HONORÉ DE BALZAC

A DISTINGUISHED PROVINCIAL AT PARIS

Оноре де Бальзак
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Содержание

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PART I

Mme. de Bargeton and Lucien de Rubempre had left Angouleme behind, and were traveling together upon the road to Paris. Not one of the party who made that journey alluded to it afterwards; but it may be believed that an infatuated youth who had looked forward to the delights of an elopement, must have found the continual presence of Gentil, the man-servant, and Albertine, the maid, not a little irksome on the way. Lucien, traveling post for the first time in his life, was horrified to see pretty nearly the whole sum on which he meant to live in Paris for a twelvemonth dropped along the road. Like other men who combine great intellectual powers with the charming simplicity of childhood, he openly expressed his surprise at the new and wonderful things which he saw, and thereby made a mistake. A man should study a woman very carefully before he allows her to see his thoughts and emotions as they arise in him. A woman, whose nature is large as her heart is tender, can smile upon childishness, and make allowances; but let her have ever so small

a spice of vanity herself, and she cannot forgive childishness, or littleness, or vanity in her lover. Many a woman is so extravagant a worshiper that she must always see the god in her idol; but there are yet others who love a man for his sake and not for their own, and adore his failings with his greater qualities.

Lucien had not guessed as yet that Mme. de Bargeton's love was grafted on pride. He made another mistake when he failed to discern the meaning of certain smiles which flitted over Louise's lips from time to time; and instead of keeping himself to himself, he indulged in the playfulness of the young rat emerging from his hole for the first time.

The travelers were set down before daybreak at the sign of the Gaillard-Bois in the Rue de l'Echelle, both so tired out with the journey that Louise went straight to bed and slept, first bidding Lucien to engage the room immediately overhead. Lucien slept on till four o'clock in the afternoon, when he was awakened by Mme. de Bargeton's servant, and learning the hour, made a hasty toilet and hurried downstairs.

Louise was sitting in the shabby inn sitting-room. Hotel accommodation is a blot on the civilization of Paris; for with all its pretensions to elegance, the city as yet does not boast a single inn where a well-to-do traveler can find the surroundings to which he is accustomed at home. To Lucien's just-awakened, sleep-dimmed eyes, Louise was hardly recognizable in this cheerless, sunless room, with the shabby window-curtains, the comfortless polished floor, the hideous furniture bought second-

hand, or much the worse for wear.

Some people no longer look the same when detached from the background of faces, objects, and surroundings which serve as a setting, without which, indeed, they seem to lose something of their intrinsic worth. Personality demands its appropriate atmosphere to bring out its values, just as the figures in Flemish interiors need the arrangement of light and shade in which they are placed by the painter's genius if they are to live for us. This is especially true of provincials. Mme. de Bargeton, moreover, looked more thoughtful and dignified than was necessary now, when no barriers stood between her and happiness.

Gentil and Albertine waited upon them, and while they were present Lucien could not complain. The dinner, sent in from a neighboring restaurant, fell far below the provincial average, both in quantity and quality; the essential goodness of country fare was wanting, and in point of quantity the portions were cut with so strict an eye to business that they savored of short commons. In such small matters Paris does not show its best side to travelers of moderate fortune. Lucien waited till the meal was over. Some change had come over Louise, he thought, but he could not explain it.

And a change had, in fact, taken place. Events had occurred while he slept; for reflection is an event in our inner history, and Mme. de Bargeton had been reflecting.

About two o'clock that afternoon, Sixte du Chatelet made his appearance in the Rue de l'Echelle and asked for Albertine. The

sleeping damsel was roused, and to her he expressed his wish to speak with her mistress. Mme. de Bargeton had scarcely time to dress before he came back again. The unaccountable apparition of M. du Chatelet roused the lady's curiosity, for she had kept her journey a profound secret, as she thought. At three o'clock the visitor was admitted.

"I have risked a reprimand from headquarters to follow you," he said, as he greeted her; "I foresaw coming events. But if I lose my post for it, YOU, at any rate, shall not be lost."

"What do you mean?" exclaimed Mme. de Bargeton.

"I can see plainly that you love Lucien," he continued, with an air of tender resignation. "You must love indeed if *you* can act thus recklessly, and disregard the conventions which you know so well. Dear adored Nais, can you really imagine that Mme. d'Espard's salon, or any other salon in Paris, will not be closed to you as soon as it is known that you have fled from Angouleme, as it were, with a young man, especially after the duel between M. de Bargeton and M. de Chandour? The fact that your husband has gone to the Escarbas looks like a separation. Under such circumstances a gentleman fights first and afterwards leaves his wife at liberty. By all means, give M. de Rubempre your love and your countenance; do just as you please; but you must not live in the same house. If anybody here in Paris knew that you had traveled together, the whole world that you have a mind to see would point the finger at you.

"And, Nais, do not make these sacrifices for a young man

whom you have as yet compared with no one else; he, on his side, has been put to no proof; he may forsake you for some Parisienne, better able, as he may fancy, to further his ambitions. I mean no harm to the man you love, but you will permit me to put your own interests before his, and to beg you to study him, to be fully aware of the serious nature of this step that you are taking. And, then, if you find all doors closed against you, and that none of the women call upon you, make sure at least that you will feel no regret for all that you have renounced for him. Be very certain first that he for whom you will have given up so much will always be worthy of your sacrifices and appreciate them.

"Just now," continued Chatelet, "Mme. d'Espard is the more prudish and particular because she herself is separated from her husband, nobody knows why. The Navarreins, the Lenoncourts, the Blamont-Chauvrys, and the rest of the relations have all rallied round her; the most strait-laced women are seen at her house, and receive her with respect, and the Marquis d'Espard has been put in the wrong. The first call that you pay will make it clear to you that I am right; indeed, knowing Paris as I do, I can tell you beforehand that you will no sooner enter the Marquise's salon than you will be in despair lest she should find out that you are staying at the Gaillard-Bois with an apothecary's son, though he may wish to be called M. de Rubempre.

"You will have rivals here, women far more astute and shrewd than Amelie; they will not fail to discover who you are, where

you are, where you come from, and all that you are doing. You have counted upon your incognito, I see, but you are one of those women for whom an incognito is out of the question. You will meet Angouleme at every turn. There are the deputies from the Charente coming up for the opening of the session; there is the Commandant in Paris on leave. Why, the first man or woman from Angouleme who happens to see you would cut your career short in a strange fashion. You would simply be Lucien's mistress.

"If you need me at any time, I am staying with the Receiver-General in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honore, two steps away from Mme. d'Espard's. I am sufficiently acquainted with the Marechale de Carigliano, Mme. de Serizy, and the President of the Council to introduce you to those houses; but you will meet so many people at Mme. d'Espard's, that you are not likely to require me. So far from wishing to gain admittance to this set or that, every one will be longing to make your acquaintance."

Chatelet talked on; Mme. de Bargeton made no interruption. She was struck with his perspicacity. The queen of Angouleme had, in fact, counted upon preserving her incognito.

"You are right, my dear friend," she said at length; "but what am I to do?"

"Allow me to find suitable furnished lodgings for you," suggested Chatelet; "that way of living is less expensive than an inn. You will have a home of your own; and, if you will take my advice, you will sleep in your new rooms this very night."

"But how did you know my address?" queried she.

"Your traveling carriage is easily recognized; and, besides, I was following you. At Sevres your postilion told mine that he had brought you here. Will you permit me to act as your harbinger? I will write as soon as I have found lodgings."

"Very well, do so," said she. And in those seemingly insignificant words, all was said. The Baron du Chatelet had spoken the language of worldly wisdom to a woman of the world. He had made his appearance before her in faultless dress, a neat cab was waiting for him at the door; and Mme. de Bargeton, standing by the window thinking over the position, chanced to see the elderly dandy drive away.

A few moments later Lucien appeared, half awake and hastily dressed. He was handsome, it is true; but his clothes, his last year's nankeen trousers, and his shabby tight jacket were ridiculous. Put Antinous or the Apollo Belvedere himself into a water-carrier's blouse, and how shall you recognize the godlike creature of the Greek or Roman chisel? The eyes note and compare before the heart has time to revise the swift involuntary judgment; and the contrast between Lucien and Chatelet was so abrupt that it could not fail to strike Louise.

Towards six o'clock that evening, when dinner was over, Mme. de Bargeton beckoned Lucien to sit beside her on the shabby sofa, covered with a flowered chintz – a yellow pattern on a red ground.

"Lucien mine," she said, "don't you think that if we have both of us done a foolish thing, suicidal for both our interests, it would

only be common sense to set matters right? We ought not to live together in Paris, dear boy, and we must not allow anyone to suspect that we traveled together. Your career depends so much upon my position that I ought to do nothing to spoil it. So, to-night, I am going to remove into lodgings near by. But you will stay on here, we can see each other every day, and nobody can say a word against us."

And Louise explained conventions to Lucien, who opened wide eyes. He had still to learn that when a woman thinks better of her folly, she thinks better of her love; but one thing he understood – he saw that he was no longer the Lucien of Angouleme. Louise talked of herself, of *her* interests, *her* reputation, and of the world; and, to veil her egoism, she tried to make him believe that this was all on his account. He had no claim upon Louise thus suddenly transformed into Mme. de Bargeton, and, more serious still, he had no power over her. He could not keep back the tears that filled his eyes.

"If I am your glory," cried the poet, "you are yet more to me – you are my one hope, my whole future rests with you. I thought that if you meant to make my successes yours, you would surely make my adversity yours also, and here we are going to part already."

"You are judging my conduct," said she; "you do not love me."

Lucien looked at her with such a dolorous expression, that in spite of herself, she said:

"Darling, I will stay if you like. We shall both be ruined, we

shall have no one to come to our aid. But when we are both equally wretched, and every one shuts their door upon us both, when failure (for we must look all possibilities in the face), when failure drives us back to the Escarbas, then remember, love, that I foresaw the end, and that at the first I proposed that we should make your way by conforming to established rules."

"Louise," he cried, with his arms around her, "you are wise; you frighten me! Remember that I am a child, that I have given myself up entirely to your dear will. I myself should have preferred to overcome obstacles and win my way among men by the power that is in me; but if I can reach the goal sooner through your aid, I shall be very glad to owe all my success to you. Forgive me! You mean so much to me that I cannot help fearing all kinds of things; and, for me, parting means that desertion is at hand, and desertion is death."

"But, my dear boy, the world's demands are soon satisfied," returned she. "You must sleep here; that is all. All day long you will be with me, and no one can say a word."

A few kisses set Lucien's mind completely at rest. An hour later Gentil brought in a note from Chatelet. He told Mme. de Bargeton that he had found lodgings for her in the Rue Nueve-de-Luxembourg. Mme. de Bargeton informed herself of the exact place, and found that it was not very far from the Rue de l'Echelle. "We shall be neighbors," she told Lucien.

Two hours afterwards Louise stepped into the hired carriage sent by Chatelet for the removal to the new rooms. The

apartments were of the class that upholsterers furnish and let to wealthy deputies and persons of consideration on a short visit to Paris – showy and uncomfortable. It was eleven o'clock when Lucien returned to his inn, having seen nothing as yet of Paris except the part of the Rue Saint-Honore which lies between the Rue Neuve-de-Luxembourg and the Rue de l'Echelle. He lay down in his miserable little room, and could not help comparing it in his own mind with Louise's sumptuous apartments.

Just as he came away the Baron du Chatelet came in, gorgeously arrayed in evening dress, fresh from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to inquire whether Mme. de Bargeton was satisfied with all that he had done on her behalf. Nais was uneasy. The splendor was alarming to her mind. Provincial life had reacted upon her; she was painfully conscientious over her accounts, and economical to a degree that is looked upon as miserly in Paris. She had brought with her twenty thousand francs in the shape of a draft on the Receiver-General, considering that the sum would more than cover the expenses of four years in Paris; she was afraid already lest she should not have enough, and should run into debt; and now Chatelet told her that her rooms would only cost six hundred francs per month.

"A mere trifle," added he, seeing that Nais was startled. "For five hundred francs a month you can have a carriage from a livery stable; fifty louis in all. You need only think of your dress. A woman moving in good society could not well do less; and if you mean to obtain a Receiver-General's appointment for M.

de Bargeton, or a post in the Household, you ought not to look poverty-stricken. Here, in Paris, they only give to the rich. It is most fortunate that you brought Gentil to go out with you, and Albertine for your own woman, for servants are enough to ruin you here. But with your introductions you will seldom be home to a meal."

Mme. de Bargeton and the Baron de Chatelet chatted about Paris. Chatelet gave her all the news of the day, the myriad nothings that you are bound to know, under penalty of being a nobody. Before very long the Baron also gave advice as to shopping, recommending Herbault for toques and Juliette for hats and bonnets; he added the address of a fashionable dressmaker to supersede Victorine. In short, he made the lady see the necessity of rubbing off Angouleme. Then he took his leave after a final flash of happy inspiration.

"I expect I shall have a box at one of the theatres to-morrow," he remarked carelessly; "I will call for you and M. de Rubempre, for you must allow me to do the honors of Paris."

"There is more generosity in his character than I thought," said Mme. de Bargeton to herself when Lucien was included in the invitation.

In the month of June ministers are often puzzled to know what to do with boxes at the theatre; ministerialist deputies and their constituents are busy in their vineyards or harvest fields, and their more exacting acquaintances are in the country or traveling about; so it comes to pass that the best seats are filled at this

season with heterogeneous theatre-goers, never seen at any other time of year, and the house is apt to look as if it were tapestried with very shabby material. Chatelet had thought already that this was his opportunity of giving Nais the amusements which provincials crave most eagerly, and that with very little expense.

The next morning, the very first morning in Paris, Lucien went to the Rue Nueve-de-Luxembourg and found that Louise had gone out. She had gone to make some indispensable purchases, to take counsel of the mighty and illustrious authorities in the matter of the feminine toilette, pointed out to her by Chatelet, for she had written to tell the Marquise d'Espard of her arrival. Mme. de Bargeton possessed the self-confidence born of a long habit of rule, but she was exceedingly afraid of appearing to be provincial. She had tact enough to know how greatly the relations of women among themselves depend upon first impressions; and though she felt that she was equal to taking her place at once in such a distinguished set as Mme. de d'Espard's, she felt also that she stood in need of goodwill at her first entrance into society, and was resolved, in the first place, that she would leave nothing undone to secure success. So she felt boundlessly thankful to Chatelet for pointing out these ways of putting herself in harmony with the fashionable world.

A singular chance so ordered it that the Marquise was delighted to find an opportunity of being useful to a connection of her husband's family. The Marquis d'Espard had withdrawn himself without apparent reason from society, and ceased to take

any active interest in affairs, political or domestic. His wife, thus left mistress of her actions, felt the need of the support of public opinion, and was glad to take the Marquis' place and give her countenance to one of her husband's relations. She meant to be ostentatiously gracious, so as to put her husband more evidently in the wrong; and that very day she wrote, "Mme. de Bargeton *nee* Negrepelisse" a charming billet, one of the prettily worded compositions of which time alone can discover the emptiness.

"She was delighted that circumstances had brought a relative, of whom she had heard, whose acquaintance she had desired to make, into closer connection with her family. Friendships in Paris were not so solid but that she longed to find one more to love on earth; and if this might not be, there would only be one more illusion to bury with the rest. She put herself entirely at her cousin's disposal. She would have called upon her if indisposition had not kept her to the house, and she felt that she lay already under obligations to the cousin who had thought of her."

Lucien, meanwhile, taking his first ramble along the Rue de la Paix and through the Boulevards, like all newcomers, was much more interested in the things that he saw than in the people he met. The general effect of Paris is wholly engrossing at first. The wealth in the shop windows, the high houses, the streams of traffic, the contrast everywhere between the last extremes of luxury and want struck him more than anything else. In his astonishment at the crowds of strange faces, the man of imaginative temper felt as if he himself had shrunk, as it were,

immensely. A man of any consequence in his native place, where he cannot go out but he meets with some recognition of his importance at every step, does not readily accustom himself to the sudden and total extinction of his consequence. You are somebody in your own country, in Paris you are nobody. The transition between the first state and the last should be made gradually, for the too abrupt fall is something like annihilation. Paris could not fail to be an appalling wilderness for a young poet, who looked for an echo for all his sentiments, a confidant for all his thoughts, a soul to share his least sensations.

Lucien had not gone in search of his luggage and his best blue coat; and painfully conscious of the shabbiness, to say no worse, of his clothes, he went to Mme. de Bargeton, feeling that she must have returned. He found the Baron du Chatelet, who carried them both off to dinner at the *Rocher de Cancale*. Lucien's head was dizzy with the whirl of Paris, the Baron was in the carriage, he could say nothing to Louise, but he squeezed her hand, and she gave a warm response to the mute confidence.

After dinner Chatelet took his guests to the Vaudeville. Lucien, in his heart, was not over well pleased to see Chatelet again, and cursed the chance that had brought the Baron to Paris. The Baron said that ambition had brought him to town; he had hopes of an appointment as secretary-general to a government department, and meant to take a seat in the Council of State as Master of Requests. He had come to Paris to ask for fulfilment of the promises that had been given him, for a man of his

stamp could not be expected to remain a comptroller all his life; he would rather be nothing at all, and offer himself for election as deputy, or re-enter diplomacy. Chatelet grew visibly taller; Lucien dimly began to recognize in this elderly beau the superiority of the man of the world who knows Paris; and, most of all, he felt ashamed to owe his evening's amusement to his rival. And while the poet looked ill at ease and awkward Her Royal Highness' ex-secretary was quite in his element. He smiled at his rival's hesitations, at his astonishment, at the questions he put, at the little mistakes which the latter ignorantly made, much as an old salt laughs at an apprentice who has not found his sea legs; but Lucien's pleasure at seeing a play for the first time in Paris outweighed the annoyance of these small humiliations.

That evening marked an epoch in Lucien's career; he put away a good many of his ideas as to provincial life in the course of it. His horizon widened; society assumed different proportions. There were fair Parisiennes in fresh and elegant toilettes all about him; Mme. de Bargeton's costume, tolerably ambitious though it was, looked dowdy by comparison; the material, like the fashion and the color, was out of date. That way of arranging her hair, so bewitching in Angouleme, looked frightfully ugly here among the daintily devised coiffures which he saw in every direction.

"Will she always look like that?" said he to himself, ignorant that the morning had been spent in preparing a transformation.

In the provinces comparison and choice are out of the question; when a face has grown familiar it comes to possess

a certain beauty that is taken for granted. But transport the pretty woman of the provinces to Paris, and no one takes the slightest notice of her; her prettiness is of the comparative degree illustrated by the saying that among the blind the one-eyed are kings. Lucien's eyes were now busy comparing Mme. de Bargeton with other women, just as she herself had contrasted him with Chatelet on the previous day. And Mme. de Bargeton, on her part, permitted herself some strange reflections upon her lover. The poet cut a poor figure notwithstanding his singular beauty. The sleeves of his jacket were too short; with his ill-cut country gloves and a waistcoat too scanty for him, he looked prodigiously ridiculous, compared with the young men in the balcony – "positively pitiable," thought Mme. de Bargeton. Chatelet, interested in her without presumption, taking care of her in a manner that revealed a profound passion; Chatelet, elegant, and as much at home as an actor treading the familiar boards of his theatre, in two days had recovered all the ground lost in the past six months.

Ordinary people will not admit that our sentiments towards each other can totally change in a moment, and yet certain it is, that two lovers not seldom fly apart even more quickly than they drew together. In Mme. de Bargeton and in Lucien a process of disenchantment was at work; Paris was the cause. Life had widened out before the poet's eyes, as society came to wear a new aspect for Louise. Nothing but an accident now was needed to sever finally the bond that united them; nor was that blow, so

terrible for Lucien, very long delayed.

Mme. de Bargeton set Lucien down at his inn, and drove home with Chatelet, to the intense vexation of the luckless lover.

"What will they say about me?" he wondered, as he climbed the stairs to his dismal room.

"That poor fellow is uncommonly dull," said Chatelet, with a smile, when the door was closed.

"That is the way with those who have a world of thoughts in their heart and brain. Men who have so much in them to give out in great works long dreamed of, profess a certain contempt for conversation, a commerce in which the intellect spends itself in small change," returned the haughty Negrepelisse. She still had courage to defend Lucien, but less for Lucien's sake than for her own.

"I grant it you willingly," replied the Baron, "but we live with human beings and not with books. There, dear Nais! I see how it is, there is nothing between you yet, and I am delighted that it is so. If you decide to bring an interest of a kind hitherto lacking into your life, let it not be this so-called genius, I implore you. How if you have made a mistake? Suppose that in a few days' time, when you have compared him with men whom you will meet, men of real ability, men who have distinguished themselves in good earnest; suppose that you should discover, dear and fair siren, that it is no lyre-bearer that you have borne into port on your dazzling shoulders, but a little ape, with no manners and no capacity; a presumptuous fool who may be a wit

in L'Houmeau, but turns out a very ordinary specimen of a young man in Paris? And, after all, volumes of verse come out every week here, the worst of them better than all M. Chardon's poetry put together. For pity's sake, wait and compare! To-morrow, Friday, is Opera night," he continued as the carriage turned into the Rue Nueve-de-Luxembourg; "Mme. d'Espard has the box of the First Gentlemen of the Chamber, and will take you, no doubt. I shall go to Mme. de Serizy's box to behold you in your glory. They are giving *Les Danaides*."

"Good-bye," said she.

Next morning Mme. de Bargeton tried to arrange a suitable toilette in which to call on her cousin, Mme. d'Espard. The weather was rather chilly. Looking through the dowdy wardrobe from Angouleme, she found nothing better than a certain green velvet gown, trimmed fantastically enough. Lucien, for his part, felt that he must go at once for his celebrated blue best coat; he felt aghast at the thought of his tight jacket, and determined to be well dressed, lest he should meet the Marquise d'Espard or receive a sudden summons to her house. He must have his luggage at once, so he took a cab, and in two hours' time spent three or four francs, matter for much subsequent reflection on the scale of the cost of living in Paris. Having dressed himself in his best, such as it was, he went to the Rue Nueve-de-Luxembourg, and on the doorstep encountered Gentil in company with a gorgeously be-feathered chasseur.

"I was just going round to you, sir, madame gave me a line

for you," said Gentil, ignorant of Parisian forms of respect, and accustomed to homely provincial ways. The chasseur took the poet for a servant.

Lucien tore open the note, and learned that Mme. de Bargeton had gone to spend the day with the Marquise d'Espard. She was going to the Opera in the evening, but she told Lucien to be there to meet her. Her cousin permitted her to give him a seat in her box. The Marquise d'Espard was delighted to procure the young poet that pleasure.

"Then she loves me! my fears were all nonsense!" said Lucien to himself. "She is going to present me to her cousin this very evening."

He jumped for joy. He would spend the day that separated him from the happy evening as joyously as might be. He dashed out in the direction of the Tuileries, dreaming of walking there until it was time to dine at Very's. And now, behold Lucien frisking and skipping, light of foot because light of heart, on his way to the Terrasse des Feuillants to take a look at the people of quality on promenade there. Pretty women walk arm-in-arm with men of fashion, their adorers, couples greet each other with a glance as they pass; how different it is from the terrace at Beaulieu! How far finer the birds on this perch than the Angouleme species! It is as if you beheld all the colors that glow in the plumage of the feathered tribes of India and America, instead of the sober European families.

Those were two wretched hours that Lucien spent in the

Garden of the Tuileries. A violent revulsion swept through him, and he sat in judgment upon himself.

In the first place, not a single one of these gilded youths wore a swallow-tail coat. The few exceptions, one or two poor wretches, a clerk here and there, an annuitant from the Marais, could be ruled out on the score of age; and hard upon the discovery of a distinction between morning and evening dress, the poet's quick sensibility and keen eyes saw likewise that his shabby old clothes were not fit to be seen; the defects in his coat branded that garment as ridiculous; the cut was old-fashioned, the color was the wrong shade of blue, the collar outrageously ungainly, the coat tails, by dint of long wear, overlapped each other, the buttons were reddened, and there were fatal white lines along the seams. Then his waistcoat was too short, and so grotesquely provincial, that he hastily buttoned his coat over it; and, finally, no man of any pretension to fashion wore nankeen trousers. Well-dressed men wore charming fancy materials or immaculate white, and every one had straps to his trousers, while the shrunken hems of Lucien's nether garments manifested a violent antipathy for the heels of boots which they wedded with obvious reluctance. Lucien wore a white cravat with embroidered ends; his sister had seen that M. du Hautoy and M. de Chandour wore such things, and hastened to make similar ones for her brother. Here, no one appeared to wear white cravats of a morning except a few grave seniors, elderly capitalists, and austere public functionaries, until, in the street on the other side of the railings, Lucien noticed

a grocer's boy walking along the Rue de Rivoli with a basket on his head; him the man of Angouleme detected in the act of sporting a cravat, with both ends adorned by the handiwork of some adored shop-girl. The sight was a stab to Lucien's breast; penetrating straight to that organ as yet undefined, the seat of our sensibility, the region whither, since sentiment has had any existence, the sons of men carry their hands in any excess of joy or anguish. Do not accuse this chronicle of puerility. The rich, to be sure, never having experienced sufferings of this kind, may think them incredibly petty and small; but the agonies of less fortunate mortals are as well worth our attention as crises and vicissitudes in the lives of the mighty and privileged ones of earth. Is not the pain equally great for either? Suffering exalts all things. And, after all, suppose that we change the terms and for a suit of clothes, more or less fine, put instead a ribbon, or a star, or a title; have not brilliant careers been tormented by reason of such apparent trifles as these? Add, moreover, that for those people who must seem to have that which they have not, the question of clothes is of enormous importance, and not unfrequently the appearance of possession is the shortest road to possession at a later day.

A cold sweat broke out over Lucien as he bethought himself that to-night he must make his first appearance before the Marquise in this dress – the Marquise d'Espard, relative of a First Gentleman of the Bedchamber, a woman whose house was frequented by the most illustrious among illustrious men in every

field.

"I look like an apothecary's son, a regular shop-drudge," he raged inwardly, watching the youth of the Faubourg Saint-Germain pass under his eyes; graceful, spruce, fashionably dressed, with a certain uniformity of air, a sameness due to a fineness of contour, and a certain dignity of carriage and expression; though, at the same time, each one differed from the rest in the setting by which he had chosen to bring his personal characteristics into prominence. Each one made the most of his personal advantages. Young men in Paris understand the art of presenting themselves quite as well as women. Lucien had inherited from his mother the invaluable physical distinction of race, but the metal was still in the ore, and not set free by the craftsman's hand.

His hair was badly cut. Instead of holding himself upright with an elastic corset, he felt that he was cooped up inside a hideous shirt-collar; he hung his dejected head without resistance on the part of a limp cravat. What woman could guess that a handsome foot was hidden by the clumsy boots which he had brought from Angouleme? What young man could envy him his graceful figure, disguised by the shapeless blue sack which hitherto he had mistakenly believed to be a coat? What bewitching studs he saw on those dazzling white shirt fronts, his own looked dingy by comparison; and how marvelously all these elegant persons were gloved, his own gloves were only fit for a policeman! Yonder was a youth toying with a cane exquisitely mounted; there, another

with dainty gold studs in his wristbands. Yet another was twisting a charming riding-whip while he talked with a woman; there were specks of mud on the ample folds of his white trousers, he wore clanking spurs and a tight-fitting jacket, evidently he was about to mount one of the two horses held by a hop-o'-my-thumb of a tiger. A young man who went past drew a watch no thicker than a five-franc piece from his pocket, and looked at it with the air of a person who is either too early or too late for an appointment.

Lucien, seeing these petty trifles, hitherto unimagined, became aware of a whole world of indispensable superfluities, and shuddered to think of the enormous capital needed by a professional pretty fellow! The more he admired these gay and careless beings, the more conscious he grew of his own outlandishness; he knew that he looked like a man who has no idea of the direction of the streets, who stands close to the Palais Royal and cannot find it, and asks his way to the Louvre of a passer-by, who tells him, "Here you are." Lucien saw a great gulf fixed between him and this new world, and asked himself how he might cross over, for he meant to be one of these delicate, slim youths of Paris, these young patricians who bowed before women divinely dressed and divinely fair. For one kiss from one of these, Lucien was ready to be cut in pieces like Count Philip of Konigsmark. Louise's face rose up somewhere in the shadowy background of memory – compared with these queens, she looked like an old woman. He saw women whose names will

appear in the history of the nineteenth century, women no less famous than the queens of past times for their wit, their beauty, or their lovers; one who passed was the heroine Mlle. des Touches, so well known as Camille Maupin, the great woman of letters, great by her intellect, great no less by her beauty. He overheard the name pronounced by those who went by.

"Ah!" he thought to himself, "she is Poetry."

What was Mme. de Bargeton in comparison with this angel in all the glory of youth, and hope, and promise of the future, with that sweet smile of hers, and the great dark eyes with all heaven in them, and the glowing light of the sun? She was laughing and chatting with Mme. Firmiani, one of the most charming women in Paris. A voice indeed cried, "Intellect is the lever by which to move the world," but another voice cried no less loudly that money was the fulcrum.

He would not stay any longer on the scene of his collapse and defeat, and went towards the Palais Royal. He did not know the topography of his quarter yet, and was obliged to ask his way. Then he went to Very's and ordered dinner by way of an initiation into the pleasures of Paris, and a solace for his discouragement. A bottle of Bordeaux, oysters from Ostend, a dish of fish, a partridge, a dish of macaroni and dessert, – this was the *ne plus ultra* of his desire. He enjoyed this little debauch, studying the while how to give the Marquise d'Espard proof of his wit, and redeem the shabbiness of his grotesque accoutrements by the display of intellectual riches. The total of the bill drew him down

from these dreams, and left him the poorer by fifty of the francs which were to have gone such a long way in Paris. He could have lived in Angouleme for a month on the price of that dinner. Wherefore he closed the door of the palace with awe, thinking as he did so that he should never set foot in it again.

"Eve was right," he said to himself, as he went back under the stone arcading for some more money. "There is a difference between Paris prices and prices in L'Houmeau."

He gazed in at the tailors' windows on the way, and thought of the costumes in the Garden of the Tuileries.

"No," he exclaimed, "I will *not* appear before Mme. d'Espard dressed out as I am."

He fled to his inn, fleet as a stag, rushed up to his room, took out a hundred crowns, and went down again to the Palais Royal, where his future elegance lay scattered over half a score of shops. The first tailor whose door he entered tried as many coats upon him as he would consent to put on, and persuaded his customer that all were in the very latest fashion. Lucien came out the owner of a green coat, a pair of white trousers, and a "fancy waistcoat," for which outfit he gave two hundred francs. Ere long he found a very elegant pair of ready-made shoes that fitted his foot; and, finally, when he had made all necessary purchases, he ordered the tradespeople to send them to his address, and inquired for a hairdresser. At seven o'clock that evening he called a cab and drove away to the Opera, curled like a Saint John of a Procession Day, elegantly waistcoated and gloved, but feeling a

little awkward in this kind of sheath in which he found himself for the first time.

In obedience to Mme. de Bargeton's instructions, he asked for the box reserved for the First Gentleman of the Bedchamber. The man at the box office looked at him, and beholding Lucien in all the grandeur assumed for the occasion, in which he looked like a best man at a wedding, asked Lucien for his order.

"I have no order."

"Then you cannot go in," said the man at the box office drily.

"But I belong to Mme. d'Espard's party."

"It is not our business to know that," said the man, who could not help exchanging a barely perceptible smile with his colleague.

A carriage stopped under the peristyle as he spoke. A chasseur, in a livery which Lucien did not recognize, let down the step, and two women in evening dress came out of the brougham. Lucien had no mind to lay himself open to an insolent order to get out of the way from the official. He stepped aside to let the two ladies pass.

"Why, that lady is the Marquise d'Espard, whom you say you know, sir," said the man ironically.

Lucien was so much the more confounded because Mme. de Bargeton did not seem to recognize him in his new plumage; but when he stepped up to her, she smiled at him and said:

"This has fallen out wonderfully – come!"

The functionaries at the box office grew serious again as Lucien followed Mme. de Bargeton. On their way up the great

staircase the lady introduced M. de Rubempre to her cousin. The box belonging to the First Gentleman of the Bedchamber is situated in one of the angles at the back of the house, so that its occupants see and are seen all over the theatre. Lucien took his seat on a chair behind Mme. de Bargeton, thankful to be in the shadow.

"M. de Rubempre," said the Marquise with flattering graciousness, "this is your first visit to the Opera, is it not? You must have a view of the house; take this seat, sit in front of the box; we give you permission."

Lucien obeyed as the first act came to an end.

"You have made good use of your time," Louise said in his ear, in her first surprise at the change in his appearance.

Louise was still the same. The near presence of the Marquise d'Espard, a Parisian Mme. de Bargeton, was so damaging to her; the brilliancy of the Parisienne brought out all the defects in her country cousin so clearly by contrast; that Lucien, looking out over the fashionable audience in the superb building, and then at the great lady, was twice enlightened, and saw poor Anais de Negrepelisse as she really was, as Parisians saw her – a tall, lean, withered woman, with a pimpled face and faded complexion; angular, stiff, affected in her manner; pompous and provincial in her speech; and, and above all these things, dowdily dressed. As a matter of fact, the creases in an old dress from Paris still bear witness to good taste, you can tell what the gown was meant for; but an old dress made in the country is inexplicable, it is a

thing to provoke laughter. There was neither charm nor freshness about the dress or its wearer; the velvet, like the complexion had seen wear. Lucien felt ashamed to have fallen in love with this cuttle-fish bone, and vowed that he would profit by Louise's next fit of virtue to leave her for good. Having an excellent view of the house, he could see the opera-glasses pointed at the aristocratic box par excellence. The best-dressed women must certainly be scrutinizing Mme. de Bargeton, for they smiled and talked among themselves.

If Mme. d'Espard knew the object of their sarcasms from those feminine smiles and gestures, she was perfectly insensible to them. In the first place, anybody must see that her companion was a poor relation from the country, an affliction with which any Parisian family may be visited. And, in the second, when her cousin had spoken to her of her dress with manifest misgivings, she had reassured Anais, seeing that, when once properly dressed, her relative would very easily acquire the tone of Parisian society. If Mme. de Bargeton needed polish, on the other hand she possessed the native haughtiness of good birth, and that indescribable something which may be called "pedigree." So, on Monday her turn would come. And, moreover, the Marquise knew that as soon as people learned that the stranger was her cousin, they would suspend their banter and look twice before they condemned her.

Lucien did not foresee the change in Louise's appearance shortly to be worked by a scarf about her throat, a pretty dress,

an elegant coiffure, and Mme. d'Espard's advice. As they came up the staircase even now, the Marquise told her cousin not to hold her handkerchief unfolded in her hand. Good or bad taste turns upon hundreds of such almost imperceptible shades, which a quick-witted woman discerns at once, while others will never grasp them. Mme. de Bargeton, plentifully apt, was more than clever enough to discover her shortcomings. Mme. d'Espard, sure that her pupil would do her credit, did not decline to form her. In short, the compact between the two women had been confirmed by self-interest on either side.

Mme. de Bargeton, enthralled, dazzled, and fascinated by her cousin's manner, wit, and acquaintances, had suddenly declared herself a votary of the idol of the day. She had discerned the signs of the occult power exerted by the ambitious great lady, and told herself that she could gain her end as the satellite of this star, so she had been outspoken in her admiration. The Marquise was not insensible to the artlessly admitted conquest. She took an interest in her cousin, seeing that she was weak and poor; she was, besides, not indisposed to take a pupil with whom to found a school, and asked nothing better than to have a sort of lady-in-waiting in Mme. de Bargeton, a dependent who would sing her praises, a treasure even more scarce among Parisian women than a staunch and loyal critic among the literary tribe. The flutter of curiosity in the house was too marked to be ignored, however, and Mme. d'Espard politely endeavored to turn her cousin's mind from the truth.

"If any one comes to our box," she said, "perhaps we may discover the cause to which we owe the honor of the interest that these ladies are taking – "

"I have a strong suspicion that it is my old velvet gown and Angoumoisin air which Parisian ladies find amusing," Mme. de Bargeton answered, laughing.

"No, it is not you; it is something that I cannot explain," she added, turning to the poet, and, as she looked at him for the first time, it seemed to strike her that he was singularly dressed.

"There is M. du Chatelet," exclaimed Lucien at that moment, and he pointed a finger towards Mme. de Serizy's box, which the renovated beau had just entered.

Mme. de Bargeton bit her lips with chagrin as she saw that gesture, and saw besides the Marquise's ill-suppressed smile of contemptuous astonishment. "Where does the young man come from?" her look said, and Louise felt humbled through her love, one of the sharpest of all pangs for a Frenchwoman, a mortification for which she cannot forgive her lover.

In these circles where trifles are of such importance, a gesture or a word at the outset is enough to ruin a newcomer. It is the principal merit of fine manners and the highest breeding that they produce the effect of a harmonious whole, in which every element is so blended that nothing is startling or obtrusive. Even those who break the laws of this science, either through ignorance or carried away by some impulse, must comprehend that it is with social intercourse as with music, a single discordant

note is a complete negation of the art itself, for the harmony exists only when all its conditions are observed down to the least particular.

"Who is that gentleman?" asked Mme. d'Espard, looking towards Chatelet. "And have you made Mme. de Serizy's acquaintance already?"

"Oh! is that the famous Mme. de Serizy who has had so many adventures and yet goes everywhere?"

"An unheard-of-thing, my dear, explicable but unexplained. The most formidable men are her friends, and why? Nobody dares to fathom the mystery. Then is this person the lion of Angouleme?"

"Well, M. le Baron du Chatelet has been a good deal talked about," answered Mme. de Bargeton, moved by vanity to give her adorer the title which she herself had called in question. "He was M. de Montriveau's traveling companion."

"Ah!" said the Marquise d'Espard, "I never hear that name without thinking of the Duchesse de Langeais, poor thing. She vanished like a falling star. – That is M. de Rastignac with Mme. de Nucingen," she continued, indicating another box; "she is the wife of a contractor, a banker, a city man, a broker on a large scale; he forced his way into society with his money, and they say that he is not very scrupulous as to his methods of making it. He is at endless pains to establish his credit as a staunch upholder of the Bourbons, and has tried already to gain admittance into my set. When his wife took Mme. de Langeais' box, she thought that

she could take her charm, her wit, and her success as well. It is the old fable of the jay in the peacock's feathers!"

"How do M. and Mme. de Rastignac manage to keep their son in Paris, when, as we know, their income is under a thousand crowns?" asked Lucien, in his astonishment at Rastignac's elegant and expensive dress.

"It is easy to see that you come from Angouleme," said Mme. d'Espard, ironically enough, as she continued to gaze through her opera-glass.

Her remark was lost upon Lucien; the all-absorbing spectacle of the boxes prevented him from thinking of anything else. He guessed that he himself was an object of no small curiosity. Louise, on the other hand, was exceedingly mortified by the evident slight esteem in which the Marquise held Lucien's beauty.

"He cannot be so handsome as I thought him," she said to herself; and between "not so handsome" and "not so clever as I thought him" there was but one step.

The curtain fell. Chatelet was now paying a visit to the Duchesse de Carigliano in an adjourning box; Mme. de Bargeton acknowledged his bow by a slight inclination of the head. Nothing escapes a woman of the world; Chatelet's air of distinction was not lost upon Mme. d'Espard. Just at that moment four personages, four Parisian celebrities, came into the box, one after another.

The most striking feature of the first comer, M. de Marsay, famous for the passions which he had inspired, was his girlish

beauty; but its softness and effeminacy were counteracted by the expression of his eyes, unflinching, steady, untamed, and hard as a tiger's. He was loved and he was feared. Lucien was no less handsome; but Lucien's expression was so gentle, his blue eyes so limpid, that he scarcely seemed to possess the strength and the power which attract women so strongly. Nothing, moreover, so far had brought out the poet's merits; while de Marsay, with his flow of spirits, his confidence in his power to please, and appropriate style of dress, eclipsed every rival by his presence. Judge, therefore, the kind of figure that Lucien, stiff, starched, unbending in clothes as new and unfamiliar as his surroundings, was likely to cut in de Marsay's vicinity. De Marsay with his wit and charm of manner was privileged to be insolent. From Mme. d'Espard's reception of this personage his importance was at once evident to Mme. de Bargeton.

The second comer was a Vandenesse, the cause of the scandal in which Lady Dudley was concerned. Felix de Vandenesse, amiable, intellectual, and modest, had none of the characteristics on which de Marsay prided himself, and owed his success to diametrically opposed qualities. He had been warmly recommended to Mme. d'Espard by her cousin Mme. de Mortsauf.

The third was General de Montriveau, the author of the Duchesse de Langeais' ruin.

The fourth, M. de Canalis, one of the most famous poets of the day, and as yet a newly risen celebrity, was prouder of his

birth than of his genius, and dangled in Mme. d'Espard's train by way of concealing his love for the Duchesse de Chaulieu. In spite of his graces and the affectation that spoiled them, it was easy to discern the vast, lurking ambitions that plunged him at a later day into the storms of political life. A face that might be called insignificantly pretty and caressing manners thinly disguised the man's deeply-rooted egoism and habit of continually calculating the chances of a career which at that time looked problematical enough; though his choice of Mme. de Chaulieu (a woman past forty) made interest for him at Court, and brought him the applause of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and the gibes of the Liberal party, who dubbed him "the poet of the sacristy."

Mme. de Bargeton, with these remarkable figures before her, no longer wondered at the slight esteem in which the Marquise held Lucien's good looks. And when conversation began, when intellects so keen, so subtle, were revealed in two-edged words with more meaning and depth in them than Anais de Bargeton heard in a month of talk at Angouleme; and, most of all, when Canalis uttered a sonorous phrase, summing up a materialistic epoch, and gilding it with poetry – then Anais felt all the truth of Chatelet's dictum of the previous evening. Lucien was nothing to her now. Every one cruelly ignored the unlucky stranger; he was so much like a foreigner listening to an unknown language, that the Marquise d'Espard took pity upon him. She turned to Canalis.

"Permit me to introduce M. de Rubempre," she said. "You

rank too high in the world of letters not to welcome a *debutant*. M. de Rubempre is from Angouleme, and will need your influence, no doubt, with the powers that bring genius to light. So far, he has no enemies to help him to success by their attacks upon him. Is there enough originality in the idea of obtaining for him by friendship all that hatred has done for you to tempt you to make the experiment?"

The four newcomers all looked at Lucien while the Marquise was speaking. De Marsay, only a couple of paces away, put up an eyeglass and looked from Lucien to Mme. de Bargeton, and then again at Lucien, coupling them with some mocking thought, cruelly mortifying to both. He scrutinized them as if they had been a pair of strange animals, and then he smiled. The smile was like a stab to the distinguished provincial. Felix de Vandenesse assumed a charitable air. Montriveau looked Lucien through and through.

"Madame," M. de Canalis answered with a bow, "I will obey you, in spite of the selfish instinct which prompts us to show a rival no favor; but you have accustomed us to miracles."

"Very well, do me the pleasure of dining with me on Monday with M. de Rubempre, and you can talk of matters literary at your ease. I will try to enlist some of the tyrants of the world of letters and the great people who protect them, the author of *Ourika*, and one or two young poets with sound views."

"Mme. la Marquise," said de Marsay, "if you give your support to this gentleman for his intellect, I will support him for

his good looks. I will give him advice which will put him in a fair way to be the luckiest dandy in Paris. After that, he may be a poet – if he has a mind."

Mme. de Bargeton thanked her cousin by a grateful glance.

"I did not know that you were jealous of intellect," Montriveau said, turning to de Marsay; "good fortune is the death of a poet."

"Is that why your lordship is thinking of marriage?" inquired the dandy, addressing Canalis, and watching Mme. d'Espard to see if the words went home.

Canalis shrugged his shoulders, and Mme. d'Espard, Mme. de Chaulieu's niece, began to laugh. Lucien in his new clothes felt as if he were an Egyptian statue in its narrow sheath; he was ashamed that he had nothing to say for himself all this while. At length he turned to the Marquise.

"After all your kindness, madame, I am pledged to make no failures," he said in those soft tones of his.

Chatelet came in as he spoke; he had seen Montriveau, and by hook or crook snatched at the chance of a good introduction to the Marquise d'Espard through one of the kings of Paris. He bowed to Mme. de Bargeton, and begged Mme. d'Espard to pardon him for the liberty he took in invading her box; he had been separated so long from his traveling companion! Montriveau and Chatelet met for the first time since they parted in the desert.

"To part in the desert, and meet again in the opera-house!" said Lucien.

"Quite a theatrical meeting!" said Canalis.

Montriveau introduced the Baron du Chatelet to the Marquise, and the Marquise received Her Royal Highness' ex-secretary the more graciously because she had seen that he had been very well received in three boxes already. Mme. de Serizy knew none but unexceptionable people, and moreover he was Montriveau's traveling companion. So potent was this last credential, that Mme. de Bargeton saw from the manner of the group that they accepted Chatelet as one of themselves without demur. Chatelet's sultan's airs in Angouleme were suddenly explained.

At length the Baron saw Lucien, and favored him with a cool, disparaging little nod, indicative to men of the world of the recipient's inferior station. A sardonic expression accompanied the greeting, "How does *he* come here?" he seemed to say. This was not lost on those who saw it; for de Marsay leaned towards Montriveau, and said in tones audible to Chatelet:

"Do ask him who the queer-looking young fellow is that looks like a dummy at a tailor's shop-door."

Chatelet spoke a few words in his traveling companion's ear, and while apparently renewing his acquaintance, no doubt cut his rival to pieces.

If Lucien was surprised at the apt wit and the subtlety with which these gentlemen formulated their replies, he felt bewildered with epigram and repartee, and, most of all, by their offhand way of talking and their ease of manner. The material luxury of Paris had alarmed him that morning; at night he saw the

same lavish expenditure of intellect. By what mysterious means, he asked himself, did these people make such piquant reflections on the spur of the moment, those repartees which he could only have made after much pondering? And not only were they at ease in their speech, they were at ease in their dress, nothing looked new, nothing looked old, nothing about them was conspicuous, everything attracted the eyes. The fine gentleman of to-day was the same yesterday, and would be the same to-morrow. Lucien guessed that he himself looked as if he were dressed for the first time in his life.

"My dear fellow," said de Marsay, addressing Felix de Vandenesse, "that young Rastignac is soaring away like a paper-kite. Look at him in the Marquise de Listomere's box; he is making progress, he is putting up his eyeglass at us! He knows this gentleman, no doubt," added the dandy, speaking to Lucien, and looking elsewhere.

"He can scarcely fail to have heard the name of a great man of whom we are proud," said Mme. de Bargeton. "Quite lately his sister was present when M. de Rubempre read us some very fine poetry."

Felix de Vandenesse and de Marsay took leave of the Marquise d'Espard, and went off to Mme. de Listomere, Vandenesse's sister. The second act began, and the three were left to themselves again. The curious women learned how Mme. de Bargeton came to be there from some of the party, while the others announced the arrival of a poet, and made fun of his

costume. Canalis went back to the Duchesse de Chaulieu, and no more was seen of him.

Lucien was glad when the rising of the curtain produced a diversion. All Mme. de Bargeton's misgivings with regard to Lucien were increased by the marked attention which the Marquise d'Espard had shown to Chatelet; her manner towards the Baron was very different from the patronizing affability with which she treated Lucien. Mme. de Listomere's box was full during the second act, and, to all appearance, the talk turned upon Mme. de Bargeton and Lucien. Young Rastignac evidently was entertaining the party; he had raised the laughter that needs fresh fuel every day in Paris, the laughter that seizes upon a topic and exhausts it, and leaves it stale and threadbare in a moment. Mme. d'Espard grew uneasy. She knew that an ill-natured speech is not long in coming to the ears of those whom it will wound, and waited till the end of the act.

After a revulsion of feeling such as had taken place in Mme. de Bargeton and Lucien, strange things come to pass in a brief space of time, and any revolution within us is controlled by laws that work with great swiftness. Chatelet's sage and politic words as to Lucien, spoken on the way home from the Vaudeville, were fresh in Louise's memory. Every phrase was a prophecy, it seemed as if Lucien had set himself to fulfil the predictions one by one. When Lucien and Mme. de Bargeton had parted with their illusions concerning each other, the luckless youth, with a destiny not unlike Rousseau's, went so far in his predecessor's

footsteps that he was captivated by the great lady and smitten with Mme. d'Espard at first sight. Young men and men who remember their young emotions can see that this was only what might have been looked for. Mme. d'Espard with her dainty ways, her delicate enunciation, and the refined tones of her voice; the fragile woman so envied, of such high place and high degree, appeared before the poet as Mme. de Bargeton had appeared to him in Angouleme. His fickle nature prompted him to desire influence in that lofty sphere at once, and the surest way to secure such influence was to possess the woman who exerted it, and then everything would be his. He had succeeded at Angouleme, why should he not succeed in Paris?

Involuntarily, and despite the novel counter fascination of the stage, his eyes turned to the Celimene in her splendor; he glanced furtively at her every moment; the longer he looked, the more he desired to look at her. Mme. de Bargeton caught the gleam in Lucien's eyes, and saw that he found the Marquise more interesting than the opera. If Lucien had forsaken her for the fifty daughters of Danaus, she could have borne his desertion with equanimity; but another glance – bolder, more ardent and unmistakable than any before – revealed the state of Lucien's feelings. She grew jealous, but not so much for the future as for the past.

"He never gave me such a look," she thought. "Dear me! Chatelet was right!"

Then she saw that she had made a mistake; and when a woman

once begins to repent of her weaknesses, she sponges out the whole past. Every one of Lucien's glances roused her indignation, but to all outward appearance she was calm. De Marsay came back in the interval, bringing M. de Listomere with him; and that serious person and the young coxcomb soon informed the Marquise that the wedding guest in his holiday suit, whom she had the bad luck to have in her box, had as much right to the appellation of Rubempre as a Jew to a baptismal name. Lucien's father was an apothecary named Chardon. M. de Rastignac, who knew all about Angouleme, had set several boxes laughing already at the mummy whom the Marquise styled her cousin, and at the Marquise's forethought in having an apothecary at hand to sustain an artificial life with drugs. In short, de Marsay brought a selection from the thousand-and-one jokes made by Parisians on the spur of the moment, and no sooner uttered than forgotten. Chatelet was at the back of it all, and the real author of this Punic faith.

Mme. d'Espard turned to Mme. de Bargeton, put up her fan, and said, "My dear, tell me if your protege's name is really M. de Rubempre?"

"He has assumed his mother's name," said Anais, uneasily.

"But who was his father?"

"His father's name was Chardon."

"And what was this Chardon?"

"A druggist."

"My dear friend, I felt quite sure that all Paris could not be

laughing at any one whom I took up. I do not care to stay here when wags come in in high glee because there is an apothecary's son in my box. If you will follow my advice, we will leave it, and at once."

Mme. d'Espard's expression was insolent enough; Lucien was at a loss to account for her change of countenance. He thought that his waistcoat was in bad taste, which was true; and that his coat looked like a caricature of the fashion, which was likewise true. He discerned, in bitterness of soul, that he must put himself in the hands of an expert tailor, and vowed that he would go the very next morning to the most celebrated artist in Paris. On Monday he would hold his own with the men in the Marquise's house.

Yet, lost in thought though he was, he saw the third act to an end, and, with his eyes fixed on the gorgeous scene upon the stage, dreamed out his dream of Mme. d'Espard. He was in despair over her sudden coldness; it gave a strange check to the ardent reasoning through which he advanced upon this new love, undismayed by the immense difficulties in the way, difficulties which he saw and resolved to conquer. He roused himself from these deep musings to look once more at his new idol, turned his head, and saw that he was alone; he had heard a faint rustling sound, the door closed – Madame d'Espard had taken her cousin with her. Lucien was surprised to the last degree by the sudden desertion; he did not think long about it, however, simply because it was inexplicable.

When the carriage was rolling along the Rue de Richelieu on the way to the Faubourg Saint-Honore, the Marquise spoke to her cousin in a tone of suppressed irritation.

"My dear child, what are you thinking about? Pray wait till an apothecary's son has made a name for himself before you trouble yourself about him. The Duchesse de Chaulieu does not acknowledge Canalis even now, and he is famous and a man of good family. This young fellow is neither your son nor your lover, I suppose?" added the haughty dame, with a keen, inquisitive glance at her cousin.

"How fortunate for me that I kept the little scapegrace at a distance!" thought Madame de Bargeton.

"Very well," continued the Marquise, taking the expression in her cousin's eyes for an answer, "drop him, I beg of you. Taking an illustrious name in that way! – Why, it is a piece of impudence that will meet with its desserts in society. It is his mother's name, I dare say; but just remember, dear, that the King alone can confer, by a special ordinance, the title of de Rubempre on the son of a daughter of the house. If she made a *mesalliance*, the favor would be enormous, only to be granted to vast wealth, or conspicuous services, or very powerful influence. The young man looks like a shopman in his Sunday suit; evidently he is neither wealthy nor noble; he has a fine head, but he seems to me to be very silly; he has no idea what to do, and has nothing to say for himself; in fact, he has no breeding. How came you to take him up?"

Mme. de Bargeton renounced Lucien as Lucien himself had renounced her; a ghastly fear lest her cousin should learn the manner of her journey shot through her mind.

"Dear cousin, I am in despair that I have compromised you."

"People do not compromise me," Mme. d'Espard said, smiling; "I am only thinking of you."

"But you have asked him to dine with you on Monday."

"I shall be ill," the Marquise said quickly; "you can tell him so, and I shall leave orders that he is not to be admitted under either name."

During the interval Lucien noticed that every one was walking up and down the lobby. He would do the same. In the first place, not one of Mme. d'Espard's visitors recognized him nor paid any attention to him, their conduct seemed nothing less than extraordinary to the provincial poet; and, secondly, Chatelet, on whom he tried to hang, watched him out of the corner of his eye and fought shy of him. Lucien walked to and fro, watching the eddying crowd of men, till he felt convinced that his costume was absurd, and he went back to his box, ensconced himself in a corner, and stayed there till the end. At times he thought of nothing but the magnificent spectacle of the ballet in the great Inferno scene in the fifth act; sometimes the sight of the house absorbed him, sometimes his own thoughts; he had seen society in Paris, and the sight had stirred him to the depths.

"So this is my kingdom," he said to himself; "this is the world that I must conquer."

As he walked home through the streets he thought over all that had been said by Mme. d'Espard's courtiers; memory reproducing with strange faithfulness their demeanor, their gestures, their manner of coming and going.

Next day, towards noon, Lucien betook himself to Staub, the great tailor of that day. Partly by dint of entreaties, and partly by virtue of cash, Lucien succeeded in obtaining a promise that his clothes should be ready in time for the great day. Staub went so far as to give his word that a perfectly elegant coat, a waistcoat, and a pair of trousers should be forthcoming. Lucien then ordered linen and pocket-handkerchiefs, a little outfit, in short, of a linen-draper, and a celebrated bootmaker measured him for shoes and boots. He bought a neat walking cane at Verdier's; he went to Mme. Irlande for gloves and shirt studs; in short, he did his best to reach the climax of dandyism. When he had satisfied all his fancies, he went to the Rue Neuve-de-Luxembourg, and found that Louise had gone out.

"She was dining with Mme. la Marquise d'Espard," her maid said, "and would not be back till late."

Lucien dined for two francs at a restaurant in the Palais Royal, and went to bed early. The next day was Sunday. He went to Louise's lodging at eleven o'clock. Louise had not yet risen. At two o'clock he returned once more.

"Madame cannot see anybody yet," reported Albertine, "but she gave me a line for you."

"Cannot see anybody yet?" repeated Lucien. "But I am not

anybody – ”

“I do not know,” Albertine answered very impertinently; and Lucien, less surprised by Albertine’s answer than by a note from Mme. de Bargeton, took the billet, and read the following discouraging lines: —

“Mme. d’Espard is not well; she will not be able to see you on Monday. I am not feeling very well myself, but I am about to dress and go to keep her company. I am in despair over this little disappointment; but your talents reassure me, you will make your way without charlatanism.”

“And no signature!” Lucien said to himself. He found himself in the Tuileries before he knew whither he was walking.

With the gift of second-sight which accompanies genius, he began to suspect that the chilly note was but a warning of the catastrophe to come. Lost in thought, he walked on and on, gazing at the monuments in the Place Louis Quinze.

It was a sunny day; a stream of fine carriages went past him on the way to the Champs Elysees. Following the direction of the crowd of strollers, he saw the three or four thousand carriages that turn the Champs Elysees into an improvised Longchamp on Sunday afternoons in summer. The splendid horses, the toilettes, and liveries bewildered him; he went further and further, until he reached the Arc de Triomphe, then unfinished. What were his feelings when, as he returned, he saw Mme. de Bargeton and Mme. d’Espard coming towards him in a wonderfully appointed caleche, with a chasseur behind it in waving plumes and that

gold-embroidered green uniform which he knew only too well. There was a block somewhere in the row, and the carriages waited. Lucien beheld Louise transformed beyond recognition. All the colors of her toilette had been carefully subordinated to her complexion; her dress was delicious, her hair gracefully and becomingly arranged, her hat, in exquisite taste, was remarkable even beside Mme. d'Espard, that leader of fashion.

There is something in the art of wearing a hat that escapes definition. Tilted too far to the back of the head, it imparts a bold expression to the face; bring it too far forward, it gives you a sinister look; tipped to one side, it has a jaunty air; a well-dressed woman wears her hat exactly as she means to wear it, and exactly at the right angle. Mme. de Bargeton had solved this curious problem at sight. A dainty girdle outlined her slender waist. She had adopted her cousin's gestures and tricks of manner; and now, as she sat by Mme. d'Espard's side, she played with a tiny scent bottle that dangled by a slender gold chain from one of her fingers, displayed a little well-gloved hand without seeming to do so. She had modeled herself on Mme. d'Espard without mimicking her; the Marquise had found a cousin worthy of her, and seemed to be proud of her pupil.

The men and women on the footways all gazed at the splendid carriage, with the bearings of the d'Espards and Blamont-Chauvrys upon the panels. Lucien was amazed at the number of greetings received by the cousins; he did not know that the "all Paris," which consists in some score of salons, was well

aware already of the relationship between the ladies. A little group of young men on horseback accompanied the carriage in the Bois; Lucien could recognize de Marsay and Rastignac among them, and could see from their gestures that the pair of coxcombs were complimenting Mme. de Bargeton upon her transformation. Mme. d'Espard was radiant with health and grace. So her indisposition was simply a pretext for ridding herself of him, for there had been no mention of another day!

The wrathful poet went towards the caleche; he walked slowly, waited till he came in full sight of the two ladies, and made them a bow. Mme. de Bargeton would not see him; but the Marquise put up her eyeglass, and deliberately cut him. He had been disowned by the sovereign lords of Angouleme, but to be disowned by society in Paris was another thing; the booby-squires by doing their utmost to mortify Lucien admitted his power and acknowledged him as a man; for Mme. d'Espard he had positively no existence. This was a sentence, it was a refusal of justice. Poor poet! a deadly cold seized on him when he saw de Marsay eying him through his glass; and when the Parisian lion let that optical instrument fall, it dropped in so singular a fashion that Lucien thought of the knife-blade of the guillotine.

The caleche went by. Rage and a craving for vengeance took possession of his slighted soul. If Mme. de Bargeton had been in his power, he could have cut her throat at that moment; he was a Fouquier-Tinville gloating over the pleasure of sending Mme. d'Espard to the scaffold. If only he could have put de Marsay to

the torture with refinements of savage cruelty! Canalis went by on horseback, bowing to the prettiest women, his dress elegant, as became the most dainty of poets.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Lucien. "Money, money at all costs! money is the one power before which the world bends the knee." ("No!" cried conscience, "not money, but glory; and glory means work! Work! that was what David said.") "Great heavens! what am I doing here? But I will triumph. I will drive along this avenue in a caleche with a chasseur behind me! I will possess a Marquise d'Espard." And flinging out the wrathful words, he went to Hurbain's to dine for two francs.

Next morning, at nine o'clock, he went to the Rue Neuve-de-Luxembourg to upbraid Louise for her barbarity. But Mme. de Bargeton was not at home to him, and not only so, but the porter would not allow him to go up to her rooms; so he stayed outside in the street, watching the house till noon. At twelve o'clock Chatelet came out, looked at Lucien out of the corner of his eye, and avoided him.

Stung to the quick, Lucien hurried after his rival; and Chatelet, finding himself closely pursued, turned and bowed, evidently intending to shake him off by this courtesy.

"Spare me just a moment for pity's sake, sir," said Lucien; "I want just a word or two with you. You have shown me friendship, I now ask the most trifling service of that friendship. You have just come from Mme. de Bargeton; how have I fallen into disgrace with her and Mme. d'Espard? – please explain."

"M. Chardon, do you know why the ladies left you at the Opera that evening?" asked Chatelet, with treacherous good-nature.

"No," said the poor poet.

"Well, it was M. de Rastignac who spoke against you from the beginning. They asked him about you, and the young dandy simply said that your name was Chardon, and not de Rubempre; that your mother was a monthly nurse; that your father, when he was alive, was an apothecary in L'Houmeau, a suburb of Angouleme; and that your sister, a charming girl, gets up shirts to admiration, and is just about to be married to a local printer named Sechard. Such is the world! You no sooner show yourself than it pulls you to pieces.

"M. de Marsay came to Mme. d'Espard to laugh at you with her; so the two ladies, thinking that your presence put them in a false position, went out at once. Do not attempt to go to either house. If Mme. de Bargeton continued to receive your visits, her cousin would have nothing to do with her. You have genius; try to avenge yourself. The world looks down upon you; look down in your turn upon the world. Take refuge in some garret, write your masterpieces, seize on power of any kind, and you will see the world at your feet. Then you can give back the bruises which you have received, and in the very place where they were given. Mme. de Bargeton will be the more distant now because she has been friendly. That is the way with women. But the question now for you is not how to win back Anais' friendship, but how to

avoid making an enemy of her. I will tell you of a way. She has written letters to you; send all her letters back to her, she will be sensible that you are acting like a gentleman; and at a later time, if you should need her, she will not be hostile. For my own part, I have so high an opinion of your future, that I have taken your part everywhere; and if I can do anything here for you, you will always find me ready to be of use."

The elderly beau seemed to have grown young again in the atmosphere of Paris. He bowed with frigid politeness; but Lucien, woe-begone, haggard, and undone, forgot to return the salutation. He went back to his inn, and there found the great Staub himself, come in person, not so much to try his customer's clothes as to make inquiries of the landlady with regard to that customer's financial status. The report had been satisfactory. Lucien had traveled post; Mme. de Bargeton brought him back from Vaudeville last Thursday in her carriage. Staub addressed Lucien as "Monsieur le Comte," and called his customer's attention to the artistic skill with which he had brought a charming figure into relief.

"A young man in such a costume has only to walk in the Tuileries," he said, "and he will marry an English heiress within a fortnight."

Lucien brightened a little under the influences of the German tailor's joke, the perfect fit of his new clothes, the fine cloth, and the sight of a graceful figure which met his eyes in the looking-glass. Vaguely he told himself that Paris was the capital

of chance, and for the moment he believed in chance. Had he not a volume of poems and a magnificent romance entitled *The Archer of Charles IX.* in manuscript? He had hope for the future. Staub promised the overcoat and the rest of the clothes the next day.

The next day the bootmaker, linen-draper, and tailor all returned armed each with his bill, which Lucien, still under the charm of provincial habits, paid forthwith, not knowing how otherwise to rid himself of them. After he had paid, there remained but three hundred and sixty francs out of the two thousand which he had brought with him from Angouleme, and he had been but one week in Paris! Nevertheless, he dressed and went to take a stroll in the Terrassee des Feuillants. He had his day of triumph. He looked so handsome and so graceful, he was so well dressed, that women looked at him; two or three were so much struck with his beauty, that they turned their heads to look again. Lucien studied the gait and carriage of the young men on the Terrasse, and took a lesson in fine manners while he meditated on his three hundred and sixty francs.

That evening, alone in his chamber, an idea occurred to him which threw a light on the problem of his existence at the Gaillard-Bois, where he lived on the plainest fare, thinking to economize in this way. He asked for his account, as if he meant to leave, and discovered that he was indebted to his landlord to the extent of a hundred francs. The next morning was spent in running around the Latin Quarter, recommended for its

cheapness by David. For a long while he looked about till, finally, in the Rue de Cluny, close to the Sorbonne, he discovered a place where he could have a furnished room for such a price as he could afford to pay. He settled with his hostess of the Gaillard-Bois, and took up his quarters in the Rue de Cluny that same day. His removal only cost him the cab fare.

When he had taken possession of his poor room, he made a packet of Mme. de Bargeton's letters, laid them on the table, and sat down to write to her; but before he wrote he fell to thinking over that fatal week. He did not tell himself that he had been the first to be faithless; that for a sudden fancy he had been ready to leave his Louise without knowing what would become of her in Paris. He saw none of his own shortcomings, but he saw his present position, and blamed Mme. de Bargeton for it. She was to have lighted his way; instead she had ruined him. He grew indignant, he grew proud, he worked himself into a paroxysm of rage, and set himself to compose the following epistle: —

> "What would you think, madame, of a woman who should take a fancy to some poor and timid child full of the noble superstitions which the grown man calls 'illusions;' and using all the charms of woman's coquetry, all her most delicate ingenuity, should feign a mother's love to lead that child astray? Her fondest promises, the card-castles which raised his wonder, cost her nothing; she leads him on, tightens her hold upon him, sometimes coaxing, sometimes scolding him for his want of confidence, till the child leaves his home and follows her blindly to the shores of a vast sea.

Smiling, she lures him into a frail skiff, and sends him forth alone and helpless to face the storm. Standing safe on the rock, she laughs and wishes him luck. You are that woman; I am that child.

"The child has a keepsake in his hands, something which might betray the wrongs done by your beneficence, your kindness in deserting him. You might have to blush if you saw him struggling for life, and chanced to recollect that once you clasped him to your breast. When you read these words the keepsake will be in your own safe keeping; you are free to forget everything. "Once you pointed out fair hopes to me in the skies, I awake to find reality in the squalid poverty of Paris. While you pass, and others bow before you, on your brilliant path in the great world, I, I whom you deserted on the threshold, shall be shivering in the wretched garret to which you consigned me. Yet some pang may perhaps trouble your mind amid festivals and pleasures; you may think sometimes of the child whom you thrust into the depths. If so, madame, think of him without remorse. Out of the depths of his misery the child offers you the one thing left to him – his forgiveness in a last look. Yes, madame, thanks to you, I have nothing left. Nothing! was not the world created from nothing? Genius should follow the Divine example; I begin with God-like forgiveness, but as yet I know not whether I possess the God-like power. You need only tremble lest I should go astray; for you would be answerable for my sins. Alas! I pity you, for you will have no part in the future towards which I go, with work as my guide."

After penning this rhetorical effusion, full of the sombre dignity which an artist of one-and-twenty is rather apt to overdo, Lucien's thoughts went back to them at home. He saw the pretty rooms which David had furnished for him, at the cost of part of his little store, and a vision rose before him of quiet, simple pleasures in the past. Shadowy figures came about him; he saw his mother and Eve and David, and heard their sobs over his leave-taking, and at that he began to cry himself, for he felt very lonely in Paris, and friendless and forlorn.

Two or three days later he wrote to his sister: —

> "MY DEAR EVE, – When a sister shares the life of a brother who devotes himself to art, it is her sad privilege to take more sorrow than joy into her life; and I am beginning to fear that I shall be a great trouble to you. Have I not abused your goodness already? have not all of you sacrificed yourselves to me? It is the memory of the past, so full of family happiness, that helps me to bear up in my present loneliness. Now that I have tasted the first beginnings of poverty and the treachery of the world of Paris, how my thoughts have flown to you, swift as an eagle back to its eyrie, so that I might be with true affection again. Did you see sparks in the candle? Did a coal pop out of the fire? Did you hear singing in your ears? And did mother say, 'Lucien is thinking of us,' and David answer, 'He is fighting his way in the world?'
>
> "My Eve, I am writing this letter for your eyes only. I cannot tell any one else all that has happened to me, good and bad, blushing for both, as I write, for good here is as

rare as evil ought to be. You shall have a great piece of news in a very few words. Mme. de Bargeton was ashamed of me, disowned me, would not see me, and gave me up nine days after we came to Paris. She saw me in the street and looked another way; when, simply to follow her into the society to which she meant to introduce me, I had spent seventeen hundred and sixty francs out of the two thousand I brought from Angouleme, the money so hardly scraped together. 'How did you spend it?' you will ask. Paris is a strange bottomless gulf, my poor sister; you can dine here for less than a franc, yet the simplest dinner at a fashionable restaurant costs fifty francs; there are waistcoats and trousers to be had for four francs and two francs each; but a fashionable tailor never charges less than a hundred francs. You pay for everything; you pay a halfpenny to cross the kennel in the street when it rains; you cannot go the least little way in a cab for less than thirty-two sous.

"I have been staying in one of the best parts of Paris, but now I am living at the Hotel de Cluny, in the Rue de Cluny, one of the poorest and darkest slums, shut in between three churches and the old buildings of the Sorbonne. I have a furnished room on the fourth floor; it is very bare and very dirty, but, all the same, I pay fifteen francs a month for it. For breakfast I spend a penny on a roll and a halfpenny for milk, but I dine very decently for twenty-two sous at a restaurant kept by a man named Flicoteaux in the Place de la Sorbonne itself. My expenses every month will not exceed sixty francs, everything included, until the winter begins – at least I hope not. So my two hundred and forty

francs ought to last me for the first four months. Between now and then I shall have sold *The Archer of Charles IX*. and the *Marguerites* no doubt. Do not be in the least uneasy on my account. If the present is cold and bare and poverty-stricken, the blue distant future is rich and splendid; most great men have known the vicissitudes which depress but cannot overwhelm me.

"Plautus, the great comic Latin poet, was once a miller's lad. Machiavelli wrote *The Prince* at night, and by day was a common working-man like any one else; and more than all, the great Cervantes, who lost an arm at the battle of Lepanto, and helped to win that famous day, was called a 'base-born, handless dotard' by the scribblers of his day; there was an interval of ten years between the appearance of the first part and the second of his sublime *Don Quixote* for lack of a publisher. Things are not so bad as that nowadays. Mortifications and want only fall to the lot of unknown writers; as soon as a man's name is known, he grows rich, and I will be rich. And besides, I live within myself, I spend half the day at the Bibliotheque Sainte-Genevieve, learning all that I want to learn; I should not go far unless I knew more than I do. So at this moment I am almost happy. In a few days I have fallen in with my life very gladly. I begin the work that I love with daylight, my subsistence is secure, I think a great deal, and I study. I do not see that I am open to attack at any point, now that I have renounced a world where my vanity might suffer at any moment. The great men of every age are obliged to lead lives apart. What are they but birds in the forest? They sing, nature falls under the spell of

their song, and no one should see them. That shall be my lot, always supposing that I can carry out my ambitious plans.

"Mme. de Bargeton I do not regret. A woman who could behave as she behaved does not deserve a thought. Nor am I sorry that I left Angouleme. She did wisely when she flung me into the sea of Paris to sink or swim. This is the place for men of letters and thinkers and poets; here you cultivate glory, and I know how fair the harvest is that we reap in these days. Nowhere else can a writer find the living works of the great dead, the works of art which quicken the imagination in the galleries and museums here; nowhere else will you find great reference libraries always open in which the intellect may find pasture. And lastly, here in Paris there is a spirit which you breathe in the air; it infuses the least details, every literary creation bears traces of its influence. You learn more by talk in a cafe, or at a theatre, in one half hour, than you would learn in ten years in the provinces. Here, in truth, wherever you go, there is always something to see, something to learn, some comparison to make. Extreme cheapness and excessive dearness – there is Paris for you; there is honeycomb here for every bee, every nature finds its own nourishment. So, though life is hard for me just now, I repent of nothing. On the contrary, a fair future spreads out before me, and my heart rejoices though it is saddened for the moment. Good-bye my dear sister. Do not expect letters from me regularly; it is one of the peculiarities of Paris that one really does not know how the time goes. Life is so alarmingly rapid. I kiss the mother and you and David more tenderly than ever.

"LUCIEN."

The name of Flicoteaux is engraved on many memories. Few indeed were the students who lived in the Latin Quarter during the last twelve years of the Restoration and did not frequent that temple sacred to hunger and impecuniosity. There a dinner of three courses, with a quarter bottle of wine or a bottle of beer, could be had for eighteen sous; or for twenty-two sous the quarter bottle becomes a bottle. Flicoteaux, that friend of youth, would beyond a doubt have amassed a colossal fortune but for a line on his bill of fare, a line which rival establishments are wont to print in capital letters, thus – BREAD AT DISCRETION, which, being interpreted, should read "indiscretion."

Flicoteaux has been nursing-father to many an illustrious name. Verily, the heart of more than one great man ought to wax warm with innumerable recollections of inexpressible enjoyment at the sight of the small, square window panes that look upon the Place de la Sorbonne, and the Rue Neuve-de-Richelieu. Flicoteaux II. and Flicoteaux III. respected the old exterior, maintaining the dingy hue and general air of a respectable, old-established house, showing thereby the depth of their contempt for the charlatanism of the shop-front, the kind of advertisement which feasts the eyes at the expense of the stomach, to which your modern restaurant almost always has recourse. Here you beheld no piles of straw-stuffed game never destined to make

the acquaintance of the spit, no fantastical fish to justify the mountebank's remark, "I saw a fine carp to-day; I expect to buy it this day week." Instead of the prime vegetables more fittingly described by the word primeval, artfully displayed in the window for the delectation of the military man and his fellow country-woman the nursemaid, honest Flicoteaux exhibited full salad-bowls adorned with many a rivet, or pyramids of stewed prunes to rejoice the sight of the customer, and assure him that the word "dessert," with which other handbills made too free, was in this case no charter to hoodwink the public. Loaves of six pounds' weight, cut in four quarters, made good the promise of "bread at discretion." Such was the plenty of the establishment, that Moliere would have celebrated it if it had been in existence in his day, so comically appropriate is the name.

Flicoteaux still subsists; so long as students are minded to live, Flicoteaux will make a living. You feed there, neither more nor less; and you feed as you work, with morose or cheerful industry, according to the circumstances and the temperament.

At that time his well-known establishment consisted of two dining-halls, at right angles to each other; long, narrow, low-ceiled rooms, looking respectively on the Rue Neuve-de-Richelieu and the Place de la Sorbonne. The furniture must have come originally from the refectory of some abbey, for there was a monastic look about the lengthy tables, where the serviettes of regular customers, each thrust through a numbered ring of crystallized tin plate, were laid by their places. Flicoteaux I. only

changed the serviettes of a Sunday; but Flicoteaux II. changed them twice a week, it is said, under pressure of competition which threatened his dynasty.

Flicoteaux's restaurant is no banqueting-hall, with its refinements and luxuries; it is a workshop where suitable tools are provided, and everybody gets up and goes as soon as he has finished. The coming and going within are swift. There is no dawdling among the waiters; they are all busy; every one of them is wanted.

The fare is not very varied. The potato is a permanent institution; there might not be a single tuber left in Ireland, and prevailing dearth elsewhere, but you would still find potatoes at Flicoteaux's. Not once in thirty years shall you miss its pale gold (the color beloved of Titian), sprinkled with chopped verdure; the potato enjoys a privilege that women might envy; such as you see it in 1814, so shall you find it in 1840. Mutton cutlets and fillet of beef at Flicoteaux's represent black game and fillet of sturgeon at Very's; they are not on the regular bill of fare, that is, and must be ordered beforehand. Beef of the feminine gender there prevails; the young of the bovine species appears in all kinds of ingenious disguises. When the whiting and mackerel abound on our shores, they are likewise seen in large numbers at Flicoteaux's; his whole establishment, indeed, is directly affected by the caprices of the season and the vicissitudes of French agriculture. By eating your dinners at Flicoteaux's you learn a host of things of which the wealthy, the idle, and folk indifferent

to the phases of Nature have no suspicion, and the student penned up in the Latin Quarter is kept accurately informed of the state of the weather and good or bad seasons. He knows when it is a good year for peas or French beans, and the kind of salad stuff that is plentiful; when the Great Market is glutted with cabbages, he is at once aware of the fact, and the failure of the beetroot crop is brought home to his mind. A slander, old in circulation in Lucien's time, connected the appearance of beef-steaks with a mortality among horseflesh.

Few Parisian restaurants are so well worth seeing. Every one at Flicoteaux's is young; you see nothing but youth; and although earnest faces and grave, gloomy, anxious faces are not lacking, you see hope and confidence and poverty gaily endured. Dress, as a rule, is careless, and regular comers in decent clothes are marked exceptions. Everybody knows at once that something extraordinary is afoot: a mistress to visit, a theatre party, or some excursion into higher spheres. Here, it is said, friendships have been made among students who became famous men in after days, as will be seen in the course of this narrative; but with the exception of a few knots of young fellows from the same part of France who make a group about the end of a table, the gravity of the diners is hardly relaxed. Perhaps this gravity is due to the catholicity of the wine, which checks good fellowship of any kind.

Flicoteaux's frequenters may recollect certain sombre and mysterious figures enveloped in the gloom of the chilliest penury;

these beings would dine there daily for a couple of years and then vanish, and the most inquisitive regular comer could throw no light on the disappearance of such goblins of Paris. Friendships struck up over Flicoteaux's dinners were sealed in neighboring cafes in the flames of heady punch, or by the generous warmth of a small cup of black coffee glorified by a dash of something hotter and stronger.

Lucien, like all neophytes, was modest and regular in his habits in those early days at the Hotel de Cluny. After the first unlucky venture in fashionable life which absorbed his capital, he threw himself into his work with the first earnest enthusiasm, which is frittered away so soon over the difficulties or in the by-paths of every life in Paris. The most luxurious and the very poorest lives are equally beset with temptations which nothing but the fierce energy of genius or the morose persistence of ambition can overcome.

Lucien used to drop in at Flicoteaux's about half-past four, having remarked the advantages of an early arrival; the bill-of-fare was more varied, and there was still some chance of obtaining the dish of your choice. Like all imaginative persons, he had taken a fancy to a particular seat, and showed discrimination in his selection. On the very first day he had noticed a table near the counter, and from the faces of those who sat about it, and chance snatches of their talk, he recognized brothers of the craft. A sort of instinct, moreover, pointed out the table near the counter as a spot whence he could parlay with

the owners of the restaurant. In time an acquaintance would grow up, he thought, and then in the day of distress he could no doubt obtain the necessary credit. So he took his place at a small square table close to the desk, intended probably for casual comers, for the two clean serviettes were unadorned with rings. Lucien's opposite neighbor was a thin, pallid youth, to all appearance as poor as himself; his handsome face was somewhat worn, already it told of hopes that had vanished, leaving lines upon his forehead and barren furrows in his soul, where seeds had been sown that had come to nothing. Lucien felt drawn to the stranger by these tokens; his sympathies went out to him with irresistible fervor.

After a week's exchange of small courtesies and remarks, the poet from Angouleme found the first person with whom he could chat. The stranger's name was Etienne Lousteau. Two years ago he had left his native place, a town in Berri, just as Lucien had come from Angouleme. His lively gestures, bright eyes, and occasionally curt speech revealed a bitter apprenticeship to literature. Etienne had come from Sancerre with his tragedy in his pocket, drawn to Paris by the same motives that impelled Lucien – hope of fame and power and money.

Sometimes Etienne Lousteau came for several days together; but in a little while his visits became few and far between, and he would stay away for five or six days in succession. Then he would come back, and Lucien would hope to see his poet next day, only to find a stranger in his place. When two young men meet daily, their talk harks back to their last conversation;

but these continual interruptions obliged Lucien to break the ice afresh each time, and further checked an intimacy which made little progress during the first few weeks. On inquiry of the damsel at the counter, Lucien was told that his future friend was on the staff of a small newspaper, and wrote reviews of books and dramatic criticism of pieces played at the Ambigu-Comique, the Gaite, and the Panorama-Dramatique. The young man became a personage all at once in Lucien's eyes. Now, he thought, he would lead the conversation on rather more personal topics, and make some effort to gain a friend so likely to be useful to a beginner. The journalist stayed away for a fortnight. Lucien did not know that Etienne only dined at Flicoteaux's when he was hard up, and hence his gloomy air of disenchantment and the chilly manner, which Lucien met with gracious smiles and amiable remarks. But, after all, the project of a friendship called for mature deliberation. This obscure journalist appeared to lead an expensive life in which *petits verres*, cups of coffee, punch-bowls, sight-seeing, and suppers played a part. In the early days of Lucien's life in the Latin Quarter, he behaved like a poor child bewildered by his first experience of Paris life; so that when he had made a study of prices and weighed his purse, he lacked courage to make advances to Etienne; he was afraid of beginning a fresh series of blunders of which he was still repenting. And he was still under the yoke of provincial creeds; his two guardian angels, Eve and David, rose up before him at the least approach of an evil thought, putting him in mind of all the hopes that were

centered on him, of the happiness that he owed to the old mother, of all the promises of his genius.

He spent his mornings in studying history at the Bibliotheque Sainte-Genevieve. His very first researches made him aware of frightful errors in the memoirs of *The Archer of Charles IX*. When the library closed, he went back to his damp, chilly room to correct his work, cutting out whole chapters and piecing it together anew. And after dining at Flicoteaux's, he went down to the Passage du Commerce to see the newspapers at Blosse's reading-room, as well as new books and magazines and poetry, so as to keep himself informed of the movements of the day. And when, towards midnight, he returned to his wretched lodgings, he had used neither fuel nor candle-light. His reading in those days made such an enormous change in his ideas, that he revised the volume of flower-sonnets, his beloved *Marguerites*, working them over to such purpose, that scarce a hundred lines of the original verses were allowed to stand.

So in the beginning Lucien led the honest, innocent life of the country lad who never leaves the Latin Quarter; devoting himself wholly to his work, with thoughts of the future always before him; who finds Flicoteaux's ordinary luxurious after the simple home-fare; and strolls for recreation along the alleys of the Luxembourg, the blood surging back to his heart as he gives timid side glances to the pretty women. But this could not last. Lucien, with his poetic temperament and boundless longings, could not withstand the temptations held out by the play-bills.

The Theatre-Francais, the Vaudeville, the Varietes, the Opera-Comique relieved him of some sixty francs, although he always went to the pit. What student could deny himself the pleasure of seeing Talma in one of his famous roles? Lucien was fascinated by the theatre, that first love of all poetic temperaments; the actors and actresses were awe-inspiring creatures; he did not so much as dream of the possibility of crossing the footlights and meeting them on familiar terms. The men and women who gave him so much pleasure were surely marvelous beings, whom the newspapers treated with as much gravity as matters of national interest. To be a dramatic author, to have a play produced on the stage! What a dream was this to cherish! A dream which a few bold spirits like Casimir Delavigne had actually realized. Thick swarming thoughts like these, and moments of belief in himself, followed by despair gave Lucien no rest, and kept him in the narrow way of toil and frugality, in spite of the smothered grumblings of more than one frenzied desire.

Carrying prudence to an extreme, he made it a rule never to enter the precincts of the Palais Royal, that place of perdition where he had spent fifty francs at Very's in a single day, and nearly five hundred francs on his clothes; and when he yielded to temptation, and saw Fleury, Talma, the two Baptistes, or Michot, he went no further than the murky passage where theatre-goers used to stand in a string from half-past five in the afternoon till the hour when the doors opened, and belated comers were compelled to pay ten sous for a place near the ticket-office. And

after waiting for two hours, the cry of "All tickets are sold!" rang not unfrequently in the ears of disappointed students. When the play was over, Lucien went home with downcast eyes, through streets lined with living attractions, and perhaps fell in with one of those commonplace adventures which loom so large in a young and timorous imagination.

One day Lucien counted over his remaining stock of money, and took alarm at the melting of his funds; a cold perspiration broke out upon him when he thought that the time had come when he must find a publisher, and try also to find work for which a publisher would pay him. The young journalist, with whom he had made a one-sided friendship, never came now to Flicoteaux's. Lucien was waiting for a chance – which failed to present itself. In Paris there are no chances except for men with a very wide circle of acquaintance; chances of success of every kind increase with the number of your connections; and, therefore, in this sense also the chances are in favor of the big battalions. Lucien had sufficient provincial foresight still left, and had no mind to wait until only a last few coins remained to him. He resolved to face the publishers.

So one tolerably chilly September morning Lucien went down the Rue de la Harpe, with his two manuscripts under his arm. As he made his way to the Quai des Augustins, and went along, looking into the booksellers' windows on one side and into the Seine on the other, his good genius might have counseled him to pitch himself into the water sooner than plunge into literature.

After heart-searching hesitations, after a profound scrutiny of the various countenances, more or less encouraging, soft-hearted, churlish, cheerful, or melancholy, to be seen through the window panes, or in the doorways of the booksellers' establishments, he espied a house where the shopmen were busy packing books at a great rate. Goods were being despatched. The walls were plastered with bills:

JUST OUT

LE SOLITAIRE, by M. le Vicomte d'Arlincourt.
Third edition.
LEONIDE, by Victor Ducange; five volumes 12mo, printed on fine paper. 12 francs.
INDUCTIONS MORALES, by Keratry.

"They are lucky, that they are!" exclaimed Lucien.

The placard, a new and original idea of the celebrated Ladvocat, was just beginning to blossom out upon the walls. In no long space Paris was to wear motley, thanks to the exertions of his imitators, and the Treasury was to discover a new source of revenue.

Anxiety sent the blood surging to Lucien's heart, as he who had been so great at Angouleme, so insignificant of late in Paris, slipped past the other houses, summoned up all his courage, and at last entered the shop thronged with assistants, customers, and booksellers – "And authors too, perhaps!" thought Lucien.

"I want to speak with M. Vidal or M. Porchon," he said, addressing a shopman. He had read the names on the sign-board – VIDAL & PORCHON (it ran), *French and foreign booksellers' agents*.

"Both gentlemen are engaged," said the man.

"I will wait."

Left to himself, the poet scrutinized the packages, and amused himself for a couple of hours by scanning the titles of books, looking into them, and reading a page or two here and there. At last, as he stood leaning against a window, he heard voices, and suspecting that the green curtains hid either Vidal or Porchon, he listened to the conversation.

"Will you take five hundred copies of me? If you will, I will let you have them at five francs, and give fourteen to the dozen."

"What does that bring them in at?"

"Sixteen sous less."

"Four francs four sous?" said Vidal or Porchon, whichever it was.

"Yes," said the vendor.

"Credit your account?" inquired the purchaser.

"Old humbug! you would settle with me in eighteen months' time, with bills at a twelvemonth."

"No. Settled at once," returned Vidal or Porchon.

"Bills at nine months?" asked the publisher or author, who evidently was selling his book.

"No, my dear fellow, twelve months," returned one of the firm

of booksellers' agents.

There was a pause.

"You are simply cutting my throat!" said the visitor.

"But in a year's time shall we have placed a hundred copies of *Leonide*?" said the other voice. "If books went off as fast as the publishers would like, we should be millionaires, my good sir; but they don't, they go as the public pleases. There is some one now bringing out an edition of Scott's novels at eighteen sous per volume, three livres twelve sous per copy, and you want me to give you more for your stale remainders? No. If you mean me to push this novel of yours, you must make it worth my while. – Vidal!"

A stout man, with a pen behind his ear, came down from his desk.

"How many copies of Ducange did you place last journey?" asked Porchon of his partner.

"Two hundred of *Le Petit Vieillard de Calais*, but to sell them I was obliged to cry down two books which pay in less commission, and uncommonly fine 'nightingales' they are now."

(A "nightingale," as Lucien afterwards learned, is a bookseller's name for books that linger on hand, perched out of sight in the loneliest nooks in the shop.)

"And besides," added Vidal, "Picard is bringing out some novels, as you know. We have been promised twenty per cent on the published price to make the thing a success."

"Very well, at twelve months," the publisher answered in a

piteous voice, thunderstruck by Vidal's confidential remark.

"Is it an offer?" Porchon inquired curtly.

"Yes." The stranger went out. After he had gone, Lucien heard Porchon say to Vidal:

"We have three hundred copies on order now. We will keep him waiting for his settlement, sell the *Leonides* for five francs net, settlement in six months, and – "

"And that will be fifteen hundred francs into our pockets," said Vidal.

"Oh, I saw quite well that he was in a fix. He is giving Ducange four thousand francs for two thousand copies."

Lucien cut Vidal short by appearing in the entrance of the den.

"I have the honor of wishing you a good day, gentlemen," he said, addressing both partners. The booksellers nodded slightly.

"I have a French historical romance after the style of Scott. It is called *The Archer of Charles IX.*; I propose to offer it to you – "

Porchon glanced at Lucien with lustreless eyes, and laid his pen down on the desk. Vidal stared rudely at the author.

"We are not publishing booksellers, sir; we are booksellers' agents," he said. "When we bring out a book ourselves, we only deal in well-known names; and we only take serious literature besides – history and epitomes."

"But my book is very serious. It is an attempt to set the struggle between Catholics and Calvinists in its true light; the Catholics were supporters of absolute monarchy, and the Protestants for a republic."

"M. Vidal!" shouted an assistant. Vidal fled.

"I don't say, sir, that your book is not a masterpiece," replied Porchon, with scanty civility, "but we only deal in books that are ready printed. Go and see somebody that buys manuscripts. There is old Doguereau in the Rue du Coq, near the Louvre, he is in the romance line. If you had only spoken sooner, you might have seen Pollet, a competitor of Doguereau and of the publisher in the Wooden Galleries."

"I have a volume of poetry – "

"M. Porchon!" somebody shouted.

"*Poetry*!" Porchon exclaimed angrily. "For what do you take me?" he added, laughing in Lucien's face. And he dived into the regions of the back shop.

Lucien went back across the Pont Neuf absorbed in reflection. From all that he understood of this mercantile dialect, it appeared that books, like cotton nightcaps, were to be regarded as articles of merchandise to be sold dear and bought cheap.

"I have made a mistake," said Lucien to himself; but, all the same, this rough-and-ready practical aspect of literature made an impression upon him.

In the Rue du Coq he stopped in front of a modest-looking shop, which he had passed before. He saw the inscription DOGUEREAU, BOOKSELLER, painted above it in yellow letters on a green ground, and remembered that he had seen the name at the foot of the title-page of several novels at Blosse's reading-room. In he went, not without the inward trepidation

which a man of any imagination feels at the prospect of a battle. Inside the shop he discovered an odd-looking old man, one of the queer characters of the trade in the days of the Empire.

Doguereau wore a black coat with vast square skirts, when fashion required swallow-tail coats. His waistcoat was of some cheap material, a checked pattern of many colors; a steel chain, with a copper key attached to it, hung from his fob and dangled down over a roomy pair of black nether garments. The booksellers' watch must have been the size of an onion. Iron-gray ribbed stockings, and shoes with silver buckles completed is costume. The old man's head was bare, and ornamented with a fringe of grizzled locks, quite poetically scanty. "Old Doguereau," as Porchon styled him, was dressed half like a professor of belles-lettres as to his trousers and shoes, half like a tradesman with respect to the variegated waistcoat, the stockings, and the watch; and the same odd mixture appeared in the man himself. He united the magisterial, dogmatic air, and the hollow countenance of the professor of rhetoric with the sharp eyes, suspicious mouth, and vague uneasiness of the bookseller.

"M. Doguereau?" asked Lucien.

"That is my name, sir."

"You are very young," remarked the bookseller.

"My age, sir, has nothing to do with the matter."

"True," and the old bookseller took up the manuscript. "Ah, begad! *The Archer of Charles IX.*, a good title. Let us see now, young man, just tell me your subject in a word or two."

"It is a historical work, sir, in the style of Scott. The character of the struggle between the Protestants and Catholics is depicted as a struggle between two opposed systems of government, in which the throne is seriously endangered. I have taken the Catholic side."

"Eh! but you have ideas, young man. Very well, I will read your book, I promise you. I would rather have had something more in Mrs. Radcliffe's style; but if you are industrious, if you have some notion of style, conceptions, ideas, and the art of telling a story, I don't ask better than to be of use to you. What do we want but good manuscripts?"

"When can I come back?"

"I am going into the country this evening; I shall be back again the day after to-morrow. I shall have read your manuscript by that time; and if it suits me, we might come to terms that very day."

Seeing his acquaintance so easy, Lucien was inspired with the unlucky idea of bringing the *Marguerites* upon the scene.

"I have a volume of poetry as well, sir – " he began.

"Oh! you are a poet! Then I don't want your romance," and the old man handed back the manuscript. "The rhyming fellows come to grief when they try their hands at prose. In prose you can't use words that mean nothing; you absolutely must say something."

"But Sir Walter Scott, sir, wrote poetry as well as – "

"That is true," said Doguereau, relenting. He guessed that the young fellow before him was poor, and kept the manuscript.

"Where do you live? I will come and see you."

Lucien, all unsuspicious of the idea at the back of the old man's head, gave his address; he did not see that he had to do with a bookseller of the old school, a survival of the eighteenth century, when booksellers tried to keep Voltaires and Montesquieus starving in garrets under lock and key.

"The Latin Quarter. I am coming back that very way," said Doguereau, when he had read the address.

"Good man!" thought Lucien, as he took his leave. "So I have met with a friend to young authors, a man of taste who knows something. That is the kind of man for me! It is just as I said to David – talent soon makes its way in Paris."

Lucien went home again happy and light of heart; he dreamed of glory. He gave not another thought to the ominous words which fell on his ear as he stood by the counter in Vidal and Porchon's shop; he beheld himself the richer by twelve hundred francs at least. Twelve hundred francs! It meant a year in Paris, a whole year of preparation for the work that he meant to do. What plans he built on that hope! What sweet dreams, what visions of a life established on a basis of work! Mentally he found new quarters, and settled himself in them; it would not have taken much to set him making a purchase or two. He could only stave off impatience by constant reading at Blosse's.

Two days later old Doguereau come to the lodgings of his budding Sir Walter Scott. He was struck with the pains which Lucien had taken with the style of this his first work, delighted

with the strong contrasts of character sanctioned by the epoch, and surprised at the spirited imagination which a young writer always displays in the scheming of a first plot – he had not been spoiled, thought old Daddy Doguereau. He had made up his mind to give a thousand francs for *The Archer of Charles IX.*; he would buy the copyright out and out, and bind Lucien by an engagement for several books, but when he came to look at the house, the old fox thought better of it.

"A young fellow that lives here has none but simple tastes," said he to himself; "he is fond of study, fond of work; I need not give more than eight hundred francs."

"Fourth floor," answered the landlady, when he asked for M. Lucien de Rubempre. The old bookseller, peering up, saw nothing but the sky above the fourth floor.

"This young fellow," thought he, "is a good-looking lad; one might go so far as to say that he is very handsome. If he were to make too much money, he would only fall into dissipated ways, and then he would not work. In the interests of us both, I shall only offer six hundred francs, in coin though, not paper."

He climbed the stairs and gave three raps at the door. Lucien came to open it. The room was forlorn in its bareness. A bowl of milk and a penny roll stood on the table. The destitution of genius made an impression on Daddy Doguereau.

"Let him preserve these simple habits of life, this frugality, these modest requirements," thought he. – Aloud he said: "It is a pleasure to me to see you. Thus, sir, lived Jean-Jacques, whom

you resemble in more ways than one. Amid such surroundings the fire of genius shines brightly; good work is done in such rooms as these. This is how men of letters should work, instead of living riotously in cafes and restaurants, wasting their time and talent and our money."

He sat down.

"Your romance is not bad, young man. I was a professor of rhetoric once; I know French history, there are some capital things in it. You have a future before you, in fact."

"Oh! sir."

"No; I tell you so. We may do business together. I will buy your romance."

Lucien's heart swelled and throbbed with gladness. He was about to enter the world of literature; he should see himself in print at last.

"I will give you four hundred francs," continued Doguereau in honeyed accents, and he looked at Lucien with an air which seemed to betoken an effort of generosity.

"The volume?" queried Lucien.

"For the romance," said Doguereau, heedless of Lucien's surprise. "In ready money," he added; "and you shall undertake to write two books for me every year for six years. If the first book is out of print in six months, I will give you six hundred francs for the others. So, if you write two books each year, you will be making a hundred francs a month; you will have a sure income, you will be well off. There are some authors whom I

only pay three hundred francs for a romance; I give two hundred for translations of English books. Such prices would have been exorbitant in the old days."

"Sir, we cannot possibly come to an understanding. Give me back my manuscript, I beg," said Lucien, in a cold chill.

"Here it is," said the old bookseller. "You know nothing of business, sir. Before an author's first book can appear, a publisher is bound to sink sixteen hundred francs on the paper and the printing of it. It is easier to write a romance than to find all that money. I have a hundred romances in manuscript, and I have not a hundred and sixty thousand francs in my cash box, alas! I have not made so much in all these twenty years that I have been a bookseller. So you don't make a fortune by printing romances, you see. Vidal and Porchon only take them of us on conditions that grow harder and harder day by day. You have only your time to lose, while I am obliged to disburse two thousand francs. If we fail, *habent sua fata libelli*, I lose two thousand francs; while, as for you, you simply hurl an ode at the thick-headed public. When you have thought over this that I have the honor of telling you, you will come back to me. —*You will come back to me*!" he asserted authoritatively, by way of reply to a scornful gesture made involuntarily by Lucien. "So far from finding a publisher obliging enough to risk two thousand francs for an unknown writer, you will not find a publisher's clerk that will trouble himself to look through your screed. Now that I have read it I can point out a good many slips in grammar. You have put *observer*

for *faire observer* and *malgre que*. *Malgre* is a preposition, and requires an object."

Lucien appeared to be humiliated.

"When I see you again, you will have lost a hundred francs," he added. "I shall only give a hundred crowns."

With that he rose and took his leave. On the threshold he said, "If you had not something in you, and a future before you; if I did not take an interest in studious youth, I should not have made you such a handsome offer. A hundred francs per month! Think of it! After all, a romance in a drawer is not eating its head off like a horse in a stable, nor will it find you in victuals either, and that's a fact."

Lucien snatched up his manuscript and dashed it on the floor.

"I would rather burn it, sir!" he exclaimed.

"You have a poet's head," returned his senior.

Lucien devoured his bread and supped his bowl of milk, then he went downstairs. His room was not large enough for him; he was turning round and round in it like a lion in a cage at the Jardin des Plantes.

At the Bibliotheque Saint-Genevieve, whither Lucien was going, he had come to know a stranger by sight; a young man of five-and-twenty or thereabouts, working with the sustained industry which nothing can disturb nor distract, the sign by which your genuine literary worker is known. Evidently the young man had been reading there for some time, for the librarian and attendants all knew him and paid him special attention; the

librarian would even allow him to take away books, with which Lucien saw him return in the morning. In the stranger student he recognized a brother in penury and hope.

Pale-faced and slight and thin, with a fine forehead hidden by masses of black, tolerably unkempt hair, there was something about him that attracted indifferent eyes: it was a vague resemblance which he bore to portraits of the young Bonaparte, engraved from Robert Lefebvre's picture. That engraving is a poem of melancholy intensity, of suppressed ambition, of power working below the surface. Study the face carefully, and you will discover genius in it and discretion, and all the subtlety and greatness of the man. The portrait has speaking eyes like a woman's; they look out, greedy of space, craving difficulties to vanquish. Even if the name of Bonaparte were not written beneath it, you would gaze long at that face.

Lucien's young student, the incarnation of this picture, usually wore footed trousers, shoes with thick soles to them, an overcoat of coarse cloth, a black cravat, a waistcoat of some gray-and-white material buttoned to the chin, and a cheap hat. Contempt for superfluity in dress was visible in his whole person. Lucien also discovered that the mysterious stranger with that unmistakable stamp which genius sets upon the forehead of its slaves was one of Flicoteaux's most regular customers; he ate to live, careless of the fare which appeared to be familiar to him, and drank water. Wherever Lucien saw him, at the library or at Flicoteaux's, there was a dignity in his manner, springing

doubtless from the consciousness of a purpose that filled his life, a dignity which made him unapproachable. He had the expression of a thinker, meditation dwelt on the fine nobly carved brow. You could tell from the dark bright eyes, so clear-sighted and quick to observe, that their owner was wont to probe to the bottom of things. He gesticulated very little, his demeanor was grave. Lucien felt an involuntary respect for him.

Many times already the pair had looked at each other at the Bibliotheque or at Flicoteaux's; many times they had been on the point of speaking, but neither of them had ventured so far as yet. The silent young man went off to the further end of the library, on the side at right angles to the Place de la Sorbonne, and Lucien had no opportunity of making his acquaintance, although he felt drawn to a worker whom he knew by indescribable tokens for a character of no common order. Both, as they came to know afterwards, were unsophisticated and shy, given to fears which cause a pleasurable emotion to solitary creatures. Perhaps they never would have been brought into communication if they had not come across each other that day of Lucien's disaster; for as Lucien turned into the Rue des Gres, he saw the student coming away from the Bibliotheque Sainte-Genevieve.

"The library is closed; I don't know why, monsieur," said he.

Tears were standing in Lucien's eyes; he expressed his thanks by one of those gestures that speak more eloquently than words, and unlock hearts at once when two men meet in youth. They went together along the Rue des Gres towards the Rue de la

Harpe.

"As that is so, I shall go to the Luxembourg for a walk," said Lucien. "When you have come out, it is not easy to settle down to work again."

"No; one's ideas will not flow in the proper current," remarked the stranger. "Something seems to have annoyed you, monsieur?"

"I have just had a queer adventure," said Lucien, and he told the history of his visit to the Quai, and gave an account of his subsequent dealings with the old bookseller. He gave his name and said a word or two of his position. In one month or thereabouts he had spent sixty francs on his board, thirty for lodging, twenty more francs in going to the theatre, and ten at Blosse's reading room – one hundred and twenty francs in all, and now he had just a hundred and twenty francs in hand.

"Your story is mine, monsieur, and the story of ten or twelve hundred young fellows besides who come from the country to Paris every year. There are others even worse off than we are. Do you see that theatre?" he continued, indicating the turrets of the Odeon. "There came one day to lodge in one of the houses in the square a man of talent who had fallen into the lowest depths of poverty. He was married, in addition to the misfortunes which we share with him, to a wife whom he loved; and the poorer or the richer, as you will, by two children. He was burdened with debt, but he put his faith in his pen. He took a comedy in five acts to the Odeon; the comedy was accepted, the management arranged to bring it out, the actors learned their

parts, the stage manager urged on the rehearsals. Five several bits of luck, five dramas to be performed in real life, and far harder tasks than the writing of a five-act play. The poor author lodged in a garret; you can see the place from here. He drained his last resources to live until the first representation; his wife pawned her clothes, they all lived on dry bread. On the day of the final rehearsal, the household owed fifty francs in the Quarter to the baker, the milkwoman, and the porter. The author had only the strictly necessary clothes – a coat, a shirt, trousers, a waistcoat, and a pair of boots. He felt sure of his success; he kissed his wife. The end of their troubles was at hand. 'At last! There is nothing against us now,' cried he. – 'Yes, there is fire,' said his wife; 'look, the Odeon is on fire!' – The Odeon was on fire, monsieur. So do not you complain. You have clothes, you have neither wife nor child, you have a hundred and twenty francs for emergencies in your pocket, and you owe no one a penny. – Well, the piece went through a hundred and fifty representations at the Theatre Louvois. The King allowed the author a pension. 'Genius is patience,' as Buffon said. And patience after all is a man's nearest approach to Nature's processes of creation. What is Art, monsieur, but Nature concentrated?"

By this time the young men were striding along the walks of the Luxembourg, and in no long time Lucien learned the name of the stranger who was doing his best to administer comfort. That name has since grown famous. Daniel d'Arthez is one of the most illustrious of living men of letters; one of the rare few who show

us an example of "a noble gift with a noble nature combined," to quote a poet's fine thought.

"There is no cheap route to greatness," Daniel went on in his kind voice. "The works of Genius are watered with tears. The gift that is in you, like an existence in the physical world, passes through childhood and its maladies. Nature sweeps away sickly or deformed creatures, and Society rejects an imperfectly developed talent. Any man who means to rise above the rest must make ready for a struggle and be undaunted by difficulties. A great writer is a martyr who does not die; that is all. – There is the stamp of genius on your forehead," d'Arthez continued, enveloping Lucien by a glance; "but unless you have within you the will of genius, unless you are gifted with angelic patience, unless, no matter how far the freaks of Fate have set you from your destined goal, you can find the way to your Infinite as the turtles in the Indies find their way to the ocean, you had better give up at once."

"Then do you yourself expect these ordeals?" asked Lucien.

"Trials of every kind, slander and treachery, and effrontery and cunning, the rivals who act unfairly, and the keen competition of the literary market," his companion said resignedly. "What is a first loss, if only your work was good?"

"Will you look at mine and give me your opinion?" asked Lucien.

"So be it," said d'Arthez. "I am living in the Rue des Quatre-Vents. Desplein, one of the most illustrious men of genius

in our time, the greatest surgeon that the world has known, once endured the martyrdom of early struggles with the first difficulties of a glorious career in the same house. I think of that every night, and the thought gives me the stock of courage that I need every morning. I am living in the very room where, like Rousseau, he had no Theresa. Come in an hour's time. I shall be in."

The poets grasped each other's hands with a rush of melancholy and tender feeling inexpressible in words, and went their separate ways; Lucien to fetch his manuscript, Daniel d'Arthez to pawn his watch and buy a couple of faggots. The weather was cold, and his new-found friend should find a fire in his room.

Lucien was punctual. He noticed at once that the house was of an even poorer class than the Hotel de Cluny. A staircase gradually became visible at the further end of a dark passage; he mounted to the fifth floor, and found d'Arthez's room.

A bookcase of dark-stained wood, with rows of labeled cardboard cases on the shelves, stood between the two crazy windows. A gaunt, painted wooden bedstead, of the kind seen in school dormitories, a night-table, picked up cheaply somewhere, and a couple of horsehair armchairs, filled the further end of the room. The wall-paper, a Highland plaid pattern, was glazed over with the grime of years. Between the window and the grate stood a long table littered with papers, and opposite the fireplace there was a cheap mahogany chest of drawers. A second-hand

carpet covered the floor – a necessary luxury, for it saved firing. A common office armchair, cushioned with leather, crimson once, but now hoary with wear, was drawn up to the table. Add half-a-dozen rickety chairs, and you have a complete list of the furniture. Lucien noticed an old-fashioned candle-sconce for a card-table, with an adjustable screen attached, and wondered to see four wax candles in the sockets. D'Arthez explained that he could not endure the smell of tallow, a little trait denoting great delicacy of sense perception, and the exquisite sensibility which accompanies it.

The reading lasted for seven hours. Daniel listened conscientiously, forbearing to interrupt by word or comment – one of the rarest proofs of good taste in a listener.

"Well?" queried Lucien, laying the manuscript on the chimney-piece.

"You have made a good start on the right way," d'Arthez answered judicially, "but you must go over your work again. You must strike out a different style for yourself if you do not mean to ape Sir Walter Scott, for you have taken him for your model. You begin, for instance, as he begins, with long conversations to introduce your characters, and only when they have said their say does description and action follow.

"This opposition, necessary in all work of a dramatic kind, comes last. Just put the terms of the problem the other way round. Give descriptions, to which our language lends itself so admirably, instead of diffuse dialogue, magnificent in Scott's

work, but colorless in your own. Lead naturally up to your dialogue. Plunge straight into the action. Treat your subject from different points of view, sometimes in a side-light, sometimes retrospectively; vary your methods, in fact, to diversify your work. You may be original while adapting the Scots novelist's form of dramatic dialogue to French history. There is no passion in Scott's novels; he ignores passion, or perhaps it was interdicted by the hypocritical manners of his country. Woman for him is duty incarnate. His heroines, with possibly one or two exceptions, are all alike; he has drawn them all from the same model, as painters say. They are, every one of them, descended from Clarissa Harlowe. And returning continually, as he did, to the same idea of woman, how could he do otherwise than produce a single type, varied only by degrees of vividness in the coloring? Woman brings confusion into Society through passion. Passion gives infinite possibilities. Therefore depict passion; you have one great resource open to you, foregone by the great genius for the sake of providing family reading for prudish England. In France you have the charming sinner, the brightly-colored life of Catholicism, contrasted with sombre Calvinistic figures on a background of the times when passions ran higher than at any other period of our history.

"Every epoch which has left authentic records since the time of Charles the Great calls for at least one romance. Some require four or five; the periods of Louis XIV., of Henry IV., of Francis I., for instance. You would give us in this way a picturesque

history of France, with the costumes and furniture, the houses and their interiors, and domestic life, giving us the spirit of the time instead of a laborious narration of ascertained facts. Then there is further scope for originality. You can remove some of the popular delusions which disfigure the memories of most of our kings. Be bold enough in this first work of yours to rehabilitate the great magnificent figure of Catherine, whom you have sacrificed to the prejudices which still cloud her name. And finally, paint Charles IX. for us as he really was, and not as Protestant writers have made him. Ten years of persistent work, and fame and fortune will be yours."

By this time it was nine o'clock; Lucien followed the example set in secret by his future friend by asking him to dine at Eldon's, and spent twelve francs at that restaurant. During the dinner Daniel admitted Lucien into the secret of his hopes and studies. Daniel d'Arthez would not allow that any writer could attain to a pre-eminent rank without a profound knowledge of metaphysics. He was engaged in ransacking the spoils of ancient and modern philosophy, and in the assimilation of it all; he would be like Moliere, a profound philosopher first, and a writer of comedies afterwards. He was studying the world of books and the living world about him – thought and fact. His friends were learned naturalists, young doctors of medicine, political writers and artists, a number of earnest students full of promise.

D'Arthez earned a living by conscientious and ill-paid work; he wrote articles for encyclopaedias, dictionaries of biography

and natural science, doing just enough to enable him to live while he followed his own bent, and neither more nor less. He had a piece of imaginative work on hand, undertaken solely for the sake of studying the resources of language, an important psychological study in the form of a novel, unfinished as yet, for d'Arthez took it up or laid it down as the humor took him, and kept it for days of great distress. D'Arthez's revelations of himself were made very simply, but to Lucien he seemed like an intellectual giant; and by eleven o'clock, when they left the restaurant, he began to feel a sudden, warm friendship for this nature, unconscious of its loftiness, this unostentatious worth.

Lucien took d'Arthez's advice unquestioningly, and followed it out to the letter. The most magnificent palaces of fancy had been suddenly flung open to him by a nobly-gifted mind, matured already by thought and critical examinations undertaken for their own sake, not for publication, but for the solitary thinker's own satisfaction. The burning coal had been laid on the lips of the poet of Angouleme, a word uttered by a hard student in Paris had fallen upon ground prepared to receive it in the provincial. Lucien set about recasting his work.

In his gladness at finding in the wilderness of Paris a nature abounding in generous and sympathetic feeling, the distinguished provincial did, as all young creatures hungering for affection are wont to do; he fastened, like a chronic disease, upon this one friend that he had found. He called for D'Arthez on his way to the Bibliotheque, walked with him on fine days in the Luxembourg

Gardens, and went with his friend every evening as far as the door of his lodging-house after sitting next to him at Flicoteaux's. He pressed close to his friend's side as a soldier might keep by a comrade on the frozen Russian plains.

During those early days of his acquaintance, he noticed, not without chagrin, that his presence imposed a certain restraint on the circle of Daniel's intimates. The talk of those superior beings of whom d'Arthez spoke to him with such concentrated enthusiasm kept within the bounds of a reserve but little in keeping with the evident warmth of their friendships. At these times Lucien discreetly took his leave, a feeling of curiosity mingling with the sense of something like pain at the ostracism to which he was subjected by these strangers, who all addressed each other by their Christian names. Each one of them, like d'Arthez, bore the stamp of genius upon his forehead.

After some private opposition, overcome by d'Arthez without Lucien's knowledge, the newcomer was at length judged worthy to make one of the *cenacle* of lofty thinkers. Henceforward he was to be one of a little group of young men who met almost every evening in d'Arthez's room, united by the keenest sympathies and by the earnestness of their intellectual life. They all foresaw a great writer in d'Arthez; they looked upon him as their chief since the loss of one of their number, a mystical genius, one of the most extraordinary intellects of the age. This former leader had gone back to his province for reasons on which it serves no purpose to enter, but Lucien often heard them

speak of this absent friend as “Louis.” Several of the group were destined to fall by the way; but others, like d’Arthez, have since won all the fame that was their due. A few details as to the circle will readily explain Lucien’s strong feeling of interest and curiosity.

One among those who still survive was Horace Bianchon, then a house-student at the Hotel-Dieu; later, a shining light at the Ecole de Paris, and now so well known that it is needless to give any description of his appearance, genius, or character.

Next came Leon Giraud, that profound philosopher and bold theorist, turning all systems inside out, criticising, expressing, and formulating, dragging them all to the feet of his idol – Humanity; great even in his errors, for his honesty ennobled his mistakes. An intrepid toiler, a conscientious scholar, he became the acknowledged head of a school of moralists and politicians. Time alone can pronounce upon the merits of his theories; but if his convictions have drawn him into paths in which none of his old comrades tread, none the less he is still their faithful friend.

Art was represented by Joseph Bridau, one of the best painters among the younger men. But for a too impressionable nature, which made havoc of Joseph’s heart, he might have continued the traditions of the great Italian masters, though, for that matter, the last word has not yet been said concerning him. He combines Roman outline with Venetian color; but love is fatal to his work, love not merely transfixes his heart, but sends his arrow through the brain, deranges the course of his life, and sets the victim

describing the strangest zigzags. If the mistress of the moment is too kind or too cruel, Joseph will send into the Exhibition sketches where the drawing is clogged with color, or pictures finished under the stress of some imaginary woe, in which he gave his whole attention to the drawing, and left the color to take care of itself. He is a constant disappointment to his friends and the public; yet Hoffmann would have worshiped him for his daring experiments in the realms of art. When Bridau is wholly himself he is admirable, and as praise is sweet to him, his disgust is great when one praises the failures in which he alone discovers all that is lacking in the eyes of the public. He is whimsical to the last degree. His friends have seen him destroy a finished picture because, in his eyes, it looked too smooth. "It is overdone," he would say; "it is niggling work."

With his eccentric, yet lofty nature, with a nervous organization and all that it entails of torment and delight, the craving for perfection becomes morbid. Intellectually he is akin to Sterne, though he is not a literary worker. There is an indescribable piquancy about his epigrams and sallies of thought. He is eloquent, he knows how to love, but the uncertainty that appears in his execution is a part of the very nature of the man. The brotherhood loved him for the very qualities which the philistine would style defects.

Last among the living comes Fulgence Ridal. No writer of our times possesses more of the exuberant spirit of pure comedy than this poet, careless of fame, who will fling his more commonplace

productions to theatrical managers, and keep the most charming scenes in the seraglio of his brain for himself and his friends. Of the public he asks just sufficient to secure his independence, and then declines to do anything more. Indolent and prolific as Rossini, compelled, like great poet-comedians, like Moliere and Rabelais, to see both sides of everything, and all that is to be said both for and against, he is a sceptic, ready to laugh at all things. Fulgence Ridal is a great practical philosopher. His worldly wisdom, his genius for observation, his contempt for fame ("fuss," as he calls it) have not seared a kind heart. He is as energetic on behalf of another as he is careless where his own interests are concerned; and if he bestirs himself, it is for a friend. Living up to his Rabelaisian mask, he is no enemy to good cheer, though he never goes out of his way to find it; he is melancholy and gay. His friends dubbed him the "Dog of the Regiment." You could have no better portrait of the man than his nickname.

Three more of the band, at least as remarkable as the friends who have just been sketched in outline, were destined to fall by the way. Of these, Meyraux was the first. Meyraux died after stirring up the famous controversy between Cuvier and Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, a great question which divided the whole scientific world into two opposite camps, with these two men of equal genius as leaders. This befell some months before the death of the champion of rigorous analytical science as opposed to the pantheism of one who is still living to bear an honored name in Germany. Meyraux was the friend of that "Louis" of whom death

was so soon to rob the intellectual world.

With these two, both marked by death, and unknown to-day in spite of their wide knowledge and their genius, stands a third, Michel Chrestien, the great Republican thinker, who dreamed of European Federation, and had no small share in bringing about the Saint-Simonian movement of 1830. A politician of the calibre of Saint-Just and Danton, but simple, meek as a maid, and brimful of illusions and loving-kindness; the owner of a singing voice which would have sent Mozart, or Weber, or Rossini into ecstasies, for his singing of certain songs of Beranger's could intoxicate the heart in you with poetry, or hope, or love – Michel Chrestien, poor as Lucien, poor as Daniel d'Arthez, as all the rest of his friends, gained a living with the haphazard indifference of a Diogenes. He indexed lengthy works, he drew up prospectuses for booksellers, and kept his doctrines to himself, as the grave keeps the secrets of the dead. Yet the gay bohemian of intellectual life, the great statesman who might have changed the face of the world, fell as a private soldier in the cloister of Saint-Merri; some shopkeeper's bullet struck down one of the noblest creatures that ever trod French soil, and Michel Chrestien died for other doctrines than his own. His Federation scheme was more dangerous to the aristocracy of Europe than the Republican propaganda; it was more feasible and less extravagant than the hideous doctrines of indefinite liberty proclaimed by the young madcaps who assume the character of heirs of the Convention. All who knew the noble plebeian

wept for him; there is not one of them but remembers, and often remembers, a great obscure politician.

Esteem and friendship kept the peace between the extremes of hostile opinion and conviction represented in the brotherhood. Daniel d'Arthez came of a good family in Picardy. His belief in the Monarchy was quite as strong as Michel Chrestien's faith in European Federation. Fulgence Ridal scoffed at Leon Giraud's philosophical doctrines, while Giraud himself prophesied for d'Arthez's benefit the approaching end of Christianity and the extinction of the institution of the family. Michel Chrestien, a believer in the religion of Christ, the divine lawgiver, who taught the equality of men, would defend the immortality of the soul from Bianchon's scalpel, for Horace Bianchon was before all things an analyst.

There was plenty of discussion, but no bickering. Vanity was not engaged, for the speakers were also the audience. They would talk over their work among themselves and take counsel of each other with the delightful openness of youth. If the matter in hand was serious, the opponent would leave his own position to enter into his friend's point of view; and being an impartial judge in a matter outside his own sphere, would prove the better helper; envy, the hideous treasure of disappointment, abortive talent, failure, and mortified vanity, was quite unknown among them. All of them, moreover, were going their separate ways. For these reasons, Lucien and others admitted to their society felt at their ease in it. Wherever you find real talent, you will find frank good

fellowship and sincerity, and no sort of pretension, the wit that caresses the intellect and never is aimed at self-love.

When the first nervousness, caused by respect, wore off, it was unspeakably pleasant to make one of this elect company of youth. Familiarity did not exclude in each a consciousness of his own value, nor a profound esteem for his neighbor; and finally, as every member of the circle felt that he could afford to receive or to give, no one made a difficulty of accepting. Talk was unflagging, full of charm, and ranging over the most varied topics; words light as arrows sped to the mark. There was a strange contrast between the dire material poverty in which the young men lived and the splendor of their intellectual wealth. They looked upon the practical problems of existence simply as matter for friendly jokes. The cold weather happened to set in early that year. Five of d'Arthez's friends appeared one day, each concealing firewood under his cloak; the same idea had occurred to the five, as it sometimes happens that all the guests at a picnic are inspired with the notion of bringing a pie as their contribution.

All of them were gifted with the moral beauty which reacts upon the physical form, and, no less than work and vigils, overlays a youthful face with a shade of divine gold; purity of life and the fire of thought had brought refinement and regularity into features somewhat pinched and rugged. The poet's amplitude of brow was a striking characteristic common to them all; the bright, sparkling eyes told of cleanliness of life. The hardships

of penury, when they were felt at all, were born so gaily and embraced with such enthusiasm, that they had left no trace to mar the serenity peculiar to the faces of the young who have no grave errors laid to their charge as yet, who have not stooped to any of the base compromises wrung from impatience of poverty by the strong desire to succeed. The temptation to use any means to this end is the greater since that men of letters are lenient with bad faith and extend an easy indulgence to treachery.

There is an element in friendship which doubles its charm and renders it indissoluble – a sense of certainty which is lacking in love. These young men were sure of themselves and of each other; the enemy of one was the enemy of all; the most urgent personal considerations would have been shattered if they had clashed with the sacred solidarity of their fellowship. All alike incapable of disloyalty, they could oppose a formidable No to any accusation brought against the absent and defend them with perfect confidence. With a like nobility of nature and strength of feeling, it was possible to think and speak freely on all matters of intellectual or scientific interest; hence the honesty of their friendships, the gaiety of their talk, and with this intellectual freedom of the community there was no fear of being misunderstood; they stood upon no ceremony with each other; they shared their troubles and joys, and gave thought and sympathy from full hearts. The charming delicacy of feeling which makes the tale of *Deux Amis* a treasury for great souls, was the rule of their daily life. It may be imagined, therefore, that

their standard of requirements was not an easy one; they were too conscious of their worth, too well aware of their happiness, to care to trouble their life with the admixture of a new and unknown element.

This federation of interests and affection lasted for twenty years without a collision or disappointment. Death alone could thin the numbers of the noble Pleiades, taking first Louis Lambert, later Meyraux and Michel Chrestien.

When Michel Chrestien fell in 1832 his friends went, in spite of the perils of the step, to find his body at Saint-Merri; and Horace Bianchon, Daniel d'Arthez, Leon Giraud, Joseph Bridau, and Fulgence Ridal performed the last duties to the dead, between two political fires. By night they buried their beloved in the cemetery of Pere-Lachaise; Horace Bianchon, undaunted by the difficulties, cleared them away one after another – it was he indeed who besought the authorities for permission to bury the fallen insurgent and confessed to his old friendship with the dead Federalist. The little group of friends present at the funeral with those five great men will never forget that touching scene.

As you walk in the trim cemetery you will see a grave purchased in perpetuity, a grass-covered mound with a dark wooden cross above it, and the name in large red letters – MICHEL CHRESTIEN. There is no other monument like it. The friends thought to pay a tribute to the sternly simple nature of the man by the simplicity of the record of his death.

So, in that chilly garret, the fairest dreams of friendship were

realized. These men were brothers leading lives of intellectual effort, loyally helping each other, making no reservations, not even of their worst thoughts; men of vast acquirements, natures tried in the crucible of poverty. Once admitted as an equal among such elect souls, Lucien represented beauty and poetry. They admired the sonnets which he read to them; they would ask him for a sonnet as he would ask Michel Chrestien for a song. And, in the desert of Paris, Lucien found an oasis in the Rue des Quatre-Vents.

At the beginning of October, Lucien had spent the last of his money on a little firewood; he was half-way through the task of recasting his work, the most strenuous of all toil, and he was penniless. As for Daniel d'Arthez, burning blocks of spent tan, and facing poverty like a hero, not a word of complaint came from him; he was as sober as any elderly spinster, and methodical as a miser. This courage called out Lucien's courage; he had only newly come into the circle, and shrank with invincible repugnance from speaking of his straits. One morning he went out, manuscript in hand, and reached the Rue du Coq; he would sell *The Archer of Charles IX*. to Doguereau; but Doguereau was out. Lucien little knew how indulgent great natures can be to the weaknesses of others. Every one of the friends had thought of the peculiar troubles besetting the poetic temperament, of the prostration which follows upon the struggle, when the soul has been overwrought by the contemplation of that nature which it is the task of art to reproduce. And strong as they were to endure

their own ills, they felt keenly for Lucien's distress; they guessed that his stock of money was failing; and after all the pleasant evenings spent in friendly talk and deep meditations, after the poetry, the confidences, the bold flights over the fields of thought or into the far future of the nations, yet another trait was to prove how little Lucien had understood these new friends of his.

"Lucien, dear fellow," said Daniel, "you did not dine at Flicoteaux's yesterday, and we know why."

Lucien could not keep back the overflowing tears.

"You showed a want of confidence in us," said Michel Chrestien; "we shall chalk that up over the chimney, and when we have scored ten we will – "

"We have all of us found a bit of extra work," said Bianchon; "for my own part, I have been looking after a rich patient for Desplein; d'Arthez has written an article for the *Revue Encyclopedique*; Chrestien thought of going out to sing in the Champs Elysees of an evening with a pocket-handkerchief and four candles, but he found a pamphlet to write instead for a man who has a mind to go into politics, and gave his employer six hundred francs worth of Machiavelli; Leon Giraud borrowed fifty francs of his publisher, Joseph sold one or two sketches; and Fulgence's piece was given on Sunday, and there was a full house."

"Here are two hundred francs," said Daniel, "and let us say no more about it."

"Why, if he is not going to hug us all as if we had done

something extraordinary!" cried Chrestien.

Lucien, meanwhile, had written to the home circle. His letter was a masterpiece of sensibility and goodwill, as well as a sharp cry wrung from him by distress. The answers which he received the next day will give some idea of the delight that Lucien took in this living encyclopedia of angelic spirits, each of whom bore the stamp of the art or science which he followed: —

David Sechard to Lucien.

"MY DEAR LUCIEN, – Enclosed herewith is a bill at ninety days, payable to your order, for two hundred francs. You can draw on M. Metivier, paper merchant, our Paris correspondent in the Rue Serpente. My good Lucien, we have absolutely nothing. Eve has undertaken the charge of the printing-house, and works at her task with such devotion, patience, and industry, that I bless heaven for giving me such an angel for a wife. She herself says that it is impossible to send you the least help. But I think, my friend now that you are started in so promising a way, with such great and noble hearts for your companions, that you can hardly fail to reach the greatness to which you were born, aided as you are by intelligence almost divine in Daniel d'Arthez and Michel Chrestien and Leon Giraud, and counseled by Meyraux and Bianchon and Ridal, whom we have come to know through your dear letter. So I have drawn this bill without Eve's knowledge, and I will contrive somehow to meet it when the time comes. Keep on your way, Lucien; it is rough, but it will be glorious. I can bear anything but the thought of you sinking into the sloughs of

Paris, of which I saw so much. Have sufficient strength of mind to do as you are doing, and keep out of scrapes and bad company, wild young fellows and men of letters of a certain stamp, whom I learned to take at their just valuation when I lived in Paris. Be a worthy compeer of the divine spirits whom we have learned to love through you. Your life will soon meet with its reward. Farewell, dearest brother; you have sent transports of joy to my heart. I did not expect such courage of you.

"DAVID."

Eve Sechard to Lucien.

"DEAR, – your letter made all of us cry. As for the noble hearts to whom your good angel surely led you, tell them that a mother and a poor young wife will pray for them night and morning; and if the most fervent prayers can reach the Throne of God, surely they will bring blessings upon you all. Their names are engraved upon my heart. Ah! some day I shall see your friends; I will go to Paris, if I have to walk the whole way, to thank them for their friendship for you, for to me the thought has been like balm to smarting wounds. We are working like day laborers here, dear. This husband of mine, the unknown great man whom I love more and more every day, as I discover moment by moment the wealth of his nature, leaves the printing-house more and more to me. Why, I guess. Our poverty, yours, and ours, and our mother's, is heartbreaking to him. Our adored David is a Prometheus gnawed by a vulture, a haggard, sharp-beaked regret. As for himself, noble fellow, he scarcely thinks of himself; he is hoping to make a fortune for *us*. He spends his whole time in experiments in paper-making; he begged me to take his place and look after the business, and gives me as much help as his preoccupation allows. Alas! I shall be a mother soon. That should have been a crowning joy; but as things are, it saddens me. Poor mother! she has grown young again; she has found strength to go back to her tiring

nursing. We should be happy if it were not for these money cares. Old Father Sechard will not give his son a farthing. David went over to see if he could borrow a little for you, for we were in despair over your letter. 'I know Lucien,' David said; 'he will lose his head and do something rash.' – I gave him a good scolding. 'My brother disappoint us in any way!' I told him, 'Lucien knows that I should die of sorrow.' – Mother and I have pawned a few things; David does not know about it, mother will redeem them as soon as she has made a little money. In this way we have managed to put together a hundred francs, which I am sending you by the coach. If I did not answer your last letter, do not remember it against me, dear; we were working all night just then. I have been working like a man. Oh, I had no idea that I was so strong!

"Mme. de Bargeton is a heartless woman; she has no soul; even if she cared for you no longer, she owed it to herself to use her influence for you and to help you when she had torn you from us to plunge you into that dreadful sea of Paris. Only by the special blessing of Heaven could you have met with true friends there among those crowds of men and innumerable interests. She is not worth a regret. I used to wish that there might be some devoted woman always with you, a second myself; but now I know that your friends will take my place, and I am happy. Spread your wings, my dear great genius, you will be our pride as well as our beloved.

"EVE."

> "My darling," the mother wrote, "I can only add my blessing to all that your sister says, and assure you that you are more in my thoughts and in my prayers (alas!) than those whom I see daily; for some hearts, the absent are always in the right, and so it is with the heart of your mother."

So two days after the loan was offered so graciously, Lucien repaid it. Perhaps life had never seemed so bright to him as at that moment; but the touch of self-love in his joy did not escape the delicate sensibility and searching eyes of his friends.

"Any one might think that you were afraid to owe us anything," exclaimed Fulgence.

"Oh! the pleasure that he takes in returning the money is a very serious symptom to my mind," said Michel Chrestien. "It confirms some observations of my own. There is a spice of vanity in Lucien."

"He is a poet," said d'Arthez.

"But do you grudge me such a very natural feeling?" asked Lucien.

"We should bear in mind that he did not hide it," said Leon Giraud; "he is still open with us; but I am afraid that he may come to feel shy of us."

"And why?" Lucien asked.

"We can read your thoughts," answered Joseph Bridau.

"There is a diabolical spirit in you that will seek to justify courses which are utterly contrary to our principles. Instead of being a sophist in theory, you will be a sophist in practice."

"Ah! I am afraid of that," said d'Arthez. "You will carry on admirable debates in your own mind, Lucien, and take up a lofty position in theory, and end by blameworthy actions. You will never be at one with yourself."

"What ground have you for these charges?"

"Thy vanity, dear poet, is so great that it intrudes itself even into thy friendships!" cried Fulgence. "All vanity of that sort is a symptom of shocking egoism, and egoism poisons friendship."

"Oh! dear," said Lucien, "you cannot know how much I love you all."

"If you loved us as we love you, would you have been in such a hurry to return the money which we had such pleasure in lending? or have made so much of it?"

"We don't lend here; we give," said Joseph Bridau roughly.

"Don't think us unkind, dear boy," said Michel Chrestien; "we are looking forward. We are afraid lest some day you may prefer a petty revenge to the joys of pure friendship. Read Goethe's *Tasso*, the great master's greatest work, and you will see how the poet-hero loved gorgeous stuffs and banquets and triumph and applause. Very well, be Tasso without his folly. Perhaps the world and its pleasures tempt you? Stay with us. Carry all the cravings of vanity into the world of imagination. Transpose folly. Keep virtue for daily wear, and let imagination run riot, instead

of doing, as d'Arthez says, thinking high thoughts and living beneath them."

Lucien hung his head. His friends were right.

"I confess that you are stronger than I," he said, with a charming glance at them. "My back and shoulders are not made to bear the burden of Paris life; I cannot struggle bravely. We are born with different temperaments and faculties, and you know better than I that faults and virtues have their reverse side. I am tired already, I confess."

"We will stand by you," said d'Arthez; "it is just in these ways that a faithful friendship is of use."

"The help that I have just received is precarious, and every one of us is just as poor as another; want will soon overtake me again. Chrestien, at the service of the first that hires him, can do nothing with the publishers; Bianchon is quite out of it; d'Arthez's booksellers only deal in scientific and technical books – they have no connection with publishers of new literature; and as for Horace and Fulgence Ridal and Bridau, their work lies miles away from the booksellers. There is no help for it; I must make up my mind one way or another."

"Stick by us, and make up your mind to it," said Bianchon. "Bear up bravely, and trust in hard work."

"But what is hardship for you is death for me," Lucien put in quickly.

"Before the cock crows thrice," smiled Leon Giraud, "this man will betray the cause of work for an idle life and the vices

of Paris."

"Where has work brought you?" asked Lucien, laughing.

"When you start out from Paris for Italy, you don't find Rome half-way," said Joseph Bridau. "You want your pease to grow ready buttered for you."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.