

GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

SENTIMENTAL
EDUCATION; OR, THE
HISTORY OF A YOUNG
MAN. VOLUME 2

Gustave Flaubert

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History of a Young Man. Volume 2**

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SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION

[CONTINUED]

CHAPTER XI. A Dinner and a Duel

Frederick passed the whole of the next day in brooding over his anger and humiliation. He reproached himself for not having given a slap in the face to Cisy. As for the Maréchale, he swore not to see her again. Others as good-looking could be easily found; and, as money would be required in order to possess these women, he would speculate on the Bourse with the purchase-money of his farm. He would get rich; he would crush the Maréchale and everyone else with his luxury. When the evening had come, he was surprised at not having thought of Madame Arnoux.

"So much the better. What's the good of it?"

Two days after, at eight o'clock, Pellerin came to pay him a visit. He began by expressing his admiration of the furniture and talking in a wheedling tone. Then, abruptly:

"You were at the races on Sunday?"

"Yes, alas!"

Thereupon the painter decried the anatomy of English horses, and praised the horses of Gericourt and the horses of the Parthenon.

"Rosanette was with you?"

And he artfully proceeded to speak in flattering terms about her.

Frederick's freezing manner put him a little out of countenance.

He did not know how to bring about the question of her portrait. His first idea had been to do a portrait in the style of Titian. But gradually the varied colouring of his model had bewitched him; he had gone on boldly with the work, heaping up paste on paste and light on light. Rosanette, in the beginning, was enchanted. Her appointments with Delmar had interrupted the sittings, and left Pellerin all the time to get bedazzled. Then, as his admiration began to subside, he asked himself whether the picture might not be on a larger scale. He had gone to have another look at the Titians, realised how the great artist had filled in his portraits with such finish, and saw wherein his own shortcomings lay; and then he began to go over the outlines again in the most simple fashion. After that, he sought, by scraping them off, to lose there, to mingle there, all the tones of the head and those of the background; and the face had assumed consistency and the shades vigour – the whole work had a look of greater firmness. At length the Maréchale came back again. She even indulged in some hostile criticisms. The painter naturally persevered in his own course. After getting into a violent passion at her silliness, he said to himself that, after all, perhaps she was right. Then began the era of doubts, twinges of reflection which brought about cramps in the stomach, insomnia, feverishness and disgust with himself. He had the courage to make some retouchings, but without much heart, and with a feeling that his work was bad.

He complained merely of having been refused a place in the Salon; then he reproached Frederick for not having come to see the Maréchale's portrait.

"What do I care about the Maréchale?"

Such an expression of unconcern emboldened the artist.

"Would you believe that this brute has no interest in the thing any longer?"

What he did not mention was that he had asked her for a thousand crowns. Now the Maréchale did not give herself much bother about ascertaining who was going to pay, and, preferring to screw money out of Arnoux for things of a more urgent character, had not even spoken to him on the subject.

"Well, and Arnoux?"

She had thrown it over on him. The ex-picture-dealer wished to have nothing to do with the portrait.

"He maintains that it belongs to Rosanette."

"In fact, it is hers."

"How is that? 'Tis she that sent me to you," was Pellerin's answer.

If he had been thinking of the excellence of his work, he would not have dreamed perhaps of making capital out of it. But a sum – and a big sum – would be an effective reply to the critics, and would strengthen his own position. Finally, to get rid of his importunities, Frederick courteously enquired his terms.

The extravagant figure named by Pellerin quite took away his breath, and he replied:

"Oh! no – no!"

"You, however, are her lover – 'tis you gave me the order!"

"Excuse me, I was only an intermediate agent."

"But I can't remain with this on my hands!"

The artist lost his temper.

"Ha! I didn't imagine you were so covetous!"

"Nor I that you were so stingy! I wish you good morning!"

He had just gone out when Sénécal made his appearance.

Frederick was moving about restlessly, in a state of great agitation.

"What's the matter?"

Sénécal told his story.

"On Saturday, at nine o'clock, Madame Arnoux got a letter which summoned her back to Paris. As there happened to be nobody in the place at the time to go to Creil for a vehicle, she asked me to go there myself. I refused, for this was no part of my duties. She left, and came back on Sunday evening. Yesterday morning, Arnoux came down to the works. The girl from Bordeaux made a complaint to him. I don't know what passed between them; but he took off before everyone the fine I had imposed on her. Some sharp words passed between us. In short, he closed accounts with me, and here I am!"

Then, with a pause between every word:

"Furthermore, I am not sorry. I have done my duty. No matter – you were the cause of it."

"How?" exclaimed Frederick, alarmed lest Sénécal might have guessed his secret.

Sénécal had not, however, guessed anything about it, for he replied:

"That is to say, but for you I might have done better."

Frederick was seized with a kind of remorse.

"In what way can I be of service to you now?"

Sénécal wanted some employment, a situation.

"That is an easy thing for you to manage. You know many people of good position, Monsieur Dambreuse amongst others; at least, so Deslauriers told me."

This allusion to Deslauriers was by no means agreeable to his friend. He scarcely cared to call on the Dambreuses again after his undesirable meeting with them in the Champ de Mars.

"I am not on sufficiently intimate terms with them to recommend anyone."

The democrat endured this refusal stoically, and after a minute's silence:

"All this, I am sure, is due to the girl from Bordeaux, and to your Madame Arnoux."

This "your" had the effect of wiping out of Frederick's heart the slight modicum of regard he entertained for Sénécal. Nevertheless, he stretched out his hand towards the key of his escritoire through delicacy.

Sénécal anticipated him:

"Thanks!"

Then, forgetting his own troubles, he talked about the affairs of the nation, the crosses of the Legion of Honour wasted at the Royal Fête, the question of a change of ministry, the Drouillard case and the Bénier case – scandals of the day – declaimed against the middle class, and predicted a revolution.

His eyes were attracted by a Japanese dagger hanging on the wall. He took hold of it; then he flung it on the sofa with an air of disgust.

"Come, then! good-bye! I must go to Nôtre Dame de Lorette."

"Hold on! Why?"

"The anniversary service for Godefroy Cavaignac is taking place there to-day. He died at work – that man! But all is not over. Who knows?"

And Sénécal, with a show of fortitude, put out his hand:

"Perhaps we shall never see each other again! good-bye!"

This "good-bye," repeated several times, his knitted brows as he gazed at the dagger, his resignation, and the solemnity of his manner, above all, plunged Frederick into a thoughtful mood, but very soon he ceased to think about Sénécal.

During the same week, his notary at Havre sent him the sum realised by the sale of his farm – one hundred and seventy-four thousand francs. He divided it into two portions, invested the first half in the Funds, and brought the second half to a stock-broker to take his chance of making money by it on the Bourse.

He dined at fashionable taverns, went to the theatres, and was trying to amuse himself as best he could, when Hussonnet addressed a letter to him announcing in a gay fashion that the Maréchale had got rid of Cisy the very day after the races. Frederick was delighted at this intelligence, without taking the trouble to ascertain what the Bohemian's motive was in giving him the information.

It so happened that he met Cisy, three days later. That aristocratic young gentleman kept his countenance, and even invited Frederick to dine on the following Wednesday.

On the morning of that day, the latter received a notification from a process-server, in which M. Charles Jean Baptiste Oudry apprised him that by the terms of a legal judgment he had become the purchaser of a property situated at Belleville, belonging to M. Jacques Arnoux, and that he was ready to pay the two hundred and twenty-three thousand for which it had been sold. But, as it appeared by the same decree that the amount of the mortgages with which the estate was encumbered exceeded the purchase-money, Frederick's claim would in consequence be completely forfeited.

The entire mischief arose from not having renewed the registration of the mortgage within the proper time. Arnoux had undertaken to attend to this matter formally himself, and had then forgotten all about it. Frederick got into a rage with him for this, and when the young man's anger had passed off:

"Well, afterwards – what?"

"If this can save him, so much the better. It won't kill me! Let us think no more about it!"

But, while moving about his papers on the table, he came across Hussonnet's letter, and noticed the postscript, which had not at first attracted his attention. The Bohemian wanted just five thousand francs to give the journal a start.

"Ah! this fellow is worrying me to death!"

And he sent a curt answer, unceremoniously refusing the application. After that, he dressed himself to go to the Maison d'Or.

Cisy introduced his guests, beginning with the most respectable of them, a big, white-haired gentleman.

"The Marquis Gilbert des Aulnays, my godfather. Monsieur Anselme de Forchambeaux," he said next – (a thin, fair-haired young man, already bald); then, pointing towards a simple-mannered man of forty: "Joseph Boffreu, my cousin; and here is my old tutor, Monsieur Vezou" – a person who seemed a mixture of a ploughman and a seminarist, with large whiskers and a long frock-coat fastened at the end by a single button, so that it fell over his chest like a shawl.

Cisy was expecting some one else – the Baron de Comaing, who "might perhaps come, but it was not certain." He left the room every minute, and appeared to be in a restless frame of mind. Finally, at eight o'clock, they proceeded towards an apartment splendidly lighted up and much more spacious than the number of guests required. Cisy had selected it for the special purpose of display.

A vermilion épergne laden with flowers and fruit occupied the centre of the table, which was covered with silver dishes, after the old French fashion; glass bowls full of salt meats and spices formed a border all around it. Jars of iced red wine stood at regular distances from each other. Five glasses of different sizes were ranged before each plate, with things of which the use could not be divined – a thousand dinner utensils of an ingenious description. For the first course alone, there was a sturgeon's jowl moistened with champagne, a Yorkshire ham with tokay, thrushes with sauce, roast quail, a béchamel vol-au-vent, a stew of red-legged partridges, and at the two ends of all this, fringes of potatoes which were mingled with truffles. The apartment was illuminated by a lustre and some girandoles, and it was hung with red damask curtains.

Four men-servants in black coats stood behind the armchairs, which were upholstered in morocco. At this sight the guests uttered an exclamation – the tutor more emphatically than the rest.

"Upon my word, our host has indulged in a foolishly lavish display of luxury. It is too beautiful!"

"Is that so?" said the Vicomte de Cisy; "Come on, then!"

And, as they were swallowing the first spoonful:

"Well, my dear old friend Aulnays, have you been to the Palais-Royal to see *Père et Portier*?"

"You know well that I have no time to go!" replied the Marquis.

His mornings were taken up with a course of arboriculture, his evenings were spent at the Agricultural Club, and all his afternoons were occupied by a study of the implements of husbandry in manufactories. As he resided at Saintonge for three fourths of the year, he took advantage of his visits to the capital to get fresh information; and his large-brimmed hat, which lay on a side-table, was crammed with pamphlets.

But Cisy, observing that M. de Forchambeaux refused to take wine:

"Go on, damn it, drink! You're not in good form for your last bachelor's meal!"

At this remark all bowed and congratulated him.

"And the young lady," said the tutor, "is charming, I'm sure?"

"Faith, she is!" exclaimed Cisy. "No matter, he is making a mistake; marriage is such a stupid thing!"

"You talk in a thoughtless fashion, my friend!" returned M. des Aulnays, while tears began to gather in his eyes at the recollection of his own dead wife.

And Forchambeaux repeated several times in succession:

"It will be your own case – it will be your own case!"

Cisy protested. He preferred to enjoy himself – to "live in the free-and-easy style of the Regency days." He wanted to learn the shoe-trick, in order to visit the thieves' taverns of the city, like Rodolphe in the *Mysteries of Paris*; drew out of his pocket a dirty clay pipe, abused the servants, and drank a great quantity; then, in order to create a good impression about himself, he disparaged all the dishes. He even sent away the truffles; and the tutor, who was exceedingly fond of them, said through servility;

"These are not as good as your grandmother's snow-white eggs."

Then he began to chat with the person sitting next to him, the agriculturist, who found many advantages from his sojourn in the country, if it were only to be able to bring up his daughters with simple tastes. The tutor approved of his ideas and toadied to him, supposing that this gentleman possessed influence over his former pupil, whose man of business he was anxious to become.

Frederick had come there filled with hostility to Cisy; but the young aristocrat's idiocy had disarmed him. However, as the other's gestures, face, and entire person brought back to his recollection the dinner at the Café Anglais, he got more and more irritated; and he lent his ears to the complimentary remarks made in a low tone by Joseph, the cousin, a fine young fellow without any money, who was a lover of the chase and a University prizeman. Cisy, for the sake of a laugh, called him a "catcher"[\[A\]](#) several times; then suddenly:

"Ha! here comes the Baron!"

At that moment, there entered a jovial blade of thirty, with somewhat rough-looking features and active limbs, wearing his hat over his ear and displaying a flower in his button-hole. He was the Vicomte's ideal. The young aristocrat was delighted at having him there; and stimulated by his presence, he even attempted a pun; for he said, as they passed a heath-cock:

"There's the best of La Bruyère's characters!" [B]

After that, he put a heap of questions to M. de Comaing about persons unknown to society; then, as if an idea had suddenly seized him:

"Tell me, pray! have you thought about me?"

The other shrugged his shoulders:

"You are not old enough, my little man. It is impossible!"

Cisy had begged of the Baron to get him admitted into his club. But the other having, no doubt, taken pity on his vanity:

"Ha! I was forgetting! A thousand congratulations on having won your bet, my dear fellow!"

"What bet?"

"The bet you made at the races to effect an entrance the same evening into that lady's house."

Frederick felt as if he had got a lash with a whip. He was speedily appeased by the look of utter confusion in Cisy's face.

In fact, the Maréchale, next morning, was filled with regret when Arnoux, her first lover, her good friend, had presented himself that very day. They both gave the Vicomte to understand that he was in the way, and kicked him out without much ceremony.

He pretended not to have heard what was said.

The Baron went on:

"What has become of her, this fine Rose? Is she as pretty as ever?" showing by his manner that he had been on terms of intimacy with her.

Frederick was chagrined by the discovery.

"There's nothing to blush at," said the Baron, pursuing the topic, "'tis a good thing!"

Cisy smacked his tongue.

"Whew! not so good!"

"Ha!"

"Oh dear, yes! In the first place, I found her nothing extraordinary, and then, you pick up the like of her as often as you please, for, in fact, she is for sale!"

"Not for everyone!" remarked Frederick, with some bitterness.

"He imagines that he is different from the others," was Cisy's comment. "What a good joke!"

And a laugh ran round the table.

Frederick felt as if the palpitations of his heart would suffocate him. He swallowed two glasses of water one after the other.

But the Baron had preserved a lively recollection of Rosanette.

"Is she still interested in a fellow named Arnoux?"

"I haven't the faintest idea," said Cisy, "I don't know that gentleman!"

Nevertheless, he suggested that he believed Arnoux was a sort of swindler.

"A moment!" exclaimed Frederick.

"However, there is no doubt about it! Legal proceedings have been taken against him."

"That is not true!"

Frederick began to defend Arnoux, vouched for his honesty, ended by convincing himself of it, and concocted figures and proofs. The Vicomte, full of spite, and tipsy in addition, persisted in his assertions, so that Frederick said to him gravely:

"Is the object of this to give offence to me, Monsieur?"

And he looked Cisy full in the face, with eyeballs as red as his cigar.

"Oh! not at all. I grant you that he possesses something very nice – his wife."

"Do you know her?"

"Faith, I do! Sophie Arnoux; everyone knows her."

"You mean to tell me that?"

Cisy, who had staggered to his feet, hiccupped:

"Everyone – knows – her."

"Hold your tongue. It is not with women of her sort you keep company!"

"I – flatter myself – it is."

Frederick flung a plate at his face. It passed like a flash of lightning over the table, knocked down two bottles, demolished a fruit-dish, and breaking into three pieces, by knocking against the épergne, hit the Vicomte in the stomach.

All the other guests arose to hold him back. He struggled and shrieked, possessed by a kind of frenzy.

M. des Aulnays kept repeating:

"Come, be calm, my dear boy!"

"Why, this is frightful!" shouted the tutor.

Forchambeaux, livid as a plum, was trembling. Joseph indulged in repeated outbursts of laughter. The attendants sponged out the traces of the wine, and gathered up the remains of the dinner from the floor; and the Baron went and shut the window, for the uproar, in spite of the noise of carriage-wheels, could be heard on the boulevard.

As all present at the moment the plate had been flung had been talking at the same time, it was impossible to discover the cause of the attack – whether it was on account of Arnoux, Madame Arnoux, Rosanette, or somebody else. One thing only they were certain of, that Frederick had acted with indescribable brutality. On his part, he refused positively to testify the slightest regret for what he had done.

M. des Aulnays tried to soften him. Cousin Joseph, the tutor, and Forchambeaux himself joined in the effort. The Baron, all this time, was cheering up Cisy, who, yielding to nervous weakness, began to shed tears.

Frederick, on the contrary, was getting more and more angry, and they would have remained there till daybreak if the Baron had not said, in order to bring matters to a close:

"The Vicomte, Monsieur, will send his seconds to call on you to-morrow."

"Your hour?"

"Twelve, if it suits you."

"Perfectly, Monsieur."

Frederick, as soon as he was in the open air, drew a deep breath. He had been keeping his feelings too long under restraint; he had satisfied them at last. He felt, so to speak, the pride of virility, a superabundance of energy within him which intoxicated him. He required two seconds. The first person he thought of for the purpose was Regimbart, and he immediately directed his steps towards the Rue Saint-Denis. The shop-front was closed, but some light shone through a pane of glass over the door. It opened and he went in, stooping very low as he passed under the penthouse.

A candle at the side of the bar lighted up the deserted smoking-room. All the stools, with their feet in the air, were piled on the table. The master and mistress, with their waiter, were at supper in a corner near the kitchen; and Regimbart, with his hat on his head, was sharing their meal, and even disturbed the waiter, who was compelled every moment to turn aside a little. Frederick, having briefly explained the matter to him, asked Regimbart to assist him. The Citizen at first made no reply. He rolled his eyes about, looked as if he were plunged in reflection, took several strides around the room, and at last said:

"Yes, by all means!" and a homicidal smile smoothed his brow when he learned that the adversary was a nobleman.

"Make your mind easy; we'll rout him with flying colours! In the first place, with the sword – "

"But perhaps," broke in Frederick, "I have not the right."

"I tell you 'tis necessary to take the sword," the Citizen replied roughly. "Do you know how to make passes?"

"A little."

"Oh! a little. This is the way with all of them; and yet they have a mania for committing assaults. What does the fencing-school teach? Listen to me: keep a good distance off, always confining yourself in circles, and parry – parry as you retire; that is permitted. Tire him out. Then boldly make a lunge on him! and, above all, no malice, no strokes of the La Fougère kind. [C] No! a simple one-two, and some disengagements. Look here! do you see? while you turn your wrist as if opening a lock. Père Vauthier, give me your cane. Ha! that will do."

He grasped the rod which was used for lighting the gas, rounded his left arm, bent his right, and began to make some thrusts against the partition. He stamped with his foot, got animated, and pretended to be encountering difficulties, while he exclaimed: "Are you there? Is that it? Are you there?" and his enormous silhouette projected itself on the wall with his hat apparently touching the ceiling. The owner of the café shouted from time to time: "Bravo! very good!" His wife, though a little unnerved, was likewise filled with admiration; and Théodore, who had been in the army, remained riveted to the spot with amazement, the fact being, however, that he regarded M. Regimbart with a species of hero-worship.

Next morning, at an early hour, Frederick hurried to the establishment in which Dussardier was employed. After having passed through a succession of departments all full of clothing-materials, either adorning shelves or lying on tables, while here and there shawls were fixed on wooden racks shaped like toadstools, he saw the young man, in a sort of railed cage, surrounded by account-books, and standing in front of a desk at which he was writing. The honest fellow left his work.

The seconds arrived before twelve o'clock.

Frederick, as a matter of good taste, thought he ought not to be present at the conference.

The Baron and M. Joseph declared that they would be satisfied with the simplest excuses. But Regimbart's principle being never to yield, and his contention being that Arnoux's honour should be vindicated (Frederick had not spoken to him about anything else), he asked that the Vicomte should apologise. M. de Comaing was indignant at this presumption. The Citizen would not abate an inch. As all conciliation proved impracticable, there was nothing for it but to fight.

Other difficulties arose, for the choice of weapons lay with Cisy, as the person to whom the insult had been offered. But Regimbart maintained that by sending the challenge he had constituted himself the offending party. His seconds loudly protested that a buffet was the most cruel of offences. The Citizen carped at the words, pointing out that a buffet was not a blow. Finally, they decided to refer the matter to a military man; and the four seconds went off to consult the officers in some of the barracks.

They drew up at the barracks on the Quai d'Orsay. M. de Comaing, having accosted two captains, explained to them the question in dispute.

The captains did not understand a word of what he was saying, owing to the confusion caused by the Citizen's incidental remarks. In short, they advised the gentlemen who consulted them to draw up a minute of the proceedings; after which they would give their decision. Thereupon, they repaired to a café; and they even, in order to do things with more circumspection, referred to Cisy as H, and Frederick as K.

Then they returned to the barracks. The officers had gone out. They reappeared, and declared that the choice of arms manifestly belonged to H.

They all returned to Cisy's abode. Regimbart and Dussardier remained on the footpath outside.

The Vicomte, when he was informed of the solution of the case, was seized with such extreme agitation that they had to repeat for him several times the decision of the officers; and, when M. de Comaing came to deal with Regimbart's contention, he murmured "Nevertheless," not being very

reluctant himself to yield to it. Then he let himself sink into an armchair, and declared that he would not fight.

"Eh? What?" said the Baron. Then Cisy indulged in a confused flood of mouthings. He wished to fight with firearms – to discharge a single pistol at close quarters.

"Or else we will put arsenic into a glass, and draw lots to see who must drink it. That's sometimes done. I've read of it!"

The Baron, naturally rather impatient, addressed him in a harsh tone:

"These gentlemen are waiting for your answer. This is indecent, to put it shortly. What weapons are you going to take? Come! is it the sword?"

The Vicomte gave an affirmative reply by merely nodding his head; and it was arranged that the meeting should take place next morning at seven o'clock sharp at the Maillot gate.

Dussardier, being compelled to go back to his business, Regimbart went to inform Frederick about the arrangement. He had been left all day without any news, and his impatience was becoming intolerable.

"So much the better!" he exclaimed.

The Citizen was satisfied with his deportment.

"Would you believe it? They wanted an apology from us. It was nothing – a mere word! But I knocked them off their beam-ends nicely. The right thing to do, wasn't it?"

"Undoubtedly," said Frederick, thinking that it would have been better to choose another second.

Then, when he was alone, he repeated several times in a very loud tone:

"I am going to fight! Hold on, I am going to fight! 'Tis funny!"

And, as he walked up and down his room, while passing in front of the mirror, he noticed that he was pale.

"Have I any reason to be afraid?"

He was seized with a feeling of intolerable misery at the prospect of exhibiting fear on the ground.

"And yet, suppose I happen to be killed? My father met his death the same way. Yes, I shall be killed!"

And, suddenly, his mother rose up before him in a black dress; incoherent images floated before his mind. His own cowardice exasperated him. A paroxysm of courage, a thirst for human blood, took possession of him. A battalion could not have made him retreat. When this feverish excitement had cooled down, he was overjoyed to feel that his nerves were perfectly steady. In order to divert his thoughts, he went to the opera, where a ballet was being performed. He listened to the music, looked at the *danseuses* through his opera-glass, and drank a glass of punch between the acts. But when he got home again, the sight of his study, of his furniture, in the midst of which he found himself for the last time, made him feel ready to swoon.

He went down to the garden. The stars were shining; he gazed up at them. The idea of fighting about a woman gave him a greater importance in his own eyes, and surrounded him with a halo of nobility. Then he went to bed in a tranquil frame of mind.

It was not so with Cisy. After the Baron's departure, Joseph had tried to revive his drooping spirits, and, as the Vicomte remained in the same dull mood:

"However, old boy, if you prefer to remain at home, I'll go and say so."

Cisy durst not answer "Certainly;" but he would have liked his cousin to do him this service without speaking about it.

He wished that Frederick would die during the night of an attack of apoplexy, or that a riot would break out so that next morning there would be enough of barricades to shut up all the approaches to the Bois de Boulogne, or that some emergency might prevent one of the seconds from being present; for in the absence of seconds the duel would fall through. He felt a longing to save

himself by taking an express train – no matter where. He regretted that he did not understand medicine so as to be able to take something which, without endangering his life, would cause it to be believed that he was dead. He finally wished to be ill in earnest.

In order to get advice and assistance from someone, he sent for M. des Aulnays. That worthy man had gone back to Saintonge on receiving a letter informing him of the illness of one of his daughters. This appeared an ominous circumstance to Cisy. Luckily, M. Vezou, his tutor, came to see him. Then he unbosomed himself.

"What am I to do? my God! what am I do?"

"If I were in your place, Monsieur, I should pay some strapping fellow from the market-place to go and give him a drubbing."

"He would still know who brought it about," replied Cisy.

And from time to time he uttered a groan; then:

"But is a man bound to fight a duel?"

"'Tis a relic of barbarism! What are you to do?"

Out of complaisance the pedagogue invited himself to dinner. His pupil did not eat anything, but, after the meal, felt the necessity of taking a short walk.

As they were passing a church, he said:

"Suppose we go in for a little while – to look?"

M. Vezou asked nothing better, and even offered him holy water.

It was the month of May. The altar was covered with flowers; voices were chanting; the organ was resounding through the church. But he found it impossible to pray, as the pomps of religion inspired him merely with thoughts of funerals. He fancied that he could hear the murmurs of the *De Profundis*.

"Let us go away. I don't feel well."

They spent the whole night playing cards. The Vicomte made an effort to lose in order to exorcise ill-luck, a thing which M. Vezou turned to his own advantage. At last, at the first streak of dawn, Cisy, who could stand it no longer, sank down on the green cloth, and was soon plunged in sleep, which was disturbed by unpleasant dreams.

If courage, however, consists in wishing to get the better of one's own weakness, the Vicomte was courageous, for in the presence of his seconds, who came to seek him, he stiffened himself up with all the strength he could command, vanity making him realise that to attempt to draw back now would destroy him. M. de Comaing congratulated him on his good appearance.

But, on the way, the jolting of the cab and the heat of the morning sun made him languish. His energy gave way again. He could not even distinguish any longer where they were. The Baron amused himself by increasing his terror, talking about the "corpse," and of the way they meant to get back clandestinely to the city. Joseph gave the rejoinder; both, considering the affair ridiculous, were certain that it would be settled.

Cisy kept his head on his breast; he lifted it up slowly, and drew attention to the fact that they had not taken a doctor with them.

"'Tis needless," said the Baron.

"Then there's no danger?"

Joseph answered in a grave tone:

"Let us hope so!"

And nobody in the carriage made any further remark.

At ten minutes past seven they arrived in front of the Maillot gate. Frederick and his seconds were there, the entire group being dressed all in black. Regimbart, instead of a cravat, wore a stiff horsehair collar, like a trooper; and he carried a long violin-case adapted for adventures of this kind. They exchanged frigid bows. Then they all plunged into the Bois de Boulogne, taking the Madrid road, in order to find a suitable place.

Regimbart said to Frederick, who was walking between him and Dussardier:

"Well, and this scare – what do we care about it? If you want anything, don't annoy yourself about it; I know what to do. Fear is natural to man!"

Then, in a low tone:

"Don't smoke any more; in this case it has a weakening effect."

Frederick threw away his cigar, which had only a disturbing effect on his brain, and went on with a firm step. The Vicomte advanced behind, leaning on the arms of his two seconds. Occasional wayfarers crossed their path. The sky was blue, and from time to time they heard rabbits skipping about. At the turn of a path, a woman in a Madras neckerchief was chatting with a man in a blouse; and in the large avenue under the chestnut-trees some grooms in vests of linen-cloth were walking horses up and down.

Cisy recalled the happy days when, mounted on his own chestnut horse, and with his glass stuck in his eye, he rode up to carriage-doors. These recollections intensified his wretchedness. An intolerable thirst parched his throat. The buzzing of flies mingled with the throbbing of his arteries. His feet sank into the sand. It seemed to him as if he had been walking during a period which had neither beginning nor end.

The seconds, without stopping, examined with keen glances each side of the path they were traversing. They hesitated as to whether they would go to the Catelan Cross or under the walls of the Bagatelle. At last they took a turn to the right; and they drew up in a kind of quincunx in the midst of the pine-trees.

The spot was chosen in such a way that the level ground was cut equally into two divisions. The two places at which the principals in the duel were to take their stand were marked out. Then Regimbart opened his case. It was lined with red sheep's-leather, and contained four charming swords hollowed in the centre, with handles which were adorned with filigree. A ray of light, passing through the leaves, fell on them, and they appeared to Cisy to glitter like silver vipers on a sea of blood.

The Citizen showed that they were of equal length. He took one himself, in order to separate the combatants in case of necessity. M. de Comaing held a walking-stick. There was an interval of silence. They looked at each other. All the faces had in them something fierce or cruel.

Frederick had taken off his coat and his waistcoat. Joseph aided Cisy to do the same. When his cravat was removed a blessed medal could be seen on his neck. This made Regimbart smile contemptuously.

Then M. de Comaing (in order to allow Frederick another moment for reflection) tried to raise some quibbles. He demanded the right to put on a glove, and to catch hold of his adversary's sword with the left hand. Regimbart, who was in a hurry, made no objection to this. At last the Baron, addressing Frederick:

"Everything depends on you, Monsieur! There is never any dishonour in acknowledging one's faults."

Dussardier made a gesture of approval. The Citizen gave vent to his indignation:

"Do you think we came here as a mere sham, damn it! Be on your guard, each of you!"

The combatants were facing one another, with their seconds by their sides.

He uttered the single word:

"Come!"

Cisy became dreadfully pale. The end of his blade was quivering like a horsewhip. His head fell back, his hands dropped down helplessly, and he sank unconscious on the ground. Joseph raised him up and while holding a scent-bottle to his nose, gave him a good shaking.

The Vicomte reopened his eyes, then suddenly grasped at his sword like a madman. Frederick had held his in readiness, and now awaited him with steady eye and uplifted hand.

"Stop! stop!" cried a voice, which came from the road simultaneously with the sound of a horse at full gallop, and the hood of a cab broke the branches. A man bending out his head waved a handkerchief, still exclaiming:

"Stop! stop!"

M. de Comaing, believing that this meant the intervention of the police, lifted up his walking-stick.

"Make an end of it. The Vicomte is bleeding!"

"I?" said Cisy.

In fact, he had in his fall taken off the skin of his left thumb.

"But this was by falling," observed the Citizen.

The Baron pretended not to understand.

Arnoux had jumped out of the cab.

"I have arrived too late? No! Thanks be to God!"

He threw his arms around Frederick, felt him, and covered his face with kisses.

"I am the cause of it. You wanted to defend your old friend! That's right – that's right! Never shall I forget it! How good you are! Ah! my own dear boy!"

He gazed at Frederick and shed tears, while he chuckled with delight. The Baron turned towards Joseph:

"I believe we are in the way at this little family party. It is over, messieurs, is it not? Vicomte, put your arm into a sling. Hold on! here is my silk handkerchief."

Then, with an imperious gesture: "Come! no spite! This is as it should be!"

The two adversaries shook hands in a very lukewarm fashion. The Vicomte, M. de Comaing, and Joseph disappeared in one direction, and Frederick left with his friends in the opposite direction.

As the Madrid Restaurant was not far off, Arnoux proposed that they should go and drink a glass of beer there.

"We might even have breakfast."

But, as Dussardier had no time to lose, they confined themselves to taking some refreshment in the garden.

They all experienced that sense of satisfaction which follows happy *dénouements*. The Citizen, nevertheless, was annoyed at the duel having been interrupted at the most critical stage.

Arnoux had been apprised of it by a person named Compain, a friend of Regimbart; and with an irrepressible outburst of emotion he had rushed to the spot to prevent it, under the impression, however, that he was the occasion of it. He begged of Frederick to furnish him with some details about it. Frederick, touched by these proofs of affection, felt some scruples at the idea of increasing his misapprehension of the facts.

"For mercy's sake, don't say any more about it!"

Arnoux thought that this reserve showed great delicacy. Then, with his habitual levity, he passed on to some fresh subject.

"What news, Citizen?"

And they began talking about banking transactions, and the number of bills that were falling due. In order to be more undisturbed, they went to another table, where they exchanged whispered confidences.

Frederick could overhear the following words: "You are going to back me up with your signature." "Yes, but you, mind!" "I have negotiated it at last for three hundred!" "A nice commission, faith!"

In short, it was clear that Arnoux was mixed up in a great many shady transactions with the Citizen.

Frederick thought of reminding him about the fifteen thousand francs. But his last step forbade the utterance of any reproachful words even of the mildest description. Besides, he felt tired himself, and this was not a convenient place for talking about such a thing. He put it off till some future day.

Arnoux, seated in the shade of an evergreen, was smoking, with a look of joviality in his face. He raised his eyes towards the doors of private rooms looking out on the garden, and said he had often paid visits to the house in former days.

"Probably not by yourself?" returned the Citizen.

"Faith, you're right there!"

"What blackguardism you do carry on! you, a married man!"

"Well, and what about yourself?" retorted Arnoux; and, with an indulgent smile: "I am even sure that this rascal here has a room of his own somewhere into which he takes his friends."

The Citizen confessed that this was true by simply shrugging his shoulders. Then these two gentlemen entered into their respective tastes with regard to the sex: Arnoux now preferred youth, work-girls; Regimbert hated affected women, and went in for the genuine article before anything else. The conclusion which the earthenware-dealer laid down at the close of this discussion was that women were not to be taken seriously.

"Nevertheless, he is fond of his own wife," thought Frederick, as he made his way home; and he looked on Arnoux as a coarse-grained man. He had a grudge against him on account of the duel, as if it had been for the sake of this individual that he risked his life a little while before.

But he felt grateful to Dussardier for his devotedness. Ere long the book-keeper came at his invitation to pay him a visit every day.

Frederick lent him books – Thiers, Dulaure, Barante, and Lamartine's *Girondins*.

The honest fellow listened to everything the other said with a thoughtful air, and accepted his opinions as those of a master.

One evening he arrived looking quite scared.

That morning, on the boulevard, a man who was running so quickly that he had got out of breath, had jostled against him, and having recognised in him a friend of Sénécal, had said to him:

"He has just been taken! I am making my escape!"

There was no doubt about it. Dussardier had spent the day making enquiries. Sénécal was in jail charged with an attempted crime of a political nature.

The son of an overseer, he was born at Lyons, and having had as his teacher a former disciple of Chalier, he had, on his arrival in Paris, obtained admission into the "Society of Families." His ways were known, and the police kept a watch on him. He was one of those who fought in the outbreak of May, 1839, and since then he had remained in the shade; but, his self-importance increasing more and more, he became a fanatical follower of Alibaud, mixing up his own grievances against society with those of the people against monarchy, and waking up every morning in the hope of a revolution which in a fortnight or a month would turn the world upside down. At last, disgusted at the inactivity of his brethren, enraged at the obstacles that retarded the realisation of his dreams, and despairing of the country, he entered in his capacity of chemist into the conspiracy for the use of incendiary bombs; and he had been caught carrying gunpowder, of which he was going to make a trial at Montmartre – a supreme effort to establish the Republic.

Dussardier was no less attached to the Republican idea, for, from his point of view, it meant enfranchisement and universal happiness. One day – at the age of fifteen – in the Rue Transnonain, in front of a grocer's shop, he had seen soldiers' bayonets reddened with blood and exhibiting human hairs pasted to the butt-ends of their guns. Since that time, the Government had filled him with feelings of rage as the very incarnation of injustice. He frequently confused the assassins with the gendarmes; and in his eyes a police-spy was just as bad as a parricide. All the evil scattered over the earth he ingenuously attributed to Power; and he hated it with a deep-rooted, undying hatred that held possession of his heart and made his sensibility all the more acute. He had been dazzled by Sénécal's

declamations. It was of little consequence whether he happened to be guilty or not, or whether the attempt with which he was charged could be characterised as an odious proceeding! Since he was the victim of Authority, it was only right to help him.

"The Peers will condemn him, certainly! Then he will be conveyed in a prison-van, like a convict, and will be shut up in Mont Saint-Michel, where the Government lets people die! Austen had gone mad! Steuben had killed himself! In order to transfer Barbès into a dungeon, they had dragged him by the legs and by the hair. They trampled on his body, and his head rebounded along the staircase at every step they took. What abominable treatment! The wretches!"

He was choking with angry sobs, and he walked about the apartment in a very excited frame of mind.

"In the meantime, something must be done! Come, for my part, I don't know what to do! Suppose we tried to rescue him, eh? While they are bringing him to the Luxembourg, we could throw ourselves on the escort in the passage! A dozen resolute men – that sometimes is enough to accomplish it!"

There was so much fire in his eyes that Frederick was a little startled by his look. He recalled to mind Sénécal's sufferings and his austere life. Without feeling the same enthusiasm about him as Dussardier, he experienced nevertheless that admiration which is inspired by every man who sacrifices himself for an idea. He said to himself that, if he had helped this man, he would not be in his present position; and the two friends anxiously sought to devise some contrivance whereby they could set him free.

It was impossible for them to get access to him.

Frederick examined the newspapers to try to find out what had become of him, and for three weeks he was a constant visitor at the reading-rooms.

One day several numbers of the *Flambard* fell into his hands. The leading article was invariably devoted to cutting up some distinguished man. After that came some society gossip and some scandals. Then there were some chaffing observations about the Odéon Carpentras, pisciculture, and prisoners under sentence of death, when there happened to be any. The disappearance of a packet-boat furnished materials for a whole year's jokes. In the third column a picture-canvasser, under the form of anecdotes or advice, gave some tailors' announcements, together with accounts of evening parties, advertisements as to auctions, and analysis of artistic productions, writing in the same strain about a volume of verse and a pair of boots. The only serious portion of it was the criticism of the small theatres, in which fierce attacks were made on two or three managers; and the interests of art were invoked on the subjects of the decorations of the Rope-dancers' Gymnasium and of the actress who played the part of the heroine at the *Délassements*.

Frederick was passing over all these items when his eyes alighted on an article entitled "A Lass between three Lads." It was the story of his duel related in a lively Gallic style. He had no difficulty in recognising himself, for he was indicated by this little joke, which frequently recurred: "A young man from the College of Sens who has no sense." He was even represented as a poor devil from the provinces, an obscure booby trying to rub against persons of high rank. As for the Vicomte, he was made to play a fascinating part, first by having forced his way into the supper-room, then by having carried off the lady, and, finally, by having behaved all through like a perfect gentleman.

Frederick's courage was not denied exactly, but it was pointed out that an intermediary – the *protector* himself – had come on the scene just in the nick of time. The entire article concluded with this phrase, pregnant perhaps with sinister meaning:

"What is the cause of their affection? A problem! and, as Bazile says, who the deuce is it that is deceived here?"

This was, beyond all doubt, Hussonnet's revenge against Frederick for having refused him five thousand francs.

What was he to do? If he demanded an explanation from him, the Bohemian would protest that he was innocent, and nothing would be gained by doing this. The best course was to swallow the affront in silence. Nobody, after all, read the *Flambard*.

As he left the reading-room, he saw some people standing in front of a picture-dealer's shop. They were staring at the portrait of a woman, with this fine traced underneath in black letters: "Mademoiselle Rosanette Bron, belonging to M. Frederick Moreau of Nogent."

It was indeed she – or, at least, like her – her full face displayed, her bosom uncovered, with her hair hanging loose, and with a purse of red velvet in her hands, while behind her a peacock leaned his beak over her shoulder, covering the wall with his immense plumage in the shape of a fan.

Pellerin had got up this exhibition in order to compel Frederick to pay, persuaded that he was a celebrity, and that all Paris, roused to take his part, would be interested in this wretched piece of work.

Was this a conspiracy? Had the painter and the journalist prepared their attack on him at the same time?

His duel had not put a stop to anything. He had become an object of ridicule, and everyone had been laughing at him.

Three days afterwards, at the end of June, the Northern shares having had a rise of fifteen francs, as he had bought two thousand of them within the past month, he found that he had made thirty thousand francs by them. This caress of fortune gave him renewed self-confidence. He said to himself that he wanted nobody's help, and that all his embarrassments were the result of his timidity and indecision. He ought to have begun his intrigue with the Maréchale with brutal directness and refused Hussonnet the very first day. He should not have compromised himself with Pellerin. And, in order to show that he was not a bit embarrassed, he presented himself at one of Madame Dambreuse's ordinary evening parties.

In the middle of the anteroom, Martinon, who had arrived at the same time as he had, turned round:

"What! so you are visiting here?" with a look of surprise, and as if displeased at seeing him.

"Why not?"

And, while asking himself what could be the cause of such a display of hostility on Martinon's part, Frederick made his way into the drawing-room.

The light was dim, in spite of the lamps placed in the corners, for the three windows, which were wide open, made three large squares of black shadow stand parallel with each other. Under the pictures, flower-stands occupied, at a man's height, the spaces on the walls, and a silver teapot with a samovar cast their reflections in a mirror on the background. There arose a murmur of hushed voices. Pumps could be heard creaking on the carpet. He could distinguish a number of black coats, then a round table lighted up by a large shaded lamp, seven or eight ladies in summer toilets, and at some little distance Madame Dambreuse in a rocking armchair. Her dress of lilac taffeta had slashed sleeves, from which fell muslin puffs, the charming tint of the material harmonising with the shade of her hair; and she sat slightly thrown back with the tip of her foot on a cushion, with the repose of an exquisitely delicate work of art, a flower of high culture.

M. Dambreuse and an old gentleman with a white head were walking from one end of the drawing-room to the other. Some of the guests chatted here and there, sitting on the edges of little sofas, while the others, standing up, formed a circle in the centre of the apartment.

They were talking about votes, amendments, counter-amendments, M. Grandin's speech, and M. Benoist's reply. The third party had decidedly gone too far. The Left Centre ought to have had a better recollection of its origin. Serious attacks had been made on the ministry. It must be reassuring, however, to see that it had no successor. In short, the situation was completely analogous to that of 1834.

As these things bored Frederick, he drew near the ladies. Martinon was beside them, standing up, with his hat under his arm, showing himself in three-quarter profile, and looking so neat that he

resembled a piece of Sèvres porcelain. He took up a copy of the *Revue des Deux Mondes* which was lying on the table between an *Imitation* and an *Almanach de Gotha*, and spoke of a distinguished poet in a contemptuous tone, said he was going to the "conferences of Saint-Francis," complained of his larynx, swallowed from time to time a pellet of gummatum, and in the meantime kept talking about music, and played the part of the elegant trifler. Mademoiselle Cécile, M. Dambreuse's niece, who happened to be embroidering a pair of ruffles, gazed at him with her pale blue eyes; and Miss John, the governess, who had a flat nose, laid aside her tapestry on his account. Both of them appeared to be exclaiming internally:

"How handsome he is!"

Madame Dambreuse turned round towards him.

"Please give me my fan which is on that pier-table over there. You are taking the wrong one! 'tis the other!"

She arose, and when he came across to her, they met in the middle of the drawing-room face to face. She addressed a few sharp words to him, no doubt of a reproachful character, judging by the haughty expression of her face. Martinon tried to smile; then he went to join the circle in which grave men were holding discussions. Madame Dambreuse resumed her seat, and, bending over the arm of her chair, said to Frederick:

"I saw somebody the day before yesterday who was speaking to me about you – Monsieur de Cisy. You know him, don't you?"

"Yes, slightly."

Suddenly Madame Dambreuse uttered an exclamation:

"Oh! Duchesse, what a pleasure to see you!"

And she advanced towards the door to meet a little old lady in a Carmelite taffeta gown and a cap of guipure with long borders. The daughter of a companion in exile of the Comte d'Artois, and the widow of a marshal of the Empire; who had been created a peer of France in 1830, she adhered to the court of a former generation as well as to the new court, and possessed sufficient influence to procure many things. Those who stood talking stepped aside, and then resumed their conversation.

It had now turned on pauperism, of which, according to these gentlemen, all the descriptions that had been given were grossly exaggerated.

"However," urged Martinon, "let us confess that there is such a thing as want! But the remedy depends neither on science nor on power. It is purely an individual question. When the lower classes are willing to get rid of their vices, they will free themselves from their necessities. Let the people be more moral, and they will be less poor!"

According to M. Dambreuse, no good could be attained without a superabundance of capital. Therefore, the only practicable method was to intrust, "as the Saint-Simonians, however, proposed (good heavens! there was some merit in their views – let us be just to everybody) – to intrust, I say, the cause of progress to those who can increase the public wealth." Imperceptibly they began to touch on great industrial undertakings – the railways, the coal-mines. And M. Dambreuse, addressing Frederick, said to him in a low whisper:

"You have not called about that business of ours?"

Frederick pleaded illness; but, feeling that this excuse was too absurd:

"Besides, I need my ready money."

"Is it to buy a carriage?" asked Madame Dambreuse, who was brushing past him with a cup of tea in her hand, and for a minute she watched his face with her head bent slightly over her shoulder.

She believed that he was Rosanette's lover – the allusion was obvious. It seemed even to Frederick that all the ladies were staring at him from a distance and whispering to one another.

In order to get a better idea as to what they were thinking about, he once more approached them. On the opposite side of the table, Martinon, seated near Mademoiselle Cécile, was turning over the leaves of an album. It contained lithographs representing Spanish costumes. He read the

descriptive titles aloud: "A Lady of Seville," "A Valencia Gardener," "An Andalusian Picador"; and once, when he had reached the bottom of the page, he continued all in one breath:

"Jacques Arnoux, publisher. One of your friends, eh?"

"That is true," said Frederick, hurt by the tone he had assumed.

Madame Dambreuse again interposed:

"In fact, you came here one morning – about a house, I believe – a house belonging to his wife." (This meant: "She is your mistress.")

He reddened up to his ears; and M. Dambreuse, who joined them at the same moment, made this additional remark:

"You appear even to be deeply interested in them."

These last words had the effect of putting Frederick out of countenance. His confusion, which, he could not help feeling, was evident to them, was on the point of confirming their suspicions, when M. Dambreuse drew close to him, and, in a tone of great seriousness, said:

"I suppose you don't do business together?"

He protested by repeated shakes of the head, without realising the exact meaning of the capitalist, who wished to give him advice.

He felt a desire to leave. The fear of appearing faint-hearted restrained him. A servant carried away the teacups. Madame Dambreuse was talking to a diplomatist in a blue coat. Two young girls, drawing their foreheads close together, showed each other their jewellery. The others, seated in a semicircle on armchairs, kept gently moving their white faces crowned with black or fair hair. Nobody, in fact, minded them. Frederick turned on his heels; and, by a succession of long zigzags, he had almost reached the door, when, passing close to a bracket, he remarked, on the top of it, between a china vase and the wainscoting, a journal folded up in two. He drew it out a little, and read these words —*The Flambarde*.

Who had brought it there? Cisy. Manifestly no one else. What did it matter, however? They would believe – already, perhaps, everyone believed – in the article. What was the cause of this rancour? He wrapped himself up in ironical silence. He felt like one lost in a desert. But suddenly he heard Martinon's voice:

"Talking of Arnoux, I saw in the newspapers, amongst the names of those accused of preparing incendiary bombs, that of one of his *employés*, Sénécal. Is that our Sénécal?"

"The very same!"

Martinon repeated several times in a very loud tone:

"What? our Sénécal! our Sénécal!"

Then questions were asked him about the conspiracy. It was assumed that his connection with the prosecutor's office ought to furnish him with some information on the subject.

He declared that he had none. However, he knew very little about this individual, having seen him only two or three times. He positively regarded him as a very ill-conditioned fellow. Frederick exclaimed indignantly:

"Not at all! he is a very honest fellow."

"All the same, Monsieur," said a landowner, "no conspirator can be an honest man."

Most of the men assembled there had served at least four governments; and they would have sold France or the human race in order to preserve their own incomes, to save themselves from any discomfort or embarrassment, or even through sheer baseness, through worship of force. They all maintained that political crimes were inexcusable. It would be more desirable to pardon those which were provoked by want. And they did not fail to put forward the eternal illustration of the father of a family stealing the eternal loaf of bread from the eternal baker.

A gentleman occupying an administrative office even went so far as to exclaim:

"For my part, Monsieur, if I were told that my brother were a conspirator I would denounce him!"

Frederick invoked the right of resistance, and recalling to mind some phrases that Deslauriers had used in their conversations, he referred to Delosmes, Blackstone, the English Bill of Rights, and Article 2 of the Constitution of '91. It was even by virtue of this law that the fall of Napoléon had been proclaimed. It had been recognised in 1830, and inscribed at the head of the Charter. Besides, when the sovereign fails to fulfil the contract, justice requires that he should be overthrown.

"Why, this is abominable!" exclaimed a prefect's wife.

All the rest remained silent, filled with vague terror, as if they had heard the noise of bullets. Madame Dambreuse rocked herself in her chair, and smiled as she listened to him.

A manufacturer, who had formerly been a member of the Carbonari, tried to show that the Orléans family possessed good qualities. No doubt there were some abuses.

"Well, what then?"

"But we should not talk about them, my dear Monsieur! If you knew how all these clamourings of the Opposition injure business!"

"What do I care about business?" said Frederick.

He was exasperated by the rottenness of these old men; and, carried away by the recklessness which sometimes takes possession of even the most timid, he attacked the financiers, the deputies, the government, the king, took up the defence of the Arabs, and gave vent to a great deal of abusive language. A few of those around him encouraged him in a spirit of irony:

"Go on, pray! continue!" whilst others muttered: "The deuce! what enthusiasm!" At last he thought the right thing to do was to retire; and, as he was going away, M. Dambreuse said to him, alluding to the post of secretary:

"No definite arrangement has been yet arrived at; but make haste!"

And Madame Dambreuse:

"You'll call again soon, will you not?"

Frederick considered their parting salutation a last mockery. He had resolved never to come back to this house, or to visit any of these people again. He imagined that he had offended them, not realising what vast funds of indifference society possesses. These women especially excited his indignation. Not a single one of them had backed him up even with a look of sympathy. He felt angry with them for not having been moved by his words. As for Madame Dambreuse, he found in her something at the same time languid and cold, which prevented him from defining her character by a formula. Had she a lover? and, if so, who was her lover? Was it the diplomatist or some other? Perhaps it was Martinon? Impossible! Nevertheless, he experienced a sort of jealousy against Martinon, and an unaccountable ill-will against her.

Dussardier, having called this evening as usual, was awaiting him. Frederick's heart was swelling with bitterness; he unburdened it, and his grievances, though vague and hard to understand, saddened the honest shop-assistant. He even complained of his isolation. Dussardier, after a little hesitation, suggested that they ought to call on Deslauriers.

Frederick, at the mention of the advocate's name, was seized with a longing to see him once more. He was now living in the midst of profound intellectual solitude, and found Dussardier's company quite insufficient. In reply to the latter's question, Frederick told him to arrange matters any way he liked.

Deslauriers had likewise, since their quarrel, felt a void in his life. He yielded without much reluctance to the cordial advances which were made to him. The pair embraced each other, then began chatting about matters of no consequence.

Frederick's heart was touched by Deslauriers' display of reserve, and in order to make him a sort of reparation, he told the other next day how he had lost the fifteen thousand francs without mentioning that these fifteen thousand francs had been originally intended for him. The advocate, nevertheless, had a shrewd suspicion of the truth; and this misadventure, which justified, in his own

mind, his prejudices against Arnoux, entirely disarmed his rancour; and he did not again refer to the promise made by his friend on a former occasion.

Frederick, misled by his silence, thought he had forgotten all about it. A few days afterwards, he asked Deslauriers whether there was any way in which he could get back his money.

They might raise the point that the prior mortgage was fraudulent, and might take proceedings against the wife personally.

"No! no! not against her!" exclaimed Frederick, and, yielding to the ex-law-clerk's questions, he confessed the truth. Deslauriers was convinced that Frederick had not told him the entire truth, no doubt through a feeling of delicacy. He was hurt by this want of confidence.

They were, however, on the same intimate terms as before, and they even found so much pleasure in each other's society that Dussardier's presence was an obstacle to their free intercourse. Under the pretence that they had appointments, they managed gradually to get rid of him.

There are some men whose only mission amongst their fellow-men is to serve as go-betweens; people use them in the same way as if they were bridges, by stepping over them and going on further.

Frederick concealed nothing from his old friend. He told him about the coal-mine speculation and M. Dambreuse's proposal. The advocate grew thoughtful.

"That's queer! For such a post a man with a good knowledge of law would be required!"

"But you could assist me," returned Frederick.

"Yes! – hold on! faith, yes! certainly."

During the same week Frederick showed Dussardier a letter from his mother.

Madame Moreau accused herself of having misjudged M. Roque, who had given a satisfactory explanation of his conduct. Then she spoke of his means, and of the possibility, later, of a marriage with Louise.

"That would not be a bad match," said Deslauriers.

Frederick said it was entirely out of the question. Besides, Père Roque was an old trickster. That in no way affected the matter, in the advocate's opinion.

At the end of July, an unaccountable diminution in value made the Northern shares fall. Frederick had not sold his. He lost sixty thousand francs in one day. His income was considerably reduced. He would have to curtail his expenditure, or take up some calling, or make a brilliant catch in the matrimonial market.

Then Deslauriers spoke to him about Mademoiselle Roque. There was nothing to prevent him from going to get some idea of things by seeing for himself. Frederick was rather tired of city life. Provincial existence and the maternal roof would be a sort of recreation for him.

The aspect of the streets of Nogent, as he passed through them in the moonlight, brought back old memories to his mind; and he experienced a kind of pang, like persons who have just returned home after a long period of travel.

At his mother's house, all the country visitors had assembled as in former days – MM. Gamblin, Heudras, and Chambrion, the Lebrun family, "those young ladies, the Augers," and, in addition, Père Roque, and, sitting opposite to Madame Moreau at a card-table, Mademoiselle Louise. She was now a woman. She sprang to her feet with a cry of delight. They were all in a flutter of excitement. She remained standing motionless, and the paleness of her face was intensified by the light issuing from four silver candlesticks.

When she resumed play, her hand was trembling. This emotion was exceedingly flattering to Frederick, whose pride had been sorely wounded of late. He said to himself: "You, at any rate, will love me!" and, as if he were thus taking his revenge for the humiliations he had endured in the capital, he began to affect the Parisian lion, retailed all the theatrical gossip, told anecdotes as to the doings of society, which he had borrowed from the columns of the cheap newspapers, and, in short, dazzled his fellow-townpeople.

Next morning, Madame Moreau expatiated on Louise's fine qualities; then she enumerated the woods and farms of which she would be the owner. Père Roque's wealth was considerable.

He had acquired it while making investments for M. Dambreuse; for he had lent money to persons who were able to give good security in the shape of mortgages, whereby he was enabled to demand additional sums or commissions. The capital, owing to his energetic vigilance, was in no danger of being lost. Besides, Père Roque never had any hesitation in making a seizure. Then he bought up the mortgaged property at a low price, and M. Dambreuse, having got back his money, found his affairs in very good order.

But this manipulation of business matters in a way which was not strictly legal compromised him with his agent. He could refuse Père Roque nothing, and it was owing to the latter's solicitations that M. Dambreuse had received Frederick so cordially.

The truth was that in the depths of his soul Père Roque cherished a deep-rooted ambition. He wished his daughter to be a countess; and for the purpose of gaining this object, without imperilling the happiness of his child, he knew no other young man so well adapted as Frederick.

Through the influence of M. Dambreuse, he could obtain the title of his maternal grandfather, Madame Moreau being the daughter of a Comte de Fouvens, and besides being connected with the oldest families in Champagne, the Lavernades and the D'Etrignys. As for the Moreaus, a Gothic inscription near the mills of Villeneuve-l'Archevêque referred to one Jacob Moreau, who had rebuilt them in 1596; and the tomb of his own son, Pierre Moreau, first esquire of the king under Louis XIV., was to be seen in the chapel of Saint-Nicholas.

So much family distinction fascinated M. Roque, the son of an old servant. If the coronet of a count did not come, he would console himself with something else; for Frederick might get a deputyship when M. Dambreuse had been raised to the peerage, and might then be able to assist him in his commercial pursuits, and to obtain for him supplies and grants. He liked the young man personally. In short, he desired to have Frederick for a son-in-law, because for a long time past he had been smitten with this notion, which only grew all the stronger day by day. Now he went to religious services, and he had won Madame Moreau over to his views, especially by holding before her the prospect of a title.

So it was that, eight days later, without any formal engagement, Frederick was regarded as Mademoiselle Roque's "intended," and Père Roque, who was not troubled with many scruples, often left them together.

CHAPTER XII.

Little Louise Grows Up

Deslauriers had carried away from Frederick's house the copy of the deed of subrogation, with a power of attorney in proper form, giving him full authority to act; but, when he had reascended his own five flights of stairs and found himself alone in the midst of his dismal room, in his armchair upholstered in sheep-leather, the sight of the stamped paper disgusted him.

He was tired of these things, and of restaurants at thirty-two sous, of travelling in omnibuses, of enduring want and making futile efforts. He took up the papers again; there were others near them. They were prospectuses of the coal-mining company, with a list of the mines and the particulars as to their contents, Frederick having left all these matters in his hands in order to have his opinion about them.

An idea occurred to him – that of presenting himself at M. Dambreuse's house and applying for the post of secretary. This post, it was perfectly certain, could not be obtained without purchasing a certain number of shares. He recognised the folly of his project, and said to himself:

"Oh! no, that would be a wrong step."

Then he ransacked his brains to think of the best way in which he could set about recovering the fifteen thousand francs. Such a sum was a mere trifle to Frederick. But, if he had it, what a lever it would be in his hands! And the ex-law-clerk was indignant at the other being so well off.

"He makes a pitiful use of it. He is a selfish fellow. Ah! what do I care for his fifteen thousand francs!"

Why had he lent the money? For the sake of Madame Arnoux's bright eyes. She was his mistress! Deslauriers had no doubt about it. "There was another way in which money was useful!"

And he was assailed by malignant thoughts.

Then he allowed his thoughts to dwell even on Frederick's personal appearance. It had always exercised over him an almost feminine charm; and he soon came to admire it for a success which he realised that he was himself incapable of achieving.

"Nevertheless, was not the will the main element in every enterprise? and, since by its means we may triumph over everything – "

"Ha! that would be funny!"

But he felt ashamed of such treachery, and the next moment:

"Pooh! I am afraid?"

Madame Arnoux – from having heard her spoken about so often – had come to be depicted in his imagination as something extraordinary. The persistency of this passion had irritated him like a problem. Her austerity, which seemed a little theatrical, now annoyed him. Besides, the woman of the world – or, rather, his own conception of her – dazzled the advocate as a symbol and the epitome of a thousand pleasures. Poor though he was, he hankered after luxury in its more glittering form.

"After all, even though he should get angry, so much the worse! He has behaved too badly to me to call for any anxiety about him on my part! I have no assurance that she is his mistress! He has denied it. So then I am free to act as I please!"

He could no longer abandon the desire of taking this step. He wished to make a trial of his own strength, so that one day, all of a sudden, he polished his boots himself, bought white gloves, and set forth on his way, substituting himself for Frederick, and almost imagining that he was the other by a singular intellectual evolution, in which there was, at the same time, vengeance and sympathy, imitation and audacity.

He announced himself as "Doctor Deslauriers."

Madame Arnoux was surprised, as she had not sent for any physician.

"Ha! a thousand apologies! – 'tis a doctor of law! I have come in Monsieur Moreau's interest."

This name appeared to produce a disquieting effect on her mind.

"So much the better!" thought the ex-law-clerk.

"Since she has a liking for him, she will like me, too!" buoying up his courage with the accepted idea that it is easier to supplant a lover than a husband.

He referred to the fact that he had the pleasure of meeting her on one occasion at the law-courts; he even mentioned the date. This remarkable power of memory astonished Madame Arnoux. He went on in a tone of mild affectation:

"You have already found your affairs a little embarrassing?"

She made no reply.

"Then it must be true."

He began to chat about one thing or another, about her house, about the works; then, noticing some medallions at the sides of the mirror:

"Ha! family portraits, no doubt?"

He remarked that of an old lady, Madame Arnoux's mother.

"She has the appearance of an excellent woman, a southern type."

And, on being met with the objection that she was from Chartres:

"Chartres! pretty town!"

He praised its cathedral and public buildings, and coming back to the portrait, traced resemblances between it and Madame Arnoux, and cast flatteries at her indirectly. She did not appear to be offended at this. He took confidence, and said that he had known Arnoux a long time.

"He is a fine fellow, but one who compromises himself. Take this mortgage, for example – one can't imagine such a reckless act – "

"Yes, I know," said she, shrugging her shoulders.

This involuntary evidence of contempt induced Deslauriers to continue. "That kaolin business of his was near turning out very badly, a thing you may not be aware of, and even his reputation – "

A contraction of the brows made him pause.

Then, falling back on generalities, he expressed his pity for the "poor women whose husbands frittered away their means."

"But in this case, monsieur, the means belong to him. As for me, I have nothing!"

No matter, one never knows. A woman of experience might be useful. He made offers of devotion, exalted his own merits; and he looked into her face through his shining spectacles.

She was seized with a vague torpor; but suddenly said:

"Let us look into the matter, I beg of you."

He exhibited the bundle of papers.

"This is Frederick's letter of attorney. With such a document in the hands of a process-server, who would make out an order, nothing could be easier; in twenty-four hours – " (She remained impassive; he changed his manoeuvre.)

"As for me, however, I don't understand what impels him to demand this sum, for, in fact, he doesn't want it."

"How is that? Monsieur Moreau has shown himself so kind."

"Oh! granted!"

And Deslauriers began by eulogising him, then in a mild fashion disparaged him, giving it out that he was a forgetful individual, and over-fond of money.

"I thought he was your friend, monsieur?"

"That does not prevent me from seeing his defects. Thus, he showed very little recognition of – how shall I put it? – the sympathy – "

Madame Arnoux was turning over the leaves of a large manuscript book.

She interrupted him in order to get him to explain a certain word.

He bent over her shoulder, and his face came so close to hers that he grazed her cheek. She blushed. This heightened colour inflamed Deslauriers, he hungrily kissed her head.

"What are you doing, Monsieur?" And, standing up against the wall, she compelled him to remain perfectly quiet under the glance of her large blue eyes glowing with anger.

"Listen to me! I love you!"

She broke into a laugh, a shrill, discouraging laugh. Deslauriers felt himself suffocating with anger. He restrained his feelings, and, with the look of a vanquished person imploring mercy:

"Ha! you are wrong! As for me, I would not go like him."

"Of whom, pray, are you talking?"

"Of Frederick."

"Ah! Monsieur Moreau troubles me little. I told you that!"

"Oh! forgive me! forgive me!" Then, drawling his words, in a sarcastic tone:

"I even imagined that you were sufficiently interested in him personally to learn with pleasure
_ "

She became quite pale. The ex-law-clerk added:

"He is going to be married."

"He!"

"In a month at latest, to Mademoiselle Roque, the daughter of M. Dambreuse's agent. He has even gone down to Nogent for no other purpose but that."

She placed her hand over her heart, as if at the shock of a great blow; but immediately she rang the bell. Deslauriers did not wait to be ordered to leave. When she turned round he had disappeared.

Madame Arnoux was gasping a little with the strain of her emotions. She drew near the window to get a breath of air.

On the other side of the street, on the footpath, a packer in his shirt-sleeves was nailing down a trunk. Hackney-coaches passed. She closed the window-blinds and then came and sat down. As the high houses in the vicinity intercepted the sun's rays, the light of day stole coldly into the apartment. Her children had gone out; there was not a stir around her. It seemed as if she were utterly deserted.

"He is going to be married! Is it possible?"

And she was seized with a fit of nervous trembling.

"Why is this? Does it mean that I love him?"

Then all of a sudden:

"Why, yes; I love him – I love him!"

It seemed to her as if she were sinking into endless depths. The clock struck three. She listened to the vibrations of the sounds as they died away. And she remained on the edge of the armchair, with her eyeballs fixed and an unchanging smile on her face.

The same afternoon, at the same moment, Frederick and Mademoiselle Louise were walking in the garden belonging to M. Roque at the end of the island.

Old Catherine was watching them, some distance away. They were walking side by side and Frederick said:

"You remember when I brought you into the country?"

"How good you were to me!" she replied. "You assisted me in making sand-pies, in filling my watering-pot, and in rocking me in the swing!"

"All your dolls, who had the names of queens and marchionesses – what has become of them?"

"Really, I don't know!"

"And your pug Moricaud?"

"He's drowned, poor darling!"

"And the *Don Quixote* of which we coloured the engravings together?"

"I have it still!"

He recalled to her mind the day of her first communion, and how pretty she had been at vespers, with her white veil and her large wax-taper, whilst the girls were all taking their places in a row around the choir, and the bell was tinkling.

These memories, no doubt, had little charm for Mademoiselle Roque. She had not a word to say; and, a minute later:

"Naughty fellow! never to have written a line to me, even once!"

Frederick urged by way of excuse his numerous occupations.

"What, then, are you doing?"

He was embarrassed by the question; then he told her that he was studying politics.

"Ha!"

And without questioning him further:

"That gives you occupation; while as for me – !"

Then she spoke to him about the barrenness of her existence, as there was nobody she could go to see, and nothing to amuse her or distract her thoughts. She wished to go on horseback.

"The vicar maintains that this is improper for a young lady! How stupid these proprieties are! Long ago they allowed me to do whatever I pleased; now, they won't let me do anything!"

"Your father, however, is fond of you!"

"Yes; but – "

She heaved a sigh, which meant: "That is not enough to make me happy."

Then there was silence. They heard only the noise made by their boots in the sand, together with the murmur of falling water; for the Seine, above Nogent, is cut into two arms. That which turns the mills discharges in this place the superabundance of its waves in order to unite further down with the natural course of the stream; and a person coming from the bridge could see at the right, on the other bank of the river, a grassy slope on which a white house looked down. At the left, in the meadow, a row of poplar-trees extended, and the horizon in front was bounded by a curve of the river. It was flat, like a mirror. Large insects hovered over the noiseless water. Tufts of reeds and rushes bordered it unevenly; all kinds of plants which happened to spring up there bloomed out in buttercups, caused yellow clusters to hang down, raised trees in distaff-shape with amaranth-blossoms, and made green rockets spring up at random. In an inlet of the river white water-lilies displayed themselves; and a row of ancient willows, in which wolf-traps were hidden, formed, on that side of the island, the sole protection of the garden.

In the interior, on this side, four walls with a slate coping enclosed the kitchen-garden, in which the square patches, recently dug up, looked like brown plates. The bell-glasses of the melons shone in a row on the narrow hotbed. The artichokes, the kidney-beans, the spinach, the carrots and the tomatoes succeeded each other till one reached a background where asparagus grew in such a fashion that it resembled a little wood of feathers.

All this piece of land had been under the Directory what is called "a folly." The trees had, since then, grown enormously. Clematis obstructed the hornbeams, the walks were covered with moss, brambles abounded on every side. Fragments of statues let their plaster crumble in the grass. The feet of anyone walking through the place got entangled in iron-wire work. There now remained of the pavilion only two apartments on the ground floor, with some blue paper hanging in shreds. Before the façade extended an arbour in the Italian style, in which a vine-tree was supported on columns of brick by a rail-work of sticks.

Soon they arrived at this spot; and, as the light fell through the irregular gaps on the green herbage, Frederick, turning his head on one side to speak to Louise, noticed the shadow of the leaves on her face.

She had in her red hair, stuck in her chignon, a needle, terminated by a glass bell in imitation of emerald, and, in spite of her mourning, she wore (so artless was her bad taste) straw slippers trimmed with pink satin – a vulgar curiosity probably bought at some fair.

He remarked this, and ironically congratulated her.

"Don't be laughing at me!" she replied.

Then surveying him altogether, from his grey felt hat to his silk stockings:

"What an exquisite you are!"

After this, she asked him to mention some works which she could read. He gave her the names of several; and she said:

"Oh! how learned you are!"

While yet very small, she had been smitten with one of those childish passions which have, at the same time, the purity of a religion and the violence of a natural instinct. He had been her comrade, her brother, her master, had diverted her mind, made her heart beat more quickly, and, without any desire for such a result, had poured out into the very depths of her being a latent and continuous intoxication. Then he had parted with her at the moment of a tragic crisis in her existence, when her mother had only just died, and these two separations had been mingled together. Absence had idealised him in her memory. He had come back with a sort of halo round his head; and she gave herself up ingenuously to the feelings of bliss she experienced at seeing him once more.

For the first time in his life Frederick felt himself beloved; and this new pleasure, which did not transcend the ordinary run of agreeable sensations, made his breast swell with so much emotion that he spread out his two arms while he flung back his head.

A large cloud passed across the sky.

"It is going towards Paris," said Louise. "You'd like to follow it – wouldn't you?"

"I! Why?"

"Who knows?"

And surveying him with a sharp look:

"Perhaps you have there" (she searched her mind for the appropriate phrase) "something to engage your affections."

"Oh! I have nothing to engage my affections there."

"Are you perfectly certain?"

"Why, yes, Mademoiselle, perfectly certain!"

In less than a year there had taken place in the young girl an extraordinary transformation, which astonished Frederick. After a minute's silence he added:

"We ought to 'thee' and 'thou' each other, as we used to do long ago – shall we do so?"

"No."

"Why?"

"Because – "

He persisted. She answered, with downcast face:

"I dare not!"

They had reached the end of the garden, which was close to the shell-bank. Frederick, in a spirit of boyish fun, began to send pebbles skimming over the water. She bade him sit down. He obeyed; then, looking at the waterfall:

"'Tis like Niagara!" He began talking about distant countries and long voyages. The idea of making some herself exercised a fascination over her mind. She would not have been afraid either of tempests or of lions.

Seated close beside each other, they collected in front of them handfuls of sand, then, while they were chatting, they let it slip through their fingers, and the hot wind, which rose from the plains, carried to them in puffs odours of lavender, together with the smell of tar escaping from a boat behind the lock. The sun's rays fell on the cascade. The greenish blocks of stone in the little wall over which the water slipped looked as if they were covered with a silver gauze that was perpetually rolling itself out. A long strip of foam gushed forth at the foot with a harmonious murmur. Then it

bubbled up, forming whirlpools and a thousand opposing currents, which ended by intermingling in a single limpid stream of water.

Louise said in a musing tone that she envied the existence of fishes:

"It must be so delightful to tumble about down there at your ease, and to feel yourself caressed on every side."

She shivered with sensuously enticing movements; but a voice exclaimed:

"Where are you?"

"Your maid is calling you," said Frederick.

"All right! all right!" Louise did not disturb herself.

"She will be angry," he suggested.

"It is all the same to me! and besides – " Mademoiselle Roque gave him to understand by a gesture that the girl was entirely subject to her will.

She arose, however, and then complained of a headache. And, as they were passing in front of a large cart-shed containing some faggots:

"Suppose we sat down there, *under shelter*?"

He pretended not to understand this dialectic expression, and even teased her about her accent. Gradually the corners of her mouth were compressed, she bit her lips; she stepped aside in order to sulk.

Frederick came over to her, swore he did not mean to annoy her, and that he was very fond of her.

"Is that true?" she exclaimed, looking at him with a smile which lighted up her entire face, smeared over a little with patches of bran.

He could not resist the sentiment of gallantry which was aroused in him by her fresh youthfulness, and he replied:

"Why should I tell you a lie? Have you any doubt about it, eh?" and, as he spoke, he passed his left hand round her waist.

A cry, soft as the cooing of a dove, leaped up from her throat. Her head fell back, she was going to faint, when he held her up. And his virtuous scruples were futile. At the sight of this maiden offering herself to him he was seized with fear. He assisted her to take a few steps slowly. He had ceased to address her in soothing words, and no longer caring to talk of anything save the most trifling subjects, he spoke to her about some of the principal figures in the society of Nogent.

Suddenly she repelled him, and in a bitter tone:

"You would not have the courage to run away with me!"

He remained motionless, with a look of utter amazement in his face. She burst into sobs, and hiding her face in his breast:

"Can I live without you?"

He tried to calm her emotion. She laid her two hands on his shoulders in order to get a better view of his face, and fixing her green eyes on his with an almost fierce tearfulness:

"Will you be my husband?"

"But," Frederick began, casting about in his inner consciousness for a reply. "Of course, I ask for nothing better."

At that moment M. Roque's cap appeared behind a lilac-tree.

He brought his young friend on a trip through the district in order to show off his property; and when Frederick returned, after two days' absence, he found three letters awaiting him at his mother's house.

The first was a note from M. Dambreuse, containing an invitation to dinner for the previous Tuesday. What was the occasion of this politeness? So, then, they had forgiven his prank.

The second was from Rosanette. She thanked him for having risked his life on her behalf. Frederick did not at first understand what she meant; finally, after a considerable amount of

circumlocution, while appealing to his friendship, relying on his delicacy, as she put it, and going on her knees to him on account of the pressing necessity of the case, as she wanted bread, she asked him for a loan of five hundred francs. He at once made up his mind to supply her with the amount.

The third letter, which was from Deslauriers, spoke of the letter of attorney, and was long and obscure. The advocate had not yet taken any definite action. He urged his friend not to disturb himself: "'Tis useless for you to come back!" even laying singular stress on this point.

Frederick got lost in conjectures of every sort; and he felt anxious to return to Paris. This assumption of a right to control his conduct excited in him a feeling of revolt.

Moreover, he began to experience that nostalgia of the boulevard; and then, his mother was pressing him so much, M. Roque kept revolving about him so constantly, and Mademoiselle Louise was so much attached to him, that it was no longer possible for him to avoid speedily declaring his intentions.

He wanted to think, and he would be better able to form a right estimate of things at a distance.

In order to assign a motive for his journey, Frederick invented a story; and he left home, telling everyone, and himself believing, that he would soon return.

CHAPTER XIII.

Rosanette as a Lovely Turk

His return to Paris gave him no pleasure. It was an evening at the close of August. The boulevards seemed empty. The passers-by succeeded each other with scowling faces. Here and there a boiler of asphalt was smoking; several houses had their blinds entirely drawn. He made his way to his own residence in the city. He found the hangings covered with dust; and, while dining all alone, Frederick was seized with a strange feeling of forlornness; then his thoughts reverted to Mademoiselle Roque. The idea of being married no longer appeared to him preposterous. They might travel; they might go to Italy, to the East. And he saw her standing on a hillock, or gazing at a landscape, or else leaning on his arm in a Florentine gallery while she stood to look at the pictures. What a pleasure it would be to him merely to watch this good little creature expanding under the splendours of Art and Nature! When she had got free from the commonplace atmosphere in which she had lived, she would, in a little while, become a charming companion. M. Roque's wealth, moreover, tempted him. And yet he shrank from taking this step, regarding it as a weakness, a degradation.

But he was firmly resolved (whatever he might do) on changing his mode of life – that is to say, to lose his heart no more in fruitless passions; and he even hesitated about executing the commission with which he had been intrusted by Louise. This was to buy for her at Jacques Arnoux's establishment two large-sized statues of many colours representing negroes, like those which were at the Prefecture at Troyes. She knew the manufacturer's number, and would not have any other. Frederick was afraid that, if he went back to their house, he might once again fall a victim to his old passion.

These reflections occupied his mind during the entire evening; and he was just about to go to bed when a woman presented herself.

"'Tis I," said Mademoiselle Vatnaz, with a laugh. "I have come in behalf of Rosanette."

So, then, they were reconciled?

"Good heavens, yes! I am not ill-natured, as you are well aware. And besides, the poor girl – it would take too long to tell you all about it."

In short, the Maréchale wanted to see him; she was waiting for an answer, her letter having travelled from Paris to Nogent. Mademoiselle Vatnaz did not know what was in it.

Then Frederick asked her how the Maréchale was going on.

He was informed that she was now *with* a very rich man, a Russian, Prince Tzernoukoff, who had seen her at the races in the Champ de Mars last summer.

"He has three carriages, a saddle-horse, livery servants, a groom got up in the English fashion, a country-house, a box at the Italian opera, and a heap of other things. There you are, my dear friend!"

And the Vatnaz, as if she had profited by this change of fortune, appeared gayer and happier. She took off her gloves and examined the furniture and the objects of virtù in the room. She mentioned their exact prices like a second-hand dealer. He ought to have consulted her in order to get them cheaper. Then she congratulated him on his good taste:

"Ha! this is pretty, exceedingly nice! There's nobody like you for these ideas."

The next moment, as her eyes fell on a door close to the pillar of the alcove:

"That's the way you let your friends out, eh?"

And, in a familiar fashion, she laid her finger on his chin. He trembled at the contact of her long hands, at the same time thin and soft. Round her wrists she wore an edging of lace, and on the body of her green dress lace embroidery, like a hussar. Her bonnet of black tulle, with borders hanging down, concealed her forehead a little. Her eyes shone underneath; an odour of patchouli escaped from her head-bands. The carcel-lamp placed on a round table, shining down on her like the footlights of a theatre, made her jaw protrude.

She said to him, in an unctuous tone, while she drew forth from her purse three square slips of paper:

"You will take these from me?"

They were three tickets for Delmar's benefit performance.

"What! for him?"

"Certainly."

Mademoiselle Vatnaz, without giving a further explanation, added that she adored him more than ever. If she were to be believed, the comedian was now definitely classed amongst "the leading celebrities of the age." And it was not such or such a personage that he represented, but the very genius of France, the People. He had "the humanitarian spirit; he understood the priesthood of Art." Frederick, in order to put an end to these eulogies, gave her the money for the three seats.

"You need not say a word about this over the way. How late it is, good heavens! I must leave you. Ah! I was forgetting the address – 'tis the Rue Grange-Batelier, number 14."

And, at the door:

"Good-bye, beloved man!"

"Beloved by whom?" asked Frederick. "What a strange woman!"

And he remembered that Dussardier had said to him one day, when talking about her:

"Oh, she's not much!" as if alluding to stories of a by no means edifying character.

Next morning he repaired to the Maréchale's abode. She lived in a new house, the spring-roller blinds of which projected into the street. At the head of each flight of stairs there was a mirror against the wall; before each window there was a flower-stand, and all over the steps extended a carpet of oil-cloth; and when one got inside the door, the coolness of the staircase was refreshing.

It was a man-servant who came to open the door, a footman in a red waistcoat. On a bench in the anteroom a woman and two men, tradespeople, no doubt, were waiting as if in a minister's vestibule. At the left, the door of the dining-room, slightly ajar, afforded a glimpse of empty bottles on the sideboards, and napkins on the backs of chairs; and parallel with it ran a corridor in which gold-coloured sticks supported an espalier of roses. In the courtyard below, two boys with bare arms were scrubbing a landau. Their voices rose to Frederick's ears, mingled with the intermittent sounds made by a currycomb knocking against a stone.

The man-servant returned. "Madame will receive Monsieur," and he led Frederick through a second anteroom, and then into a large drawing-room hung with yellow brocatel with twisted fringes at the corners which were joined at the ceiling, and which seemed to be continued by flowerings of lustre resembling cables. No doubt there had been an entertainment there the night before. Some cigar-ashes had been allowed to remain on the pier-tables.

At last he found his way into a kind of boudoir with stained-glass windows, through which the sun shed a dim light. Trefoils of carved wood adorned the upper portions of the doors. Behind a balustrade, three purple mattresses formed a divan; and the stem of a narghileh made of platinum lay on top of it. Instead of a mirror, there was on the mantelpiece a pyramid-shaped whatnot, displaying on its shelves an entire collection of curiosities, old silver trumpets, Bohemian horns, jewelled clasps, jade studs, enamels, grotesque figures in china, and a little Byzantine virgin with a vermilion ape; and all this was mingled in a golden twilight with the bluish shade of the carpet, the mother-of-pearl reflections of the foot-stools, and the tawny hue of the walls covered with maroon leather. In the corners, on little pedestals, there were bronze vases containing clusters of flowers, which made the atmosphere heavy.

Rosanette presented herself, attired in a pink satin vest with white cashmere trousers, a necklace of piasters, and a red cap encircled with a branch of jasmine.

Frederick started back in surprise, then said he had brought the thing she had been speaking about, and he handed her the bank-note. She gazed at him in astonishment; and, as he still kept the note in his hand, without knowing where to put it:

"Pray take it!"

She seized it; then, as she flung it on the divan:

"You are very kind."

She wanted it to meet the rent of a piece of ground at Bellevue, which she paid in this way every year. Her unceremoniousness wounded Frederick's sensibility. However, so much the better! this would avenge him for the past.

"Sit down," said she. "There – closer." And in a grave tone: "In the first place, I have to thank you, my dear friend, for having risked your life."

"Oh! that's nothing!"

"What! Why, 'tis a very noble act!" – and the Maréchale exhibited an embarrassing sense of gratitude; for it must have been impressed upon her mind that the duel was entirely on account of Arnoux, as the latter, who believed it himself, was not likely to have resisted the temptation of telling her so.

"She is laughing at me, perhaps," thought Frederick.

He had nothing further to detain him, and, pleading that he had an appointment, he rose.

"Oh! no, stay!"

He resumed his seat, and presently complimented her on her costume.

She replied, with an air of dejection:

"'Tis the Prince who likes me to dress in this fashion! And one must smoke such machines as that, too!" Rosanette added, pointing towards the narghileh. "Suppose we try the taste of it? Have you any objection?"

She procured a light, and, finding it hard to set fire to the tobacco, she began to stamp impatiently with her foot. Then a feeling of languor took possession of her; and she remained motionless on the divan, with a cushion under her arm and her body twisted a little on one side, one knee bent and the other leg straight out.

The long serpent of red morocco, which formed rings on the floor, rolled itself over her arm. She rested the amber mouthpiece on her lips, and gazed at Frederick while she blinked her eyes in the midst of the cloud of smoke that enveloped her. A gurgling sound came from her throat as she inhaled the fumes, and from time to time she murmured:

"The poor darling! the poor pet!"

He tried to find something of an agreeable nature to talk about. The thought of Vatnaz recurred to his memory.

He remarked that she appeared to him very lady-like.

"Yes, upon my word," replied the Maréchale. "She is very lucky in having me, that same lady!" – without adding another word, so much reserve was there in their conversation.

Each of them felt a sense of constraint, something that formed a barrier to confidential relations between them. In fact, Rosanette's vanity had been flattered by the duel, of which she believed herself to be the occasion. Then, she was very much astonished that he did not hasten to take advantage of his achievement; and, in order to compel him to return to her, she had invented this story that she wanted five hundred francs. How was it that Frederick did not ask for a little love from her in return? This was a piece of refinement that filled her with amazement, and, with a gush of emotion, she said to him:

"Will you come with us to the sea-baths?"

"What does 'us' mean?"

"Myself and my bird. I'll make you pass for a cousin of mine, as in the old comedies."

"A thousand thanks!"

"Well, then, you will take lodgings near ours."

The idea of hiding himself from a rich man humiliated him.

"No! that is impossible."

"Just as you please!"

Rosanette turned away with tears in her eyes. Frederick noticed this, and in order to testify the interest which he took in her, he said that he was delighted to see her at last in a comfortable position.

She shrugged her shoulders. What, then, was troubling her? Was it, perchance, that she was not loved.

"Oh! as for me, I have always people to love me!"

She added:

"It remains to be seen in what way."

Complaining that she was "suffocating with the heat," the Maréchale unfastened her vest; and, without any other garment round her body, save her silk chemise, she leaned her head on his shoulder so as to awaken his tenderness.

A man of less introspective egoism would not have bestowed a thought at such a moment on the possibility of the Vicomte, M. de Comaing, or anyone else appearing on the scene. But Frederick had been too many times the dupe of these very glances to compromise himself by a fresh humiliation.

She wished to know all about his relationships and his amusements. She even enquired about his financial affairs, and offered to lend him money if he wanted it. Frederick, unable to stand it any longer, took up his hat.

"I'm off, my pet! I hope you'll enjoy yourself thoroughly down there. *Au revoir!*"

She opened her eyes wide; then, in a dry tone:

"*Au revoir!*"

He made his way out through the yellow drawing-room, and through the second anteroom. There was on the table, between a vase full of visiting-cards and an inkstand, a chased silver chest. It was Madame Arnoux's. Then he experienced a feeling of tenderness, and, at the same time, as it were, the scandal of a profanation. He felt a longing to raise his hands towards it, and to open it. He was afraid of being seen, and went away.

Frederick was virtuous. He did not go back to the Arnoux's house. He sent his man-servant to buy the two negroes, having given him all the necessary directions; and the case containing them set forth the same evening for Nogent. Next morning, as he was repairing to Deslauriers' lodgings, at the turn where the Rue Vivienne opened out on the boulevard, Madame Arnoux presented herself before him face to face.

The first movement of each of them was to draw back; then the same smile came to the lips of both, and they advanced to meet each other. For a minute, neither of them uttered a single word.

The sunlight fell round her, and her oval face, her long eyelashes, her black lace shawl, which showed the outline of her shoulders, her gown of shot silk, the bouquet of violets at the corner of her bonnet; all seemed to him to possess extraordinary magnificence. An infinite softness poured itself out of her beautiful eyes; and in a faltering voice, uttering at random the first words that came to his lips:

"How is Arnoux?"

"Well, I thank you!"

"And your children?"

"They are very well!"

"Ah! ah! What fine weather we are getting, are we not?"

"Splendid, indeed!"

"You're going out shopping?"

And, with a slow inclination of the head:

"Good-bye!"

She put out her hand, without having spoken one word of an affectionate description, and did not even invite him to dinner at her house. No matter! He would not have given this interview for the most delightful of adventures; and he pondered over its sweetness as he proceeded on his way.

Deslauriers, surprised at seeing him, dissembled his spite; for he cherished still through obstinacy some hope with regard to Madame Arnoux; and he had written to Frederick to prolong his stay in the country in order to be free in his manœuvres.

He informed Frederick, however, that he had presented himself at her house in order to ascertain if their contract stipulated for a community of property between husband and wife: in that case, proceedings might be taken against the wife; "and she put on a queer face when I told her about your marriage."

"Now, then! What an invention!"

"It was necessary in order to show that you wanted your own capital! A person who was indifferent would not have been attacked with the species of fainting fit that she had."

"Really?" exclaimed Frederick.

"Ha! my fine fellow, you are betraying yourself! Come! be honest!"

A feeling of nervous weakness stole over Madame Arnoux's lover.

"Why, no! I assure you! upon my word of honour!"

These feeble denials ended by convincing Deslauriers. He congratulated his friend, and asked him for some details. Frederick gave him none, and even resisted a secret yearning to concoct a few. As for the mortgage, he told the other to do nothing about it, but to wait. Deslauriers thought he was wrong on this point, and remonstrated with him in rather a churlish fashion.

He was, besides, more gloomy, malignant, and irascible than ever. In a year, if fortune did not change, he would embark for America or blow out his brains. Indeed, he appeared to be in such a rage against everything, and so uncompromising in his radicalism, that Frederick could not keep from saying to him:

"Here you are going on in the same way as Sénécal!"

Deslauriers, at this remark, informed him that that individual to whom he alluded had been discharged from Sainte-Pelagie, the magisterial investigation having failed to supply sufficient evidence, no doubt, to justify his being sent for trial.

Dussardier was so much overjoyed at the release of Sénécal, that he wanted to invite his friends to come and take punch with him, and begged of Frederick to be one of the party, giving the latter, at the same time, to understand that he would be found in the company of Hussonnet, who had proved himself a very good friend to Sénécal.

In fact, the *Flambard* had just become associated with a business establishment whose prospectus contained the following references: "Vineyard Agency. Office of Publicity. Debt Recovery and Intelligence Office, etc." But the Bohemian was afraid that his connection with trade might be prejudicial to his literary reputation, and he had accordingly taken the mathematician to keep the accounts. Although the situation was a poor one, Sénécal would but for it have died of starvation. Not wishing to mortify the worthy shopman, Frederick accepted his invitation.

Dussardier, three days beforehand, had himself waxed the red floor of his garret, beaten the armchair, and knocked off the dust from the chimney-piece, on which might be seen under a globe an alabaster timepiece between a stalactite and a cocoanut. As his two chandeliers and his chamber candlestick were not sufficient, he had borrowed two more candlesticks from the doorkeeper; and these five lights shone on the top of the chest of drawers, which was covered with three napkins in order that it might be fit to have placed on it in such a way as to look attractive some macaroons, biscuits, a fancy cake, and a dozen bottles of beer. At the opposite side, close to the wall, which was hung with yellow paper, there was a little mahogany bookcase containing the *Fables of Lachambeaudie*, the *Mysteries of Paris*, and Norvins' *Napoléon*— and, in the middle of the alcove, the face of Béranger was smiling in a rosewood frame.

The guests (in addition to Deslauriers and Sénécal) were an apothecary who had just been admitted, but who had not enough capital to start in business for himself, a young man of his own

house, a town-traveller in wines, an architect, and a gentleman employed in an insurance office. Regimbart had not been able to come. Regret was expressed at his absence.

They welcomed Frederick with a great display of sympathy, as they all knew through Dussardier what he had said at M. Dambreuse's house. Sénécal contented himself with putting out his hand in a dignified manner.

He remained standing near the chimney-piece. The others seated, with their pipes in their mouths, listened to him, while he held forth on universal suffrage, from which he predicted as a result the triumph of Democracy and the practical application of the principles of the Gospel. However, the hour was at hand. The banquets of the party of reform were becoming more numerous in the provinces. Piedmont, Naples, Tuscany —

"'Tis true," said Deslauriers, interrupting him abruptly. "This cannot last longer!"

And he began to draw a picture of the situation. We had sacrificed Holland to obtain from England the recognition of Louis Philippe; and this precious English alliance was lost, owing to the Spanish marriages. In Switzerland, M. Guizot, in tow with the Austrian, maintained the treaties of 1815. Prussia, with her Zollverein, was preparing embarrassments for us. The Eastern question was still pending.

"The fact that the Grand Duke Constantine sends presents to M. d'Aumale is no reason for placing confidence in Russia. As for home affairs, never have so many blunders, such stupidity, been witnessed. The Government no longer even keeps up its majority. Everywhere, indeed, according to the well-known expression, it is naught! naught! naught! And in the teeth of such public scandals," continued the advocate, with his arms akimbo, "they declare themselves satisfied!"

The allusion to a notorious vote called forth applause. Dussardier uncorked a bottle of beer; the froth splashed on the curtains. He did not mind it. He filled the pipes, cut the cake, offered each of them a slice of it, and several times went downstairs to see whether the punch was coming up; and ere long they lashed themselves up into a state of excitement, as they all felt equally exasperated against Power. Their rage was of a violent character for no other reason save that they hated injustice, and they mixed up with legitimate grievances the most idiotic complaints.

The apothecary groaned over the pitiable condition of our fleet. The insurance agent could not tolerate Marshal Soult's two sentinels. Deslauriers denounced the Jesuits, who had just installed themselves publicly at Lille. Sénécal execrated M. Cousin much more for eclecticism, by teaching that certitude can be deduced from reason, developed selfishness and destroyed solidarity. The traveller in wines, knowing very little about these matters, remarked in a very loud tone that he had forgotten many infamies:

"The royal carriage on the Northern line must have cost eighty thousand francs. Who'll pay the amount?"

"Aye, who'll pay the amount?" repeated the clerk, as angrily as if this amount had been drawn out of his own pocket.

Then followed recriminations against the lynxes of the Bourse and the corruption of officials. According to Sénécal they ought to go higher up, and lay the blame, first of all, on the princes who had revived the morals of the Regency period.

"Have you not lately seen the Duc de Montpensier's friends coming back from Vincennes, no doubt in a state of intoxication, and disturbing with their songs the workmen of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine?"

"There was even a cry of 'Down with the thieves!'" said the apothecary. "I was there, and I joined in the cry!"

"So much the better! The people are at last waking up since the Teste-Cubières case." [D]

"For my part, that case caused me some pain," said Dussardier, "because it imputed dishonour to an old soldier!"

"Do you know," Sénécal went on, "what they have discovered at the Duchesse de Praslin's house – ?"

But here the door was sent flying open with a kick. Hussonnet entered.

"Hail, messeigneurs," said he, as he seated himself on the bed.

No allusion was made to his article, which he was sorry, however, for having written, as the Maréchale had sharply reprimanded him on account of it.

He had just seen at the Théâtre de Dumas the *Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*, and declared that it seemed to him a stupid play.

Such a criticism surprised the democrats, as this drama, by its tendency, or rather by its scenery, flattered their passions. They protested. Sénécal, in order to bring this discussion to a close, asked whether the play served the cause of Democracy.

"Yes, perhaps; but it is written in a style – "

"Well, then, 'tis a good play. What is style? 'Tis the idea!"

And, without allowing Frederick to say a word:

"Now, I was pointing out that in the Praslin case – "

Hussonnet interrupted him:

"Ha! here's another worn-out trick! I'm disgusted at it!"

"And others as well as you," returned Deslauriers.

"It has only got five papers taken. Listen while I read this paragraph."

And drawing his note-book out of his pocket, he read:

"We have, since the establishment of the best of republics, been subjected to twelve hundred and twenty-nine press prosecutions, from which the results to the writers have been imprisonment extending over a period of three thousand one hundred and forty-one years, and the light sum of seven million one hundred and ten thousand five hundred francs by way of fine.' That's charming, eh?"

They all sneered bitterly.

Frederick, incensed against the others, broke in:

"*The Democratie Pacifique* has had proceedings taken against it on account of its feuilleton, a novel entitled *The Woman's Share*."

"Come! that's good," said Hussonnet. "Suppose they prevented us from having our share of the women!"

"But what is it that's not prohibited?" exclaimed Deslauriers. "To smoke in the Luxembourg is prohibited; to sing the Hymn to Pius IX. is prohibited!"

"And the typographers' banquet has been interdicted," a voice cried, with a thick articulation.

It was that of an architect, who had sat concealed in the shade of the alcove, and who had remained silent up to that moment. He added that, the week before, a man named Rouget had been convicted of offering insults to the king.

"That gurnet[E] is fried," said Hussonnet.

This joke appeared so improper to Sénécal, that he reproached Hussonnet for defending the Juggler of the Hôtel de Ville, the friend of the traitor Dumouriez.

"I? quite the contrary!"

He considered Louis Philippe commonplace, one of the National Guard types of men, all that savoured most of the provision-shop and the cotton night-cap! And laying his hand on his heart, the Bohemian gave utterance to the rhetorical phrases:

"It is always with a new pleasure... Polish nationality will not perish... Our great works will be pursued... Give me some money for my little family..."

They all laughed hugely, declaring that he was a delightful fellow, full of wit. Their delight was redoubled at the sight of the bowl of punch which was brought in by the keeper of a café.

The flames of the alcohol and those of the wax-candles soon heated the apartment, and the light from the garret, passing across the courtyard, illuminated the side of an opposite roof with the

flue of a chimney, whose black outlines could be traced through the darkness of night. They talked in very loud tones all at the same time. They had taken off their coats; they gave blows to the furniture; they touched glasses.

Hussonnet exclaimed:

"Send up some great ladies, in order that this may be more Tour de Nesles, have more local colouring, and be more Rembrandtesque, gadzooks!"

And the apothecary, who kept stirring about the punch indefinitely, began to sing with expanded chest:

"I've two big oxen in my stable,
Two big white oxen – "

Sénécal laid his hand on the apothecary's mouth; he did not like disorderly conduct; and the lodgers pressed their faces against the window-panes, surprised at the unwonted uproar that was taking place in Dussardier's room.

The honest fellow was happy, and said that this recalled to his mind their little parties on the Quai Napoléon in days gone by; however, they missed many who used to be present at these reunions, "Pellerin, for instance."

"We can do without him," observed Frederick.

And Deslauriers enquired about Martinon.

"What has become of that interesting gentleman?"

Frederick, immediately giving vent to the ill-will which he bore to Martinon, attacked his mental capacity, his character, his false elegance, his entire personality. He was a perfect specimen of an upstart peasant! The new aristocracy, the mercantile class, was not as good as the old – the nobility. He maintained this, and the democrats expressed their approval, as if he were a member of the one class, and they were in the habit of visiting the other. They were charmed with him. The apothecary compared him to M. d'Alton Shée, who, though a peer of France, defended the cause of the people.

The time had come for taking their departure. They all separated with great handshakings. Dussardier, in a spirit of affectionate solicitude, saw Frederick and Deslauriers home. As soon as they were in the street, the advocate assumed a thoughtful air, and, after a moment's silence:

"You have a great grudge, then, against Pellerin?"

Frederick did not hide his rancour.

The painter, in the meantime, had withdrawn the notorious picture from the show-window. A person should not let himself be put out by trifles. What was the good of making an enemy for himself?

"He has given way to a burst of ill-temper, excusable in a man who hasn't a sou. You, of course, can't understand that!"

And, when Deslauriers had gone up to his own apartments, the shopman did not part with Frederick. He even urged his friend to buy the portrait. In fact, Pellerin, abandoning the hope of being able to intimidate him, had got round them so that they might use their influence to obtain the thing for him.

Deslauriers spoke about it again, and pressed him on the point, urging that the artist's claims were reasonable.

"I am sure that for a sum of, perhaps, five hundred francs – "

"Oh, give it to him! Wait! here it is!" said Frederick.

The picture was brought the same evening. It appeared to him a still more atrocious daub than when he had seen it first. The half-tints and the shades were darkened under the excessive retouchings, and they seemed obscured when brought into relation with the lights, which, having remained very brilliant here and there, destroyed the harmony of the entire picture.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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