

ÉMILE ZOLA

THERESA

RAQUIN

Émile Zola
Theresa Raquin

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25560540

Theresa Raquin:

Содержание

CHAPTER I	8
CHAPTER II	14
CHAPTER III	22
CHAPTER IV	29
CHAPTER V	34
CHAPTER VI	42
CHAPTER VII	47
CHAPTER VIII	55
CHAPTER IX	60
CHAPTER X	70
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	74

Émile Zola

Theresa Raquin

PREFACE

This volume, "Therese Raquin," was Zola's third book, but it was the one that first gave him notoriety, and made him somebody, as the saying goes.

While still a clerk at Hachette's at eight pounds a month, engaged in checking and perusing advertisements and press notices, he had already in 1864 published the first series of "Les Contes a Ninon" – a reprint of short stories contributed to various publications; and, in the following year, had brought out "La Confession de Claude." Both these books were issued by Lacroix, a famous go-ahead publisher and bookseller in those days, whose place of business stood at one of the corners of the Rue Vivienne and the Boulevard Montmartre, and who, as Lacroix, Verboeckhoven et Cie., ended in bankruptcy in the early seventies.

"La Confession de Claude" met with poor appreciation from the general public, although it attracted the attention of the Public Prosecutor, who sent down to Hachette's to make a few inquiries about the author, but went no further. When, however, M. Barbey d'Aurevilly, in a critical weekly paper called the "Nain Jaune,"

spitefully alluded to this rather daring novel as “Hachette’s little book,” one of the members of the firm sent for M. Zola, and addressed him thus:

“Look here, M. Zola, you are earning eight pounds a month with us, which is ridiculous for a man of your talent. Why don’t you go into literature altogether? It will bring you wealth and glory.”

Zola had no choice but to take this broad hint, and send in his resignation, which was at once accepted. The Hachettes did not require the services of writers of risky, or, for that matter, any other novels, as clerks; and, besides, as Zola has told us himself, in an interview with my old friend and employer,* the late M. Fernand Xau, Editor of the Paris “Journal,” they thought “La Confession de Claude” a trifle stiff, and objected to their clerks writing books in time which they considered theirs, as they paid for it.

Zola, cast, so to say, adrift, with “Les Contes a Ninon” and “La Confession de Claude” as scant literary baggage, buckled to, and set about “Les Mysteres de Marseille” and “Therese Raquin,” while at the same time contributing art criticisms to the “Evenement” – a series of articles which raised such a storm that painters and sculptors were in the habit of purchasing copies of the paper and tearing it up in the faces of Zola

* He sent me to Hamburg for ten days in 1892 to report on the appalling outbreak of cholera in that city, with the emoluments of ten pounds a day, besides printing several articles from my pen on Parisian topics. – E. V.

and De Villemessant, the owner, whenever they chanced to meet them. Nevertheless it was these articles that first drew attention to Manet, who had hitherto been regarded as a painter of no account, and many of whose pictures now hang in the Luxembourg Gallery.

“Therese Raquin” originally came out under the title of “A Love Story” in a paper called the “Artiste,” edited by that famous art critic and courtier of the Second Empire, Arsene Houssaye, author of “Les Grandes Dames,” as well as of those charming volumes “Hommes et Femmes du 18eme Siecle,” and many other works.

Zola received no more than twenty-four pounds for the serial rights of the novel, and he consented at the insistence of the Editor, who pointed out to him that the periodical was read by the Empress Eugenie, to draw his pen through certain passages, which were reinstated when the story was published in volume form. I may say here that in this translation, I have adopted the views of the late M. Arsene Houssaye; and, if I have allowed the appalling description of the Paris Morgue to stand, it is, first of all, because it constitutes a very important factor in the story; and moreover, it is so graphic, so true to life, as I have seen the place myself, times out of number, that notwithstanding its horror, it really would be a loss to pass it over.

Well, “Therese Raquin” having appeared as “A Love Story” in the “Artiste,” was then published as a book, in 1867, by that same Lacroix as had issued Zola’s preceding efforts in novel

writing. I was living in Paris at the time, and I well recall the yell of disapprobation with which the volume was received by the reviewers. Louis Ulbach, then a writer on the "Figaro," to which Zola also contributed, and who subsequently founded and edited a paper called "La Cloche," when Zola, curiously enough, became one of his critics, made a particularly virulent attack on the novel and its author. Henri de Villemessant, the Editor, authorised Zola to reply to him, with the result that a vehement discussion ensued in print between author and critic, and "Therese Raquin" promptly went into a second edition, to which Zola appended a preface.

I have not thought it necessary to translate this preface, which is a long and rather tedious reply to the reviewers of the day. It will suffice to say, briefly, that the author meets the strictures of his critics by pointing out and insisting on the fact, that he has simply sought to make an analytic study of temperament and not of character.

"I have selected persons," says he, "absolutely swayed by their nerves and blood, deprived of free will, impelled in every action of life, by the fatal lusts of the flesh. Therese and Laurent are human brutes, nothing more. I have sought to follow these brutes, step by step, in the secret labour of their passions, in the impulsion of their instincts, in the cerebral disorder resulting from the excessive strain on their nerves."

EDWARD VIZETELLY SURBITON, 1 December, 1901.

CHAPTER I

At the end of the Rue Guenegaud, coming from the quays, you find the Arcade of the Pont Neuf, a sort of narrow, dark corridor running from the Rue Mazarine to the Rue de Seine. This arcade, at the most, is thirty paces long by two in breadth. It is paved with worn, loose, yellowish tiles which are never free from acrid damp. The square panes of glass forming the roof, are black with filth.

On fine days in the summer, when the streets are burning with heavy sun, whitish light falls from the dirty glazing overhead to drag miserably through the arcade. On nasty days in winter, on foggy mornings, the glass throws nothing but darkness on the sticky tiles – unclean and abominable gloom.

To the left are obscure, low, dumpy shops whence issue puffs of air as cold as if coming from a cellar. Here are dealers in toys, cardboard boxes, second-hand books. The articles displayed in their windows are covered with dust, and owing to the prevailing darkness, can only be perceived indistinctly. The shop fronts, formed of small panes of glass, streak the goods with a peculiar greenish reflex. Beyond, behind the display in the windows, the dim interiors resemble a number of lugubrious cavities animated by fantastic forms.

To the right, along the whole length of the arcade, extends a wall against which the shopkeepers opposite have stuck some

small cupboards. Objects without a name, goods forgotten for twenty years, are spread out there on thin shelves painted a horrible brown colour. A dealer in imitation jewelry has set up shop in one of these cupboards, and there sells fifteen sous rings, delicately set out on a cushion of blue velvet at the bottom of a mahogany box.

Above the glazed cupboards, ascends the roughly plastered black wall, looking as if covered with leprosy, and all seamed with defacements.

The Arcade of the Pont Neuf is not a place for a stroll. You take it to make a short cut, to gain a few minutes. It is traversed by busy people whose sole aim is to go quick and straight before them. You see apprentices there in their working-aprons, work-girls taking home their work, persons of both sexes with parcels under their arms. There are also old men who drag themselves forward in the sad gloaming that falls from the glazed roof, and bands of small children who come to the arcade on leaving school, to make a noise by stamping their feet on the tiles as they run along. Throughout the day a sharp hurried ring of footsteps resounds on the stone with irritating irregularity. Nobody speaks, nobody stays there, all hurry about their business with bent heads, stepping out rapidly, without taking a single glance at the shops. The tradesmen observe with an air of alarm, the passers-by who by a miracle stop before their windows.

The arcade is lit at night by three gas burners, enclosed in heavy square lanterns. These jets of gas, hanging from the

glazed roof whereon they cast spots of fawn-coloured light, shed around them circles of pale glimmer that seem at moments to disappear. The arcade now assumes the aspect of a regular cut-throat alley. Great shadows stretch along the tiles, damp puffs of air enter from the street. Anyone might take the place for a subterranean gallery indistinctly lit-up by three funeral lamps. The tradespeople for all light are contented with the faint rays which the gas burners throw upon their windows. Inside their shops, they merely have a lamp with a shade, which they place at the corner of their counter, and the passer-by can then distinguish what the depths of these holes sheltering night in the daytime, contain. On this blackish line of shop fronts, the windows of a cardboard-box maker are flaming: two schist-lamps pierce the shadow with a couple of yellow flames. And, on the other side of the arcade a candle, stuck in the middle of an argand lamp glass, casts glistening stars into the box of imitation jewelry. The dealer is dozing in her cupboard, with her hands hidden under her shawl.

A few years back, opposite this dealer, stood a shop whose bottle-green woodwork excreted damp by all its cracks. On the signboard, made of a long narrow plank, figured, in black letters the word: MERCERY. And on one of the panes of glass in the door was written, in red, the name of a woman: *Therese Raquin*. To right and left were deep show cases, lined with blue paper.

During the daytime the eye could only distinguish the display of goods, in a soft, obscured light.

On one side were a few linen articles: crimped tulle caps at two and three francs apiece, muslin sleeves and collars: then undervests, stockings, socks, braces. Each article had grown yellow and crumpled, and hung lamentably suspended from a wire hook. The window, from top to bottom, was filled in this manner with whitish bits of clothing, which took a lugubrious aspect in the transparent obscurity. The new caps, of brighter whiteness, formed hollow spots on the blue paper covering the shelves. And the coloured socks hanging on an iron rod, contributed sombre notes to the livid and vague effacement of the muslin.

On the other side, in a narrower show case, were piled up large balls of green wool, white cards of black buttons, boxes of all colours and sizes, hair nets ornamented with steel beads, spread over rounds of bluish paper, fascies of knitting needles, tapestry patterns, bobbins of ribbon, along with a heap of soiled and faded articles, which doubtless had been lying in the same place for five or six years. All the tints had turned dirty grey in this cupboard, rotting with dust and damp.

In summer, towards noon, when the sun scorched the squares and streets with its tawny rays, you could distinguish, behind the caps in the other window, the pale, grave profile of a young woman. This profile issued vaguely from the darkness reigning in the shop. To a low parched forehead was attached a long, narrow, pointed nose; the pale pink lips resembled two thin threads, and the short, nervy chin was attached to the neck by a line that was

supple and fat. The body, lost in the shadow, could not be seen. The profile alone appeared in its olive whiteness, perforated by a large, wide-open, black eye, and as though crushed beneath thick dark hair. This profile remained there for hours, motionless and peaceful, between a couple of caps for women, whereon the damp iron rods had imprinted bands of rust.

At night, when the lamp had been lit, you could see inside the shop which was greater in length than depth. At one end stood a small counter; at the other, a corkscrew staircase afforded communication with the rooms on the first floor. Against the walls were show cases, cupboards, rows of green cardboard boxes. Four chairs and a table completed the furniture. The shop looked bare and frigid; the goods were done up in parcels and put away in corners instead of lying hither and thither in a joyous display of colour.

As a rule two women were seated behind the counter: the young woman with the grave profile, and an old lady who sat dozing with a smile on her countenance. The latter was about sixty; and her fat, placid face looked white in the brightness of the lamp. A great tabby cat, crouching at a corner of the counter, watched her as she slept.

Lower down, on a chair, a man of thirty sat reading or chatting in a subdued voice with the young woman. He was short, delicate, and in manner languid. With his fair hair devoid of lustre, his sparse beard, his face covered with red blotches, he resembled a sickly, spoilt child arrived at manhood.

Shortly before ten o'clock, the old lady awoke. The shop was then closed, and all the family went upstairs to bed. The tabby cat followed the party purring, and rubbing its head against each bar of the banisters.

The lodging above comprised three apartments. The staircase led to a dining-room which also did duty as drawing-room. In a niche on the left stood a porcelain stove; opposite, a sideboard; then chairs were arranged along the walls, and a round table occupied the centre. At the further end a glazed partition concealed a dark kitchen. On each side of the dining-room was a sleeping apartment.

The old lady after kissing her son and daughter-in-law withdrew. The cat went to sleep on a chair in the kitchen. The married couple entered their room, which had a second door opening on a staircase that communicated with the arcade by an obscure narrow passage.

The husband who was always trembling with fever went to bed, while the young woman opened the window to close the shutter blinds. She remained there a few minutes facing the great black wall, which ascends and stretches above the arcade. She cast a vague wandering look upon this wall, and, without a word she, in her turn, went to bed in disdainful indifference.

CHAPTER II

Madame Raquin had formerly been a mercer at Vernon. For close upon five-and-twenty years, she had kept a small shop in that town. A few years after the death of her husband, becoming subject to fits of faintness, she sold her business. Her savings added to the price of this sale placed a capital of 40,000 francs in her hand which she invested so that it brought her in an income of 2,000 francs a year. This sum amply sufficed for her requirements. She led the life of a recluse. Ignoring the poignant joys and cares of this world, she arranged for herself a tranquil existence of peace and happiness.

At an annual rental of 400 francs she took a small house with a garden descending to the edge of the Seine. This enclosed, quiet residence vaguely recalled the cloister. It stood in the centre of large fields, and was approached by a narrow path. The windows of the dwelling opened to the river and to the solitary hillocks on the opposite bank. The good lady, who had passed the half century, shut herself up in this solitary retreat, where along with her son Camille and her niece Therese, she partook of serene joy.

Although Camille was then twenty, his mother continued to spoil him like a little child. She adored him because she had shielded him from death, throughout a tedious childhood of constant suffering. The boy contracted every fever, every imaginable malady, one after the other. Madame Raquin

struggled for fifteen years against these terrible evils, which arrived in rapid succession to tear her son away from her. She vanquished them all by patience, care, and adoration. Camille having grown up, rescued from death, had contracted a shiver from the torture of the repeated shocks he had undergone. Arrested in his growth, he remained short and delicate. His long, thin limbs moved slowly and wearily. But his mother loved him all the more on account of this weakness that arched his back. She observed his thin, pale face with triumphant tenderness when she thought of how she had brought him back to life more than ten times over.

During the brief spaces of repose that his sufferings allowed him, the child attended a commercial school at Vernon. There he learned orthography and arithmetic. His science was limited to the four rules, and a very superficial knowledge of grammar. Later on, he took lessons in writing and bookkeeping. Madame Raquin began to tremble when advised to send her son to college. She knew he would die if separated from her, and she said the books would kill him. So Camille remained ignorant, and this ignorance seemed to increase his weakness.

At eighteen, having nothing to do, bored to death at the delicate attention of his mother, he took a situation as clerk with a linen merchant, where he earned 60 francs a month. Being of a restless nature idleness proved unbearable. He found greater calm and better health in this labour of a brute which kept him bent all day long over invoices, over enormous additions, each

figure of which he patiently added up. At night, broken down with fatigue, without an idea in his head, he enjoyed infinite delight in the doltishness that settled on him. He had to quarrel with his mother to go with the dealer in linen. She wanted to keep him always with her, between a couple of blankets, far from the accidents of life.

But the young man spoke as master. He claimed work as children claim toys, not from a feeling of duty, but by instinct, by a necessity of nature. The tenderness, the devotedness of his mother had instilled into him an egotism that was ferocious. He fancied he loved those who pitied and caressed him; but, in reality, he lived apart, within himself, loving naught but his comfort, seeking by all possible means to increase his enjoyment. When the tender affection of Madame Raquin disgusted him, he plunged with delight into a stupid occupation that saved him from infusions and potions.

In the evening, on his return from the office, he ran to the bank of the Seine with his cousin Therese who was then close upon eighteen. One day, sixteen years previously, while Madame Raquin was still a mercer, her brother Captain Degans brought her a little girl in his arms. He had just arrived from Algeria.

“Here is a child,” said he with a smile, “and you are her aunt. The mother is dead and I don’t know what to do with her. I’ll give her to you.”

The mercer took the child, smiled at her and kissed her rosy cheeks. Although Degans remained a week at Vernon, his

sister barely put a question to him concerning the little girl he had brought her. She understood vaguely that the dear little creature was born at Oran, and that her mother was a woman of the country of great beauty. The Captain, an hour before his departure, handed his sister a certificate of birth in which Therese, acknowledged by him to be his child, bore his name. He rejoined his regiment, and was never seen again at Vernon, being killed a few years later in Africa.

Therese grew up under the fostering care of her aunt, sleeping in the same bed as Camille. She who had an iron constitution, received the treatment of a delicate child, partaking of the same medicine as her cousin, and kept in the warm air of the room occupied by the invalid. For hours she remained crouching over the fire, in thought, watching the flames before her, without lowering her eyelids.

This obligatory life of a convalescent caused her to retire within herself. She got into the habit of talking in a low voice, of moving about noiselessly, of remaining mute and motionless on a chair with expressionless, open eyes. But, when she raised an arm, when she advanced a foot, it was easy to perceive that she possessed feline suppleness, short, potent muscles, and that unmistakable energy and passion slumbered in her soporous frame. Her cousin having fallen down one day in a fainting fit, she abruptly picked him up and carried him – an effort of strength that turned her cheeks scarlet. The cloistered life she led, the debilitating regimen to which she found herself subjected, failed

to weaken her thin, robust form. Only her face took a pale, and even a slightly yellowish tint, making her look almost ugly in the shade. Ever and anon she went to the window, and contemplated the opposite houses on which the sun threw sheets of gold.

When Madame Raquin sold her business, and withdrew to the little place beside the river, Therese experienced secret thrills of joy. Her aunt had so frequently repeated to her: "Don't make a noise; be quiet," that she kept all the impetuosity of her nature carefully concealed within her. She possessed supreme composure, and an apparent tranquillity that masked terrible transports. She still fancied herself in the room of her cousin, beside a dying child, and had the softened movements, the periods of silence, the placidity, the faltering speech of an old woman.

When she saw the garden, the clear river, the vast green hillocks ascending on the horizon, she felt a savage desire to run and shout. She felt her heart thumping fit to burst in her bosom; but not a muscle of her face moved, and she merely smiled when her aunt inquired whether she was pleased with her new home.

Life now became more pleasant for her. She maintained her supple gait, her calm, indifferent countenance, she remained the child brought up in the bed of an invalid; but inwardly she lived a burning, passionate existence. When alone on the grass beside the water, she would lie down flat on her stomach like an animal, her black eyes wide open, her body writhing, ready to spring. And she stayed there for hours, without a thought, scorched by

the sun, delighted at being able to thrust her fingers in the earth. She had the most ridiculous dreams; she looked at the roaring river in defiance, imagining that the water was about to leap on her and attack her. Then she became rigid, preparing for the defence, and angrily inquiring of herself how she could vanquish the torrent.

At night, Therese, appeased and silent, stitched beside her aunt, with a countenance that seemed to be dozing in the gleam that softly glided from beneath the lamp shade. Camille buried in an armchair thought of his additions. A word uttered in a low voice, alone disturbed, at moments, the peacefulness of this drowsy home.

Madame Raquin observed her children with serene benevolence. She had resolved to make them husband and wife. She continued to treat her son as if he were at death's door; and she trembled when she happened to reflect that she would one day die herself, and would leave him alone and suffering. In that contingency, she relied on Therese, saying to herself that the young girl would be a vigilant guardian beside Camille. Her niece with her tranquil manner, and mute devotedness, inspired her with unlimited confidence. She had seen Therese at work, and wished to give her to her son as a guardian angel. This marriage was a solution to the matter, foreseen and settled in her mind.

The children knew for a long time that they were one day to marry. They had grown up with this idea, which had thus become familiar and natural to them. The union was spoken of in the

family as a necessary and positive thing. Madame Raquin had said:

“We will wait until Therese is one-and-twenty.”

And they waited patiently, without excitement, and without a blush.

Camille, whose blood had become impoverished by illness, had remained a little boy in the eyes of his cousin. He kissed her as he kissed his mother, by habit, without losing any of his egotistic tranquillity. He looked upon her as an obliging comrade who helped him to amuse himself, and who, if occasion offered, prepared him an infusion. When playing with her, when he held her in his arms, it was as if he had a boy to deal with. He experienced no thrill, and at these moments the idea had never occurred to him of planting a warm kiss on her lips as she struggled with a nervous laugh to free herself.

The girl also seemed to have remained cold and indifferent. At times her great eyes rested on Camille and fixedly gazed at him with sovereign calm. On such occasions her lips alone made almost imperceptible little motions. Nothing could be read on her expressionless countenance, which an inexorable will always maintained gentle and attentive. Therese became grave when the conversation turned to her marriage, contenting herself with approving all that Madame Raquin said by a sign of the head. Camille went to sleep.

On summer evenings, the two young people ran to the edge of the water. Camille, irritated at the incessant attentions of his

mother, at times broke out in open revolt. He wished to run about and make himself ill, to escape the fondling that disgusted him. He would then drag Therese along with him, provoking her to wrestle, to roll in the grass. One day, having pushed his cousin down, the young girl bounded to her feet with all the savageness of a wild beast, and, with flaming face and bloodshot eyes, fell upon him with clenched fists. Camille in fear sank to the ground.

Months and years passed by, and at length the day fixed for the marriage arrived. Madame Raquin took Therese apart, spoke to her of her father and mother, and related to her the story of her birth. The young girl listened to her aunt, and when she had finished speaking, kissed her, without answering a word.

At night, Therese, instead of going into her own room, which was on the left of the staircase, entered that of her cousin which was on the right. This was all the change that occurred in her mode of life. The following day, when the young couple came downstairs, Camille had still his sickly languidness, his righteous tranquillity of an egotist. Therese still maintained her gentle indifference, and her restrained expression of frightful calmness.

CHAPTER III

A week after the marriage, Camille distinctly told his mother that he intended quitting Vernon to reside in Paris. Madame Raquin protested: she had arranged her mode of life, and would not modify it in any way. Thereupon her son had a nervous attack, and threatened to fall ill, if she did not give way to his whim.

“Never have I opposed you in your plans,” said he; “I married my cousin, I took all the drugs you gave me. It is only natural, now, when I have a desire of my own, that you should be of the same mind. We will move at the end of the month.”

Madame Raquin was unable to sleep all night. The decision Camille had come to, upset her way of living, and, in despair, she sought to arrange another existence for herself and the married couple. Little by little, she recovered calm. She reflected that the young people might have children, and that her small fortune would not then suffice. It was necessary to earn money, to go into business again, to find lucrative occupation for Therese. The next day she had become accustomed to the idea of moving, and had arranged a plan for a new life.

At luncheon she was quite gay.

“This is what we will do,” said she to her children. “I will go to Paris to-morrow. There I will look out for a small mercery business for sale, and Therese and myself will resume selling needles and cotton, which will give us something to do. You,

Camille, will act as you like. You can either stroll about in the sun, or you can find some employment.”

“I shall find employment,” answered the young man.

The truth was that an idiotic ambition had alone impelled Camille to leave Vernon. He wished to find a post in some important administration. He blushed with delight when he fancied he saw himself in the middle of a large office, with lustring elbow sleeves, and a pen behind his ear.

Therese was not consulted: she had always displayed such passive obedience that her aunt and husband no longer took the trouble to ask her opinion. She went where they went, she did what they did, without a complaint, without a reproach, without appearing even to be aware that she changed her place of residence.

Madame Raquin came to Paris, and went straight to the Arcade of the Pont Neuf. An old maid at Vernon had sent her to one of her relatives who in this arcade kept a mercery shop which she desired to get rid of. The former mercer found the shop rather small, and rather dark; but, in passing through Paris, she had been taken aback by the noise in the streets, by the luxuriously dressed windows, and this narrow gallery, this modest shop front, recalled her former place of business which was so peaceful. She could fancy herself again in the provinces, and she drew a long breath thinking that her dear children would be happy in this out-of-the-way corner. The low price asked for the business, caused her to make up her mind. The owner sold it her for

2,000 francs, and the rent of the shop and first floor was only 1,200 francs a year. Madame Raquin, who had close upon 4,000 francs saved up, calculated that she could pay for the business and settle the rent for the first year, without encroaching on her fortune. The salary Camille would be receiving, and the profit on the mercery business would suffice, she thought, to meet the daily expenses; so that she need not touch the income of her funded money, which would capitalise, and go towards providing marriage portions for her grandchildren.

She returned to Vernon beaming with pleasure, relating that she had found a gem, a delightful little place right in the centre of Paris. Little by little, at the end of a few days, in her conversations of an evening, the damp, obscure shop in the arcade became a palace; she pictured it to herself, so far as her memory served her, as convenient, spacious, tranquil, and replete with a thousand inestimable advantages.

“Ah! my dear Therese,” said she, “you will see how happy we shall be in that nook! There are three beautiful rooms upstairs. The arcade is full of people. We will make charming displays. There is no fear of our feeling dull.”

But she did not stop there. All her instinct of a former shopkeeper was awakened. She gave advice to Therese, beforehand, as to buying and selling, and posted her up in all the tricks of small tradespeople. At length, the family quitted the house beside the Seine, and on the evening of the same day, were installed in the Arcade of the Pont Neuf.

When Therese entered the shop, where in future she was to live, it seemed to her that she was descending into the clammy soil of a grave. She felt quite disheartened, and shivered with fear. She looked at the dirty, damp gallery, visited the shop, and ascending to the first floor, walked round each room. These bare apartments, without furniture, looked frightful in their solitude and dilapidation. The young woman could not make a gesture, or utter a word. She was as if frozen. Her aunt and husband having come downstairs, she seated herself on a trunk, her hands rigid, her throat full of sobs, and yet she could not cry.

Madame Raquin, face to face with reality, felt embarrassed, and ashamed of her dreams. She sought to defend her acquisition. She found a remedy for every fresh inconvenience that was discovered, explaining the obscurity by saying the weather was overcast, and concluded by affirming that a sweep-up would suffice to set everything right.

“Bah!” answered Camille, “all this is quite suitable. Besides, we shall only come up here at night. I shall not be home before five or six o’clock. As to you two, you will be together, so you will not be dull.”

The young man would never have consented to inhabit such a den, had he not relied on the comfort of his office. He said to himself that he would be warm all day at his administration, and that, at night, he would go to bed early.

For a whole week, the shop and lodging remained in disorder. Therese had seated herself behind the counter from the first

day, and she did not move from that place. Madame Raquin was astonished at this depressed attitude. She had thought that the young woman would try to adorn her habitation. That she would place flowers at the windows, and ask for new papers, curtains and carpets. When she suggested some repairs, some kind of embellishment, her niece quietly replied:

“What need is there for it? We are very well as we are. There is no necessity for luxury.”

It was Madame Raquin who had to arrange the rooms and tidy up the shop. Therese at last lost patience at seeing the good old lady incessantly turning round and round before her eyes; she engaged a charwoman, and forced her aunt to be seated beside her.

Camille remained a month without finding employment. He lived as little as possible in the shop, preferring to stroll about all day; and he found life so dreadfully dull with nothing to do, that he spoke of returning to Vernon. But he at length obtained a post in the administration of the Orleans Railway, where he earned 100 francs a month. His dream had become realised.

He set out in the morning at eight o'clock. Walking down the Rue Guenegaud, he found himself on the quays. Then, taking short steps with his hands in his pockets, he followed the Seine from the Institut to the Jardin des Plantes. This long journey which he performed twice daily, never wearied him. He watched the water running along, and he stopped to see the rafts of wood descending the river, pass by. He thought of nothing. Frequently

he planted himself before Notre Dame, to contemplate the scaffolding surrounding the cathedral which was then undergoing repair. These huge pieces of timber amused him although he failed to understand why. Then he cast a glance into the Port aux Vins as he went past, and after that counted the cabs coming from the station.

In the evening, quite stupefied, with his head full of some silly story related to his office, he crossed the Jardin des Plantes, and went to have a look at the bears, if he was not in too great a hurry. There he remained half an hour, leaning over the rails at the top of the pit, observing the animals clumsily swaying to and fro. The behaviour of these huge beasts pleased him. He examined them with gaping mouth and rounded eyes, partaking of the joy of an idiot when he perceived them bestir themselves. At last he turned homewards, dragging his feet along, busying himself with the passers-by, with the vehicles, and the shops. As soon as he arrived he dined, and then began reading. He had purchased the works of Buffon, and, every evening, he set himself to peruse twenty to thirty pages, notwithstanding the wearisome nature of the task. He also read in serial, at 10 centimes the number, "The History of the Consulate and Empire" by Thiers, and "The History of the Girondins" by Lamartine, as well as some popular scientific works. He fancied he was labouring at his education. At times, he forced his wife to listen to certain pages, to particular anecdotes, and felt very much astonished that Therese could remain pensive and silent the whole evening,

without being tempted to take up a book. And he thought to himself that his wife must be a woman of very poor intelligence.

Therese thrust books away from her with impatience. She preferred to remain idle, with her eyes fixed, and her thoughts wandering and lost. But she maintained an even, easy temper, exercising all her will to render herself a passive instrument, replete with supreme complaisance and abnegation.

The shop did not do much business. The profit was the same regularly each month. The customers consisted of female workpeople living in the neighbourhood. Every five minutes a young girl came in to purchase a few sous worth of goods. Therese served the people with words that were ever the same, with a smile that appeared mechanically on her lips. Madame Raquin displayed a more unbending, a more gossipy disposition, and, to tell the truth, it was she who attracted and retained the customers.

For three years, days followed days and resembled one another. Camille did not once absent himself from his office. His mother and wife hardly ever left the shop. Therese, residing in damp obscurity, in gloomy, crushing silence, saw life expand before her in all its nakedness, each night bringing the same cold couch, and each morn the same empty day.

CHAPTER IV

One day out of seven, on the Thursday evening, the Raquin family received their friends. They lit a large lamp in the dining-room, and put water on the fire to make tea. There was quite a set out. This particular evening emerged in bold relief from the others. It had become one of the customs of the family, who regarded it in the light of a middle-class orgie full of giddy gaiety. They did not retire to rest until eleven o'clock at night.

At Paris Madame Raquin had found one of her old friends, the commissary of police Michaud, who had held a post at Vernon for twenty years, lodging in the same house as the mercer. A narrow intimacy had thus been established between them; then, when the widow had sold her business to go and reside in the house beside the river, they had little by little lost sight of one another. Michaud left the provinces a few months later, and came to live peacefully in Paris, Rue de Seine, on his pension of 1,500 francs. One rainy day, he met his old friend in the Arcade of the Pont Neuf, and the same evening dined with the family.

The Thursday receptions began in this way: the former commissary of police got into the habit of calling on the Raquins regularly once a week. After a while he came accompanied by his son Olivier, a great fellow of thirty, dry and thin, who had married a very little woman, slow and sickly. This Olivier held the post of head clerk in the section of order and security at

the Prefecture of Police, worth 3,000 francs a year, which made Camille feel particularly jealous. From the first day he made his appearance, Therese detested this cold, rigid individual, who imagined he honoured the shop in the arcade by making a display of his great shrivelled-up frame, and the exhausted condition of his poor little wife.

Camille introduced another guest, an old clerk at the Orleans Railway, named Grivet, who had been twenty years in the service of the company, where he now held the position of head clerk, and earned 2,100 francs a year. It was he who gave out the work in the office where Camille had found employment, and the latter showed him certain respect. Camille, in his day dreams, had said to himself that Grivet would one day die, and that he would perhaps take his place at the end of a decade or so. Grivet was delighted at the welcome Madame Raquin gave him, and he returned every week with perfect regularity. Six months later, his Thursday visit had become, in his way of thinking, a duty: he went to the Arcade of the Pont Neuf, just as he went every morning to his office, that is to say mechanically, and with the instinct of a brute.

From this moment, the gatherings became charming. At seven o'clock Madame Raquin lit the fire, set the lamp in the centre of the table, placed a box of dominoes beside it, and wiped the tea service which was in the sideboard. Precisely at eight o'clock old Michaud and Grivet met before the shop, one coming from the Rue de Seine, and the other from the Rue Mazarine. As soon as

they entered, all the family went up to the first floor. There, in the dining-room, they seated themselves round the table waiting for Olivier Michaud and his wife who always arrived late. When the party was complete, Madame Raquin poured out the tea. Camille emptied the box of dominoes on the oilcloth table cover, and everyone became deeply interested in their hands. Henceforth nothing could be heard but the jingle of dominoes. At the end of each game, the players quarrelled for two or three minutes, then mournful silence was resumed, broken by the sharp clanks of the dominoes.

Therese played with an indifference that irritated Camille. She took Francois, the great tabby cat that Madame Raquin had brought from Vernon, on her lap, caressing it with one hand, whilst she placed her dominoes with the other. These Thursday evenings were a torture to her. Frequently she complained of being unwell, of a bad headache, so as not to play, and remain there doing nothing, and half asleep. An elbow on the table, her cheek resting on the palm of her hand, she watched the guests of her aunt and husband through a sort of yellow, smoky mist coming from the lamp. All these faces exasperated her. She looked from one to the other in profound disgust and secret irritation.

Old Michaud exhibited a pasty countenance, spotted with red blotches, one of those death-like faces of an old man fallen into second childhood; Grivet had the narrow visage, the round eyes, the thin lips of an idiot. Olivier, whose bones were piercing his

cheeks, gravely carried a stiff, insignificant head on a ridiculous body; as to Suzanne, the wife of Olivier, she was quite pale, with expressionless eyes, white lips, and a soft face. And Therese could not find one human being, not one living being among these grotesque and sinister creatures, with whom she was shut up; sometimes she had hallucinations, she imagined herself buried at the bottom of a tomb, in company with mechanical corpses, who, when the strings were pulled, moved their heads, and agitated their legs and arms. The thick atmosphere of the dining-room stifled her; the shivering silence, the yellow gleams of the lamp penetrated her with vague terror, and inexpressible anguish.

Below, to the door of the shop, they had fixed a bell whose sharp tinkle announced the entrance of customers. Therese had her ear on the alert; and when the bell rang, she rapidly ran downstairs quite relieved, delighted at being able to quit the dining-room. She slowly served the purchaser, and when she found herself alone, she sat down behind the counter where she remained as long as possible, dreading going upstairs again, and in the enjoyment of real pleasure at no longer having Grivet and Olivier before her eyes. The damp air of the shop calmed the burning fever of her hands, and she again fell into the customary grave reverie.

But she could not remain like this for long. Camille became angry at her absence. He failed to comprehend how anyone could prefer the shop to the dining-room on a Thursday evening, and

he leant over the banister, to look for his wife.

“What’s the matter?” he would shout. “What are you doing there? Why don’t you come up? Grivet has the devil’s own luck. He has just won again.”

The young woman rose painfully, and ascending to the dining-room resumed her seat opposite old Michaud, whose pendent lips gave heartrending smiles. And, until eleven o’clock, she remained oppressed in her chair, watching Francois whom she held in her arms, so as to avoid seeing the cardboard dolls grimacing around her.

CHAPTER V

One Thursday, Camille, on returning from his office, brought with him a great fellow with square shoulders, whom he pushed in a familiar manner into the shop.

“Mother,” he said to Madame Raquin, pointing to the newcomer, “do you recognise this gentleman?”

The old mercer looked at the strapping blade, seeking among her recollections and finding nothing, while Therese placidly observed the scene.

“What!” resumed Camille, “you don’t recognise Laurent, little Laurent, the son of daddy Laurent who owns those beautiful fields of corn out Jeufosse way. Don’t you remember? I went to school with him; he came to fetch me of a morning on leaving the house of his uncle, who was our neighbour, and you used to give him slices of bread and jam.”

All at once Madame Raquin recollected little Laurent, whom she found very much grown. It was quite ten years since she had seen him. She now did her best to make him forget her lapse of memory in greeting him, by recalling a thousand little incidents of the past, and by adopting a wheedling manner towards him that was quite maternal. Laurent had seated himself. With a peaceful smile on his lips, he replied to the questions addressed to him in a clear voice, casting calm and easy glances around him.

“Just imagine,” said Camille, “this joker has been employed

at the Orleans-Railway-Station for eighteen months, and it was only to-night that we met and recognised one another – the administration is so vast, so important!”

As the young man made this remark, he opened his eyes wider, and pinched his lips, proud to be a humble wheel in such a large machine. Shaking his head, he continued:

“Oh! but he is in a good position. He has studied. He already earns 1,500 francs a year. His father sent him to college. He had read for the bar, and learnt painting. That is so, is it not, Laurent? You’ll dine with us?”

“I am quite willing,” boldly replied the other.

He got rid of his hat and made himself comfortable in the shop, while Madame Raquin ran off to her stewpots. Therese, who had not yet pronounced a word, looked at the new arrival. She had never seen such a man before. Laurent, who was tall and robust, with a florid complexion, astonished her. It was with a feeling akin to admiration, that she contemplated his low forehead planted with coarse black hair, his full cheeks, his red lips, his regular features of sanguineous beauty. For an instant her eyes rested on his neck, a neck that was thick and short, fat and powerful. Then she became lost in the contemplation of his great hands which he kept spread out on his knees: the fingers were square; the clenched fist must be enormous and would fell an ox.

Laurent was a real son of a peasant, rather heavy in gait, with an arched back, with movements that were slow and precise, and

an obstinate tranquil manner. One felt that his apparel concealed round and well-developed muscles, and a body of thick hard flesh. Therese examined him with curiosity, glancing from his fists to his face, and experienced little shivers when her eyes fell on his bull-like neck.

Camille spread out his Buffon volumes, and his serials at 10 centimes the number, to show his friend that he also studied. Then, as if answering an inquiry he had been making of himself for some minutes, he said to Laurent:

“But, surely you must know my wife? Don’t you remember that little cousin who used to play with us at Vernon?”

“I had no difficulty in recognising Madame,” answered Laurent, looking Therese full in the face.

This penetrating glance troubled the young woman, who, nevertheless, gave a forced smile, and after exchanging a few words with Laurent and her husband, hurried away to join her aunt, feeling ill at ease.

As soon as they had seated themselves at table, and commenced the soup, Camille thought it right to be attentive to his friend.

“How is your father?” he inquired.

“Well, I don’t know,” answered Laurent. “We are not on good terms; we ceased corresponding five years ago.”

“Bah!” exclaimed the clerk, astonished at such a monstrosity.

“Yes,” continued the other, “the dear man has ideas of his own. As he is always at law with his neighbours, he sent me to

college, in the fond hope that later on, he would find in me an advocate who would win him all his actions. Oh! daddy Laurent has naught but useful ambitions; he even wants to get something out of his follies.”

“And you wouldn’t be an advocate?” inquired Camille, more and more astonished.

“Faith, no,” answered his friend with a smile. “For a couple of years I pretended to follow the classes, so as to draw the allowance of 1,200 francs which my father made me. I lived with one of my college chums, who is a painter, and I set about painting also. It amused me. The calling is droll, and not at all fatiguing. We smoked and joked all the livelong day.”

The Raquin family opened their eyes in amazement.

“Unfortunately,” continued Laurent, “this could not last. My father found out that I was telling him falsehoods. He stopped my 100 francs a month, and invited me to return and plough the land with him. I then tried to paint pictures on religious subjects which proved bad business. As I could plainly see that I was going to die of hunger, I sent art to the deuce and sought employment. My father will die one of these days, and I am waiting for that event to live and do nothing.”

Laurent spoke in a tranquil tone. In a few words he had just related a characteristic tale that depicted him at full length. In reality he was an idle fellow, with the appetite of a full-blooded man for everything, and very pronounced ideas as to easy and lasting employment. The only ambition of this great powerful

frame was to do nothing, to grovel in idleness and satiation from hour to hour. He wanted to eat well, sleep well, to abundantly satisfy his passions, without moving from his place, without running the risk of the slightest fatigue.

The profession of advocate had terrified him, and he shuddered at the idea of tilling the soil. He had plunged into art, hoping to find therein a calling suitable to an idle man. The paint-brush struck him as being an instrument light to handle, and he fancied success easy. His dream was a life of cheap sensuality, a beautiful existence full of hours, of repose on divans, of victuals and intoxication.

The dream lasted so long as daddy Laurent sent the crown pieces. But when the young man, who was already thirty, perceived the wolf at the door, he began to reflect. Face to face with privations, he felt himself a coward. He would not have accepted a day without bread, for the utmost glory art could bestow. As he had said himself, he sent art to the deuce, as soon as he recognised that it would never suffice to satisfy his numerous requirements. His first efforts had been below mediocrity; his peasant eyes caught a clumsy, slovenly view of nature; his muddy, badly drawn, grimacing pictures, defied all criticism.

But he did not seem to have an over-dose of vanity for an artist; he was not in dire despair when he had to put aside his brushes. All he really regretted was the vast studio of his college chum, where he had been voluptuously grovelling for four or five

years. He also regretted the women who came to pose there. Nevertheless he found himself at ease in his position as clerk; he lived very well in a brutish fashion, and he was fond of this daily task, which did not fatigue him, and soothed his mind. Still one thing irritated him: the food at the eighteen sous ordinaries failed to appease the gluttonous appetite of his stomach.

As Camille listened to his friend, he contemplated him with all the astonishment of a simpleton. This feeble man was dreaming, in a childish manner, of this studio life which his friend had been alluding to, and he questioned Laurent on the subject.

“So,” said he, “there were lady models who posed before you in the nude?”

“Oh! yes,” answered Laurent with a smile, and looking at Therese, who had turned deadly pale.

“You must have thought that very funny,” continued Camille, laughing like a child. “It would have made me feel most awkward. I expect you were quite scandalised the first time it happened.”

Laurent had spread out one of his great hands and was attentively looking at the palm. His fingers gave slight twitches, and his cheeks became flushed.

“The first time,” he answered, as if speaking to himself, “I fancy I thought it quite natural. This devilish art is exceedingly amusing, only it does not bring in a sou. I had a red-haired girl as model who was superb, firm white flesh, gorgeous bust, hips as wide as.”

Laurent, raising his head, saw Therese mute and motionless

opposite, gazing at him with ardent fixedness. Her dull black eyes seemed like two fathomless holes, and through her parted lips could be perceived the rosy tint of the inside of her mouth. She seemed as if overpowered by what she heard, and lost in thought. She continued listening.

Laurent looked from Therese to Camille, and the former painter restrained a smile. He completed his phrase by a broad voluptuous gesture, which the young woman followed with her eyes. They were at dessert, and Madame Raquin had just run downstairs to serve a customer.

When the cloth was removed Laurent, who for some minutes had been thoughtful, turned to Camille.

“You know,” he blurted out, “I must paint your portrait.”

This idea delighted Madame Raquin and her son, but Therese remained silent.

“It is summer-time,” resumed Laurent, “and as we leave the office at four o’clock, I can come here, and let you give me a sitting for a couple of hours in the evening. The picture will be finished in a week.”

“That will be fine,” answered Camille, flushed with joy. “You shall dine with us. I will have my hair curled, and put on my black frock coat.”

Eight o’clock struck. Grivet and Michaud made their entry. Olivier and Suzanne arrived behind them.

When Camille introduced his friend to the company, Grivet pinched his lips. He detested Laurent whose salary, according to

his idea, had risen far too rapidly. Besides, the introduction of a new-comer was quite an important matter, and the guests of the Raquins could not receive an individual unknown to them, without some display of coldness.

Laurent behaved very amicably. He grasped the situation, and did his best to please the company, so as to make himself acceptable to them at once. He related anecdotes, enlivened the party by his merry laughter, and even won the friendship of Grivet.

That evening Therese made no attempt to go down to the shop. She remained seated on her chair until eleven o'clock, playing and talking, avoiding the eyes of Laurent, who for that matter did not trouble himself about her. The sanguineous temperament of this strapping fellow, his full voice and jovial laughter, troubled the young woman and threw her into a sort of nervous anguish.

CHAPTER VI

Henceforth, Laurent called almost every evening on the Raquins. He lived in the Rue Saint-Victor, opposite the Port aux Vins, where he rented a small furnished room at 18 francs a month. This attic, pierced at the top by a lift-up window, measured barely nine square yards, and Laurent was in the habit of going home as late as possible at night. Previous to his meeting with Camille, the state of his purse not permitting him to idle away his time in the cafes, he loitered at the cheap eating-houses where he took his dinner, smoking his pipe and sipping his coffee and brandy which cost him three sous. Then he slowly gained the Rue Saint-Victor, sauntering along the quays, where he seated himself on the benches, in mild weather.

The shop in the Arcade of the Pont Neuf became a charming retreat, warm and quiet, where he found amicable conversation and attention. He saved the three sous his coffee and brandy cost him, and gluttonously swallowed the excellent tea prepared by Madame Raquin. He remained there until ten o'clock, dozing and digesting as if he were at home; and before taking his departure, assisted Camille to put up the shutters and close the shop for the night.

One evening, he came with his easel and box of colours. He was to commence the portrait of Camille on the morrow. A canvas was purchased, minute preparations made, and the artist

at last took the work in hand in the room occupied by the married couple, where Laurent said the light was the best.

He took three evenings to draw the head. He carefully trailed the charcoal over the canvas with short, sorry strokes, his rigid, cold drawing recalling in a grotesque fashion that of the primitive masters. He copied the face of Camille with a hesitating hand, as a pupil copies an academical figure, with a clumsy exactitude that conveyed a scowl to the face. On the fourth day, he placed tiny little dabs of colour on his palette, and commenced painting with the point of the brush; he then dotted the canvas with small dirty spots, and made short strokes altogether as if he had been using a pencil.

At the end of each sitting, Madame Raquin and Camille were in ecstasies. But Laurent said they must wait, that the resemblance would soon come.

Since the portrait had been commenced, Therese no longer quitted the room, which had been transformed into a studio. Leaving her aunt alone behind the counter, she ran upstairs at the least pretext, and forgot herself watching Laurent paint.

Still grave and oppressed, paler and more silent, she sat down and observed the labour of the brushes. But this sight did not seem to amuse her very much. She came to the spot, as though attracted by some power, and she remained, as if riveted there. Laurent at times turned round, with a smile, inquiring whether the portrait pleased her. But she barely answered, a shiver ran through her frame, and she resumed her meditative trance.

Laurent, returning at night to the Rue Saint-Victor, reasoned with himself at length, discussing in his mind, whether he should become the lover of Therese, or not.

“Here is a little woman,” said he to himself, “who will be my sweetheart whenever I choose. She is always there, behind my back, examining, measuring me, summing me up. She trembles. She has a strange face that is mute and yet impassioned. What a miserable creature that Camille is, to be sure.”

And Laurent inwardly laughed as he thought of his pale, thin friend. Then he resumed:

“She is bored to death in that shop. I go there, because I have nowhere else to go to, otherwise they would not often catch me in the Arcade of the Pont Neuf. It is damp and sad. A woman must be wearied to death there. I please her, I am sure of it; then, why not me rather than another?”

He stopped. Self-conceit was getting the better of him. Absorbed in thought, he watched the Seine running by.

“Anyhow, come what may,” he exclaimed, “I shall kiss her at the first opportunity. I bet she falls at once into my arms.”

As he resumed his walk, he was seized with indecision.

“But she is ugly,” thought he. “She has a long nose, and a big mouth. Besides, I have not the least love for her. I shall perhaps get myself into trouble. The matter requires reflection.”

Laurent, who was very prudent, turned these thoughts over in his head for a whole week. He calculated all the possible inconveniences of an intrigue with Therese, and only decided

to attempt the adventure, when he felt convinced that it could be attended by no evil consequences. Therese would have every interest to conceal their intimacy, and he could get rid of her whenever he pleased. Even admitting that Camille discovered everything, and got angry, he would knock him down, if he became spiteful. From every point of view that matter appeared to Laurent easy and engaging.

Henceforth he enjoyed gentle quietude, waiting for the hour to strike. He had made up his mind to act boldly at the first opportunity. In the future he saw comfortable evenings, with all the Raquins contributing to his enjoyment: Therese giving him her love, Madame Raquin wheedling him like a mother, and Camille chatting with him so that he might not feel too dull, at night, in the shop.

The portrait was almost completed, but the opportunity he desired did not occur. Therese, depressed and anxious, continued to remain in the room. But so did Camille, and Laurent was in despair at being unable to get rid of him. Nevertheless, the time came when he found himself obliged to mention that the portrait would be finished on the morrow, and Madame Raquin thereupon announced that they would celebrate the completion of the work of the artist by dining together.

The next day, when Laurent had given the canvas the last touch, all the family assembled to go into raptures over the striking resemblance. The portrait was vile, a dirty grey colour with large violescent patches. Laurent could not use even the

brightest colours, without making them dull and muddy. In spite of himself he had exaggerated the wan complexion of his model, and the countenance of Camille resembled the greenish visage of a person who had met death by drowning. The grimacing drawing threw the features into convulsions, thus rendering the sinister resemblance all the more striking. But Camille was delighted; he declared that he had the appearance of a person of distinction on the canvas.

When he had thoroughly admired his own face, he declared he would go and fetch a couple of bottles of champagne. Madame Raquin went down to the shop, and the artist was alone with Therese.

The young woman had remained seated, gazing vaguely in front of her. Laurent hesitated. He examined the portrait, and played with his brushes. There was not much time to lose. Camille might come back, and the opportunity would perhaps not occur again. The painter abruptly turned round, and found himself face to face with Therese.

They contemplated one another for a few seconds. Then, with a violent movement, Laurent bent down, and pressed the young woman to him. Throwing back her head he crushed her mouth beneath his lips. She made a savage, angry effort at revolt, and, then all at once gave in. They exchanged not a word. The act was silent and brutal.

CHAPTER VII

The two sweethearts from the commencement found their intrigue necessary, inevitable and quite natural. At their first interview they conversed familiarly, kissing one another without embarrassment, and without a blush, as if their intimacy had dated back several years. They lived quite at ease in their new situation, with a tranquillity and an independence that were perfect.

They made their appointments. Therese being unable to go out, it was arranged that Laurent should come to see her. In a clear, firm voice the young woman explained to him the plan she had conceived. The interview would take place in the nuptial chamber. The sweetheart would pass by the passage which ran into the arcade, and Therese would open the door on the staircase to him. During this time, Camille would be at his office, and Madame Raquin below, in the shop. This was a daring arrangement that ought to succeed.

Laurent accepted. There was a sort of brutal temerity in his prudence, the temerity of a man with big fists. Choosing a pretext, he obtained permission from his chief to absent himself for a couple of hours, and hastened to the Arcade of the Pont Neuf.

The dealer in imitation jewelry was seated just opposite the door of the passage, and he had to wait until she was busy,

until some young work-girl came to purchase a ring or a brooch made of brass. Then, rapidly entering the passage, he ascended the narrow, dark staircase, leaning against the walls which were clammy with damp. He stumbled against the stone steps, and each time he did so, he felt a red-hot iron piercing his chest. A door opened, and on the threshold, in the midst of a gleam of white light he perceived Therese, who closing the door after him, threw her arms about his neck.

Laurent was astonished to find his sweetheart handsome. He had never seen her before as she appeared to him then. Therese, supple and strong, pressed him in her arms, flinging her head backward, while on her visage coursed ardent rays of light and passionate smiles. This face seemed as if transfigured, with its moist lips and sparkling eyes. It now had a fond caressing look. It radiated. She was beautiful with the strong beauty born of passionate abandon.

When Laurent parted from her, after his initial visit, he staggered like a drunken man, and the next day, on recovering his cunning prudent calm, he asked himself whether he should return to this young woman whose kisses gave him the fever. First of all he positively decided to keep to himself. Then he had a cowardly feeling. He sought to forget, to avoid seeing Therese, and yet she always seemed to be there, implacably extending her arms. The physical suffering that this spectacle caused him became intolerable.

He gave way. He arranged another meeting, and returned to

the Arcade of the Pont Neuf.

From that day forth, Therese entered into his life. He did not yet accept her, although he bore with her. He had his hours of terror, his moments of prudence, and, altogether this intrigue caused him disagreeable agitation. But his discomfort and his fears disappeared. The meetings continued and multiplied.

Therese experienced no hesitation. She went straight where her passion urged her to go. This woman whom circumstances had bowed down, and who had at length drawn herself up erect, now revealed all her being and explained her life.

“Oh! if you only knew,” said she, “how I have suffered. I was brought up in the tepid damp room of an invalid. I slept in the same bed as Camille. At night I got as far away from him as I could, to avoid the sickly odour of his body. He was naughty and obstinate. He would not take his physic unless I shared it with him. To please my aunt I was obliged to swallow a dose of every drug. I don’t know how it is I have survived. They made me ugly. They robbed me of the only thing I possessed, and it is impossible for you to love me as I love you.”

She broke off and wept, and after kissing Laurent, continued with bitter hatred:

“I do not wish them any harm. They brought me up, they received me, and shielded me from misery. But I should have preferred abandonment to their hospitality. I had a burning desire for the open air. When quite young, my dream was to rove barefooted along the dusty roads, holding out my hand for

charity, living like a gipsy. I have been told that my mother was a daughter of the chief of a tribe in Africa. I have often thought of her, and I understood that I belonged to her by blood and instinct. I should have liked to have never parted from her, and to have crossed the sand slung at her back.

“Ah! what a childhood! I still feel disgust and rebellion, when I recall the long days I passed in the room where Camille was at death’s door. I sat bent over the fire, stupidly watching the infusions simmer, and feeling my limbs growing stiff. And I could not move. My aunt scolded me if I made a noise. Later on, I tasted profound joy in the little house beside the river; but I was already half feeble, I could barely walk, and when I tried to run I fell down. Then they buried me alive in this vile shop.”

After a pause, she resumed:

“You will hardly credit how bad they have made me. They have turned me into a liar and a hypocrite. They have stifled me with their middle-class gentleness, and I can hardly understand how it is that there is still blood in my veins. I have lowered my eyes, and given myself a mournful, idiotic face like theirs. I have led their deathlike life. When you saw me I looked like a blockhead, did I not? I was grave, overwhelmed, brutalised. I no longer had any hope. I thought of flinging myself into the Seine.

“But previous to this depression, what nights of anger I had. Down there at Vernon, in my frigid room, I bit my pillow to stifle my cries. I beat myself, taxed myself with cowardice. My blood was on the boil, and I would have lacerated my body. On two

occasions, I wanted to run away, to go straight before me, towards the sun; but my courage failed. They had turned me into a docile brute with their tame benevolence and sickly tenderness. Then I lied, I always lied. I remained there quite gentle, quite silent, dreaming of striking and biting.”

After a silence, she continued:

“I do not know why I consented to marry Camille. I did not protest, from a feeling of a sort of disdainful indifference. I pitied the child. When I played with him, I felt my fingers sink into the flesh of his limbs as into damp clay. I took him because my aunt offered him to me, and because I never intended to place any restraint on my actions on his account.

“I found my husband just the same little suffering boy whose bed I had shared when I was six years old. He was just as frail, just as plaintive, and he still had that insipid odour of a sick child that had been so repugnant to me previously. I am relating all this so that you may not be jealous. I was seized with a sort of disgust. I remembered the physic I had drunk. I got as far away from him as the bed would allow, and I passed terrible nights. But you, you – ”

Therese drew herself up, bending backward, her fingers imprisoned in the massive hands of Laurent, gazing at his broad shoulders, and enormous neck.

“You, I love you,” she continued. “I loved you from the day Camille pushed you into the shop. You have perhaps no esteem for me, because I gave way at once. Truly, I know not how it

happened. I am proud. I am passionate. I would have liked to have beaten you, the first day, when you kissed me. I do not know how it was I loved you; I hated you rather. The sight of you irritated me, and made me suffer. When you were there, my nerves were strained fit to snap. My head became quite empty. I was ready to commit a crime.

“Oh! how I suffered! And I sought this suffering. I waited for you to arrive. I loitered round your chair, so as to move in your breath, to drag my clothes over yours. It seemed as though your blood cast puffs of heat on me as I passed, and it was this sort of burning cloud in which you were enveloped, that attracted me, and detained me beside you in spite of my secret revolt. You remember when you were painting here: a fatal power attracted me to your side, and I breathed your air with cruel delight. I know I seemed to be begging for kisses, I felt ashamed of my bondage, I felt I should fall, if you were to touch me. But I gave way to my cowardice, I shivered with cold, waiting until you chose to take me in your arms.”

When Therese ceased speaking, she was quivering, as though proud at being avenged. In this bare and chilly room were enacted scenes of burning lust, sinister in their brutality.

On her part Therese seemed to revel in daring. The only precaution she would take when expecting her lover was to tell her aunt she was going upstairs to rest. But then, when he was there she never bothered about avoiding noise, walking about and talking. At first this terrified Laurent.

“For God’s sake,” he whispered, “don’t make so much noise. Madame Raquin will hear.”

Therese would laugh. “Who cares, you are always so worried. She is at her counter and won’t leave. She is too afraid of being robbed. Besides, you can hide.”

Laurent’s passion had not yet stifled his native peasant caution, but soon he grew used to the risks of these meetings, only a few yards from the old woman.

One day, fearing her niece was ill, Madame Raquin climbed the stairs. Therese never bothered to bolt the bedroom door.

At the sound of the woman’s heavy step on the wooden stairs, Laurent became frantic. Therese laughed as she saw him searching for his waistcoat and hat. She grabbed his arm and pushed him down at the foot of the bed. With perfect self-possession she whispered:

“Stay there. Don’t move.”

She threw all his clothes that were lying about over him and covered them with a white petticoat she had taken off. Without losing her calm, she lay down, half-naked, with her hair loose.

When Madame Raquin quietly opened the door and tiptoed to the bed the younger woman pretended to be asleep. Laurent, under all the clothes was in a panic.

“Therese,” asked the old lady with some concern, “are you all right, my dear?”

Therese, opening her eyes and yawning, answered that she had a terrible migraine. She begged her aunt to let her sleep some

more. The old lady left the room as quietly as she had entered it.

“So you see,” Therese said triumphantly, “there is no reason to worry. These people are not in love. They are blind.”

At other times Therese seemed quite mad, wandering in her mind. She would see the cat, sitting motionless and dignified, looking at them. “Look at Francois,” she said to Laurent. “You’d think he understands and is planning to tell Camille everything to-night. He knows a thing or two about us. Wouldn’t it be funny if one day, in the shop, he just started talking.” This idea was delightful to Therese but Laurent felt a shudder run through him as he looked at the cat’s big green eyes. Therese’s hold on him was not total and he was scared. He got up and put the cat out of the room.

CHAPTER VIII

Laurent was perfectly happy of an evening, in the shop. He generally returned from the office with Camille. Madame Raquin had formed quite a motherly affection for him. She knew he was short of cash, and indifferently nourished, that he slept in a garret; and she had told him, once for all, that a seat would always be kept for him at their table. She liked this young fellow with that expansive feeling that old women display for people who come from their own part of the country, bringing with them memories of the past.

The young man took full advantage of this hospitality. Before going to dinner, after leaving the office for the night, he and Camille went for a stroll on the quays. Both found satisfaction in this intimacy. They dawdled along, chatting with one another, which prevented them feeling dull, and after a time decided to go and taste the soup prepared by Madame Raquin. Laurent opened the shop door as if he were master of the house, seated himself astride a chair, smoking and expectorating as though at home.

The presence of Therese did not embarrass him in the least. He treated the young woman with friendly familiarity, paying her commonplace compliments without a line of his face becoming disturbed. Camille laughed, and, as his wife confined herself to answering his friend in monosyllables, he firmly believed they detested one another. One day he even reproached Therese with

what he termed her coldness for Laurent.

Laurent had made a correct guess: he had become the sweetheart of the woman, the friend of the husband, the spoilt child of the mother. Never had he enjoyed such a capital time. His position in the family struck him as quite natural. He was on the most friendly terms with Camille, in regard to whom he felt neither anger nor remorse. He was so sure of being prudent and calm that he did not even keep watch on his gestures and speech. The egotism he displayed in the enjoyment of his good fortune, shielded him from any fault. All that kept him from kissing Therese in the shop was the fear that he would not be allowed to come any more. He would not have cared a bit about hurting Camille and his mother.

Therese, who was of a more nervous and quivering temperament, was compelled to play a part, and she played it to perfection, thanks to the clever hypocrisy she had acquired in her bringing up. For nearly fifteen years, she had been lying, stifling her fever, exerting an implacable will to appear gloomy and half asleep. It cost her nothing to keep this mask on her face, which gave her an appearance of icy frigidity.

When Laurent entered the shop, he found her glum, her nose longer, her lips thinner. She was ugly, cross, unapproachable. Nevertheless, she did not exaggerate her effects, but only played her former part, without awakening attention by greater harshness. She experienced extraordinary pleasure in deceiving Camille and Madame Raquin. She was aware she was doing

wrong, and at times she felt a ferocious desire to rise from table and smother Laurent with kisses, just to show her husband and aunt that she was not a fool, and that she had a sweetheart.

At moments, she felt giddy with joy; good actress as she proved herself, she could not on such occasions refrain from singing, when her sweetheart did not happen to be there, and she had no fear of betraying herself. These sudden outbursts of gaiety charmed Madame Raquin, who taxed her niece with being too serious. The young woman, moreover, decked the window of her room with pots of flowers, and then had new paper hung in the apartment. After this she wanted a carpet, curtains and rosewood furniture.

The nature of the circumstances seemed to have made this woman for this man, and to have thrust one towards the other. The two together, the woman nervous and hypocritical, the man sanguineous and leading the life of a brute, formed a powerful couple allied. The one completed the other, and they mutually protected themselves. At night, at table, in the pale light of the lamp, one felt the strength of their union, at the sight of the heavy, smiling face of Laurent, opposite the mute, impenetrable mask of Therese.

Those evenings were pleasant and calm. In the silence, in the transparent shadow and cool atmosphere, arose friendly conversation. The family and their guest sat close together round the table. After the dessert, they chatted about a thousand trifles of the day, about incidents that had occurred the day before,

about their hopes for the morrow.

Camille liked Laurent, as much as he was capable of liking anybody, after the fashion of a contented egotist, and Laurent seemed to show him equal attachment. Between them there was an exchange of kind sentences, of obliging gestures, and thoughtful attentions. Madame Raquin, with placid countenance, contributed her peacefulness to the tranquillity of the scene, which resembled a gathering of old friends who knew one another to the heart, and who confidently relied on the faith of their friendship.

Therese, motionless, peaceful like the others, observed this joy, this smiling depression of these people of the middle class, and in her heart there was savage laughter; all her being jeered, but her face maintained its frigid rigidity. Ah! how she deceived these worthy people, and how delighted she was to deceive them with such triumphant impudence. Her sweetheart, at this moment, was like a person unknown to her, a comrade of her husband, a sort of simpleton and interloper concerning whom she had no need to concern herself. This atrocious comedy, these duperies of life, this comparison between the burning kisses in the daytime, and the indifference played at night, gave new warmth to the blood of the young woman.

When by chance Madame Raquin and Camille went downstairs, Therese bounded from her chair, to silently, and with brutal energy, press her lips to those of her sweetheart, remaining thus breathless and choking until she heard the stairs

creak. Then, she briskly seated herself again, and resumed her glum grimace, while Laurent calmly continued the interrupted conversation with Camille. It was like a rapid, blinding flash of lightning in a leaden sky.

On Thursday, the evening became a little more animated. Laurent, although bored to death, nevertheless made a point of not missing one of these gatherings. As a measure of prudence he desired to be known and esteemed by the friends of Camille. So he had to lend an ear to the idle talk of Grivet and old Michaud. The latter always related the same tales of robbery and murder, while Grivet spoke at the same time about his clerks, his chiefs, and his administration, until the young man sought refuge beside Olivier and Suzanne, whose stupidity seemed less wearisome. But he soon asked for the dominoes.

It was on Thursday evening that Laurent and Therese arranged the day and hour of their meeting. In the bustle attending the departure, when Madame Raquin and Camille accompanied the guest to the door of the arcade, the young woman approached Laurent, to whom she spoke in an undertone, as she pressed his hand. At times, when all had turned their backs, she kissed him, out of a sort of bravado.

The life of shocks and appeasements, lasted eight months. The sweethearts lived in complete beatitude; Therese no longer felt dull, and was perfectly contented. Laurent satiated, pampered, fatter than before, had but one fear, that of seeing this delightful existence come to an end.

CHAPTER IX

One afternoon, as Laurent was leaving his office to run and meet Therese who was expecting him, his chief gave him to understand that in future he was forbidden to absent himself. He had taken too many holidays already, and the authorities had decided to dismiss him if he again went out in office hours.

Riveted to his chair, he remained in despair until eventide. He had to earn his living, and dared not lose his place. At night the wrathful countenance of Therese was a torture to him, and he was unable to find an opportunity to explain to her how it was he had broken his word. At length, as Camille was putting up the shutters, he briskly approached the young woman, to murmur in an undertone:

“We shall be unable to see one another any more. My chief refuses to give me permission to go out.”

Camille came into the shop, and Laurent was obliged to withdraw without giving any further information, leaving Therese under the disagreeable influence of this abrupt and unpleasant announcement. Exasperated at anyone daring to interfere with her delectation, she passed a sleepless night, arranging extravagant plans for a meeting with her sweetheart. The following Thursday, she spoke with Laurent for a minute at the most. Their anxiety was all the keener as they did not know where to meet for the purpose of consulting and coming

to an understanding. The young woman, on this occasion, gave her sweetheart another appointment which for the second time he failed to keep, and she then had but one fixed idea – to see him at any cost.

For a fortnight Laurent was unable to speak to Therese alone, and he then felt how necessary this woman had become to his existence. Far from experiencing any uneasiness, as formerly, at the kisses which his ladylove showered on him, he now sought her embraces with the obstinacy of a famished animal. A sanguineous passion had lurked in his muscles, and now that his sweetheart was taken from him, this passion burst out in blind violence. He was madly in love. This thriving brutish nature seemed unconscious in everything. He obeyed his instincts, permitting the will of his organism to lead him.

A year before, he would have burst into laughter, had he been told he would become the slave of a woman, to the point of risking his tranquillity. The hidden forces of lust that had brought about this result had been secretly proceeding within him, to end by casting him, bound hand and foot, into the arms of Therese. At this hour, he was in dread lest he should omit to be prudent. He no longer dared go of an evening to the shop in the Arcade of the Pont Neuf lest he should commit some folly. He no longer belonged to himself. His ladylove, with her feline suppleness, her nervous flexibility, had glided, little by little, into each fibre of his body. This woman was as necessary to his life as eating and drinking.

He would certainly have committed some folly, had he not received a letter from Therese, asking him to remain at home the following evening. His sweetheart promised him to call about eight o'clock.

On quitting the office, he got rid of Camille by saying he was tired, and should go to bed at once. Therese, after dinner, also played her part. She mentioned a customer who had moved without paying her, and acting the indignant creditor who would listen to nothing, declared that she intended calling on her debtor with the view of asking for payment of the money that was due. The customer now lived at Batignolles. Madame Raquin and Camille considered this a long way to go, and thought it doubtful whether the journey would have a satisfactory result; but they expressed no surprise, and allowed Therese to set out on her errand in all tranquillity.

The young woman ran to the Port aux Vins, gliding over the slippery pavement, and knocking up against the passers-by, in her hurry to reach her destination. Beads of perspiration covered her face, and her hands were burning. Anyone might have taken her for a drunken woman. She rapidly ascended the staircase of the hotel, and on reaching the sixth floor, out of breath, and with wandering eyes, she perceived Laurent, who was leaning over the banister awaiting her.

She entered the garret, which was so small that she could barely turn round in it, and tearing off her hat with one hand leant against the bedstead in a faint. Through the lift-up window

in the roof, which was wide open, the freshness of the evening fell upon the burning couch.

The couple remained some time in this wretched little room, as though at the bottom of a hole. All at once, Therese heard a clock in the neighbourhood strike ten. She felt as if she would have liked to have been deaf. Nevertheless, she looked for her hat which she fastened to her hair with a long pin, and then seating herself, slowly murmured:

“I must go.”

Laurent fell on his knees before her, and took her hands.

“Good-bye, till we see each other again,” said she, without moving.

“No, not till we see each other again!” he exclaimed, “that is too indefinite. When will you come again?”

She looked him full in the face.

“Do you wish me to be frank with you?” she inquired. “Well, then, to tell you the truth, I think I shall come no more. I have no pretext, and I cannot invent one.”

“Then we must say farewell,” he remarked.

“No, I will not do that!” she answered.

She pronounced these words in terrified anger. Then she added more gently, without knowing what she was saying, and without moving from her chair:

“I am going.”

Laurent reflected. He was thinking of Camille.

“I wish him no harm,” said he at length, without pronouncing

the name: "but really he is too much in our way. Couldn't you get rid of him, send him on a journey somewhere, a long way off?"

"Ah! yes, send him on a journey!" resumed the young woman, nodding her head. "And do you imagine a man like that would consent to travel? There is only one journey, that from which you never return. But he will bury us all. People who are at their last breath, never die."

Then came a silence which was broken by Laurent who remarked:

"I had a day dream. Camille met with an accident and died, and I became your husband. Do you understand?"

"Yes, yes," answered Therese, shuddering.

Then, abruptly bending over the face of Laurent, she smothered it with kisses, and bursting into sobs, uttered these disjointed sentences amidst her tears:

"Don't talk like that, for if you do, I shall lack the strength to leave you. I shall remain here. Give me courage rather. Tell me we shall see one another again. You have need of me, have you not? Well, one of these days we shall find a way to live together."

"Then come back, come back to-morrow," said Laurent.

"But I cannot return," she answered. "I have told you. I have no pretext."

She wrung her hands and continued:

"Oh! I do not fear the scandal. If you like, when I get back, I will tell Camille you are my sweetheart, and return here. I am trembling for you. I do not wish to disturb your life. I want to

make you happy.”

The prudent instincts of the young man were awakened.

“You are right,” said he. “We must not behave like children. Ah! if your husband were to die!”

“If my husband were to die,” slowly repeated Therese.

“We would marry,” he continued, “and have nothing more to fear. What a nice, gentle life it would be!”

The young woman stood up erect. Her cheeks were pale, and she looked at her sweetheart with a clouded brow, while her lips were twitching.

“Sometimes people die,” she murmured at last. “Only it is dangerous for those who survive.”

Laurent did not reply.

“You see,” she continued, “all the methods that are known are bad.”

“You misunderstood me,” said he quietly. “I am not a fool, I wish to love you in peace. I was thinking that accidents happen daily, that a foot may slip, a tile may fall. You understand. In the latter event, the wind alone is guilty.”

He spoke in a strange voice. Then he smiled, and added in a caressing tone:

“Never mind, keep quiet. We will love one another fondly, and live happily. As you are unable to come here, I will arrange matters. Should we remain a few months without seeing one another, do not forget me, and bear in mind that I am labouring for your felicity.”

As Therese opened the door to leave, he seized her in his arms.

“You are mine, are you not?” he continued. “You swear to belong to me, at any hour, when I choose.”

“Yes!” exclaimed the young woman. “I am yours, do as you please with me.”

For a moment they remained locked together and mute. Then Therese tore herself roughly away, and, without turning her head, quitted the garret and went downstairs. Laurent listened to the sound of her footsteps fading away.

When he heard the last of them, he returned to his wretched room, and went to bed. The sheets were still warm. Without closing the window, he lay on his back, his arms bare, his hands open, exposed to the fresh air. And he reflected, with his eyes on the dark blue square that the window framed in the sky.

He turned the same idea over in his head until daybreak. Previous to the visit of Therese, the idea of murdering Camille had not occurred to him. He had spoken of the death of this man, urged to do so by the facts, irritated at the thought that he would be unable to meet his sweetheart any more. And it was thus that a new corner of his unconscious nature came to be revealed.

Now that he was more calm, alone in the middle of the peaceful night, he studied the murder. The idea of death, blurred out in despair between a couple of kisses, returned implacable and keen. Racked by insomnia, and unnerved by the visit of Therese, he calculated the disadvantages and the advantages of his becoming an assassin.

All his interests urged him to commit the crime. He said to himself that as his father, the Jeufosse peasant, could not make up his mind to die, he would perhaps have to remain a clerk another ten years, eating in cheap restaurants, and living in a garret. This idea exasperated him. On the other hand, if Camille were dead, he would marry Therese, he would inherit from Madame Raquin, resign his clerkship, and saunter about in the sun. Then, he took pleasure in dreaming of this life of idleness; he saw himself with nothing to do, eating and sleeping, patiently awaiting the death of his father. And when the reality arose in the middle of his dream, he ran up against Camille, and clenched his fists to knock him down. Laurent desired Therese; he wanted her for himself alone, to have her always within reach. If he failed to make the husband disappear, the woman would escape him. She had said so: she could not return. He would have eloped with her, carried her off somewhere, but then both would die of hunger. He risked less in killing the husband. There would be no scandal. He would simply push a man away to take his place. In his brutal logic of a peasant, he found this method excellent and natural. His innate prudence even advised this rapid expedient.

He grovelled on his bed, in perspiration, flat on his stomach, with his face against the pillow, and he remained there breathless, stifling, seeing lines of fire pass along his closed eyelids. He asked himself how he would kill Camille. Then, unable to breathe any more, he turned round at a bound to resume his position on his back, and with his eyes wide open, received full

in the face, the puffs of cold air from the window, seeking in the stars, in the bluish square of sky, a piece of advice about murder, a plan of assassination.

And he found nothing. As he had told his ladylove, he was neither a child nor a fool. He wanted neither a dagger nor poison. What he sought was a subtle crime, one that could be accomplished without danger; a sort of sinister suffocation, without cries and without terror, a simple disappearance. Passion might well stir him, and urge him forward; all his being imperiously insisted on prudence. He was too cowardly, too voluptuous to risk his tranquillity. If he killed, it would be for a calm and happy life.

Little by little slumber overcame him. Fatigued and appeased, he sank into a sort of gentle and uncertain torpor. As he fell asleep, he decided he would await a favourable opportunity, and his thoughts, fleeting further and further away, lulled him to rest with the murmur:

“I will kill him, I will kill him.”

Five minutes later, he was at rest, breathing with serene regularity.

Therese returned home at eleven o'clock, with a burning head, and her thoughts strained, reaching the Arcade of the Pont Neuf unconscious of the road she had taken. It seemed to her that she had just come downstairs from her visit to Laurent, so full were her ears of the words she had recently heard. She found Madame Raquin and Camille anxious and attentive; but she answered their

questions sharply, saying she had been on a fools' errand, and had waited an hour on the pavement for an omnibus.

When she got into bed, she found the sheets cold and damp. Her limbs, which were still burning, shuddered with repugnance. Camille soon fell asleep, and for a long time Therese watched his wan face reposing idiotically on the pillow, with his mouth wide open. Therese drew away from her husband. She felt a desire to drive her clenched fist into that mouth.

CHAPTER X

More than three weeks passed. Laurent came to the shop every evening, looking weary and unwell. A light bluish circle surrounded his eyes, and his lips were becoming pale and chapped. Otherwise, he still maintained his obtuse tranquillity, he looked Camille in the face, and showed him the same frank friendship. Madame Raquin pampered the friend of the family the more, now that she saw him giving way to a sort of low fever.

Therese had resumed her mute, glum countenance and manner. She was more motionless, more impenetrable, more peaceful than ever. She did not seem to trouble herself in the least about Laurent. She barely looked at him, rarely exchanged a word with him, treating him with perfect indifference. Madame Raquin, who in her goodness of heart, felt pained at this attitude, sometimes said to the young man:

“Do not pay attention to the manner of my niece, I know her; her face appears cold, but her heart is warm with tenderness and devotedness.”

The two sweethearts had no more meetings. Since the evening in the Rue Saint-Victor they had not met alone. At night, when they found themselves face to face, placid in appearance and like strangers to one another, storms of passion and dismay passed beneath the calm flesh of their countenance. And while with Therese, there were outbursts of fury, base ideas, and cruel

jeers, with Laurent there were sombre brutalities, and poignant indecisions. Neither dared search to the bottom of their beings, to the bottom of that cloudy fever that filled their brains with a sort of thick and acrid vapour.

When they could press the hands of one another behind a door, without speaking, they did so, fit to crush them, in a short rough clasp. They would have liked, mutually, to have carried off strips of their flesh clinging to their fingers. They had naught but this pressure of hands to appease their feelings. They put all their souls into them, and asked for nothing more from one another. They waited.

One Thursday evening, before sitting down to the game of dominoes, the guests of the Raquin family had a chat, as usual. A favourite subject of conversation was afforded by the experiences of old Michaud who was plied with questions respecting the strange and sinister adventures with which he must have been connected in the discharge of his former functions. Then Grivet and Camille listened to the stories of the commissary with the affrighted and gaping countenances of small children listening to “Blue Beard” or “Tom Thumb.” These tales terrified and amused them.

On this particular Thursday, Michaud, who had just given an account of a horrible murder, the details of which had made his audience shudder, added as he wagged his head:

“And a great deal never comes out at all. How many crimes remain undiscovered! How many murderers escape the justice

of man!”

“What!” exclaimed Grivet astonished, “you think there are foul creatures like that walking about the streets, people who have murdered and are not arrested?”

Olivier smiled with an air of disdain.

“My dear sir,” he answered in his dictatorial tone, “if they are not arrested it is because no one is aware that they have committed a murder.”

This reasoning did not appear to convince Grivet, and Camille came to his assistance.

“I am of the opinion of M. Grivet,” said he, with silly importance. “I should like to believe that the police do their duty, and that I never brush against a murderer on the pavement.”

Olivier considered this remark a personal attack.

“Certainly the police do their duty,” he exclaimed in a vexed tone. “Still we cannot do what is impossible. There are wretches who have studied crime at Satan’s own school; they would escape the Divinity Himself. Isn’t that so, father?”

“Yes, yes,” confirmed old Michaud. “Thus, while I was at Vernon – you perhaps remember the incident, Madame Raquin – a wagoner was murdered on the highway. The corpse was found cut in pieces, at the bottom of a ditch. The authorities were never able to lay hands on the culprit. He is perhaps still living at this hour. Maybe he is our neighbour, and perhaps M. Grivet will meet him on his way home.”

Grivet turned pale as a sheet. He dared not look round. He

fancied the murderer of the wagoner was behind him. But for that matter, he was delighted to feel afraid.

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.