sometimes they walked down to Yport with the baron, and one evening, as they were standing on the beach, old Lastique came up to them, and, without taking his pipe from his mouth, for it would have been stranger to see him without his pipe than without his nose, said:

"With this wind, M'sieu l'baron, you'd be able to go to Etretat and back to-morrow quite easily."

Jeanne clasped her hands together; "Oh, papa! If only you would!"

The baron turned to M. de Lamare.

"Will you go, vicomte? We could have lunch over there." And the excursion was planned for the following day.

The next morning Jeanne was up at daybreak. She waited for her father, who took longer to dress, and then they walked over the dewy plain and through the wood filled with the sweet song of the birds, down to Yport, where they found the vicomte and old Lastique sitting on the capstan of their little vessel.

Two sailors helped to start the boat, by putting their shoulders to the sides and pushing with all their might. It was hard to move over the level part of the beach, and Lastique slipped rollers of greased wood under the keel, then went back to his place and drawled out his long "Heave oh!" which was the signal for them all to push together, and when they came to the slant of the beach, the boat set off all at once, sliding over the round pebbles, and making a grating noise like the tearing of linen. It stopped short at the edge of the waves and they all got in, except the two sailors, who pushed the boat off.

A light, steady breeze blowing towards the land just ruffled the surface of the water. The sail was hoisted, filled out a little, and the boat moved gently along hardly rocked by the waves.

At first they sailed straight out to sea. At the horizon the sky could not be distinguished from the ocean; on land the high steep cliff had a deep shadow at its foot. Behind could be seen the brown sails of the boats leaving the white pier of Fécamp, and before lay a rounded rock with a hole right through it, looking like an elephant thrusting its trunk into the water.

Jeanne, feeling a little dizzy by the rocking of the boat, sat holding one side with her hand, and looking out to sea; light, space and the ocean seemed to her to be the only really beautiful things in creation. No one spoke. From time to time old Lastique, who was steering, drank something out of a bottle placed within his reach under the seat. He smoked his stump of a pipe which seemed

unextinguishable, and a small cloud of blue smoke went up from it while another issued from the corner of his mouth; he was never seen to relight the clay bowl, which was colored blacker than ebony, or to refill it with tobacco, and he only removed the pipe from his mouth to eject the brown saliva.

The baron sat in the bows and managed the sail, performing the duties of a sailor, and Jeanne and the vicomte were side by side, both feeling a little agitated. Their glances were continually meeting, a hidden sympathy making them raise their eyes at the same moment, for there was already that vague, subtle fondness between them which springs up so quickly between two young people when the youth is good-looking and the girl is pretty. They felt happy at being close together, perhaps because each was thinking of the other.

The sun rose higher in the sky as if to consider from a better vantage point the vast sea stretched out beneath him, while the latter, like a coquette, enveloped herself in a light mist which veiled her from his rays. It was a transparent golden haze which hid nothing but softened everything. It gradually melted away before the sun's flaming darts, and when the full heat of the day began it disappeared entirely, and the sea, smooth as glass, lay glittering in the sun.

Jeanne murmured enthusiastically, "How lovely it is!"

The vicomte answered "Yes, it is indeed beautiful." And their hearts felt as bright as the clear morning itself.

Suddenly, looking as if the cliff bestrode part of the sea, appeared the great arcades of Etretat, high enough for a ship to pass underneath him without the point of a sharp white rock rising out of the water before the first one.

When they reached the shore, the vicomte lifted Jeanne out that she should not wet her feet in landing, while the baron held the boat close to the beach with a rope; then they went up the steep, shingly beach side by side, both agitated by this short embrace, and they heard old Lastique say to the baron:

"In my opinion they'd make a very handsome couple."

They had lunch in a little inn near the beach. On the sea they had been quiet, but at the table they had as much to say as children let out of school.

The most simple things gave rise to endless laughter. Old Lastique carefully put his pipe, which was still alight, into his cap before he sat down to table; and everyone laughed. A fly, attracted, no doubt, by the sailor's red nose, persisted on settling on it, and when moving too slowly to catch it he knocked it away, it went over to a very fly-spotted curtain whence it seemed to eagerly watch the sailor's highly-colored nasal organ, for it soon flew back and settled on it again.

Each time the insect returned a loud laugh burst out, and when the old man, annoyed by its tickling, murmured: "What a confoundly obstinate fly!" Jeanne and the vicomte laughed till they cried, holding their serviettes to their mouths to prevent themselves shrieking out loud.

When the coffee had been served Jeanne said:

"Suppose we go for a walk?"

The vicomte got up to go with her, but the baron preferred going out on the beach to take his nap.

"You two go," he said. "You will find me here in an hour's time."

They walked straight along the road, passed a few cottages and a little château which looked more like a big farm, and then found themselves in an open valley. Jeanne had a singing in her ears, and was thrilled by a strange sensation which she had never before experienced. Overhead was a blazing sun, and on each side of the road lay fields of ripe corn drooping under the heat. The feeble, continuous chirp of the swarms of grasshoppers in the corn and hedges was the only sound to be heard, and the sky of dazzling blue, slightly tinged with yellow, looked as though it would suddenly turn red, like brass when it is put into a furnace.

They entered a little wood where the trees were so thick that no sunbeams could penetrate their foliage; the grass had died from want of light and fresh air, but the ground was covered with moss, and all around was a cool dampness which chilled them after the heat of the sun.

"See, we could sit down over there," said Jeanne, looking around her as they walked on.

Two trees had died, and through the break in the foliage fell a flood of light, warming the earth, calling to life the grass and dandelion seeds, and expanding the delicate flowers of the anemone and digitalis. A thousand winged insects – butterflies, bees, hornets, big gnats looking like skeleton-flies, ladybirds with red spots on them, beetles with greenish reflections on their wings, others which were black and horned – peopled this one warm and luminous spot in the midst of the cool shadow of the trees.

Jeanne and the vicomte sat down with their heads in the shadow and their feet in the light. They watched these tiny moving insects that a sunbeam had called forth, and Jeanne said softly:

"How lovely the country is! Sometimes I wish I were a bee or a butterfly that I might bury myself in the flowers."

They began talking about their own habits and tastes in a low, confidential tone. He declared himself tired of his useless life, disgusted with society; it was always the same, one never found any truth, any sincerity. She would have liked to know what town-life was like but she was convinced beforehand that society would never be so pleasant as a country-life.

The nearer their hearts drew to one another the more studiously did they address each other as "monsieur" and "mademoiselle"; but they could not help their eyes smiling and their glances meeting, and it seemed to them that new and better feelings were entering their hearts, making them ready to love and take an interest in things they had before cared nothing about.

When they returned from their walk they found that the baron had gone to a cave formed in the cliff, called the *Chambre aux Desmoiselles*, so they waited for him at the inn, where he did not appear till five o'clock, and then they started to go home. The boat glided along so smoothly that it hardly seemed to be moving; the wind came in gentle puffs filling the sail one second only to let it flap loosely against the mast the next, and the tired sun was slowly approaching the sea. The stillness around made them all silent for a long while, but at last Jeanne said:

"How I should like to travel!"

"Yes, but it would be rather dull traveling alone," said the vicomte. "You want a companion to whom you could confide your impressions."

"That is true," she answered thoughtfully; "still, I like to go for long walks alone. When there is no one with me I build such castles in the air."

"But two people can better still plan out a happy future," he said, looking her full in the face.

Her eyes fell; did he mean anything? She gazed at the horizon as though she would look beyond it; then she said slowly:

"I should like to go to Italy – and to Greece – and to Corsica, it must be so wild and so beautiful there."

He preferred the chalets and lakes of Switzerland.

She said: "No, I should like to go either to a country with little or no history like Corsica, or else to one with very old associations like Greece. It must be so interesting to find the traces of those nations whose history one has known from childhood, and to see the places where such great and noble deeds were done."

"Well, for my part, I should like to go to England; it is such an instructive country," said the vicomte, who was more practical than Jeanne.

Then they discussed the beauties of every country from the poles to the equator, and went into raptures over the unconventional customs of such nations as the Chinese or the Laplanders; but they came to the conclusion that the most beautiful land in the world is France, with her temperate climate

– cool in summer and warm in winter – her fertile fields, her green forests, her great, calm rivers, and her culture in the fine arts which has existed nowhere else since the palmy days of Athens.

Silence again fell over the little party. The blood-red sun was sinking, and a broad pathway of light lay in the wake of the boat leading right up to the dazzling globe. The wind died out, there was not a ripple on the water, and the motionless sail was reddened by the rays of the setting sun. The air seemed to possess some soothing influence which silenced everything around this meeting of the elements. The sea, like some huge bird, awaited the fiery lover who was approaching her shining, liquid bosom, and the sun hastened his descent, empurpled by the desire of their embrace. At length he joined her, and gradually disappeared. Then a freshness came from the horizon, and a breath of air rippled the surface of the water as if the vanished sun had given a sigh of satisfaction.

The twilight was very short, and the sky soon became dark and studded with stars. Lastique got out the oars, and Jeanne and the vicomte sat side by side watching the trembling, phosphorescent glimmer behind the boat and feeling a keen enjoyment even in breathing the cool night air. The vicomte's fingers were resting against Jeanne's hand which was lying on the seat, and she did not draw it away, the slight contact making her feel happy and yet confused.

When she went to her room that evening Jeanne felt so moved that the least thing would have made her cry. She looked at the clock and fancied that the little bee throbbed like a friendly heart; she thought of how it would be the silent witness of her whole life, how it would accompany all her joys and sorrows with its quick, regular beat, and she stopped the gilded insect to drop a kiss upon its wings. She could have kissed anything, no matter what, and suddenly remembering an old doll she had hidden away in the bottom of a drawer, she got it out and found as much joy in seeing it again as if it had been an old well-loved friend. Pressing it to her bosom she covered its painted cheeks and flaxen hair with warm kisses, then, still holding it in her arms, she began to think.

Was HE the husband referred to by so many inward voices, and was it by a supremely-kind Providence that he was thus sent into her life? Was he really the being created for her, to whom her whole existence would be devoted? Were he and she really predestined to unite their hearts and so beget Love? She did not yet experience those tumultuous feelings, those wild raptures, that profound stirring of her whole soul, which she believed to be love; still she thought she was beginning to love him, for sometimes she felt her senses fail her when she thought of him and she always was thinking of him. Her heart throbbed in his presence, her color came and went when she met his glance, and the sound of his voice sent a thrill through her. That night she hardly slept at all.

Each day her longing for love became greater. She was always consulting the marguerites, or the clouds, or tossing a coin in the air to see whether she was loved or not.

One evening her father said to her:

"Make yourself look very pretty to-morrow morning, Jeanne."

"Why, papa?" she asked.

"That's a secret," replied the baron.

When she came down the next morning, looking fresh and bright in a light summer dress, she found the drawing-room table covered with bon-bon boxes, and an enormous bouquet on a chair.

A cart turned in at the gateway with "Lérat, Confectioner, Contractor for Wedding-breakfasts" on it, and Ludivine, with the aid of a scullery-maid, took from it a great many flat baskets from which issued an appetizing odor.

The vicomte came in soon after; his trousers were fastened tightly under the varnished boots which showed off his small feet to perfection. His tightly-fitting coat was closely fastened, except on the chest, where it opened to show the lace shirt-frill; and a fine cravat, twisted several times round his neck, forced him to hold up his handsome dark head. His careful toilet made him look different from usual, and Jeanne stared at him as though she had never seen him before; she thought he looked a perfect gentleman from head to foot.

He bowed, and asked with a smile:

"Well, godmother, are you ready?"

"What do you mean?" stammered out Jeanne. "What is it all about?"

"Oh, you shall know just now," answered the baron.

The carriage drew up before the door and Madame Adélaïde, in a handsome dress, came downstairs leaning on Rosalie, who was struck with such admiration at the sight of M. de Lamare's elegant appearance, that the baron murmured:

"I say, vicomte, I think our maid likes the look of you."

The vicomte blushed up to the roots of his hair, pretended not to hear what the baron said, and, taking up the big bouquet, presented it to Jeanne. She took it, feeling still more astonished, and all four got into the carriage.

"Really, madame, it looks like a wedding!" exclaimed the cook, Ludivine, who had brought some cold broth for the baroness to have before she started.

When they reached Yport they got out, and, as they walked through the village, the sailors in new clothes which still showed where the cloth had been folded, came out of the houses, touched their hats, shook the baron by the hand, and followed behind them, forming a procession, at the head of which walked the vicomte with Jeanne on his arm.

On arriving at the church a halt was made. A choir-boy came out carrying a great silver cross, followed by another pink and white urchin carrying the holy water with the brush in it; behind them came three old choristers, one of whom limped, then the serpent-player, then the curé in a stole with a gold cross embroidered on it. He saluted the baron's party with a smile and a nod, then, with half-closed eyes, his lips moving in prayer, his miter pushed down over his eyes, he followed his surpliced subordinates down to the sea.

On the beach a crowd was waiting round a new boat decorated all over with garlands; its mast, sail, and ropes were covered with long ribbons which fluttered in the breeze, and its name, "Jeanne," was on the stern in gilt letters. Old Lastique was the master of this boat that the baron had had built, and he advanced to meet the procession.

At the sight of the cross all the men took off their caps, and a line of nuns, enveloped in their long, straight, black mantles, knelt down. The curé went to one end of the boat with the two choir-boys, while at the other the three old choristers, with their dirty faces and hairy chins shown up by their white surplices, sang at the top of their voices. Each time they paused to take breath, the serpent-player continued his music alone, and he blew out his cheeks till his little gray eyes could not be seen and the very skin of his forehead and neck looked as if it was separated from the flesh.

The calm, transparent sea, its ripples breaking on the shore with a faint, grating noise, seemed to be watching the christening of the tiny boat. Great, white sea-gulls flew by with outstretched wings, and then returned over the heads of the kneeling crowd with a sweeping flight as though they wanted to see what was going on.

The chanting stopped after an "Amen" which was repeated and sustained for five minutes, and the priest gabbled some Latin words of which only the sonorous terminations could be made out. Then he walked all round the boat sprinkling it with holy water, and commenced to murmur the oremus, stopping opposite the two sponsors, who were standing hand in hand.

The young man's handsome face was quite calm, but the young girl, almost suffocated by the palpitation of her heart, felt as though she should faint, and she trembled so violently that her teeth chattered. The dream that had haunted her for so long seemed all at once to have become a reality. She had heard this ceremony compared to a wedding, the priest was there uttering blessings, and surpliced men were chanting prayers; surely she was being married!

Did the vicomte feel the nervous trembling of her fingers? Did his heart sympathize with hers? Did he understand? did he guess? was he also under the influence of an all-absorbing love-dream? Or was it only the knowledge that women found him irresistible that made him press her hand, gently at

first, then harder and harder till he hurt her? Then, without changing the expression of his face, that no one might notice him, he said very distinctly: "Oh, Jeanne, if you liked, this might be our betrothal!"

She slowly bent her head with a movement which perhaps meant "yes"; and some drops of holy water fell on their hands.

The ceremony was over; the women rose from their knees, and everyone began to hurry back. The choir-boy let the cross swing from side to side, or tilt forward till it nearly fell; the curé, no longer praying, hurried behind him; the choristers and the serpent-player disappeared down a narrow turning to get back and undress quickly, the sailors hastened past in twos and threes; a good lunch was waiting for them at Les Peuples and the very thought of it quickened their pace and made their mouths water.

Sixty sailors and peasants sat down to the long table laid in the courtyard under the apple trees. The baroness sat at the middle of the table with the curé from Yport on one side of her and the Abbé Picot on the other; opposite her was the baron between the mayor and his wife. The mayoress was a thin, elderly country woman with a nod for everyone; her big Normandy cap fitted close round her thin face, making her head, with its round, astonished-looking eyes, look like a white-tufted fowl's, and she ate in little jerks as if she were pecking at her plate.

Jeanne was silent, seeing nothing, hearing nothing, her head turned with joy. At last she asked the vicomte, who was sitting beside her:

"What is your Christian name?"

"Julien," he replied; "did you not know?"

She did not answer him, for she was thinking: "How often I shall repeat that name to myself."

When lunch was over, the courtyard was left to the sailors. The baroness began to take her exercise, leaning on the baron and accompanied by the two priests, and Jeanne and Julien walked down to the wood, and wandered along its little winding paths. All at once he took her hands in his.

"Tell me," he said, "will you be my wife?"

She hung her head, and he pleaded:

"Do not keep me in suspense, I implore you."

Then she slowly raised her eyes to his, and in that look he read her answer.



## IV

The baron went into Jeanne's room before she was up one morning soon after the christening of the boat, and sat down at the foot of the bed.

"M. le Vicomte de Lamare has proposed for you," he said.

Jeanne would have liked to hide her head under the bed-clothes.

"We told him we must think over his proposal before we could give him an answer," continued the baron, who was smiling. "We did not wish to arrange anything without first consulting you; your mother and I made no objection to the marriage, but at the same time we did not make any promise. You are a great deal richer than he is, but when the happiness of a life is at stake the question of money ought not to be considered. He has no relations, so if you married him we should gain a son, whereas if you married anyone else you would have to go among strangers, and we should lose our daughter. We like the young fellow, but the question is, do you like him?"

"I am quite willing to marry him, papa," she stammered out, blushing to the roots of her hair.

The baron looked into her eyes, and said with a smile: "I thought as much, mademoiselle."

Until that evening Jeanne hardly knew what she was doing. She went through everything mechanically, feeling thoroughly worn out with fatigue, although she had done nothing to tire her. The vicomte came about six o'clock and found her sitting with her mother under the plane-tree, and Jeanne's heart beat wildly as the young man came calmly towards them. He kissed the baroness's fingers, then, raising the young girl's trembling hand to his lips, he imprinted on it a long, tender kiss of gratitude.

The happy betrothal time began. The young couple spent their days sitting on the slope leading to the waste land beyond the wood, or walking up and down the baroness's avenue, she with her eyes fixed on the dusty track her mother's foot had made, he talking of the future. Once the marriage agreed to, they wanted it to take place as soon as possible, so it was decided that they should be married in six weeks' time, on the 15th of August, and that they should start on their wedding tour almost immediately afterwards. When Jeanne was asked to what country she should like to go, she chose Corsica, where they would be more alone than in Italy.

They awaited the time of their union without very much impatience, vaguely desiring more passionate embraces, and yet satisfied with a slight caress, a pressure of the hand, a gaze so long that each seemed to read the other's heart through their eyes.

No one was to be asked to the wedding besides Aunt Lison, the baroness's sister, who was a lady-boarder in a convent at Versailles.

After their father's death the baroness wanted her sister to live with her, but the old maid was convinced that she was a nuisance to everybody, and always in the way, and she took apartments in one of the convents which open their doors to the solitary and unhappy, though she occasionally spent a month or two with her relations. She was a small woman with very little to say, and always kept in the background; when she stayed with the baroness she was only seen at meal times, the rest of the day she spent shut up in her room. She had a kind, rather old-looking face, although she was only forty-two, with sad, meek eyes. Her wishes had always been sacrificed to those of everyone else. As a child she had always sat quietly in some corner, never kissed because she was neither pretty nor noisy, and as a young girl no one had ever troubled about her. Her sister, following the example of her parents, always thought of her as of someone of no importance, almost like some object of furniture which she was accustomed to see every day but which never occupied her thoughts.

She seemed ashamed of her name, Lise, because it was so girlish and pretty, and when there seemed no likelihood of her marrying, "Lise" had gradually changed to "Lison." Since the birth of Jeanne she had become "Aunt Lison," a sort of poor relation whom everyone treated with a careless familiarity which hid a good-natured contempt. She was prim and very timid even with her sister and

brother-in-law, who liked her as they liked everyone, but whose affection was formed of an indifferent kindness, and an unconscious compassion.

Sometimes when the baroness was speaking of the far-away time of her childhood she would say to fix a date: "It was about the time of Lison's mad attempt." She never said anything more, and there was a certain mystery about this "mad attempt."

One evening, when she was about nineteen years old, Lise had tried to drown herself. No one could understand the reason of this act of folly; there was nothing in her life or habits to at all account for it. She had been rescued half-dead, and her parents, shocked at the deed, had not attempted to discover its cause, but had only talked about her "mad attempt," in the same way as they had spoken of the accident to the horse Coco, when he had broken his leg in a ditch and had to be killed. Since then Lise had been thought very weak-minded, and everyone around her gradually came to look upon her with the mild contempt with which her relations regarded her; even little Jeanne, perceiving with the quickness of a child how her parents treated her aunt, never ran to kiss her or thought of performing any little services for her. No one ever went to her room, and Rosalie, the maid, alone seemed to know where it was situated. If anyone wanted to speak to her a servant was sent to find her, and if she could not be found no one troubled about her, no one thought of her, no one would ever have dreamt of saying:

"Dear me! I have not seen Lison this morning."

When she came down to breakfast of a morning, little Jeanne went and held up her face for a kiss, and that was the only greeting she received. She had no position in the house and seemed destined never to be understood even by her relations, never able to gain their love or confidence, and when she died she would leave no empty chair, no sense of loss behind her.

When anyone said "Aunt Lison" the words caused no more feeling of affection in anyone's heart than if the coffee pot or sugar basin had been mentioned. She always walked with little, quick, noiseless steps, never making any noise, never stumbling against anything, and her hands seemed to be made of velvet, so light and delicate was their handling of anything she touched.

Lison arrived at the château about the middle of July, quite upset by the idea of the marriage; she brought a great many presents which did not receive much attention as she was the giver, and the day after her arrival no one noticed she was there. She could not take her eyes off the sweethearts, and busied herself about the trousseau with a strange energy, a feverish excitement, working in her room, where no one came to see her, like a common seamstress. She was always showing the baroness some handkerchiefs she had hemmed, or some towels on which she had embroidered the monogram, and asking:

"Do you like that, Adélaïde?"

The baroness would carelessly look at the work and answer:

"Don't take so much trouble over it, my dear Lison."

About the end of the month, after a day of sultry heat, the moon rose in one of those warm, clear nights which seem to draw forth all the hidden poetry of the soul. The soft breeze fluttered the hangings of the quiet drawing-room, and the shaded lamp cast a ring of soft light on the table where the baroness and her husband were playing cards. Aunt Lison was sitting by them knitting, and the young people were leaning against the open window, looking out at the garden as it lay bathed in light.

The shadows of the linden and the plane tree fell on the moonlit grass which stretched away to the shadows of the wood.

Irresistibly attracted by the beauty of the sight, Jeanne turned and said:

"Papa, we are going for a walk on the grass."

"Very well, my dear," answered the baron, without looking up from his game.

Jeanne and the vicomte went out and walked slowly down the grass till they reached the little wood at the bottom. They stayed out so long that at last the baroness, feeling tired and wanting to go to her room, said:

"We must call in the lovers."

The baron glanced at the moonlit garden, where the two figures could be seen walking slowly about.

"Leave them alone," he answered, "it is so pleasant out of doors; Lison will wait up for them; won't you, Lison?"

The old maid looked up, and answered in her timid voice: "Oh, yes, certainly."

The baron helped his wife to rise, and, tired himself by the heat of the day,

"I will go to bed, too," he said. And he went upstairs with the baroness.

Then Aunt Lison got up, and, leaving her work on the arm of the easy chair, leant out of the window and looked at the glorious night. The two sweethearts were walking backwards and forwards across the grass, silently pressing each other's hands, as they felt the sweet influence of the visible poetry that surrounded them.

Jeanne saw the old maid's profile in the window, with the lighted lamp behind.

"Look," she said, "Aunt Lison is watching us."

"Yes, so she is," answered the vicomte in the tone of one who speaks without thinking of what he is saying; and they continued their slow walk and their dreams of love. But the dew was falling, and they began to feel chilled.

"We had better go in now," said Jeanne.

They went into the drawing-room, and found Aunt Lison bending over the knitting she had taken up again; her thin fingers were trembling as if they were very tired. Jeanne went up to her.

"Aunt, we will go to bed now," she said.

The old maid raised her eyes; they were red as if she had been crying, but neither of the lovers noticed it. Suddenly the young man saw that Jeanne's thin slippers were quite wet, and fearing she would catch cold:

"Are not your dear little feet cold?" he asked affectionately.

Aunt Lison's fingers trembled so they could no longer hold the work; her ball of wool rolled across the floor, and, hiding her face in her hands, she began to sob convulsively. For a moment Jeanne and the vicomte stood looking at her in mute surprise, then Jeanne, feeling frightened, knelt down beside her, drew away her hands from her face, and asked in dismay:

"What is it, Aunt Lison? What is the matter with you?"

The poor, old maid, trembling all over, stammered out in a broken voice:

"When he asked you – 'Are – are not your dear little feet – cold?' – I – I thought how no one had – had ever said anything like that to me."

Jeanne felt full of pity for her aunt, but it seemed very funny to think of anyone making love to Lison, and the vicomte turned his head away to hide his laughter. Lison started up, left her wool on the ground and her knitting on the armchair, and abruptly leaving the room, groped her way up the dark staircase to her bedroom.

The two young people looked at one another, feeling sorry for her, and yet rather amused.

"Poor auntie," murmured Jeanne.

"She must be a little mad this evening," replied Julien.

They were holding each other's hands as if they could not make up their minds to say good-night, and very gently they exchanged their first kiss before Aunt Lison's empty chair. The next day they had forgotten all about the old maid's tears.

The fortnight before her marriage, Jeanne passed calmly and peacefully, as if she were almost exhausted by the number of pleasant hours she had lately had. The morning of the eventful day she had no time to think; she was only conscious of a great sense of nothingness within her, as if beneath her skin, her flesh, and blood, and bones had vanished, and she noticed how her fingers trembled when she touched anything.

She did not regain her self-possession till she was going through the marriage service. Married! She was married! Everything which had happened since dawn seemed a dream, and all around her seemed changed; people's gestures had a new meaning; even the hours of the day did not seem to be in their right places. She felt stunned at the change. The day before nothing had been altered in her life; her dearest hope had only become nearer – almost within her grasp. She had fallen asleep a girl, now she was a woman. She had crossed the barrier which hides the future with all its expected joys and fancied happiness, and she saw before her an open door; she was at last going to realize her dreams.

After the ceremony they went into the vestry, which was nearly empty, for there were no wedding guests; but when they appeared at the door of the church a loud noise made the bride start and the baroness shriek; it was a salvo fired by the peasants, who had arranged to salute the bride, and the shots could be heard all the way to Les Peuples.

Breakfast was served for the family, the curé from Yport, the Abbé Picot, and the witnesses. Then everyone went to walk in the garden till dinner was ready. The baron and the baroness, Aunt Lison, the mayor, and the abbé walked up and down the baroness's path, and the priest from Yport strode along the other avenue reading his breviary.

From the other side of the château came the noisy laughter of the peasants drinking cider under the apple-trees. The whole countryside in its Sunday garb was in the court, and the girls and young men were playing games and chasing each other.

Jeanne and Julien went across the wood, and at the top of the slope stood silently looking at the sea. It was rather chilly, although it was the middle of August; there was a north wind, and the sun was shining in the midst of a cloudless sky, so the young couple crossed the plain to find shelter in the wooded valley leading to Yport. In the coppice no wind could be felt, and they left the straight road and turned into a narrow path running under the trees.

They could hardly walk abreast, and he gently put his arm round her waist; she did not say anything, but her heart throbbed, and her breath came quickly; the branches almost touched their heads, and they often had to bend low to pass under them. She broke off a leaf; underneath it lay two lady-birds looking like delicate, red shells.

"Look, it's a husband and wife," she said, innocently, feeling a little more at ease.

Julien's mouth brushed her ear.

"To-night you will be my little wife," he said.

Although she had learnt a great deal since she had been living among the fields, as yet only the poetical side of love had presented itself to her mind, and she did not understand him. Was she not already his wife?

Then he began to drop little kisses on her forehead, and on her neck just where some soft, stray hairs curled; instinctively she drew her head away from him, startled and yet enraptured by these kisses to which she was not accustomed. Looking up they found they had reached the end of the wood. She stopped, a little confused at finding herself so far from home; what would everyone think?

"Let us go back," she said.

He withdrew his arm from her waist, and as they turned round they came face to face, so close together that she felt his breath on her cheek. They looked into each other's eyes, each seeking to read the other's soul, and trying to learn its secrets by a determined, penetrating gaze. What would each be like? What would be the life they were commencing together? What joys, what disillusionings did married life reserve for them? Suddenly Julien placed his hands on his wife's shoulders, and pressed on her lips such a kiss as she had never before received, a kiss which thrilled her whole being, a kiss which gave her such a strange shock that she almost fell to the ground. She wildly pushed him from her.

"Let us go back. Let us go back," she stammered out.

He did not make any answer, but took both her hands and held them in his own, and they walked back to the house in silence.

At dusk a simple dinner was served, but there was a restraint upon the conversation. The two priests, the mayor, and the four farmers, who had been invited as witnesses, alone indulged in a little coarse gayety which generally accompanies a wedding, and when the laughter died away the mayor would try to revive it with a jest. It was about nine o'clock when the coffee was served. Out of doors, under the apple-trees, the open-air ball had just commenced; the tapers which had been hung on the branches made the leaves look the color of verdigris, and through the open windows of the dining-room all the revelry could be seen. The rustics skipped round, howling a dance-tune, accompanied by two violins and a clarionet, the musicians being perched upon a kitchen table. The noisy voices of the peasants sometimes entirely drowned the sound of the instruments, and the thin music sounded as if it was dropping from the sky in little bits, a few notes being scattered every now and then.

Two big barrels, surrounded by flaming torches, provided drink for the crowd, and two servants did nothing but rinse glasses and bowls in a tub, and then hold them, dripping wet, under the taps whence flowed a crimson stream of wine, or a golden stream of cider. The thirsty dancers crowded round, stretched out their hands to get hold of any drinking vessel, and poured the liquid down their dust-filled throats. Bread, butter, cheese, and sausages were laid on a table, and everyone swallowed a mouthful from time to time. As they watched this healthy, noisy fête, the melancholy guests in the dining-room felt that they too would have liked to join the dance, to drink from the great casks, and eat a slice of bread-and-butter and a raw onion.

"By Jove! they are enjoying themselves!" said the mayor, beating time to the music with his knife. "It makes one think of the wedding feast at Ganache."

There was a murmur of suppressed laughter.

"You mean at Cana," replied the Abbé Picot, the natural enemy of every civil authority.

But the mayor held his ground.

"No, M. le curé, I know quite well what I am saying; when I say Ganache, I mean Ganache."

After dinner they went among the peasants for a little while, and then the guests took their leave. The baron and his wife had a little quarrel in a low voice. Madame Adélaïde, more out of breath than ever, seemed to be refusing something her husband was asking her to do; and at last she said almost out loud: "No, my dear, I cannot. I shouldn't know how to begin." The baron abruptly left her, and went up to Jeanne.

"Will you come for a walk with me, my child?" he said.

"If you like, papa," she answered, feeling a little uneasy.

As soon as they were outside the door they felt the wind in their faces – a cold, dry wind which drove the clouds across the sky, and made the summer night feel like autumn. The baron pressed his daughter's arm closely to him, and affectionately pressed her hand. For some minutes they walked on in silence; he could not make up his mind to begin, but, at last, he said:

"My pet, I have to perform a very difficult duty which really belongs to your mother; as she refuses to do what she ought, I am obliged to take her place. I do not know how much you already know of the laws of existence; there are some things which are carefully hidden from children, from girls especially, for girls ought to remain pure-minded and perfectly innocent until the hour their parents place them in the arms of the man who, henceforth, has the care of their happiness; it is his duty to raise the veil drawn over the sweet secret of life. But, if no suspicion of the truth has crossed their minds, girls are often shocked by the somewhat brutal reality which their dreams have not revealed to them. Wounded in mind, and even in body, they refuse to their husband what is accorded to him as an absolute right by both human and natural laws. I cannot tell you any more, my darling; but remember this, only this, that you belong entirely to your husband."

What did she know in reality? What did she guess? She began to tremble, and she felt low-spirited, and overcome by a presentiment of something terrible. When she and her father went in again they stopped in surprise at the drawing-room door. Madame Adélaïde was sobbing on Julien's shoulder. Her noisy tears seemed to be forced from her, and issued at the same time from her nose,

mouth and eyes, and the amazed vicomte was awkwardly supporting the huge woman, who had thrown herself in his arms to ask him to be gentle with her darling, her pet, her dear child. The baron hurried forward.

"Oh, pray do not make a scene, do not let us have any tears," he said, taking hold of his wife, and seating her in an armchair while she wiped her face. Then turning towards Jeanne:

"Now then, my dear, kiss your mother and go to bed," he said.

Ready to cry herself, Jeanne quickly kissed her parents and ran away. Aunt Lison had already gone to her room, so the baron and his wife were left alone with Julien. They all three felt very awkward, and could think of nothing to say; the two men, in their evening-dress, remained standing, looking into space, and Madame Adélaïde leant back in her armchair, her breast still heaved by an occasional sob. At last the silence became unbearable, and the baron began to talk about the journey the young couple were going to take in a few days.

Jeanne, in her room, was being undressed by Rosalie, whose tears fell like rain; her trembling hands could not find the strings and pins, and she certainly seemed a great deal more affected than her mistress. But Jeanne did not notice her maid's tears; she felt as though she had entered another world, and was separated from all she had known and loved. Everything in her life seemed turned upside down; the strange idea came to her: "Did she really love her husband?" He suddenly seemed some stranger she hardly knew. Three months before she had not even been aware of his existence, and now she was his wife. How had it happened? Did people always plunge into marriage as they might into some uncovered hole lying in their path? When she was in her night-dress she slipped into bed, and the cold sheets made her shiver, and increased the sensation of cold, and sadness and loneliness which had weighed on her mind for two hours. Rosalie went away still sobbing, and Jeanne lay still, anxiously awaiting the revelation she had partly guessed, and that her father had hinted at in confused words – awaiting the unveiling of love's great secret.

There came three soft knocks at the door, though she had heard no one come upstairs. She started violently, and made no answer; there was another knock, and then the door-handle was turned. She hid her head under the clothes as if a thief had got into her room, and then came a noise of boots on the boards, and all at once some one touched the bed. She started again, and gave a little cry; then, uncovering her head, she saw Julien standing beside the bed, looking at her with a smile.

"Oh, how you frightened me!" she said.

"Did you not expect me, then?" he asked.

She made no answer, feeling horribly ashamed of being seen in bed by this man, who looked so grave and correct in his evening-dress. They did not know what to say or do next; they hardly dared to look at one another, in this decisive hour, on which the intimate happiness of their life depended. Perhaps he vaguely felt what perfect self-possession, what affectionate stratagems are needed not to hurt the modesty, the extreme delicacy of a maiden's heart. He gently took her hand and kissed it; then, kneeling by the bed as he would before an altar, he murmured, in a voice soft as a sigh:

"Will you love me?"

She felt a little reassured, and raised her head, which was covered with a cloud of lace.

"I love you already, dear," she said, with a smile.

He took his wife's little slender fingers in his mouth, and, his voice changed by this living gag, he asked:

"Will you give me a proof of your love?"

The question frightened her again, and, only remembering her father's words, and not quite understanding what she said:

"I am yours, dear," she answered.

He covered her hand with humid kisses, and, slowly rising, he bent towards her face, which she again began to hide. Suddenly he threw one arm across the bed, winding it around his wife over

the clothes, and slipped his other arm under the bolster, which he raised with her head upon it; then he asked, in a low whisper:

"Then you will make room for me beside you?"

She had an instinctive fear, and stammered out: "Oh, not yet, I entreat you."

He seemed disappointed and a little hurt; then he went on in a voice that was still pleading, but a little more abrupt:

"Why not now, since we have got to come to it sooner or later?"

She did not like him for saying that, but, perfectly resigned and submissive, she said, for the second time:

"I am yours, dear."

Then he went quickly into his dressing-room, and she could distinctly hear the rustling of his clothes as he took them off, the jingling of the money in his pockets, the noise his boots made as he let them drop on the floor. All at once he ran across the room in his drawers and socks to put his watch on the mantelpiece; then he returned to the other room, where he moved about a little while longer. Jeanne turned quickly over to the other side and shut her eyes when she heard him coming. She nearly started out of bed when she felt a cold, hairy leg slide against hers, and, distractedly hiding her face in her hands, she moved right to the edge of the bed, almost crying with fear and horror. He took her in his arms, although her back was turned to him, and eagerly kissed her neck, the lace of her nightcap, and the embroidered collar of her night-dress. Filled with a horrible dread, she did not move, and then she felt his strong hands caressing her. She gasped for breath at this brutal touch, and felt an intense longing to escape and hide herself somewhere out of this man's reach. Soon he lay still, and she could feel the warmth of his body against her back. She did not feel so frightened then, and all at once the thought flashed across her mind that she had only to turn round and her lips would touch his.

At last he seemed to get impatient, and, in a sorrowful voice, he said:

"Then you will not be my little wife?"

"Am I not your wife already?" she said, through her hands.

"Come now, my dear, don't try to make a fool of me," he answered, with a touch of bad temper in his voice.

She felt very sorry when she heard him speak like that, and with a sudden movement she turned towards him to ask his pardon. He passionately seized her in his arms and imprinted burning kisses all over her face and neck. She had taken her hands from her face and lay still, making no response to his efforts, her thoughts so confused that she could understand nothing, until suddenly she felt a sharp pain, and then she began to moan and writhe in his arms.

What happened next? She did not know, for her head was in a whirl. She was conscious of nothing more until she felt him raining grateful kisses on her lips. Then he spoke to her and she had to answer; then he made other attempts, which she repelled with horror, and as she struggled she felt against her chest the thick hair she had already felt against her leg, and she drew back in dismay. Tired at last of entreating her without effect, he lay still on his back; then she could think. She had expected something so different, and this destruction of her hopes, this shattering of her expectations of delight, filled her with despair, and she could only say to herself: "That, then, is what he calls being his wife; that is it, that is it."

For a long time she lay thus, feeling very miserable, her eyes wandering over the tapestry on the walls, with its tale of love. As Julien did not speak or move, she slowly turned her head towards him, and then she saw that he was asleep, with his mouth half opened and his face quite calm. Asleep! she could hardly believe it, and it made her feel more indignant, more outraged than his brutal passion had done. How could he sleep on such a night? There was no novelty for him, then, in what had passed between them? She would rather he had struck her, or bruised her with his odious caresses till she had lost consciousness, than that he should have slept. She leant on her elbow, and bent towards him to listen to the breath which sometimes sounded like a snore as it passed through his lips.

Daylight came, dim at first, then brighter, then pink, then radiant. Julien opened his eyes, yawned, stretched his arms, looked at his wife, smiled, and asked:

"Have you slept well, dear?"

She noticed with great surprise that he said "thou" to her now, and she replied:

"Oh, yes; have you?"

"I? Oh, very well indeed," he answered, turning and kissing her. Then he began to talk, telling her his plans, and using the word "economy" so often that Jeanne wondered. She listened to him without very well understanding what he said, and, as she looked at him, a thousand thoughts passed rapidly through her mind.

Eight o'clock struck.

"We must get up," he said; "we shall look stupid if we stay in bed late to-day;" and he got up first.

When he had finished dressing, he helped his wife in all the little details of her toilet, and would not hear of her calling Rosalie. As he was going out of the room, he stopped to say:

"You know, when we are by ourselves, we can call each other 'thee' and 'thou,' but we had better wait a little while before we talk like that before your parents. It will sound quite natural when we come back after our honeymoon." And then he went downstairs.

Jeanne did not go down till lunch-time; and the day passed exactly the same as usual, without anything extraordinary happening. There was only an extra man in the house.



## V

Four days after the wedding, the berlin in which they were to travel to Marseilles arrived. After the anguish of that first night, Jeanne soon became accustomed to Julien's kisses and affectionate caresses, though their more intimate relations still revolted her. When they went away she had quite regained her gayety of heart, and the baroness was the only one who showed any emotion at the parting. Just as the carriage was going off, she put a heavy purse in her daughter's hand.

"That is for any little thing you may want to buy," she said.

Jeanne dropped it into her pocket and the carriage started.

"How much did your mother give you in that purse?" asked Julien in the evening.

Jeanne had forgotten all about it, so she turned it out on her knees, and found there were two thousand francs in gold.

"What a lot of things I shall be able to buy!" she cried, clapping her hands.

At the end of a week they arrived at Marseilles, where the heat was terrible, and the next day they embarked on the *Roi Louis*, the little packet-boat which calls at Ajaccio on its way to Naples, and started for Corsica. It seemed to Jeanne as if she were in a trance which yet left her the full possession of all her senses, and she could hardly believe she was really going to Corsica, the birthplace of Napoleon, with its wild undergrowth, its bandits, and its mountains. She and her husband stood side by side on the deck of the boat watching the cliffs of Provence fly past. Overhead was a bright blue sky, and the waves seemed to be getting thicker and firmer under the burning heat of the sun.

"Do you remember when we went to Etretat in old Lastique's boat?" asked Jeanne; and, instead of answering her, Julien dropped a kiss right on her ear.

The steamer's paddles churned up the sea, and behind the boat, as far as the eye could reach, lay a long foaming track where the troubled waves frothed like champagne. All at once an immense dolphin leapt out of the water a few fathoms ahead, and then dived in again head foremost. It startled Jeanne, and she threw herself in Julien's arms with a little cry of fear; then she laughed at her terror, and watched for the reappearance of the enormous fish. In a few seconds up it came again, like a huge mechanical toy; then it dived again, and again disappeared; then came two more, then three, then six, which gamboled round the boat, and seemed to be escorting their large wooden brother with the iron fins. Sometimes they were on the left of the boat, sometimes on the right, and, one following the other in a kind of game, they would leap into the air, describe a curve, and replunge into the sea one after the other. Jeanne clapped her hands, delighted at each reappearance of the big, pliant fish, and felt a childish enjoyment in watching them. Suddenly they disappeared, rose to the surface a long way out to sea, then disappeared for good, and Jeanne felt quite sorry when they went away.

The calm, mild, radiant evening drew on; there was not a breath of air to cause the smallest ripple on the sea; the sun was slowly sinking towards that part of the horizon beyond which lay the land of burning heat, Africa, whose glow could almost be felt across the ocean; then, when the sun had quite disappeared, a cool breath of wind, so faint that it could not be called a breeze, came over the sea. There were all the horrible smells of a packet-boat in their cabin, so Jeanne and Julien wrapped themselves in their cloaks and lay down side by side on deck. Julien went to sleep directly, but Jeanne lay looking up at the host of stars which sparkled with so bright and clear a light in this soft Southern sky; then the monotonous noise of the engines made her drowsy, and at last she fell asleep. In the morning she was awakened by the voices of the sailors cleaning the boat, and she aroused her husband and got up. The sea was still all around them, but straight ahead something gray could be faintly seen in the dawn; it looked like a bank of strange-shaped clouds, pointed and jagged, lying on the waves. This vague outline gradually became more distinct, until, standing out against the brightening sky, a long line of mountain-peaks could be seen. It was Corsica, hidden behind a light veil of mist.

The sun rose, throwing black shadows around and below every prominence, and each peak had a crown of light, while all the rest of the island remained enveloped in mist.

The captain, a little elderly man, bronzed, withered, and toughened by the rough salt winds, came up on deck.

"Can you smell my lady over there?" he asked Jeanne, in a voice that thirty years of command, and shouting above the noise of the wind, had made hoarse.

She had indeed noticed a strong, peculiar odor of herbs and aromatic plants.

"It's Corsica that smells like that, madame," went on the captain. "She has a perfumed breath, just like a pretty woman. I am a Corsican, and I should know that smell five miles off, if I'd been away twenty years. Over there, at St. Helena, I hear he is always speaking of the perfume of his country; he belongs to my family."

And the captain took off his hat and saluted Corsica, and then, looking across the ocean, he saluted the great emperor who was a prisoner on that far-away isle, and Jeanne's heart was touched by this simple action. Then the sailor pointed towards the horizon.

"There are the Sanguinaires," he said.

Julien had his arm round his wife's waist, and they both strained their eyes to see what the captain was pointing out. As last they saw some pointed rocks that the boat rounded before entering a large, calm bay, surrounded by high mountains, whose steep sides looked as though they were covered with moss.

"That is the undergrowth," said the captain, pointing out this verdure.

The circle of mountains seemed to close in behind the boat as she slowly steamed across the azure water which was so transparent that in places the bottom could be seen. Ajaccio came in sight; it was a white town at the foot of the mountains, with a few small Italian boats lying at anchor in the harbor, and four or five row-boats came beside the *Roi Louis* to take off the passengers. Julien, who was looking after the luggage, asked his wife in a low tone:

"A franc is enough, isn't it, to give the steward?"

The whole week he had been constantly asking her this question which she hated.

"When you don't know what is enough, give too much," she answered, a little impatiently.

He haggled with every one, landlords and hotel-waiters, cabmen and shopmen, and when he had obtained the reduction he wanted, he would rub his hands, and say to Jeanne: "I don't like to be robbed." She trembled when the bills were brought, for she knew beforehand the remarks he would make on each item, and felt ashamed of his bargaining; and when she saw the scornful look of the servants as her husband left his small fee in their hands, she blushed to the roots of her hair. Of course he had a discussion with the boatmen who took them ashore.

The first tree she saw on landing was a palm, which delighted her. They went to a big empty hotel standing at the corner of a vast square, and ordered lunch. When they had finished dessert, Jeanne got up to go and wander about the town, but Julien, taking her in his arms, whispered tenderly in her ear:

"Shall we go upstairs for a little while, my pet?"

"Go upstairs?" she said, with surprise; "but I am not at all tired."

He pressed her to him: "Don't you understand? For two days –"

She blushed crimson.

"Oh, what would everyone say? what would they think? You could not ask for a bedroom in the middle of the day. Oh, Julien, don't say anything about it now, please don't."

"Do you think I care what the hotel-people say or think?" he interrupted. "You'll see what difference they make to me." And he rang the bell.

She did not say anything more, but sat with downcast eyes, disgusted at her husband's desires, to which she always submitted with a feeling of shame and degradation; her senses were not yet aroused, and her husband treated her as if she shared all his ardors. When the waiter answered the

bell, Julien asked him to show them to their room; the waiter, a man of true Corsican type, bearded to the eyes, did not understand, and kept saying that the room would be quite ready by the evening. Julien got out of patience.

"Get it ready at once," he said. "The journey has tired us and we want to rest."

A slight smile crept over the waiter's face, and Jeanne would have liked to run away; when they came downstairs again, an hour later, she hardly dared pass the servants, feeling sure that they would whisper and laugh behind her back. She felt vexed with Julien for not understanding her feelings, and wondering at his want of delicacy; it raised a sort of barrier between them, and, for the first time, she understood that two people can never be in perfect sympathy; they may pass through life side by side, seemingly in perfect union, but neither quite understands the other, and every soul must of necessity be for ever lonely.

They stayed three days in the little town which was like a furnace, for every breath of wind was shut out by the mountains. Then they made out a plan of the places they should visit, and decided to hire some horses. They started one morning at daybreak on the two wiry little Corsican horses they had obtained, and accompanied by a guide mounted on a mule which also carried some provisions, for inns are unknown in this wild country. At first the road ran along the bay, but soon it turned into a shallow valley leading to the mountains. The uncultivated country seemed perfectly bare, and the sides of the hills were covered with tall weeds, turned sere and yellow by the burning heat; they often crossed ravines where only a narrow stream still ran with a gurgling sound, and occasionally they met a mountaineer, sometimes on foot, sometimes riding his little horse, or bestriding a donkey no bigger than a dog; these mountaineers always carried a loaded gun which might be old and rusty, but which became a very formidable weapon in their hands. The air was filled with the pungent smell of the aromatic plants with which the isle is covered, and the road sloped gradually upwards, winding round the mountains.

The peaks of blue and pink granite made the island look like a fairy palace, and, from the heights, the forests of immense chestnut trees on the lower parts of the hills looked like green thickets. Sometimes the guide would point to some steep height, and mention a name; Jeanne and Julien would look, at first seeing nothing, but at last discovering the summit of the mountain. It was a village, a little granite hamlet, hanging and clinging like a bird's nest to the vast mountain. Jeanne got tired of going at a walking pace for so long.

"Let us gallop a little," she said, whipping up her horse.

She could not hear her husband behind her, and, turning round to see where he was, she burst out laughing. Pale with fright, he was holding onto his horse's mane, almost jolted out of the saddle by the animal's motion. His awkwardness and fear were all the more funny, because he was such a grave, handsome man. Then they trotted gently along the road between two thickets formed of juniper trees, green oaks, arbutus trees, heaths, bay trees, myrtles, and box trees, whose branches were formed into a network by the climbing clematis, and between and around which grew big ferns, honeysuckles, rosemary, lavender, and briars, forming a perfectly impassable thicket, which covered the hill like a cloak. The travelers began to get hungry, and the guide rejoined them and took them to one of those springs so often met with in a mountainous country, with the icy water flowing from a little hole in the rock where some passer-by has left the big chestnut leaf which conveyed the water to his mouth. Jeanne felt so happy that she could hardly help shouting aloud; and they again remounted and began to descend, winding round the Gulf of Sagone.

As evening was drawing on they went through Cargèse, the Greek village founded so long ago by fugitives driven from their country. Round a fountain was a group of tall, handsome and particularly graceful girls, with well formed hips, long hands, and slender waists; Julien cried "Good-night" to them, and they answered him in the musical tongue of their ancestors. When they got to Piana they had to ask for hospitality quite in the way of the middle ages, and Jeanne trembled with

joy as they waited for the door to open in answer to Julien's knock. Oh, that was a journey! There they did indeed meet with adventures!

They had happened to appeal to a young couple who received them as the patriarch received the messenger of God, and they slept on a straw mattress in an old house whose woodwork was so full of worms that it seemed alive. At sunrise they started off again, and soon they stopped opposite a regular forest of crimson rocks; there were peaks, columns, and steeples, all marvelously sculptured by time and the sea. Thin, round, twisted, crooked, and fantastic, these wonderful rocks nine hundred feet high, looked like trees, plants, animals, monuments, men, monks in their cassocks, horned demons and huge birds, such as one sees in a nightmare, the whole forming a monstrous tribe which seemed to have been petrified by some eccentric god.

Jeanne could not speak, her heart was too full, but she took Julien's hand and pressed it, feeling that she must love something or some one before all this beauty; and then, leaving this confusion of forms, they came upon another bay surrounded by a wall of blood-red granite, which cast crimson reflections into the blue sea. Jeanne exclaimed, "Oh, Julien!" and that was all she could say; a great lump came in her throat and two tears ran down her cheeks. Julien looked at her in astonishment.

"What is it, my pet?" he asked.

She dried her eyes, smiled, and said in a voice that still trembled a little. "Oh, it's nothing, I suppose I am nervous. I am so happy that the least thing upsets me."

He could not understand this nervousness; he despised the hysterical excitement to which women give way and the joy or despair into which they are cast by a mere sensation, and he thought her tears absurd. He glanced at the bad road.

"You had better look after your horse," he said.

They went down by a nearly impassable road, then turning to the right, proceeded along the gloomy valley of Ota. The path looked very dangerous, and Julien proposed that they should go up on foot. Jeanne was only too delighted to be alone with him after the emotion she had felt, so the guide went on with the mule and horses, and they walked slowly after him. The mountain seemed cleft from top to bottom, and the path ran between two tremendous walls of rock which looked nearly black. The air was icy cold, and the little bit of sky that could be seen looked quite strange, it seemed so far away. A sudden noise made Jeanne look up. A large bird flew out of a hole in the rock; it was an eagle, and its open wings seemed to touch the two sides of the chasm as it mounted towards the sky. Farther on, the mountain again divided, and the path wound between the two ravines, taking abrupt turns. Jeanne went first, walking lightly and easily, sending the pebbles rolling from under her feet and fearlessly looking down the precipices. Julien followed her, a little out of breath, and keeping his eyes on the ground so that he should not feel giddy and it seemed like coming out of Hades when they suddenly came into the full sunlight.

They were very thirsty, and, seeing a damp track, they followed it till they came to a tiny spring flowing into a hollow stick which some goat-herd had put there; all around the spring the ground was carpeted with moss, and Jeanne knelt down to drink. Julien followed her example, and as she was slowly enjoying the cool water, he put his arm around her and tried to take her place at the end of the wooden pipe. In the struggle between their lips they would in turns seize the small end of the tube and hold it in their mouths for a few seconds; then, as they left it, the stream flowed on again and splashed their faces and necks, their clothes and their hands. A few drops shone in their hair like pearls, and with the water flowed their kisses.

Then Jeanne had an inspiration of love. She filled her mouth with the clear liquid, and, her cheeks puffed out like bladders, she made Julien understand that he was to quench his thirst at her lips. He stretched his throat, his head thrown backwards and his arms open, and the deep draught he drank at this living spring enflamed him with desire. Jeanne leant on his shoulder with unusual affection, her heart throbbed, her bosom heaved, her eyes, filled with tears, looked softer, and she whispered:

"Julien, I love you!"

Then, drawing him to her, she threw herself down and hid her shame-stricken face in her hands. He threw himself down beside her, and pressed her passionately to him; she gasped for breath as she lay nervously waiting, and all at once she gave a loud cry as though thunderstruck by the sensation she had invited. It was a long time before they reached the top of the mountain, so fluttered and exhausted was Jeanne, and it was evening when they got to Evisa, and went to the house of Paoli Palabretti, a relation of the guide's. Paoli was a tall man with a slight cough, and the melancholy look of a consumptive; he showed them their room, a miserable-looking chamber built of stone, but which was handsome for this country, where no refinement is known. He was expressing in his Corsican patois (a mixture of French and Italian) his pleasure at receiving them, when a clear voice interrupted him, and a dark little woman, with big black eyes, a sun-kissed skin, and a slender waist, hurried forward, kissed Jeanne, shook Julien by the hand and said: "Good-day, madame; good-day, monsieur; are you quite well?" She took their hats and shawls and arranged everything with one hand, for her other arm was in a sling; then she turned them all out, saying to her husband: "Take them for a walk till dinner is ready."

M. Palabretti obeyed at once, and, walking between Jeanne and her husband, he took them round the village. His steps and his words both drawled, and he coughed frequently, saying at each fit, "The cold air has got on my lungs." He led them under some immense chestnut-trees, and, suddenly stopping, he said in his monotonous voice:

"It was here that Mathieu Lori killed my cousin Jean Rinaldi. I was standing near Jean, just there, when we saw Mathieu about three yards off. 'Jean,' he cried; 'don't go to Albertacce; don't you go, Jean, or I'll kill you.' I took Jean's arm. 'Don't go Jean,' I said, 'or he'll do it.' It was about a girl, Paulina Sinacoupi, that they were both after. Then Jean cried out, 'I shall go, Mathieu; and you won't stop me, either.' Then Mathieu raised his gun, and, before I could take aim, he fired. Jean leaped two feet from the ground, monsieur, and then fell right on me, and my gun dropped and rolled down to that chestnut there. Jean's mouth was wide open, but he didn't say a word; he was dead."

The young couple stared in astonishment at this calm witness of such a crime.

"What became of the murderer?" asked Jeanne.

Paoli coughed for some time, then he went on:

"He gained the mountain, and my brother killed him the next year. My brother, Philippi Palabretti, the bandit, you know."

Jeanne shuddered. "Is your brother a bandit?" she asked.

The placid Corsican's eye flashed proudly.

"Yes, madame, he was a celebrated bandit, he was; he put an end to six gendarmes. He died with Nicolas Morali after they had been surrounded for six days, and were almost starved to death."

Then they went in to dinner, and the little woman treated them as if she had known them twenty years. Jeanne was haunted by the fear that she would not again experience the strange shock she had felt in Julien's arms beside the fountain, and when they were alone in their room she was still afraid his kisses would again leave her insensible, but she was soon reassured, and that was her first night of love. The next day she could hardly bear to leave this humble abode, where a new happiness had come to her; she drew her host's little wife into her bedroom, and told her she did not mean it as a present in return for their hospitality, but she must absolutely insist on sending her a souvenir from Paris, and to this souvenir she seemed to attach a superstitious importance. For a long time the young Corsican woman refused to accept anything at all, but at last she said:

"Well, send me a little pistol, a very little one."

Jeanne opened her eyes in astonishment, and the woman added in her ear, as though she were confiding some sweet and tender secret to her:

"It's to kill my brother-in-law with."

And with a smile on her face, she quickly unbandaged the arm she could not use, and showed Jeanne the soft, white flesh which had been pierced right through with a stiletto, though the wound had nearly healed.

"If I had not been as strong as he is," she said, "he would have killed me. My husband is not jealous, for he understands me, and then he is ill, you see, so he is not so hot-blooded; besides, I am an honest woman, madame. But my brother-in-law believes everything that is told him about me, and he is jealous for my husband. I am sure he will make another attempt upon my life, but if I have a little pistol I shall feel safe, and I shall be sure of having my revenge."

Jeanne promised to send the weapon, affectionately kissed her new friend and said good-bye. The rest of her journey was a dream, an endless embrace, an intoxication of caresses; she no longer saw country or people or the places where they stopped, she had eyes only for Julien. When they got to Bastia the guide had to be paid; Julien felt in his pockets, and not finding what he wanted, he said to Jeanne:

"Since you don't use the two thousand francs your mother gave you, I might as well carry them; they will be safer in my pocket, and, besides, then I shan't have to change any notes."

They went to Leghorn, Florence, and Genoa, and, one windy morning, they found themselves again at Marseilles. It was then the fifteenth of October, and they had been away from Les Peuples two months. The cold wind, which seemed to blow from Normandy, chilled Jeanne and made her feel miserable. There had lately been a change in Julien's behavior towards her, he seemed tired, and indifferent, and she had a vague presentiment of evil. She persuaded him to stay at Marseilles four days longer, for she could not bear to leave these warm, sunny lands where she had been so happy, but at last they had to go. They intended to buy all the things they wanted for their housekeeping at Paris, and Jeanne was looking forward to buying all sorts of things for Les Peuples, thanks to her mother's present; but the very first thing she meant to purchase was the pistol she had promised to the young Corsican woman at Evisa.

The day after they reached Paris, she said to Julien:

"Will you give me mamma's money, dear? I want to buy some things."

He looked rather cross.

"How much do you want?" he asked.

"Oh – what you like," she answered in surprise.

"I will give you a hundred francs," he answered; "and whatever you do, don't waste it."

She did not know what to say, she felt so amazed and confused, but at last she said in a hesitating way:

"But – I gave you that money to – "

He interrupted her.

"Yes, exactly. What does it matter whether it's in your pocket or mine now that we share everything? I am not refusing you the money, am I? I am going to give you a hundred francs."

She took the five pieces of gold without another word; she did not dare ask for more, so she bought nothing but the pistol.

A week later they started for Les Peuples.

## VI

When the post-chaise drove up, the baron and baroness and all the servants were standing outside the white railings to give the travelers a hearty welcome home. The baroness cried, Jeanne quietly wiped away two tears, and her father walked backwards and forwards nervously. Then, while the luggage was being brought in, the whole journey was gone over again before the drawing-room fire. The eager words flowed from Jeanne's lips, and in half-an-hour she had related everything, except a few little details she forgot in her haste. Then she went to unpack, with Rosalie, who was in a state of great excitement, to help her; when she had finished and everything had been put away in its proper place Rosalie left her mistress, and Jeanne sat down, feeling a little tired. She wondered what she could do next, and she tried to think of some occupation for her mind, some task for her fingers. She did not want to go down to the drawing-room again to sit by her mother who was dozing, and she thought of going for a walk, but it was so miserable out of doors that only to glance out of the window made her feel melancholy.

Then the thought flashed across her mind that now there never would be anything for her to do. At the convent the future had always given her something to think about, and her dreams had filled the hours, so that their flight had passed unnoticed; but she had hardly left the convent when her love-dreams had been realized. In a few weeks she had met, loved, and married a man who had borne her away in his arms without giving her time to think of anything. But now the sweet reality of the first few weeks of married life was going to become a daily monotony, barring the way to all the hopes and delicious fears of an unknown future. There was nothing more to which she could look forward, nothing more for her to do, to-day, to-morrow, or ever. She felt all that with a vague sensation of disillusion and melancholy. She rose and went to lean her forehead against the cold window-pane, and, after looking for some time at the dull sky and heavy clouds, she made up her mind to go out.

Could it really be the same country, the same grass, the same trees as she had seen with such joy in May? What had become of the sun-bathed leaves, and the flaming dandelions, the blood-red poppies, the pure marguerites that had reared their heads amidst the green grass above which had fluttered innumerable yellow butterflies? They were all gone, and the very air seemed changed, for now it was no longer full of life, and fertilizing germs and intoxicating perfumes. The avenues were soaked by the autumn rains and covered with a thick carpet of dead leaves, and the thin branches of the poplars trembled in the wind which was shaking off the few leaves that still hung on them. All day long these last, golden leaves hovered and whirled in the air for a few seconds and then fell, in an incessant, melancholy rain.

Jeanne walked on down to the wood. It gave her the sad impression of being in the room of a dying man. The leafy walls which had separated the pretty winding paths no longer existed, the branches of the shrubs blew mournfully one against the other, the rustling of the fallen leaves, that the wind was blowing about and piling into heaps, sounded like a dying sigh, and the birds hopped from tree to tree with shivering little chirps, vainly seeking a shelter from the cold. Shielded by the elms which formed a sort of vanguard against the sea-wind, the linden and the plane-tree were still covered with leaves, and the one was clothed in a mantle of scarlet velvet, the other in a cloak of orange silk. Jeanne walked slowly along the baroness's avenue, by the side of Couillard's farm, beginning to realize what a dull, monotonous life lay before her; then she sat down on the slope where Julien had first told his love, too sad even to think and only feeling that she would like to go to bed and sleep, so that she might escape from this melancholy day. Looking up she saw a seagull blown along by a gust of wind, and she suddenly thought of the eagle she had seen in Corsica in the somber valley of Ota. As she sat there she could see again the island with its sun-ripened oranges, its strong perfumes, its pink-topped mountains, its azure bays, its ravines, with their rushing torrents, and it gave her a sharp pain to think of that happy time that was past and gone; and the damp, rugged country by which she

was now surrounded, the mournful fall of the leaves, the gray clouds hurrying before the wind, made her feel so miserable that she went indoors, feeling that she should cry if she stayed out any longer. She found her mother, who was accustomed to these dull days, dozing over the fire. The baron and Julien had gone for a walk, and the night was drawing on filling the vast drawing-room with dark shadows which were sometimes dispersed by the fitful gleams of the fire; out of doors the gray sky and muddy fields could just be seen in the fading light.

The baron and Julien came in soon after Jeanne. As soon as he came into the gloomy room the baron rang the bell, exclaiming:

"How miserable you look in here! Let us have some lights."

He sat down before the fire, putting his feet near the flame, which made the mud drop off his steaming boots.

"I think it is going to freeze," he said, rubbing his hands together cheerfully. "The sky is clearing towards the north, and it's a full moon this evening. We shall have a hard frost to-night."

Then, turning towards his daughter:

"Well, my dear," he asked, "are you glad to get back to your own house and see the old people at home again?"

This simple question quite upset Jeanne. Her eyes filled with tears, and she threw herself into her father's arms, covering his face with kisses as though she would ask him to forgive her discontent. She had thought she should be so pleased to see her parents again, and now, instead of joy, she felt a coldness around her heart, and it seemed as if she could not regain all her former love for them until they had all dropped back into their ordinary ways again.

Dinner seemed very long that evening; no one spoke, and Julien did not pay the least attention to his wife. In the drawing-room after dinner, Jeanne dozed over the fire opposite the baroness who was quite asleep, and, when she was aroused for a moment by the voices of the two men, raised in argument over something, she wondered if she would ever become quite content with a pleasureless, listless life like her mother. The crackling fire burnt clear and bright, and threw sudden gleams on the faded tapestry chairs, on the fox and the stork, on the melancholy-looking heron, on the ant and the grasshopper. The baron came over to the fireplace, and held his hands to the blaze.

"The fire burns well to-night," he said; "there is a frost, I am sure."

He put his hands on Jeanne's shoulder, and, pointing to the fire:

"My child," he said, "the hearth with all one's family around it is the happiest spot on earth; there is no place like it. But don't you think we had better go to bed? You must both be quite worn out with fatigue."

Up in her bedroom Jeanne wondered how this second return to the place she loved so well could be so different from the first. "Why did she feel so miserable?" she asked herself; "why did the château, the fields, everything she had so loved, seem to-day so desolate?" Her eyes fell on the clock. The little bee was swinging from left to right and from right to left over the gilded flowers, with the same quick even movement as of old. She suddenly felt a glow of affection for this little piece of mechanism, which told her the hour in its silvery tones, and beat like a human heart, and the tears came into her eyes as she looked at it; she had not felt so moved when she had kissed her father and mother on her return, but the heart has no rules or logic, to guide it.

Julien had made his fatigue the pretext for not sharing his wife's chamber that night, so, for the first time since her marriage, she slept alone. It had been agreed that henceforth they should have separate rooms, but she was not yet accustomed to sleep alone, and, for a long time she lay awake while the moaning wind swept round the house. In the morning she was aroused by the blood-red light falling on her bed. Through the frozen window-panes it looked as if the whole sky were on fire. Throwing a big dressing-gown round her, Jeanne ran to the window and opened it, and in rushed an icy wind, stinging her skin and bringing the water to her eyes. In the midst of a crimson sky, the great red sun was rising behind the trees, and the white frost had made the ground so hard that it



rang under the farm-servant's feet. In this one night all the branches of the poplars had been entirely stripped of their few remaining leaves, and, through the bare trees, beyond the plain, appeared the long, green line of the sea, covered with white-crested waves. The plane-tree and the linden were being rapidly stripped of their bright coverings by the cold wind, and showers of leaves fell to the ground as each gust swept by.

Jeanne dressed herself, and for want of something better to do, went to see the farmers. The Martins were very surprised to see her. Madame Martin kissed her on both cheeks, and she had to drink a little glass of noyau; then she went over to the other farm. The Couillards were also very surprised when she came in; the farmer's wife gave two pecks at her ears and insisted on her drinking a little glass of cassis; then she went in to breakfast. And that day passed like the previous one, only it was cold instead of damp, and the other days of the week were like the first two, and all the weeks of the month were like the first one.

Little by little, Jeanne's regrets for those happy, distant lands vanished; she began to get resigned to her life, to feel an interest in the many unimportant details of the days, and to perform her simple, regular occupations with care. A disenchantment of life, a sort of settled melancholy gradually took possession of her. What did she want? She did not know herself. She had no desire for society, no thirst for the excitement of the world, the pleasures she might have had possessed no attraction for her, but all her dreams and illusions had faded away, leaving her life as colorless as the old tapestry chairs in the château drawing-room.

Her relations with Julien had completely changed, for he became quite a different man when they settled down after their wedding tour, like an actor who becomes himself again as soon as he has finished playing his part. He hardly ever took any notice of his wife, or even spoke to her; all his love seemed to have suddenly disappeared, and it was very seldom that he accompanied her to her room of a night. He had taken the management of the estate and the household into his own hands, and he looked into all the accounts, saw that the peasants paid their arrears of rent, and cut down every expense. No longer the polished, elegant man who had won Jeanne's heart, he looked and dressed like a well-to-do farmer, neglecting his personal appearance with the carelessness of a man who no longer strives to fascinate. He always wore an old velvet shooting-jacket, covered all over with stains, which he had found one day as he was looking over his old clothes; then he left off shaving, and his long, untrimmed beard made him look quite plain, while his hands never received any attention.

After each meal, he drank four or five small glasses of brandy, and when Jeanne affectionately reproached him, he answered so roughly: "Leave me alone, can't you?" that she never tried to reason with him again.

She accepted all this in a calm way that astonished herself, but she looked upon him now as a stranger who was nothing whatever to her. She often thought of it all, and wondered how it was that after having loved and married each other in a delicious passion of affection they should suddenly awake from their dream of love as utter strangers, as if they had never lain in each other's arms. How was it his indifference did not hurt her more? Had they been mistaken in each other? Would she have been more pained if Julien had still been handsome, elegant and attractive?

It was understood that at the new year the baron and baroness were to spend a few months in their Rouen house, leaving Les Peuples to the young people who would become settled that winter, and so get accustomed to the place where they were to pass their lives. Julien wanted to present his wife to the Brisevilles, the Couteliers and the Fourvilles, but they could not pay these visits yet because they had not been able to get the painter to change the coat-of-arms on the carriage; for nothing in the world would have persuaded Julien to go to the neighboring château in the old family carriage, which the baron had given up to him, until the arms of the De Lames had been quartered on it with those of the Leperthuis des Vauds. Now there was only one man in the whole province who made a speciality of coats-of-arms, a painter from Bolbec, named Bataille, who was naturally

in great request among all the Normandy aristocracy; so Julien had to wait for some time before he could secure his services.

At last, one December morning just as they were finishing lunch at Les Peuples, they saw a man, with a box on his back, open the gate and come up the path; it was Bataille. He was shown into the dining-room, and lunch was served to him just as if he had been a gentleman, for his constant intercourse with the provincial aristocracy, his knowledge of the coats-of-arms, their mottoes and signification, made him a sort of herald with whom no gentleman need be ashamed to shake hands.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

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

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