HONORÉ DE BALZAC

BEATRIX

Honoré Balzac
Beatrix

http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=25020987
Beatrix:

Содержание

Honoré de Balzac
Beatrix

NOTE

It is somewhat remarkable that Balzac, dealing as he did with traits of character and the minute and daily circumstances of life, has never been accused of representing actual persons in the two or three thousand portraits which he painted of human nature. In "The Great Man of the Provinces in Paris" some likenesses were imagined: Jules Janin in Etienne Lousteau, Armand Carrel in Michel Chrestien, and, possibly, Berryer in Daniel d'Arthez. But in the present volume, "Beatrix," he used the characteristics of certain persons, which were recognized and admitted at the time of publication. Mademoiselle des Touches (Camille Maupin) is George

Sand in character, and the personal description of her, though applied by some to the famous Mademoiselle Georges, is easily recognized from Couture's drawing. Beatrix, Conti, and Claude Vignon are sketches of the Comtesse d'Agoult, Liszt, and the well-known critic Gustave Planche.

The opening scene of this volume, representing the manners and customs of the old Breton family, a social state existing no longer except in history, and the transition

period of the *vieille roche* as it passed into the customs and ideas of the present century, is one of Balzac's remarkable and most famous pictures in the "Comedy of Human Life."

K.P.W.

I. A BRETON TOWN AND MANSION

France, especially in Brittany, still possesses certain towns completely outside of the movement which gives to the nineteenth century its peculiar characteristics. For lack of quick and regular communication with Paris, scarcely connected by wretched roads with the sub-prefecture, or the chief city of their own province, these towns regard the new civilization as a spectacle to be gazed at; it amazes them, but they never applaud it; and, whether they fear or scoff at it, they continue faithful to the old manners and customs which have come down to them. Whoso would travel as a moral archaeologist, observing men instead of stones, would find images of the time of Louis XV. in many a village of Provence, of the time of Louis XIV. in the depths of Pitou, and of still more ancient times in the towns of Brittany. Most of these towns have fallen from states of splendor never mentioned by historians, who are always more concerned with facts and dates than with the truer history of manners and customs. The tradition of this splendor still lives in the memory of the people, – as in Brittany, where the native character allows no forgetfulness of things which concern its own land. Many of these towns were once the capitals of a little feudal State, – a county or duchy conquered by the crown or divided among many

heirs, if the male line failed. Disinherited from active life, these heads became arms; and arms deprived of nourishment, wither and barely vegetate.

For the last thirty years, however, these pictures of ancient times are beginning to fade and disappear. Modern industry, working for the masses, goes on destroying the creations of ancient art, the works of which were once as personal to the consumer as to the artisan. Nowadays we have *products*, we no longer have *works*. Public buildings, monuments of the past, count for much in the phenomena of retrospection; but the monuments of modern industry are freestone quarries, saltpetre mines, cotton factories. A few more years and even these old cities will be transformed and seen no more except in the pages of this iconography.

One of the towns in which may be found the most correct likeness of the feudal ages is Guerande. The name alone awakens a thousand memories in the minds of painters, artists, thinkers who have visited the slopes on which this splendid jewel of feudality lies proudly posed to command the flux and reflux of the tides and the dunes, – the summit, as it were, of a triangle, at the corners of which are two other jewels not less curious: Croisic, and the village of Batz. There are no towns after Guerande except Vitre in the centre of Brittany, and Avignon in the south of France, which preserve so intact, to the very middle of our epoch, the type and form of the middle ages.

Guerande is still encircled with its doughty walls, its moats are

full of water, its battlements entire, its loopholes unencumbered with vegetation; even ivy has never cast its mantle over the towers, square or round. The town has three gates, where may be seen the rings of the portcullises; it is entered by a drawbridge of iron-clamped wood, no longer raised but which could be raised at will. The mayoralty was blamed for having, in 1820, planted poplars along the banks of the moat to shade the promenade. It excused itself on the ground that the long and beautiful esplanade of the fortifications facing the dunes had been converted one hundred years earlier into a mall where the inhabitants took their pleasure beneath the elms.

The houses of the old town have suffered no change; and they have neither increased nor diminished. None have suffered upon their frontage from the hammer of the architect, the brush of the plasterer, nor have they staggered under the weight of added stories. All retain their primitive characteristics. Some rest on wooden columns which form arcades under which foot-passengers circulate, the floor planks bending beneath them, but never breaking. The houses of the merchants are small and low; their fronts are veneered with slate. Wood, now decaying, counts for much in the carved material of the window-casings and the pillars, above which grotesque faces look down, while shapes of fantastic beasts climb up the angles, animated by that great thought of Art, which in those old days gave life to inanimate nature. These relics, resisting change, present to the eye of painters those dusky tones and half-blurred features in

which the artistic brush delights.

The streets are what they were four hundred years ago, – with one exception; population no longer swarms there; the social movement is now so dead that a traveller wishing to examine the town (as beautiful as a suit of antique armor) may walk alone, not without sadness, through a deserted street, where the mullioned windows are plastered up to avoid the window-tax. This street ends at a postern, flanked with a wall of masonry, beyond which rises a bouquet of trees planted by the hands of Breton nature, one of the most luxuriant and fertile vegetations in France. A painter, a poet would sit there silently, to taste the quietude which reigns beneath the well-preserved arch of the postern, where no voice comes from the life of the peaceful city, and where the landscape is seen in its rich magnificence through the loop-holes of the casemates once occupied by halberdiers and archers, which are not unlike the sashes of some belvedere arranged for a point of view.

It is impossible to walk about the place without thinking at every step of the habits and usages of long-past times; the very stones tell of them; the ideas of the middle ages are still there with all their ancient superstitions. If, by chance, a gendarme passes you, with his silver-laced hat, his presence is an anachronism against which your sense of fitness protests; but nothing is so rare as to meet a being or an object of the present time. There is even very little of the clothing of the day; and that little the inhabitants adapt in a way to their immutable customs, their unchangeable

physiognomies. The public square is filled with Breton costumes, which artists flock to draw; these stand out in wonderful relief upon the scene around them. The whiteness of the linen worn by the *paludiers* (the name given to men who gather salt in the salt-marshes) contrasts vigorously with the blues and browns of the peasantry and the original and sacredly preserved jewelry of the women. These two classes, and that of the sailors in their jerkins and varnished leather caps are as distinct from one another as the castes of India, and still recognize the distance that parts them from the bourgeoisie, the nobility, and the clergy. All lines are clearly marked; there the revolutionary level found the masses too rugged and too hard to plane; its instrument would have been notched, if not broken. The character of immutability which science gives to zoological species is found in Breton human nature. Even now, after the Revolution of 1830, Guerande is still a town apart, essentially Breton, fervently Catholic, silent, self-contained, – a place where modern ideas have little access.

Its geographical position explains this phenomenon. The pretty town overlooks a salt-marsh, the product of which is called throughout Brittany the Guerande salt, to which many Bretons attribute the excellence of their butter and their sardines. It is connected with the rest of France by two roads only: that coming from Savenay, the arrondissement to which it belongs, which stops at Saint-Nazaire; and a second road, leading from Vannes, which connects it with the Morbihan. The arrondissement road establishes communication by land, and from Saint-Nazaire by

water, with Nantes. The land road is used only by government; the more rapid and more frequented way being by water from Saint-Nazaire. Now, between this village and Guerande is a distance of eighteen miles, which the mail-coach does not serve, and for good reason; not three coach passengers a year would pass over it.

These, and other obstacles, little fitted to encourage travellers, still exist. In the first place, government is slow in its proceedings; and next, the inhabitants of the region put up readily enough with difficulties which separate them from the rest of France. Guerande, therefore, being at the extreme end of the continent, leads nowhere, and no one comes there. Glad to be ignored, she thinks and cares about herself only. The immense product of her salt-marshes, which pays a tax of not less than a million to the Treasury, is chiefly managed at Croisic, a peninsular village which communicates with Guerande over quicksands, which efface during the night the tracks made by day, and also by boats which cross the arm of the sea that makes the port of Croisic.

This fascinating little town is therefore the Herculaneum of feudality, less its winding sheet of lava. It is afoot, but not living; it has no other ground of existence except that it has not been demolished. If you reach Guerande from Croisic, after crossing a dreary landscape of salt-marshes, you will experience a strong sensation at sight of that vast fortification, which is still as good as ever. If you come to it by Saint-Nazaire, the picturesqueness of its position and the naive grace of its environs will please you

no less. The country immediately surrounding it is ravishing; the hedges are full of flowers, honeysuckles, roses, box, and many enchanting plants. It is like an English garden, designed by some great architect. This rich, coy nature, so untrodden, with all the grace of a bunch of violets or a lily of the valley in the glade of a forest, is framed by an African desert banked by the ocean, – a desert without a tree, an herb, a bird; where, on sunny days, the laboring *paludiers*, clothed in white and scattered among those melancholy swamps where the salt is made, remind us of Arabs in their burrows.

Thus Guerande bears no resemblance to any other place in France. The town produces somewhat the same effect upon the mind as a sleeping-draught upon the body. It is silent as Venice. There is no other public conveyance than the springless wagon of a carrier who carries travellers, merchandise, and occasionally letters from Saint-Nazaire to Guerande and *vice versa*. Bernus, the carrier, was, in 1829, the factotum of this large community. He went and came when he pleased; all the country knew him; and he did the errands of all. The arrival of a carriage in Guerande, that of a lady or some invalid going to Croisic for sea-bathing (thought to have greater virtue among those rocks than at Boulogne or Dieppe) is still an immense event. The peasants come in on horseback, most of them with commodities for barter in sacks. They are induced to do so (and so are the *paludiers*) by the necessity of purchasing the jewels distinctive of their caste which are given to all Breton brides, and the white linen, or cloth

for their clothing.

For a circuit ten miles round, Guerande is always GUERANDE, – the illustrious town where the famous treaty was signed in 1365, the key of the coast, which may boast, not less than the village of Batz, of a splendor now lost in the night of time. The jewels, linen, cloth, ribbon, and hats are made elsewhere, but to those who buy them they are from Guerande and nowhere else. All artists, and even certain bourgeois, who come to Guerande feel, as they do at Venice, a desire (soon forgotten) to end their days amid its peace and silence, walking in fine weather along the beautiful mall which surrounds the town from gate to gate on the side toward the sea. Sometimes the image of this town arises in the temple of memory; she enters, crowned with her towers, clasped with her girdle; her flower-strewn robe floats onward, the golden mantle of her dunes enfolds her, the fragrant breath of her briony paths, filled with the flowers of each passing season, exhales at every step; she fills your mind, she calls to you like some enchanting woman whom you have met in other climes and whose presence still lingers in a fold of your heart.

Near the church of Guerande stands a mansion which is to the town what the town is to the region, an exact image of the past, the symbol of a grand thing destroyed, – a poem, in short. This mansion belongs to the noblest family of the province; to the du Guaisnics, who, in the times of the du Guesclins, were as superior to the latter in antiquity and fortune as the Trojans were

to the Romans. The Guaisqlains (the name is also spelled in the olden time du Glaicquin), from which comes du Guesclin, issued from the du Guaisnics.

Old as the granite of Brittany, the Guaisnics are neither Frenchmen nor Gauls, – they are Bretons; or, to be more exact, they are Celts. Formerly, they must have been Druids, gathering mistletoe in the sacred forests and sacrificing men upon their dolmens. Useless to say what they were! To-day this race, equal to the Rohans without having deigned to make themselves princes, a race which was powerful before the ancestors of Hugues Capet were ever heard of, this family, pure of all alloy, possesses two thousand francs a year, its mansion in Guerande, and the little castle of Guaisnic. All the lands belonging to the barony of Guaisnic, the first in Brittany, are pledged to farmers, and bring in sixty thousand francs a year, in spite of ignorant culture. The du Gaisnics remain the owners of these lands although they receive none of the revenues, for the reason that for the last two hundred years they have been unable to pay off the money advanced upon them. They are in the position of the crown of France towards its *engagistes* (tenants of crown-lands) before the year 1789. Where and when could the barons obtain the million their farmers have advanced to them? Before 1789 the tenure of the fiefs subject to the castle of Guaisnic was still worth fifty thousand francs a year; but a vote of the National Assembly suppressed the seigneurs' dues levied on inheritance.

In such a situation this family – of absolutely no account in

France, and which would be a subject of laughter in Paris, were it known there – is to Guerande the whole of Brittany. In Guerande the Baron du Guaisnic is one of the great barons of France, a man above whom there is but one man, – the King of France, once elected ruler. To-day the name of du Guaisnic, full of Breton significances (the roots of which will be found explained in "The Chouans") has been subjected to the same alteration which disfigures that of du Guaisqlain. The tax-gatherer now writes the name, as do the rest of the world, du Guenic.

At the end of a silent, damp, and gloomy lane may be seen the arch of a door, or rather gate, high enough and wide enough to admit a man on horseback, – a circumstance which proves of itself that when this building was erected carriages did not exist. The arch, supported by two jambs, is of granite. The gate, of oak, rugged as the bark of the tree itself, is studded with enormous nails placed in geometric figures. The arch is semicircular. On it are carved the arms of the Guaisnics as clean-cut and clear as though the sculptor had just laid down his chisel. This escutcheon would delight a lover of the heraldic art by a simplicity which proves the pride and the antiquity of the family. It is as it was in the days when the crusaders of the Christian world invented these symbols by which to recognize each other; the Guaisnics have never had it quartered; it is always itself, like that of the house of France, which connoisseurs find inescutcheoned in the shields of many of the old families. Here it is, such as you may see it still at Guerande: Gules, a hand proper gonfaloned ermine, with a sword

argent in pale, and the terrible motto, FAC. Is not that a grand and noble thing? The circlet of a baronial coronet surmounts this simple escutcheon, the vertical lines of which, used in carving to represent gules, are clear as ever. The artist has given I know not what proud, chivalrous turn to the hand. With what vigor it holds the sword which served but recently the present family!

If you go to Guerande after reading this history you cannot fail to quiver when you see that blazon. Yes, the most confirmed republican would be moved by the fidelity, the nobleness, the grandeur hidden in the depths of that dark lane. The du Guaisnics did well yesterday, and they are ready to do well to-morrow. To DO is the motto of chivalry. "You did well in the battle" was the praise of the Connetable *par excellence*, the great du Guesclin who drove the English for a time from France. The depth of this carving, which has been protected from the weather by the projecting edges of the arch, is in keeping with the moral depth of the motto in the soul of this family. To those who know the Guaisnics this fact is touching.

The gate when open gives a vista into a somewhat vast court-yard, on the right of which are the stables, on the left the kitchen and offices. The house is build of freestone from cellar to garret. The facade on the court-yard has a portico with a double range of steps, the wall of which is covered with vestiges of carvings now effaced by time, but in which the eye of an antiquary can still make out in the centre of the principal mass the Hand bearing the sword. The granite steps are now disjointed, grasses

have forced their way with little flowers and mosses through the fissures between the stones which centuries have displaced without however lessening their solidity. The door of the house must have had a charming character. As far as the relics of the old designs allow us to judge, it was done by an artist of the great Venetian school of the thirteenth century. Here is a mixture, still visible, of the Byzantine and the Saracenic. It is crowned with a circular pediment, now wreathed with vegetation, – a bouquet, rose, brown, yellow, or blue, according to the season. The door, of oak, nail-studded, gives entrance to a noble hall, at the end of which is another door, opening upon another portico which leads to the garden.

This hall is marvellously well preserved. The panelled wainscot, about three feet high, is of chestnut. A magnificent Spanish leather with figures in relief, the gilding now peeled off or reddened, covers the walls. The ceiling is of wooden boards artistically joined and painted and gilded. The gold is scarcely noticeable; it is in the same condition as that of the Cordova leather, but a few red flowers and the green foliage can be distinguished. Perhaps a thorough cleaning might bring out paintings like those discovered on the plank ceilings of Tristan's house at Tours. If so, it would prove that those planks were placed or restored in the reign of Louis XI. The chimney-piece is enormous, of carved stone, and within it are gigantic andirons in wrought-iron of precious workmanship. It could hold a cart-load of wood. The furniture of this hall is wholly of oak, each

article bearing upon it the arms of the family. Three English guns equally suitable for chase or war, three sabres, two game-bags, the utensils of a huntsman and a fisherman hang from nails upon the wall.

On one side is a dining-room, which connects with the kitchen by a door cut through a corner tower. This tower corresponds in the design of the facade toward the court-yard with another tower at the opposite corner, in which is a spiral staircase leading to the two upper stories.

The dining-room is hung with tapestries of the fourteenth century; the style and the orthography of the inscription on the banderols beneath each figure prove their age, but being, as they are, in the naive language of the *fabliaux*, it is impossible to transcribe them here. These tapestries, well preserved in those parts where light has scarcely penetrated, are framed in bands of oak now black as ebony. The ceiling has projecting rafters enriched with foliage which is varied for each rafter; the space between them is filled with planks painted blue, on which twine garlands of golden flowers. Two old buffers face each other; on their shelves, rubbed with Breton persistency by Mariotte the cook, can be seen, as in the days when kings were as poor in 1200 as the du Guaisnics are in 1830, four old goblets, an ancient embossed soup-tureen, and two salt-cellars, all of silver; also many pewter plates and many pitchers of gray and blue pottery, bearing arabesque designs and the arms of the du Guaisnics, covered by hinged pewter lids. The chimney-piece is

modernized. Its condition proves that the family has lived in this room for the last century. It is of carved stone in the style of the Louis XV. period, and is ornamented with a mirror, let in to the back with gilt beaded moulding. This anachronism, to which the family is indifferent, would grieve a poet. On the mantel-shelf, covered with red velvet, is a tall clock of tortoise-shell inlaid with brass, flanked on each side with a silver candelabrum of singular design. A large square table, with solid legs, fills the centre of this room; the chairs are of turned wood covered with tapestry. On a round table supported by a single leg made in the shape of a vine-shoot, which stands before a window looking into the garden, is a lamp of an odd kind. This lamp has a common glass globe, about the size of an ostrich egg, which is fastened into a candle-stick by a glass tube. Through a hole at the top of the globe issues a wick which passes through a sort of reed of brass, drawing the nut-oil held in the globe through its own length coiled like a tape-worm in a surgeon's phial. The windows which look into the garden, like those that look upon the court-yard, are mullioned in stone with hexagonal leaded panes, and are draped by curtains, with heavy valances and stout cords, of an ancient stuff of crimson silk with gold reflections, called in former days either brocatelle or small brocade.

On each of the two upper stories of the house there are but two rooms. The first is the bedroom of the head of the family, the second is that of the children. Guests were lodged in chambers beneath the roof. The servants slept above the

kitchens and stables. The pointed roof, protected with lead at its angles and edges, has a noble pointed window on each side, one looking down upon the court-yard, the other on the garden. These windows, rising almost to the level of the roof, have slender, delicate casings, the carvings of which have crumbled under the salty vapors of the atmosphere. Above the arch of each window with its crossbars of stone, still grinds, as it turns, the vane of a noble.

Let us not forget a precious detail, full of naivete, which will be of value in the eyes of an archaeologist. The tower in which the spiral staircase goes up is placed at the corner of a great gable wall in which there is no window. The staircase comes down to a little arched door, opening upon a gravelled yard which separates the house from the stables. This tower is repeated on the garden side by another of five sides, ending in a cupola in which is a bell-turret, instead of being roofed, like the sister-tower, with a pepper-pot. This is how those charming architects varied the symmetry of their sky-lines. These towers are connected on the level of the first floor by a stone gallery, supported by what we must call brackets, each ending in a grotesque human head. This gallery has a balustrade of exquisite workmanship. From the gable above depends a stone dais like those that crown the statues of saints at the portal of churches. Can you not see a woman walking in the morning along this balcony and gazing over Guerande at the sunshine, where it gilds the sands and shimmers on the breast of Ocean? Do you not admire that

gable wall flanked at its angles with those varied towers? The opposite gable of the Guaisnic mansion adjoins the next house. The harmony so carefully sought by the architects of those days is maintained in the facade looking on the court-yard by the tower which communicates between the dining-room and the kitchen, and is the same as the staircase tower, except that it stops at the first upper story and its summit is a small open dome, beneath which stands a now blackened statue of Saint Calyste.

The garden is magnificent for so old a place. It covers half an acre of ground, its walls are all espaliered, and the space within is divided into squares for vegetables, bordered with cordons of fruit-trees, which the man-of-all-work, named Gasselin, takes care of in the intervals of grooming the horses. At the farther end of the garden is a grotto with a seat in it; in the middle, a sun-dial; the paths are gravelled. The facade on the garden side has no towers corresponding to those on the court-yard; but a slender spiral column rises from the ground to the roof, which must in former days have borne the banner of the family, for at its summit may still be seen an iron socket, from which a few weak plants are straggling. This detail, in harmony with the vestiges of sculpture, proves to a practised eye that the mansion was built by a Venetian architect. The graceful staff is like a signature revealing Venice, chivalry, and the exquisite delicacy of the thirteenth century. If any doubts remained on this point, a feature of the ornamentation would dissipate them. The trefoils of the hotel du Guaisnic have four leaves instead of three. This

difference plainly indicates the Venetian school depraved by its commerce with the East, where the semi-Saracenic architects, careless of the great Catholic thought, give four leaves to clover, while Christian art is faithful to the Trinity. In this respect Venetian art becomes heretical.

If this ancient dwelling attracts your imagination, you may perhaps ask yourself why such miracles of art are not renewed in the present day. Because to-day mansions are sold, pulled down, and the ground they stood on turned into streets. No one can be sure that the next generation will possess the paternal dwelling; homes are no more than inns; whereas in former times when a dwelling was built men worked, or thought they worked, for a family in perpetuity. Hence the grandeur of these houses. Faith in self, as well as faith in God, did prodigies.

As for the arrangement of the upper rooms they may be imagined after this description of the ground-floor, and after reading an account of the manners, customs, and physiognomy of the family. For the last fifty years the du Guaisnics have received their friends in the two rooms just described, in which, as in the court-yard and the external accessories of the building, the spirit, grace, and candor of the old and noble Brittany still survives. Without the topography and description of the town, and without this minute depicting of the house, the surprising figures of the family might be less understood. Therefore the frames have preceded the portraits. Every one is aware that things influence beings. There are public buildings whose effect

is visible upon the persons living in their neighborhood. It would be difficult indeed to be irreligious in the shadow of a cathedral like that of Bourges. When the soul is everywhere reminded of its destiny by surrounding images, it is less easy to fail of it. Such was the thought of our immediate grandfathers, abandoned by a generation which was soon to have no signs and no distinctions, and whose manners and morals were to change every decade. If you do not now expect to find the Baron du Guaisnic sword in hand, all here written would be falsehood.

II. THE BARON, HIS WIFE, AND SISTER

Early in the month of May, in the year 1836, the period when this scene opens, the family of Guenic (we follow henceforth the modern spelling) consisted of Monsieur and Madame du Guenic, Mademoiselle du Guenic the baron's elder sister, and an only son, aged twenty-one, named, after an ancient family usage, Gaudebert-Calyste-Louis. The father's name was Gaudebert-Calyste-Charles. Only the last name was ever varied. Saint Gaudebert and Saint Calyste were forever bound to protect the Guenics.

The Baron du Guenic had started from Guerande the moment that La Vendee and Brittany took arms; he fought through the war with Charette, with Cathelineau, La Rochejaquelein, d'Elbee, Bonchamps, and the Prince de Loudon. Before starting he had, with a prudence unique in revolutionary annals, sold his whole property of every kind to his elder and only sister, Mademoiselle Zephirine du Guenic. After the death of all those heroes of the West, the baron, preserved by a miracle from ending as they did, refused to submit to Napoleon. He fought on till 1802, when being at last defeated and almost captured, he returned to Guerande, and from Guerande went to Croisic, whence he crossed to Ireland, faithful to the ancient Breton hatred for

England.

The people of Guerande feigned utter ignorance of the baron's existence. In the whole course of twenty years not a single indiscreet word was ever uttered. Mademoiselle du Guenic received the rents and sent them to her brother by fishermen. Monsieur du Guenic returned to Guerande in 1813, as quietly and simply as if he had merely passed a season at Nantes. During his stay in Dublin the old Breton, despite his fifty years, had fallen in love with a charming Irish woman, daughter of one of the noblest and poorest families of that unhappy kingdom. Fanny O'Brien was then twenty-one years old. The Baron du Guenic came over to France to obtain the documents necessary for his marriage, returned to Ireland, and, after about ten months (at the beginning of 1814), brought his wife to Guerande, where she gave him Calyste on the very day that Louis XVIII. landed at Calais, – a circumstance which explains the young man's final name of Louis.

The old and loyal Breton was now a man of seventy-three; but his long-continued guerilla warfare with the Republic, his exile, the perils of his five crossings through a turbulent sea in open boats, had weighed upon his head, and he looked a hundred; therefore, at no period had the chief of the house of Guenic been more in keeping with the worn-out grandeur of their dwelling, built in the days when a court reigned at Guerande.

Monsieur du Guenic was a tall, straight, wiry, lean old man. His oval face was lined with innumerable wrinkles, which formed

a net-work over his cheek-bones and above his eyebrows, giving to his face a resemblance to those choice old men whom Van Ostade, Rembrandt, Mieris, and Gerard Dow so loved to paint, in pictures which need a microscope to be fully appreciated. His countenance might be said to be sunken out of sight beneath those innumerable wrinkles, produced by a life in the open air and by the habit of watching his country in the full light of the sun from the rising of that luminary to the sinking of it. Nevertheless, to an observer enough remained of the imperishable forms of the human face which appealed to the soul, even though the eye could see no more than a lifeless head. The firm outline of the face, the shape of the brow, the solemnity of the lines, the rigidity of the nose, the form of the bony structure which wounds alone had slightly altered, – all were signs of intrepidity without calculation, faith without reserve, obedience without discussion, fidelity without compromise, love without inconstancy. In him, the Breton granite was made man.

The baron had no longer any teeth. His lips, once red, now violet, and backed by hard gums only (with which he ate the bread his wife took care to soften by folding it daily in a damp napkin), drew inward to the mouth with a sort of grin, which gave him an expression both threatening and proud. His chin seemed to seek his nose; but in that nose, humped in the middle, lay the signs of his energy and his Breton resistance. His skin, marbled with red blotches appearing through his wrinkles, showed a powerfully sanguine temperament, fitted to resist fatigue and to

preserve him, as no doubt it did, from apoplexy. The head was crowned with abundant hair, as white as silver, which fell in curls upon his shoulders. The face, extinguished, as we have said, in part, lived through the glitter of the black eyes in their brown orbits, casting thence the last flames of a generous and loyal soul. The eyebrows and lashes had disappeared; the skin, grown hard, could not unwrinkle. The difficulty of shaving had obliged the old man to let his beard grow, and the cut of it was fan-shaped. An artist would have admired beyond all else in this old lion of Brittany with his powerful shoulders and vigorous chest, the splendid hands of the soldier, – hands like those du Guesclin must have had, large, broad, hairy; hands that once had clasped the sword never, like Joan of Arc, to relinquish it until the royal standard floated in the cathedral of Rheims; hands that were often bloody from the thorns and furze of the Bocage; hands which had pulled an oar in the Marais to surprise the Blues, or in the offing to signal Georges; the hands of a guerilla, a cannoneer, a common solder, a leader; hands still white though the Bourbons of the Elder branch were again in exile. Looking at those hands attentively, one might have seen some recent marks attesting the fact that the Baron had recently joined MADAME in La Vendee. To-day that fact may be admitted. These hands were a living commentary on the noble motto to which no Guenic had proved recreant: *Fac!*

His forehead attracted attention by the golden tones of the temples, contrasting with the brown tints of the hard and narrow

brow, which the falling off of the hair had somewhat broadened, giving still more majesty to that noble ruin. The countenance – a little material, perhaps, but how could it be otherwise? – presented, like all the Breton faces grouped about the baron, a certain savagery, a stolid calm which resembled the impassibility of the Huguenots; something, one might say, stupid, due perhaps to the utter repose which follows extreme fatigue, in which the animal nature alone is visible. Thought was rare. It seemed to be an effort; its seat was in the heart more than in the head; it led to acts rather than ideas. But, examining that grand old man with sustained observation, one could penetrate the mystery of this strange contradiction to the spirit of the century. He had faiths, sentiments, inborn so to speak, which allowed him to dispense with thought. His duty, life had taught him. Institutions and religion thought for him. He reserved his mind, he and his kind, for action, not dissipating it on useless things which occupied the minds of other persons. He drew his thought from his heart like his sword from its scabbard, holding it aloft in his ermined hand, as on his scutcheon, shining with sincerity. That secret once penetrated, all is clear. We can comprehend the depth of convictions that are not thoughts, but living principles, – clear, distinct, downright, and as immaculate as the ermine itself. We understand that sale made to his sister before the war; which provided for all, and faced all, death, confiscation, exile. The beauty of the character of these two old people (for the sister lived only for and by the brother) cannot be understood to its full

extent by the right of the selfish morals, the uncertain aims, and the inconstancy of this our epoch. An archangel, charged with the duty of penetrating to the inmost recesses of their hearts could not have found one thought of personal interest. In 1814, when the rector of Guerande suggested to the baron that he should go to Paris and claim his recompense from the triumphant Bourbons, the old sister, so saving and miserly for the household, cried out: —

"Oh, fy! does my brother need to hold out his hand like a beggar?"

"It would be thought I served a king from interest," said the old man. "Besides, it is for him to remember. Poor king! he must be weary indeed of those who harass him. If he gave them all France in bits, they still would ask."

This loyal servant, who had spent his life and means on Louis XVIII., received the rank of colonel, the cross of Saint-Louis, and a stipend of two thousand francs a year.

"The king did remember!" he said when the news reached him.

No one undeceived him. The gift was really made by the Duc de Feltre. But, as an act of gratitude to the king, the baron sustained a siege at Guerande against the forces of General Travot. He refused to surrender the fortress, and when it was absolutely necessary to evacuate it he escaped into the woods with a band of Chouans, who continued armed until the second restoration of the Bourbons. Guerande still treasures the memory

of that siege.

We must admit that the Baron du Guenic was illiterate as a peasant. He could read, write, and do some little ciphering; he knew the military art and heraldry, but, excepting always his prayer-book, he had not read three volumes in the course of his life. His clothing, which is not an insignificant point, was invariably the same; it consisted of stout shoes, ribbed stockings, breeches of greenish velveteen, a cloth waistcoat, and a loose coat with a collar, from which hung the cross of Saint-Louis. A noble serenity now reigned upon that face where, for the last year or so, sleep, the forerunner of death, seemed to be preparing him for rest eternal. This constant somnolence, becoming daily more and more frequent, did not alarm either his wife, his blind sister, or his friends, whose medical knowledge was of the slightest. To them these solemn pauses of a life without reproach, but very weary, were naturally explained: the baron had done his duty, that was all.

In this ancient mansion the absorbing interests were the fortunes of the dispossessed Elder branch. The future of the exiled Bourbons, that of the Catholic religion, the influence of political innovations on Brittany were the exclusive topics of conversation in the baron's family. There was but one personal interest mingled with these most absorbing ones: the attachment of all for the only son, for Calyste, the heir, the sole hope of the great name of the du Guenics.

The old Vendean, the old Chouan, had, some years previously,

a return of his own youth in order to train his son to those manly exercises which were proper for a gentleman liable to be summoned at any moment to take arms. No sooner was Calyste sixteen years of age than his father accompanied him to the marshes and the forest, teaching him through the pleasures of the chase the rudiments of war, preaching by example, indifferent to fatigue, firm in his saddle, sure of his shot whatever the game might be, – deer, hare, or a bird on the wing, – intrepid in face of obstacles, bidding his son follow him into danger as though he had ten other sons to take Calyste's place.

So, when the Duchesse de Berry landed in France to conquer back the kingdom for her son, the father judged it right to take his boy to join her, and put in practice the motto of their ancestors. The baron started in the dead of night, saying no word to his wife, who might perhaps have weakened him; taking his son under fire as if to a fete, and Gasselin, his only vassal, who followed him joyfully. The three men of the family were absent for three months without sending news of their whereabouts to the baroness, who never read the "Quotidienne" without trembling from line to line, nor to his old blind sister, heroically erect, whose nerve never faltered for an instance as she heard that paper read. The three guns hanging to the walls had therefore seen service recently. The baron, who considered the enterprise useless, left the region before the affair of La Penissiere, or the house of Guenic would probably have ended in that hecatomb.

When, on a stormy night after parting from MADAME, the

father, son, and servant returned to the house in Guerande, they took their friends and the baroness and old Mademoiselle du Guenic by surprise, although the latter, by the exercise of senses with which the blind are gifted, recognized the steps of the three men in the little lane leading to the house. The baron looked round upon the circle of his anxious friends, who were seated beside the little table lighted by the antique lamp, and said in a tremulous voice, while Gasselin replaced the three guns and the sabres in their places, these words of feudal simplicity: —

"The barons did not all do their duty."

Then, having kissed his wife and sister, he sat down in his old arm-chair and ordered supper to be brought for his son, for Gasselin, and for himself. Gasselin had thrown himself before Calyste on one occasion, to protect him, and received the cut of a sabre on his shoulder; but so simple a matter did it seem that even the women scarcely thanked him. The baron and his guests uttered neither curses nor complaints of their conquerors. Such silence is a trait of Breton character. In forty years no one ever heard a word of contumely from the baron's lips about his adversaries. It was for them to do their duty as he did his. This utter silence is the surest indication of an unalterable will.

This last effort, the flash of an energy now waning, had caused the present weakness and somnolence of the old man. The fresh defeat and exile of the Bourbons, as miraculously driven out as miraculously re-established, were to him a source of bitter sadness.

About six o'clock on the evening of the day on which this history begins, the baron, who, according to ancient custom, had finished dining by four o'clock, fell asleep as usual while his wife was reading to him the "Quotidienne." His head rested against the back of the arm-chair which stood beside the fireplace on the garden side.

Near this gnarled trunk of an ancient tree, and in front of the fireplace, the baroness, seated on one of the antique chairs, presented the type of those adorable women who exist in England, Scotland, or Ireland only. There alone are born those milk-white creatures with golden hair the curls of which are wound by the hands of angels, for the light of heaven seems to ripple in their silken spirals swaying to the breeze. Fanny O'Brien was one of those sylphs, – strong in tenderness, invincible under misfortune, soft as the music of her voice, pure as the azure of her eyes, of a delicate, refined beauty, blessed with a skin that was silken to the touch and caressing to the eye, which neither painter's brush nor written word can picture. Beautiful still at forty-two years of age, many a man would have thought it happiness to marry her as she looked at the splendors of that autumn coloring, redundant in flowers and fruit, refreshed and refreshing with the dews of heaven.

The baroness held the paper in the dimpled hand, the fingers of which curved slightly backward, their nails cut square like those of an antique statue. Half lying, without ill-grace or affectation, in her chair, her feet stretched out to warm them,

she was dressed in a gown of black velvet, for the weather was now becoming chilly. The corsage, rising to the throat, moulded the splendid contour of the shoulders and the rich bosom which the suckling of her son had not deformed. Her hair was worn in *ringlets*, after the English fashion, down her cheeks; the rest was simply twisted to the crown of her head and held there with a tortoise-shell comb. The color, not undecided in tone as other blond hair, sparkled to the light like a filagree of burnished gold. The baroness always braided the short locks curling on the nape of her neck – which are a sign of race. This tiny braid, concealed in the mass of hair always carefully put up, allowed the eye to follow with delight the undulating line by which her neck was set upon her shoulders. This little detail will show the care which she gave to her person; it was her pride to rejoice the eyes of the old baron. What a charming, delicate attention! When you see a woman displaying in her own home the coquetry which most women spend on a single sentiment, believe me, that woman is as noble a mother as she is a wife; she is the joy and the flower of the home; she knows her obligations as a woman; in her soul, in her tenderness, you will find her outward graces; she is doing good in secret; she worships, she adores without a calculation of return; she loves her fellows, as she loves God, – for their own sakes. And so one might fancy that the Virgin of paradise, under whose care she lived, had rewarded the chaste girlhood and the sacred life of the old man's wife by surrounding her with a sort of halo which preserved her beauty from the

wrongs of time. The alterations of that beauty Plato would have glorified as the coming of new graces. Her skin, so milk-white once, had taken the warm and pearly tones which painters adore. Her broad and finely modelled brow caught lovingly the light which played on its polished surface. Her eyes, of a turquoise blue, shone with unequalled sweetness; the soft lashes, and the slightly sunken temples inspired the spectator with I know not what mute melancholy. The nose, which was aquiline and thin, recalled the royal origin of the high-born woman. The pure lips, finely cut, wore happy smiles, brought there by loving-kindness inexhaustible. Her teeth were small and white; she had gained of late a slight embonpoint, but her delicate hips and slender waist were none the worse for it. The autumn of her beauty presented a few perennial flowers of her springtide among the richer blooms of summer. Her arms became more nobly rounded, her lustrous skin took a finer grain; the outlines of her form gained plenitude. Lastly and best of all, her open countenance, serene and slightly rosy, the purity of her blue eyes, that a look too eager might have wounded, expressed illimitable sympathy, the tenderness of angels.

At the other chimney-corner, in an arm-chair, the octogenarian sister, like in all points save clothes to her brother, sat listening to the reading of the newspaper and knitting stockings, a work for which sight is needless. Both eyes had cataracts; but she obstinately refused to submit to an operation, in spite of the entreaties of her sister-in-law. The secret reason

of that obstinacy was known to herself only; she declared it was want of courage; but the truth was that she would not let her brother spend twenty-five louis for her benefit. That sum would have been so much the less for the good of the household.

These two old persons brought out in fine relief the beauty of the baroness. Mademoiselle Zephirine, being deprived of sight, was not aware of the changes which eighty years had wrought in her features. Her pale, hollow face, to which the fixedness of the white and sightless eyes gave almost the appearance of death, and three or four solitary and projecting teeth made menacing, was framed by a little hood of brown printed cotton, quilted like a petticoat, trimmed with a cotton ruche, and tied beneath the chin by strings which were always a little rusty. She wore a *cotillon*, or short skirt of coarse cloth, over a quilted petticoat (a positive mattress, in which were secreted double louis-d'ors), and pockets sewn to a belt which she unfastened every night and put on every morning like a garment. Her body was encased in the *casaquin* of Brittany, a species of spencer made of the same cloth as the *cotillon*, adorned with a collarette of many pleats, the washing of which caused the only dispute she ever had with her sister-in-law, – her habit being to change it only once a week. From the large wadded sleeves of the *casaquin* issued two withered but still vigorous arms, at the ends of which flourished her hands, their brownish-red color making the white arms look like poplar-wood. These hands, hooked or contracted from the habit of knitting, might be called a stocking-machine incessantly

at work; the phenomenon would have been had they stopped. From time to time Mademoiselle du Guenic took a long knitting needle which she kept in the bosom of her gown, and passed it between her hood and her hair to poke or scratch her white locks. A stranger would have laughed to see the careless manner in which she thrust back the needle without the slightest fear of wounding herself. She was straight as a steeple. Her erect and imposing carriage might pass for one of those coquetries of old age which prove that pride is a necessary passion of life. Her smile was gay. She, too, had done her duty.

As soon as the baroness saw that her husband was asleep she stopped reading. A ray of sunshine, stretching from one window to the other, divided by a golden band the atmosphere of that old room and burnished the now black furniture. The light touched the carvings of the ceiling, danced on the time-worn chests, spread its shining cloth on the old oak table, enlivening the still, brown room, as Fanny's voice cast into the heart of her octogenarian blind sister a music as luminous and as cheerful as that ray of sunlight. Soon the ray took on the ruddy colors which, by insensible gradations, sank into the melancholy tones of twilight. The baroness also sank into a deep meditation, one of those total silences which her sister-in-law had noticed for the last two weeks, trying to explain them to herself, but making no inquiry. The old woman studied the causes of this unusual pre-occupation, as blind persons, on whose soul sound lingers like a divining echo, read books in which the pages are black

and the letters white. Mademoiselle Zephirine, to whom the dark hour now meant nothing, continued to knit, and the silence at last became so deep that the clicking of her knitting-needles was plainly heard.

"You have dropped the paper, sister, but you are not asleep," said the old woman, slyly.

At this moment Mariotte came in to light the lamp, which she placed on a square table in front of the fire; then she fetched her distaff, her ball of thread, and a small stool, on which she seated herself in the recess of a window and began as usual to spin. Gasselin was still busy about the offices; he looked to the horses of the baron and Calyste, saw that the stable was in order for the night, and gave the two fine hunting-dogs their daily meal. The joyful barking of the animals was the last noise that awakened the echoes slumbering among the darksome walls of the ancient house. The two dogs and the two horses were the only remaining vestiges of the splendors of its chivalry. An imaginative man seated on the steps of the portico and letting himself fall into the poesy of the still living images of that dwelling, might have quivered as he heard the baying of the hounds and the trampling of the neighing horses.

Gasselin was one of those short, thick, squat little Bretons, with black hair and sun-browned faces, silent, slow, and obstinate as mules, but always following steadily the path marked out for them. He was forty-two years old, and had been twenty-five years in the household. Mademoiselle had hired him when he

was fifteen, on hearing of the marriage and probable return of the baron. This retainer considered himself as part of the family; he had played with Calyste, he loved the horses and dogs of the house, and talked to them and petted them as though they were his own. He wore a blue linen jacket with little pockets flapping about his hips, waistcoat and trousers of the same material at all seasons, blue stockings, and stout hob-nailed shoes. When it was cold or rainy he put on a goat's-skin, after the fashion of his country.

Mariotte, who was also over forty, was as a woman what Gasselin was as a man. No team could be better matched, – same complexion, same figure, same little eyes that were lively and black. It is difficult to understand why Gasselin and Mariotte had never married; possibly it might have seemed immoral, they were so like brother and sister. Mariotte's wages were ninety francs a year; Gasselin's, three hundred. But thousands of francs offered to them elsewhere would not have induced either to leave the Guenic household. Both were under the orders of Mademoiselle, who, from the time of the war in La Vendee to the period of her brother's return, had ruled the house. When she learned that the baron was about to bring home a mistress, she had been moved to great emotion, believing that she must yield the sceptre of the household and abdicate in favor of the Baronne du Guenic, whose subject she was now compelled to be.

Mademoiselle Zephirine was therefore agreeably surprised to find in Fanny O'Brien a young woman born to the highest

rank, to whom the petty cares of a poor household were extremely distasteful, – one who, like other fine souls, would far have preferred to eat plain bread rather than the choicest food if she had to prepare it for herself; a woman capable of accomplishing all the duties, even the most painful, of humanity, strong under necessary privations, but without courage for commonplace avocations. When the baron begged his sister in his wife's name to continue in charge of the household, the old maid kissed the baroness like a sister; she made a daughter of her, she adored her, overjoyed to be left in control of the household, which she managed rigorously on a system of almost inconceivable economy, which was never relaxed except for some great occasion, such as the lying-in of her sister, and her nourishment, and all that concerned Calyste, the worshipped son of the whole household.

Though the two servants were accustomed to this stern regime, and no orders need ever have been given to them, for the interests of their masters were greater in their minds than their own, —*were* their own in fact, – Mademoiselle Zephirine insisted on looking after everything. Her attention being never distracted, she knew, without going up to verify her knowledge, how large was the heap of nuts in the barn; and how many oats remained in the bin without plunging her sinewy arm into the depths of it. She carried at the end of a string fastened to the belt of her *casaquin*, a boatswain's whistle, with which she was wont to summon Mariotte by one, and Gasselin by two notes.

Gasselin's greatest happiness was to cultivate the garden and produce fine fruits and vegetables. He had so little work to do that without this occupation he would certainly have felt lost. After he had groomed his horses in the morning, he polished the floors and cleaned the rooms on the ground-floor, then he went to his garden, where weed or damaging insect was never seen. Sometimes Gasselin was observed motionless, bare-headed, under a burning sun, watching for a field-mouse or the terrible grub of the cockchafer; then, as soon as it was caught, he would rush with the joy of a child to show his masters the noxious beast that had occupied his mind for a week. He took pleasure in going to Croisic on fast-days, to purchase a fish to be had for less money there than at Guerande.

Thus no household was ever more truly one, more united in interests, more bound together than this noble family sacredly devoted to its duty. Masters and servants seemed made for one another. For twenty-five years there had been neither trouble nor discord. The only griefs were the petty ailments of the little boy, the only terrors were caused by the events of 1814 and those of 1830. If the same things were invariably done at the same hours, if the food was subjected to the regularity of times and seasons, this monotony, like that of Nature varied only by alterations of cloud and rain and sunshine, was sustained by the affection existing in the hearts of all, – the more fruitful, the more beneficent because it emanated from natural causes.

III. THREE BRETON SILHOUETTES

When night had fairly fallen, Gasselin came into the hall and asked his master respectfully if he had further need of him.

"You can go out, or go to bed, after prayers," replied the baron, waking up, "unless Madame or my sister – "

The two ladies here made a sign of consent. Gasselin then knelt down, seeing that his masters rose to kneel upon their chairs; Mariotte also knelt before her stool. Mademoiselle du Guenic then said the prayer aloud. After it was over, some one rapped at the door on the lane. Gasselin went to open it.

"I dare say it is Monsieur le cure; he usually comes first," said Mariotte.

Every one now recognized the rector's foot on the resounding steps of the portico. He bowed respectfully to the three occupants of the room, and addressed them in phrases of that unctuous civility which priests are accustomed to use. To the rather absent-minded greeting of the mistress of the house, he replied by an ecclesiastically inquisitive look.

"Are you anxious or ill, Madame la baronne?" he asked.

"Thank you, no," she replied.

Monsieur Grimont, a man of fifty, of middle height, lost in his cassock, from which issued two stout shoes with silver buckles,

exhibited above his hands a plump visage, and a generally white skin though yellow in spots. His hands were dimpled. His abbatial face had something of the Dutch burgomaster in the placidity of its complexion and its flesh tones, and of the Breton peasant in the straight black hair and the vivacity of the brown eyes, which preserved, nevertheless, a priestly decorum. His gaiety, that of a man whose conscience was calm and pure, admitted a joke. His manner had nothing uneasy or dogged about it, like that of many poor rectors whose existence or whose power is contested by their parishioners, and who instead of being, as Napoleon sublimely said, the moral leaders of the population and the natural justices of peace, are treated as enemies. Observing Monsieur Grimont as he marched through Guerande, the most irreligious of travellers would have recognized the sovereign of that Catholic town; but this same sovereign lowered his spiritual superiority before the feudal supremacy of the du Guenics. In their salon he was as a chaplain in his seigneur's house. In church, when he gave the benediction, his hand was always first stretched out toward the chapel belonging to the Guenics, where their mailed hand and their device were carved upon the key-stone of the arch.

"I thought that Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel had already arrived," said the rector, sitting down, and taking the hand of the baroness to kiss it. "She is getting unpunctual. Can it be that the fashion of dissipation is contagious? I see that Monsieur le chevalier is again at Les Touches this evening."

"Don't say anything about those visits before Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel," cried the old maid, eagerly.

"Ah! mademoiselle," remarked Mariotte, "you can't prevent the town from gossiping."

"What do they say?" asked the baroness.

"The young girls and the old women all say that he is in love with Mademoiselle des Touches."

"A lad of Calyste's make is playing his proper part in making the women love him," said the baron.

"Here comes Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel," said Mariotte.

The gravel in the court-yard crackled under the discreet footsteps of the coming lady, who was accompanied by a page supplied with a lantern. Seeing this lad, Mariotte removed her stool to the great hall for the purpose of talking with him by the gleam of his rush-light, which was burned at the cost of his rich and miserly mistress, thus economizing those of her own masters.

This elderly demoiselle was a thin, dried-up old maid, yellow as the parchment of a Parliament record, wrinkled as a lake ruffled by the wind, with gray eyes, large prominent teeth, and the hands of a man. She was rather short, a little crooked, possibly hump-backed; but no one had ever been inquisitive enough to ascertain the nature of her perfections or her imperfections. Dressed in the same style as Mademoiselle du Guenic, she stirred an enormous quantity of petticoats and linen whenever she wanted to find one or other of the two apertures of

her gown through which she reached her pockets. The strangest jingling of keys and money then echoed among her garments. She always wore, dangling from one side, the bunch of keys of a good housekeeper, and from the other her silver snuff-box, thimble, knitting-needles, and other implements that were also resonant. Instead of Mademoiselle Zephirine's wadded hood, she wore a green bonnet, in which she may have visited her melons, for it had passed, like them, from green to yellowish; as for its shape, our present fashions are just now bringing it back to Paris, after twenty years absence, under the name of Bibi. This bonnet was constructed under her own eye and by the hands of her nieces, out of green Florence silk bought at Guerande, and an old bonnet-shape, renewed every five years at Nantes, – for Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel allowed her bonnets the longevity of a legislature. Her nieces also made her gowns, cut by an immutable pattern. The old lady still used the cane with the short hook that all women carried in the early days of Marie-Antoinette. She belonged to the very highest nobility of Brittany. Her arms bore the ermine of its ancient dukes. In her and in her sister the illustrious Breton house of the Pen-Hoels ended. Her younger sister had married a Kergarouet, who, in spite of the deep disapproval of the whole region, added the name of Pen-Hoel to his own and called himself the Vicomte de Kergarouet-Pen-Hoel.

"Heaven has punished him," said the old lady; "he has nothing but daughters, and the Kergarouet-Pen-Hoel name will be wiped

out."

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel possessed about seven thousand francs a year from the rental of lands. She had come into her property at thirty-six years of age, and managed it herself, inspecting it on horseback, and displaying on all points the firmness of character which is noticeable in most deformed persons. Her avarice was admired by the whole country round, never meeting with the slightest disapproval. She kept one woman-servant and the page. Her yearly expenses, not including taxes, did not amount to over a thousand francs. Consequently, she was the object of the cajoleries of the Kergarouet-Pen-Hoels, who passed the winters at Nantes, and the summers at their estate on the banks of the Loire below l'Indret. She was supposed to be ready to leave her fortune and her savings to whichever of her nieces pleased her best. Every three months one or other of the four demoiselles de Kergarouet-Pen-Hoel, (the youngest of whom was twelve, and the eldest twenty years of age) came to spend a few days with her.

A friend of Zephirine du Guenic, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoel, brought up to adore the Breton grandeur of the du Guenics, had formed, ever since the birth of Calyste, the plan of transmitting her property to the chevalier by marrying him to whichever of her nieces the Vicomtesse de Kergarouet-Pen-Hoel, their mother, would bestow upon him. She dreamed of buying back some of the best of the Guenic property from the farmer *engagistes*. When avarice has an object it ceases to be a vice; it becomes

a means of virtue; its privations are a perpetual offering; it has the grandeur of an intention beneath its meannesses. Perhaps Zephirine was in the secret of Jacqueline's intention. Perhaps even the baroness, whose whole soul was occupied by love for her son and tenderness for his father, may have guessed it as she saw with what wily perseverance Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel brought with her her favorite niece, Charlotte de Kergarouet, now sixteen years of age. The rector, Monsieur Grimont, was certainly in her confidence; it was he who helped the old maid to invest her savings.

But Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel might have had three hundred thousand francs in gold, she might have had ten times the landed property she actually possessed, and the du Guenics would never have allowed themselves to pay her the slightest attention that the old woman could construe as looking to her fortune. From a feeling of truly Breton pride, Jacqueline de Pen-Hoel, glad of the supremacy accorded to her old friend Zephirine and the du Guenics, always showed herself honored by her relations with Madame du Guenic and her sister-in-law. She even went so far as to conceal the sort of sacrifice to which she consented every evening in allowing her page to burn in the Guenic hall that singular gingerbread-colored candle called an *oribus* which is still used in certain parts of western France.

Thus this rich old maid was nobility, pride, and grandeur personified. At the moment when you are reading this portrait of her, the Abbe Grimont has just indiscreetly revealed that

on the evening when the old baron, the young chevalier, and Gasselin secretly departed to join MADAME (to the terror of the baroness and the great joy of all Bretons) Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel had given the baron ten thousand francs in gold, – an immense sacrifice, to which the abbe added another ten thousand, a tithe collected by him, – charging the old hero to offer the whole, in the name of the Pen-Hoels and of the parish of Guerande, to the mother of Henri V.

Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel treated Calyste as if she felt that her intentions gave her certain rights over him; her plans seemed to authorize a supervision. Not that her ideas were strict in the matter of gallantry, for she had, in fact, the usual indulgence of the old women of the old school, but she held in horror the modern ways of revolutionary morals. Calyste, who might have gained in her estimation by a few adventures with Breton girls, would have lost it considerably had she seen him entangled in what she called innovations. She might have disinterred a little gold to pay for the results of a love-affair, but if Calyste had driven a tilbury or talked of a visit to Paris she would have thought him dissipated, and declared him a spendthrift. Impossible to say what she might not have done had she found him reading novels or an impious newspaper. To her, novel ideas meant the overthrow of succession of crops, ruin under the name of improvements and methods; in short, mortgaged lands as the inevitable result of experiments. To her, prudence was the true method of making your fortune; good management consisted in

filling your granaries with wheat, rye, and flax, and waiting for a rise at the risk of being called a monopolist, and clinging to those grain-sacks obstinately. By singular chance she had often made lucky sales which confirmed her principles. She was thought to be maliciously clever, but in fact she was not quick-witted; on the other hand, being as methodical as a Dutchman, prudent as a cat, and persistent as a priest, those qualities in a region of routine like Brittany were, practically, the equivalent of intellect.

"Will Monsieur du Halga join us this evening?" asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel, taking off her knitted mittens after the usual exchange of greetings.

"Yes, mademoiselle; I met him taking his dog to walk on the mall," replied the rector.

"Ha! then our *mouche* will be lively to-night. Last evening we were only four."

At the word *mouche* the rector rose and took from a drawer in one of the tall chests a small round basket made of fine osier, a pile of ivory counters yellow as a Turkish pipe after twenty years' usage, and a pack of cards as greasy as those of the custom-house officers at Saint-Nazaire, who change them only once in two weeks. These the abbe brought to the table, arranging the proper number of counters before each player, and putting the basket in the centre of the table beside the lamp, with infantine eagerness, and the manner of a man accustomed to perform this little service.

A knock at the outer gate given firmly in military

fashion echoed through the stillness of the ancient mansion. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel's page went gravely to open the door, and presently the long, lean, methodically-clothed person of the Chevalier du Halga, former flag-captain to Admiral de Kergarouet, defined itself in black on the penumbra of the portico.

"Welcome, chevalier!" cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel.

"The altar is raised," said the abbe.

The chevalier was a man in poor health, who wore flannel for his rheumatism, a black-silk skull-cap to protect his head from fog, and a spencer to guard his precious chest from the sudden gusts which freshen the atmosphere of Guerande. He always went armed with a gold-headed cane to drive away the dogs who paid untimely court to a favorite little bitch who usually accompanied him. This man, fussy as a fine lady, worried by the slightest *contretemps*, speaking low to spare his voice, had been in his early days one of the most intrepid and most competent officers of the old navy. He had won the confidence of de Suffren in the Indian Ocean, and the friendship of the Comte de Portenduere. His splendid conduct while flag-captain to Admiral Kergarouet was written in visible letters on his scarred face. To see him now no one would have imagined the voice that ruled the storm, the eye that compassed the sea, the courage, indomitable, of the Breton sailor.

The chevalier never smoked, never swore; he was gentle and tranquil as a girl, as much concerned about his little dog Thisbe

and her caprices as though he were an elderly dowager. In this way he gave a high idea of his departed gallantry, but he never so much as alluded to the deeds of surpassing bravery which had astonished the doughty old admiral, Comte d'Estaing. Though his manner was that of an invalid, and he walked as if stepping on eggs and complained about the sharpness of the wind or the heat of the sun, or the dampness of the misty atmosphere, he exhibited a set of the whitest teeth in the reddest of gums, – a fact reassuring as to his maladies, which were, however, rather expensive, consisting as they did of four daily meals of monastic amplitude. His bodily frame, like that of the baron, was bony, and indestructibly strong, and covered with a parchment glued to his bones as the skin of an Arab horse on the muscles which shine in the sun. His skin retained the tawny color it received in India, whence, however, he did not bring back either facts or ideas. He had emigrated with the rest of his friends, lost his property, and was now ending his days with the cross of Saint-Louis and a pension of two thousand francs, as the legal reward of his services, paid from the fund of the Invalides de la Marine. The slight hypochondria which made him invent his imaginary ills is easily explained by his actual suffering during the emigration. He served in the Russian navy until the day when the Emperor Alexander ordered him to be employed against France; he then resigned and went to live at Odessa, near the Duc de Richelieu, with whom he returned to France. It was the duke who obtained for this glorious relic of the old Breton navy the pension which

enabled him to live. On the death of Louis XVIII. he returned to Guerande, and became, after a while, mayor of the city.

The rector, the chevalier, and Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel had regularly passed their evenings for the last fifteen years at the hotel de Guenic, where the other noble personages of the neighborhood also came. It will be readily understood that the du Guenics were at the head of the faubourg Saint-Germain of the old Breton province, where no member of the new administration sent down by the government was ever allowed to penetrate. For the last six years the rector coughed when he came to the crucial words, *Domine, salvum fac regem*. Politics were still at that point in Guerande.

IV. A NORMAL EVENING

Mouche is a game played with five cards dealt to each player, and one turned over. The turned-over card is trumps. At each round the player is at liberty to run his chances or to abstain from playing his card. If he abstains he loses nothing but his own stake, for as long as there are no forfeits in the basket each player puts in a trifling sum. If he plays and wins a trick he is paid *pro rata* to the stake; that is, if there are five sous in the basket, he wins one sou. The player who fails to win a trick is made *mouche*; he has to pay the whole stake, which swells the basket for the next game. Those who decline to play throw down their cards during the game; but their play is held to be null. The players can exchange their cards with the remainder of the pack, as in ecarte, but only by order of sequence, so that the first and second players may, and sometimes do, absorb the remainder of the pack between them. The turned-over trump card belongs to the dealer, who is always the last; he has the right to exchange it for any card in his own hand. One powerful card is of more importance than all the rest; it is called Mistigris. Mistigris is the knave of clubs.

This game, simple as it is, is not lacking in interest. The cupidity natural to mankind develops in it; so does diplomatic wiliness; also play of countenance. At the hotel du Guenic, each of the players took twenty counters, representing five sous; which made the sum total of the stake for each game five farthings,

a large amount in the eyes of this company. Supposing some extraordinary luck, fifty sous might be won, – more capital than any person in Guerande spent in the course of any one day. Consequently Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel put into this game (the innocence of which is only surpassed in the nomenclature of the Academy by that of La Bataille) a passion corresponding to that of the hunters after big game. Mademoiselle Zephirine, who went shares in the game with the baroness, attached no less importance to it. To put up one farthing for the chance of winning five, game after game, was to this confirmed hoarder a mighty financial operation, into which she put as much mental action as the most eager speculator at the Bourse expends during the rise and fall of consols.

By a certain diplomatic convention, dating from September, 1825, when Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel lost thirty-five sous, the game was to cease as soon as a person losing ten sous should express the wish to retire. Politeness did not allow the rest to give the retiring player the pain of seeing the game go on without him. But, as all passions have their Jesuitism, the chevalier and the baron, those wily politicians, had found a means of eluding this charter. When all the players but one were anxious to continue an exciting game, the daring sailor, du Halga, one of those rich fellows prodigal of costs they do not pay, would offer ten counters to Mademoiselle Zephirine or Mademoiselle Jacqueline, when either of them, or both of them, had lost their five sous, on condition of reimbursement in case they won. An old bachelor

could allow himself such gallantries to the sex. The baron also offered ten counters to the old maids, but under the honest pretext of continuing the game. The miserly maidens accepted, not, however, without some pressing, as is the use and wont of maidens. But, before giving way to this vast prodigality the baron and the chevalier were required to have won; otherwise the offer would have been taken as an insult.

Mouche became a brilliant affair when a Demoiselle de Kergarouet was in transit with her aunt. We use the single name, for the Kergarouets had never been able to induce any one to call them Kergarouet-Pen-Hoel, – not even their servants, although the latter had strict orders so to do. At these times the aunt held out to the niece as a signal treat the *mouche* at the du Guenics. The girl was ordered to look amiable, an easy thing to do in the presence of the beautiful Calyste, whom the four Kergarouet young ladies all adored. Brought up in the midst of modern civilization, these young persons cared little for five sous a game, and on such occasions the stakes went higher. Those were evenings of great emotion to the old blind sister. The baroness would give her sundry hints by pressing her foot a certain number of times, according to the size of the stake it was safe to play. To play or not to play, if the basket were full, involved an inward struggle, where cupidity fought with fear. If Charlotte de Kergarouet, who was usually called giddy, was lucky in her bold throws, her aunt on their return home (if she had not won herself), would be cold and disapproving, and lecture the

girl: she had too much decision in her character; a young person should never assert herself in presence of her betters; her manner of taking the basket and beginning to play was really insolent; the proper behavior of a young girl demanded much more reserve and greater modesty; etc.

It can easily be imagined that these games, carried on nightly for twenty years, were interrupted now and then by narratives of events in the town, or by discussions on public events. Sometimes the players would sit for half an hour, their cards held fan-shape on their stomachs, engaged in talking. If, as a result of these inattentions, a counter was missing from the basket, every one eagerly declared that he or she had put in their proper number. Usually the chevalier made up the deficiency, being accused by the rest of thinking so much of his buzzing ears, his chilly chest, and other symptoms of invalidism that he must have forgotten his stake. But no sooner did he supply the missing counter than Zephirine and Jacqueline were seized with remorse; they imagined that, possibly, they themselves had forgotten their stake; they believed – they doubted – but, after all, the chevalier was rich enough to bear such a trifling misfortune. These dignified and noble personages had the delightful pettiness of suspecting each other. Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel would almost invariably accuse the rector of cheating when he won the basket.

"It is singular," he would reply, "that I never cheat except when I win the trick."

Often the baron would forget where he was when the talk fell on the misfortunes of the royal house. Sometimes the evening ended in a manner that was quite unexpected to the players, who all counted on a certain gain. After a certain number of games and when the hour grew late, these excellent people would be forced to separate without either loss or gain, but not without emotion. On these sad evenings complaints were made of *mouche* itself; it was dull, it was long; the players accused their *mouche* as Negroes stone the moon in the water when the weather is bad. On one occasion, after an arrival of the Vicomte and Vicomtesse de Kergarouet, there was talk of whist and boston being games of more interest than *mouche*. The baroness, who was bored by *mouche*, encouraged the innovation, and all the company – but not without reluctance – adopted it. But it proved impossible to make them really understand the new games, which, on the departure of the Kergarouets, were voted head-splitters, algebraic problems, and intolerably difficult to play. All preferred their *mouche*, their dear, agreeable *mouche*. *Mouche* accordingly triumphed over modern games, as all ancient things have ever triumphed in Brittany over novelties.

While the rector was dealing the cards the baroness was asking the Chevalier du Halga the same questions which she had asked him the evening before about his health. The chevalier made it a point of honor to have new ailments. Inquiries might be alike, but the nautical hero had singular advantages in the way of replies. To-day it chanced that his ribs troubled him. But here's

a remarkable thing! never did the worthy chevalier complain of his wounds. The ills that were really the matter with him he expected, he knew them and he bore them; but his fancied ailments, his headaches, the gnawings in his stomach, the buzzing in his ears, and a thousand other fads and symptoms made him horribly uneasy; he posed as incurable, – and not without reason, for doctors up to the present time have found no remedy for diseases that don't exist.

"Yesterday the trouble was, I believe, in your legs," said the rector.

"It moves about," replied the chevalier.

"Legs to ribs?" asked Mademoiselle Zephirine.

"Without stopping on the way?" said Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel, smiling.

The chevalier bowed gravely, making a negative gesture which was not a little droll, and proved to an observer that in his youth the sailor had been witty and loving and beloved. Perhaps his fossil life at Guerande hid many memories. When he stood, solemnly planted on his two heron-legs in the sunshine on the mall, gazing at the sea or watching the gambols of his little dog, perhaps he was living again in some terrestrial paradise of a past that was rich in recollections.

"So the old Duc de Lenoncourt is dead," said the baron, remembering the paragraph of the "Quotidienne," where his wife had stopped reading. "Well, the first gentleman of the Bedchamber followed his master soon. I shall go next."

"My dear, my dear!" said his wife, gently tapping the bony calloused hand of her husband.

"Let him say what he likes, sister," said Zephirine; "as long as I am above ground he can't be under it; I am the elder."

A gay smile played on the old woman's lips. Whenever the baron made reflections of that kind, the players and the visitors present looked at each other with emotion, distressed by the sadness of the king of Guerande; and after they had left the house they would say, as they walked home: "Monsieur du Guenic was sad to-night. Did you notice how he slept?" And the next day the whole town would talk of the matter. "The Baron du Guenic fails," was a phrase that opened the conversation in many houses.

"How is Thisbe?" asked Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel of the chevalier, as soon as the cards were dealt.

"The poor little thing is like her master," replied the chevalier; "she has some nervous trouble, she goes on three legs constantly. See, like this."

In raising and crooking his arm to imitate the dog, the chevalier exposed his hand to his cunning neighbor, who wanted to see if he had Mistigris or the trump, – a first wile to which he succumbed.

"Oh!" said the baroness, "the end of Monsieur le cure's nose is turning white; he has Mistigris."

The pleasure of having Mistigris was so great to the rector – as it was to the other players – that the poor priest could not conceal it. In all human faces there is a spot where the secret emotions of

the heart betray themselves; and these companions, accustomed for years to observe each other, had ended by finding out that spot on the rector's face: when he had Mistigris the tip of his nose grew pale.

"You had company to-day," said the chevalier to Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel.

"Yes, a cousin of my brother-in-law. He surprised me by announcing the marriage of the Comtesse de Kergarouet, a Demoiselle de Fontaine."

"The daughter of 'Grand-Jacques,'" cried the chevalier, who had lived with the admiral during his stay in Paris.

"The countess is his heir; she has married an old ambassador. My visitor told me the strangest things about our neighbor, Mademoiselle des Touches, – so strange that I can't believe them. If they were true, Calyste would never be so constantly with her; he has too much good sense not to perceive such monstrosities – "

"Monstrosities?" said the baron, waked up by the word.

The baroness and the rector exchanged looks. The cards were dealt; Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel had Mistigris! Impossible to continue the conversation! But she was glad to hide her joy under the excitement caused by her last word.

"Your play, monsieur le baron," she said, with an air of importance.

"My nephew is not one of those youths who like monstrosities," remarked Zephirine, taking out her knitting-needle and scratching her head.

"Mistigris!" cried Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel, making no reply to her friend.

The rector, who appeared to be well-informed in the matter of Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches, did not enter the lists.

"What does she do that is so extraordinary, Mademoiselle des Touches?" asked the baron.

"She smokes," replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel.

"That's very wholesome," said the chevalier.

"About her property?" asked the baron.

"Her property?" continued the old maid. "Oh, she is running through it."

"The game is mine!" said the baroness. "See, I have king, queen, knave of trumps, Mistigris, and a king. We win the basket, sister."

This victory, gained at one stroke, without playing a card, horrified Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel, who ceased to concern herself about Calyste and Mademoiselle des Touches. By nine o'clock no one remained in the salon but the baroness and the rector. The four old people had gone to their beds. The chevalier, according to his usual custom, accompanied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel to her house in the Place de Guerande, making remarks as they went along on the cleverness of the last play, on the joy with which Mademoiselle Zephirine engulfed her gains in those capacious pockets of hers, – for the old blind woman no longer repressed upon her face the visible signs of her feelings. Madame du Guenic's evident preoccupation was

the chief topic of conversation, however. The chevalier had remarked the abstraction of the beautiful Irish woman. When they reached Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel's door-step, and her page had gone in, the old lady answered, confidentially, the remarks of the chevalier on the strangely abstracted air of the baroness: —

"I know the cause. Calyste is lost unless we marry him promptly. He loves Mademoiselle des Touches, an actress!"

"In that case, send for Charlotte."

"I have sent; my sister will receive my letter to-morrow," replied Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel, bowing to the chevalier.

Imagine from this sketch of a normal evening the hubbub excited in Guerande homes by the arrival, the stay, the departure, or even the mere passage through the town, of a stranger.

When no sounds echoed from the baron's chamber nor from that of his sister, the baroness looked at the rector, who was playing pensively with the counters.

"I see that you begin to share my anxiety about Calyste," she said to him.

"Did you notice Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel's displeased looks to-night?" asked the rector.

"Yes," replied the baroness.

"She has, as I know, the best intentions about our dear Calyste; she loves him as though he were her son, his conduct in Vendee beside his father, the praises that MADAME bestowed upon his devotion, have only increased her affection for him. She intends

to execute a deed of gift by which she gives her whole property at her death to whichever of her nieces Calyste marries. I know that you have another and much richer marriage in Ireland for your dear Calyste, but it is well to have two strings to your bow. In case your family will not take charge of Calyste's establishment, Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel's fortune is not to be despised. You can always find a match of seven thousand francs a year for the dear boy, but it is not often that you could come across the savings of forty years and landed property as well managed, built up, and kept in repair as that of Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel. That ungodly woman, Mademoiselle des Touches, has come here to ruin many excellent things. Her life is now known."

"And what is it?" asked the mother.

"Oh! that of a trollop," replied the rector, – "a woman of questionable morals, a writer for the stage; frequenting theatres and actors; squandering her fortune among pamphleteers, painters, musicians, a devilish society, in short. She writes books herself, and has taken a false name by which she is better known, they tell me, than by her own. She seems to be a sort of circus woman who never enters a church except to look at the pictures. She has spent quite a fortune in decorating Les Touches in a most improper fashion, making it a Mohammedan paradise where the houris are not women. There is more wine drunk there, they say, during the few weeks of her stay than the whole year round in Guerande. The Demoiselles Bougniol let their lodgings last year to men with beards, who were suspected of being Blues; they

sang wicked songs which made those virtuous women blush and weep, and spent their time mostly at Les Touches. And this is the woman our dear Calyste adores! If that creature wanted to-night one of the infamous books in which the atheists of the present day scoff at holy things, Calyste would saddle his horse himself and gallop to Nantes for it. I am not sure that he would do as much for the Church. Moreover, this Breton woman is not a royalist! If Calyste were again called upon to strike a blow for the cause, and Mademoiselle des Touches – the Sieur Camille Maupin, that is her other name, as I have just remembered – if she wanted to keep him with her the chevalier would let his old father go to the field without him."

"Oh, no!" said the baroness.

"I should not like to put him to the proof; you would suffer too much," replied the rector. "All Guerande is turned upside down about Calyste's passion for this amphibious creature, who is neither man nor woman, who smokes like an hussar, writes like a journalist, and has at this very moment in her house the most venomous of all writers, – so the postmaster says, and he's a *juste-milieu* man who reads the papers. They are even talking about her at Nantes. This morning the Kergarouet cousin who wants to marry Charlotte to a man with sixty thousand francs a year, went to see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel, and filled her mind with tales about Mademoiselle des Touches which lasted seven hours. It is now striking a quarter to ten, and Calyste is not home; he is at Les Touches, – perhaps he won't come in all night."

The baroness listened to the rector, who was substituting monologue for dialogue unconsciously as he looked at this lamb of his fold, on whose face could be read her anxiety. She colored and trembled. When the worthy man saw the tears in the beautiful eyes of the mother, he was moved to compassion.

"I will see Mademoiselle de Pen-Hoel to-morrow," he said. "Don't be too uneasy. The harm may not be as great as they say it is. I will find out the truth. Mademoiselle Jacqueline has confidence in me. Besides, Calyste is our child, our pupil, – he will never let the devil inveigle him; neither will he trouble the peace of his family or destroy the plans we have made for his future. Therefore, don't weep; all is not lost, madame; one fault is not vice."

"You are only informing me of details," said the baroness. "Was not I the first to notice the change in my Calyste? A mother keenly feels the shock of finding herself second in the heart of her son. She cannot be deceived. This crisis in a man's life is one of the trials of motherhood. I have prepared myself for it, but I did not think it would come so soon. I hoped, at least, that Calyste would take into his heart some noble and beautiful being, – not a stage-player, a masquerader, a theatre woman, an author whose business it is to feign sentiments, a creature who will deceive him and make him unhappy! She has had adventures – "

"With several men," said the rector. "And yet this impious creature was born in Brittany! She dishonors her land. I shall preach a sermon upon her next Sunday."

"Don't do that!" cried the baroness. "The peasants and the *paludiers* would be capable of rushing to Les Touches. Calyste is worthy of his name; he is Breton; some dreadful thing might happen to him, for he would surely defend her as he would the Blessed Virgin."

"It is now ten o'clock; I must bid you good-night," said the abbe, lighting the wick of his lantern, the glass of which was clear and the metal shining, which testified to the care his housekeeper bestowed on the household property. "Who could ever have told me, madame," he added, "that a young man brought up by you, trained by me to Christian ideas, a fervent Catholic, a child who has lived as a lamb without spot, would plunge into such mire?"

"But is it certain?" said the mother. "How could any woman help loving Calyste?"

"What other proof is needed than her staying on at Les Touches. In all the twenty-four years since she came of age she has never stayed there so long as now; her visits to these parts, happily for us, were few and short."

"A woman over forty years old!" exclaimed the baroness. "I have heard say in Ireland that a woman of this description is the most dangerous mistress a young man can have."

"As to that, I have no knowledge," replied the rector, "and I shall die in my ignorance."

"And I, too, alas!" said the baroness, naively. "I wish now that I had loved with love, so as to understand and counsel and comfort Calyste."

The rector did not cross the clean little court-yard alone; the baroness accompanied him to the gate, hoping to hear Calyste's step coming through the town. But she heard nothing except the heavy tread of the rector's cautious feet, which grew fainter in the distance, and finally ceased when the closing of the door of the parsonage echoed behind him.

V. CALYSTE

The poor mother returned to the salon deeply distressed at finding that the whole town was aware of what she had thought was known to her alone. She sat down, trimmed the wick of the lamp by cutting it with a pair of old scissors, took up once more the worsted-work she was doing, and awaited Calyste. The baroness fondly hoped to induce her son by this means to come home earlier and spend less time with Mademoiselle des Touches. Such calculations of maternal jealousy were wasted. Day after day, Calyste's visits to Les Touches became more frequent, and every night he came in later. The night before the day of which we speak it was midnight when he returned.

The baroness, lost in maternal meditation, was setting her stitches with the rapidity of one absorbed in thought while engaged in manual labor. Whoever had seen her bending to the light of the lamp beneath the quadruply centennial hangings of that ancient room would have admired the sublimity of the picture. Fanny's skin was so transparent that it was possible to read the thoughts that crossed her brow beneath it. Piqued with a curiosity that often comes to a pure woman, she asked herself what devilish secrets these daughters of Baal possessed to so charm men as to make them forgetful of mother, family, country, and self-interests. Sometimes she longed to meet this woman and judge her soberly for herself. Her mind measured to its full extent

the evils which the innovative spirit of the age – described to her as so dangerous for young souls by the rector – would have upon her only child, until then so guileless; as pure as an innocent girl, and beautiful with the same fresh beauty.

Calyste, that splendid offspring of the oldest Breton race and the noblest Irish blood, had been nurtured by his mother with the utmost care. Until the moment when the baroness made over the training of him to the rector of Guerande, she was certain that no impure word, no evil thought had sullied the ears or entered the mind of her precious son. After nursing him at her bosom, giving him her own life twice, as it were, after guiding his footsteps as a little child, the mother had put him with all his virgin innocence into the hands of the pastor, who, out of true reverence for the family, had promised to give him a thorough and Christian education. Calyste thenceforth received the instruction which the abbe himself had received at the Seminary. The baroness taught him English, and a teacher of mathematics was found, not without difficulty, among the employes at Saint-Nazaire. Calyste was therefore necessarily ignorant of modern literature, and the advance and present progress of the sciences. His education had been limited to geography and the circumspect history of a young ladies' boarding-school, the Latin and Greek of seminaries, the literature of the dead languages, and to a very restricted choice of French writers. When, at sixteen, he began what the Abbe Grimont called his philosophy, he was neither more nor less than what he was when Fanny placed him in the abbe's hands. The

Church had proved as maternal as the mother. Without being over-pious or ridiculous, the idolized young lad was a fervent Catholic.

For this son, so noble, so innocent, the baroness desired to provide a happy life in obscurity. She expected to inherit some property, two or three thousand pounds sterling, from an aunt. This sum, joined to the small present fortune of the Guenics, might enable her to find a wife for Calyste, who would bring him twelve or even fifteen thousand francs a year. Charlotte de Kergarouet, with her aunt's fortune, a rich Irish girl, or any other good heiress would have suited the baroness, who seemed indifferent as to choice. She was ignorant of love, having never known it, and, like all the other persons grouped about her, she saw nothing in marriage but a means of fortune. Passion was an unknown thing to these Catholic souls, these old people exclusively concerned about salvation, God, the king, and their property. No one should be surprised, therefore, at the foreboding thoughts which accompanied the wounded feelings of the mother, who lived as much for the future interests of her son as by her love for him. If the young household would only listen to wisdom, she thought, the coming generation of the du Guenics, by enduring privations, and saving, as people do save in the provinces, would be able to buy back their estates and recover, in the end, the lustre of wealth. The baroness prayed for a long age that she might see the dawn of this prosperous era. Mademoiselle du Guenic had understood and fully adopted

this hope which Mademoiselle des Touches now threatened to overthrow.

The baroness heard midnight strike, with tears; her mind conceived of many horrors during the next hour, for the clock struck one, and Calyste was still not at home.

"Will he stay there?" she thought. "It would be the first time. Poor child!"

At that moment Calyste's step resounded in the lane. The poor mother, in whose heart rejoicing drove out anxiety, flew from the house to the gate and opened it for her boy.

"Oh!" cried Calyste, in a grieved voice, "my darling mother, why did you sit up for me? I have a pass-key and the tinder-box."

"You know very well, my child, that I cannot sleep when you are out," she said, kissing him.

When the baroness reached the salon, she looked at her son to discover, if possible, from the expression of his face the events of the evening. But he caused her, as usual, an emotion that frequency never weakened, – an emotion which all loving mothers feel at sight of a human masterpiece made by them; this sentiment blues their sight and supersedes all others for the moment.

Except for the black eyes, full of energy and the heat of the sun, which he derived from his father, Calyste in other respects resembled his mother; he had her beautiful golden hair, her lovable mouth, the same curving fingers, the same soft, delicate, and purely white skin. Though slightly resembling a girl disguised

as a man, his physical strength was Herculean. His muscles had the suppleness and vigor of steel springs, and the singularity of his black eyes and fair complexion was by no means without charm. His beard had not yet sprouted; this delay, it is said, is a promise of longevity. The chevalier was dressed in a short coat of black velvet like that of his mother's gown, trimmed with silver buttons, a blue foulard necktie, trousers of gray jean, and a becoming pair of gaiters. His white brow bore the signs of great fatigue, caused, to an observer's eye, by the weight of painful thoughts; but his mother, incapable of supposing that troubles could wring his heart, attributed his evident weariness to passing excitement. Calyste was as handsome as a Greek god, and handsome without conceit; in the first place, he had his mother's beauty constantly before him, and next, he cared very little for personal advantages which he found useless.

"Those beautiful pure cheeks," thought his mother, "where the rich young blood is flowing, belong to another woman! she is the mistress of that innocent brow! Ah! passion will lead to many evils; it will tarnish the look of those eyes, moist as the eyes of an infant!"

This bitter thought wrung Fanny's heart and destroyed her pleasure.

It may seem strange to those who calculate expenses that in a family of six persons compelled to live on three thousand francs a year the son should have a coat and the mother a gown of velvet; but Fanny O'Brien had aunts and rich relations in London

who recalled themselves to her remembrance by many presents. Several of her sisters, married to great wealth, took enough interest in Calyste to wish to find him an heiress, knowing that he, like Fanny their exiled favorite, was noble and handsome.

"You stayed at Les Touches longer than you did last night, my dear one," said the mother at last, in an agitated tone.

"Yes, dear mother," he answered, offering no explanation.

The curtness of this answer brought clouds to his mother's brow, and she resolved to postpone the explanation till the morrow. When mothers admit the anxieties which were now torturing the baroness, they tremble before their sons; they feel instinctively the effect of the great emancipation that comes with love; they perceive what that sentiment is about to take from them; but they have, at the same time, a sense of joy in knowing that their sons are happy; conflicting feelings battle in their hearts. Though the result may be the development of their sons into superior men, true mothers do not like this forced abdication; they would rather keep their children small and still requiring protection. Perhaps that is the secret of their predilection for feeble, deformed, or weak-minded offspring.

"You are tired, dear child; go to bed," she said, repressing her tears.

A mother who does not know all that her son is doing thinks the worst; that is, if a mother loves as much and is as much beloved as Fanny. But perhaps all other mothers would have trembled now as she did. The patient care of twenty years might

be rendered worthless. This human masterpiece of virtuous and noble and religious education, Calyste, might be destroyed; the happiness of his life, so long and carefully prepared for, might be forever ruined by this woman.

The next day Calyste slept till mid-day, for his mother would not have him wakened. Mariotte served the spoiled child's breakfast in his bed. The inflexible and semi-conventual rules which regulated the hours for meals yielded to the caprices of the chevalier. If it became desirable to extract from Mademoiselle du Guenic her array of keys in order to obtain some necessary article of food outside of the meal hours, there was no other means of doing it than to make the pretext of its serving some fancy of Calyste.

About one o'clock the baron, his wife, and Mademoiselle were seated in the salon, for they dined at three o'clock. The baroness was again reading the "Quotidienne" to her husband, who was always more awake before the dinner hour. As she finished a paragraph she heard the steps of her son on the upper floor, and she dropped the paper, saying: —

"Calyste must be going to dine again at Les Touches; he has dressed himself."

"He amuses himself, the dear boy," said the old sister, taking a silver whistle from her pocket and whistling once.

Mariotte came through the tower and appeared at the door of communication which was hidden by a silken curtain like the other doors of the room.

"What is it?" she said; "anything wanted?"

"The chevalier dines at Les Touches; don't cook the fish."

"But we are not sure as yet," said the baroness.

"You seem annoyed, sister; I know it by the tone of your voice."

"Monsieur Grimont has heard some very grave charges against Mademoiselle des Touches, who for the last year has so changed our dear Calyste."

"Changed him, how?" asked the baron.

"He reads all sorts of books."

"Ah! ah!" exclaimed the baron, "so that's why he has given up hunting and riding."

"Her morals are very reprehensible, and she has taken a man's name," added Madame du Guenic.

"A war name, I suppose," said the old man. "I was called 'l'Intime,' the Comte de Fontaine 'Grand-Jacques,' the Marquis de Montauran the 'Gars.' I was the friend of Ferdinand, who never submitted, any more than I did. Ah! those were the good times; people shot each other, but what of that? we amused ourselves all the same, here and there."

This war memory, pushing aside paternal anxiety, saddened Fanny for a moment. The rector's revelations, the want of confidence shown to her by Calyste, had kept her from sleeping.

"Suppose Monsieur le chevalier does love Mademoiselle des Touches, where's the harm?" said Mariotte. "She has thirty thousand francs a year and she is very handsome."

"What is that you say, Mariotte?" exclaimed the old baron. "A Guenic marry a des Touches! The des Touches were not even grooms in the days when du Guesclin considered our alliance a signal honor."

"A woman who takes a man's name, – Camille Maupin!" said the baroness.

"The Maupins are an old family," said the baron; "they bear: gules, three – " He stopped. "But she cannot be a Maupin and a des Touches both," he added.

"She is called Maupin on the stage."

"A des Touches could hardly be an actress," said the old man. "Really, Fanny, if I did not know you, I should think you were out of your head."

"She writes plays, and books," continued the baroness.

"Books?" said the baron, looking at his wife with an air of as much surprise as though she were telling of a miracle. "I have heard that Mademoiselle Scudery and Madame de Sevigne wrote books, but it was not the best thing they did."

"Are you going to dine at Les Touches, monsieur?" said Mariotte, when Calyste entered.

"Probably," replied the young man.

Mariotte was not inquisitive; she was part of the family; and she left the room without waiting to hear what the baroness would say to her son.

"Are you going again to Les Touches, my Calyste?" The baroness emphasized the *my*. "Les Touches is not a respectable or

decent house. Its mistress leads an irregular life; she will corrupt our Calyste. Already Camille Maupin has made him read many books; he has had adventures – You knew all that, my naughty child, and you never said one word to your best friends!"

"The chevalier is discreet," said his father, – "a virtue of the olden time."

"Too discreet," said the jealous mother, observing the red flush on her son's forehead.

"My dear mother," said Calyste, kneeling down beside the baroness, "I didn't think it necessary to publish my defeat. Mademoiselle des Touches, or, if you choose to call her so, Camille Maupin, rejected my love more than eighteen months ago, during her last stay at Les Touches. She laughed at me, gently; saying she might very well be my mother; that a woman of forty committed a sort of crime against nature in loving a minor, and that she herself was incapable of such depravity. She made a thousand little jokes, which hurt me – for she is witty as an angel; but when she saw me weep hot tears she tried to comfort me, and offered me her friendship in the noblest manner. She has more heart than even talent; she is as generous as you are yourself. I am now her child. On her return here lately, hearing from her that she loves another, I have resigned myself. Do not repeat the calumnies that have been said of her. Camille is an artist, she has genius, she leads one of those exceptional existences which cannot be judged like ordinary lives."

"My child," said the religious Fanny, "nothing can excuse a

woman for not conducting herself as the Church requires. She fails in her duty to God and to society by abjuring the gentle tenets of her sex. A woman commits a sin in even going to a theatre; but to write the impieties that actors repeat, to roam about the world, first with an enemy to the Pope, and then with a musician, ah! Calyste, you can never persuade me that such acts are deeds of faith, hope, or charity. Her fortune was given her by God to do good, and what good does she do with hers?"

Calyste sprang up suddenly, and looked at his mother.

"Mother," he said, "Camille is my friend; I cannot hear her spoken of in this way; I would give my very life for her."

"Your life!" said the baroness, looking at her son, with startled eyes. "Your life is our life, the life of all of us."

"My nephew has just said many things I do not understand," said the old woman, turning toward him.

"Where did he learn them?" said the mother; "at Les Touches."

"Yes, my darling mother; she found me ignorant as a carp, and she has taught me."

"You knew the essential things when you learned the duties taught us by religion," replied the baroness. "Ah! this woman is fated to destroy your noble and sacred beliefs."

The old maid rose, and solemnly stretched forth her hands toward her brother, who was dozing in his chair.

"Calyste," she said, in a voice that came from her heart, "your father has never opened books, he speaks Breton, he fought for

God and for the king. Educated people did the evil, educated noblemen deserted their land, – be educated if you choose!"

So saying, she sat down and began to knit with a rapidity which betrayed her inward emotion.

"My angel," said the mother, weeping, "I foresee some evil coming down upon you in that house."

"Who is making Fanny weep?" cried the old man, waking with a start at the sound of his wife's voice. He looked round upon his sister, his son, and the baroness. "What is the matter?" he asked.

"Nothing, my friend," replied his wife.

"Mamma," said Calyste, whispering in his mother's ear, "it is impossible for me to explain myself just now; but to-night you and I will talk of this. When you know all, you will bless Mademoiselle des Touches."

"Mothers do not like to curse," replied the baroness. "I could not curse a woman who truly loved my Calyste."

The young man bade adieu to his father and went out. The baron and his wife rose to see him pass through the court-yard, open the gate, and disappear. The baroness did not again take up the newspaper; she was too agitated. In this tranquil, untroubled life such a discussion was the equivalent of a quarrel in other homes. Though somewhat calmed, her motherly uneasiness was not dispersed. Whither would such a friendship, which might claim the life of Calyste and destroy it, lead her boy? Bless Mademoiselle des Touches? how could that be? These questions were as momentous to her simple soul as the fury of revolutions

to a statesman. Camille Maupin was Revolution itself in that calm and placid home.

"I fear that woman will ruin him," she said, picking up the paper.

"My dear Fanny," said the old baron, with a jaunty air, "you are too much of an angel to understand these things. Mademoiselle des Touches is, they say, as black as a crow, as strong as a Turk, and forty years old. Our dear Calyste was certain to fall in love with her. Of course he will tell certain honorable little lies to conceal his happiness. Let him alone to amuse himself with his first illusions."

"If it had been any other woman – " began the baroness.

"But, my dear Fanny, if the woman were a saint she would not accept your son." The baroness again picked up the paper. "I will go and see her myself," added the baron, "and tell you all about her."

This speech has no savor at the present moment. But after reading the biography of Camille Maupin you can then imagine the old baron entering the lists against that illustrious woman.

VI. BIOGRAPHY OF CAMILLE MAUPIN

The town of Guerande, which for two months past had seen Calyste, its flower and pride, going, morning or evening, often morning and evening, to Les Touches, concluded that Mademoiselle Felicite des Touches was passionately in love with the beautiful youth, and that she practised upon him all kinds of sorceries. More than one young girl and wife asked herself by what right an old woman exercised so absolute an empire over that angel. When Calyste passed along the Grand Rue to the Croisic gate many a regretful eye was fastened on him.

It now became necessary to explain the rumors which hovered about the person whom Calyste was on his way to see. These rumors, swelled by Breton gossip, envenomed by public ignorance, had reached the rector. The receiver of taxes, the *juge de paix*, the head of the Saint-Nazaire custom-house and other lettered persons had not reassured the abbe by relating to him the strange and fantastic life of the female writer who concealed herself under the masculine name of Camille Maupin. She did not as yet eat little children, nor kill her slaves like Cleopatra, nor throw men into the river as the heroine of the Tour de Nesle was falsely accused of doing; but to the Abbe Grimont this monstrous creature, a cross between a siren and an atheist, was an

immoral combination of woman and philosopher who violated every social law invented to restrain or utilize the infirmities of womankind.

Just as Clara Gazul is the female pseudonym of a distinguished male writer, George Sand the masculine pseudonym of a woman of genius, so Camille Maupin was the mask behind which was long hidden a charming young woman, very well-born, a Breton, named Felicite des Touches, the person who was now causing such lively anxiety to the Baronne du Guenic and the excellent rector of Guerande. The Breton des Touches family has no connection with the family of the same name in Touraine, to which belongs the ambassador of the Regent, even more famous to-day for his writings than for his diplomatic talents.

Camille Maupin, one of the few celebrated women of the nineteenth century, was long supposed to be a man, on account of the virility of her first writings. All the world now knows the two volumes of plays, not intended for representation on the stage, written after the manner of Shakespeare or Lopez de Vega, published in 1822, which made a sort of literary revolution when the great question of the classics and the romanticists palpitated on all sides, – in the newspapers, at the clubs, at the Academy, everywhere. Since then, Camille Maupin has written several plays and a novel, which have not belied the success obtained by her first publication – now, perhaps, too much forgotten. To explain by what net-work of circumstances the masculine

incarnation of a young girl was brought about, why Felicite des Touches became a man and an author, and why, more fortunate than Madame de Stael, she kept her freedom and was thus more excusable for her celebrity, would be to satisfy many curiosities and do justice to one of those abnormal beings who rise in humanity like monuments, and whose fame is promoted by its rarity, – for in twenty centuries we can count, at most, twenty famous women. Therefore, although in these pages she stands as a secondary character, in consideration of the fact that she plays a great part in the literary history of our epoch, and that her influence over Calyste was great, no one, we think, will regret being made to pause before that figure rather longer than modern art permits.

Mademoiselle Felicite des Touches became an orphan in 1793. Her property escaped confiscation by reason of the deaths of her father and brother. The first was killed on the 10th of August, at the threshold of the palace, among the defenders of the king, near whose person his rank as major of the guards of the gate had placed him. Her brother, one of the body-guard, was massacred at Les Carmes. Mademoiselle des Touches was two years old when her mother died, killed by grief, a few days after this second catastrophe. When dying, Madame des Touches confided her daughter to her sister, a nun of Chelles. Madame de Faucombe, the nun, prudently took the orphan to Faucombe, a good-sized estate near Nantes, belonging to Madame des Touches, and there she settled with the little girl

and three sisters of her convent. The populace of Nantes, during the last days of the Terror, tore down the chateau, seized the nuns and Mademoiselle des Touches, and threw them into prison on a false charge of receiving emissaries of Pitt and Coburg. The 9th Thermidor released them. Felicite's aunt died of fear. Two of the sisters left France, and the third confided the little girl to her nearest relation, Monsieur de Faucombe, her maternal great-uncle, who lived in Nantes.

Monsieur de Faucombe, an old man sixty years of age, had married a young woman to whom he left the management of his affairs. He busied himself in archaeology, – a passion, or to speak more correctly, one of those manias which enable old men to fancy themselves still living. The education of his ward was therefore left to chance. Little cared-for by her uncle's wife, a young woman given over to the social pleasures of the imperial epoch, Felicite brought herself up as a boy. She kept company with Monsieur de Faucombe in his library; where she read everything it pleased her to read. She thus obtained a knowledge of life in theory, and had no innocence of mind, though virgin personally. Her intellect floated on the impurities of knowledge while her heart was pure. Her learning became extraordinary, the result of a passion for reading, sustained by a powerful memory. At eighteen years of age she was as well-informed on all topics as a young man entering a literary career has need to be in our day. Her prodigious reading controlled her passions far more than conventual life would have done; for there the imaginations

of young girls run riot. A brain crammed with knowledge that was neither digested nor classed governed the heart and soul of the child. This depravity of the intellect, without action upon the chastity of the body, would have amazed philosophers and observers, had any one in Nantes even suspected the powers of Mademoiselle des Touches.

The result of all this was in a contrary direction to the cause. Felicite had no inclinations toward evil; she conceived everything by thought, but abstained from deed. Old Faucombe was enchanted with her, and she helped him in his work, – writing three of his books, which the worthy old gentleman believed were his own; for his spiritual paternity was blind. Such mental labor, not agreeing with the developments of girlhood, had its effect. Felicite fell ill; her blood was overheated, and her chest seemed threatened with inflammation. The doctors ordered horseback exercise and the amusements of society. Mademoiselle des Touches became, in consequence, an admirable horsewoman, and recovered her health in a few months.

At the age of eighteen she appeared in the world, where she produced so great a sensation that no one in Nantes called her anything else than "the beautiful Mademoiselle des Touches." Led to enter society by one of the imperishable sentiments in the heart of a woman, however superior she may be, the worship she inspired found her cold and unresponsive. Hurt by her aunt and her cousins, who ridiculed her studies and teased her about her unwillingness for society, which they attributed to a lack

of the power of pleasing, Felicite resolved on making herself coquettish, gay, volatile, – a woman, in short. But she expected in return an exchange of ideas, seductions, and pleasures in harmony with the elevation of her own mind and the extent of its knowledge. Instead of that, she was filled with disgust for the commonplaces of conversation, the silliness of gallantry; and more especially was she shocked by the supremacy of military men, to whom society made obeisance at that period. She had, not unnaturally, neglected the minor accomplishments. Finding herself inferior to the pretty dolls who played on the piano and made themselves agreeable by singing ballads, she determined to be a musician. Retiring into her former solitude she set to work resolvedly, under the direction of the best master in the town. She was rich, and she sent for Steibelt when the time came to perfect herself. The astonished town still talks of this princely conduct. The stay of that master cost her twelve thousand francs. Later, when she went to Paris, she studied harmony and thorough-bass, and composed the music of two operas which have had great success, though the public has never been admitted to the secret of their authorship. Ostensibly these operas are by Conti, one of the most eminent musicians of our day; but this circumstance belongs to the history of her heart, and will be mentioned later on.

The mediocrity of the society of a provincial town wearied her so excessively, her imagination was so filled with grandiose ideas that although she returned to the salons to eclipse other

women once more by her beauty, and enjoy her new triumph as a musician, she again deserted them; and having proved her power to her cousins, and driven two lovers to despair, she returned to her books, her piano, the works of Beethoven, and her old friend Faucombe. In 1812, when she was twenty-one years of age, the old archaeologist handed over to her his guardianship accounts. From that year, she took control of her fortune, which consisted of fifteen thousand francs a year, derived from Les Touches, the property of her father; twelve thousand a year from Faucombe (which, however, she increased one-third on renewing the leases); and a capital of three hundred thousand francs laid by during her minority by her guardians.

Felicite acquired from her experience of provincial life, an understanding of money, and that strong tendency to administrative wisdom which enables the provinces to hold their own under the ascensional movement of capital towards Paris. She drew her three hundred thousand francs from the house of business where her guardian had placed them, and invested them on the Grand-livre at the very moment of the disasters of the retreat from Moscow. In this way, she increased her income by thirty thousand francs. All expenses paid, she found herself with fifty thousand francs a year to invest. At twenty-one years of age a girl with such force of will is the equal of a man of thirty. Her mind had taken a wide range; habits of criticism enabled her to judge soberly of men, and art, and things, and public questions. Henceforth she resolved to leave Nantes; but

old Faucombe falling ill with his last illness, she, who had been both wife and daughter to him, remained to nurse him, with the devotion of an angel, for eighteen months, closing his eyes at the moment when Napoleon was struggling with all Europe on the corpse of France. Her removal to Paris was therefore still further postponed until the close of that crisis.

As a Royalist, she hastened to be present at the return of the Bourbons to Paris. There the Grandlieus, to whom she was related, received her as their guest; but the catastrophes of March 20 intervened, and her future was vague and uncertain. She was thus enabled to see with her own eyes that last image of the Empire, and behold the Grand Army when it came to the Champ de Mars, as to a Roman circus, to salute its Caesar before it went to its death at Waterloo. The great and noble soul of Felicite was stirred by that magic spectacle. The political commotions, the glamour of that theatrical play of three months which history has called the Hundred Days, occupied her mind and preserved her from all personal emotions in the midst of a convulsion which dispersed the royalist society among whom she had intended to reside. The Grandlieus followed the Bourbons to Ghent, leaving their house to Mademoiselle des Touches. Felicite, who did not choose to take a subordinate position, purchased for one hundred and thirty thousand francs one of the finest houses in the rue Mont Blanc, where she installed herself on the return of the Bourbons in 1815. The garden of this house is to-day worth two millions.

Accustomed to control her own life, Felicite soon familiarized herself with the ways of thought and action which are held to be exclusively the province of man. In 1816 she was twenty-five years old. She knew nothing of marriage; her conception of it was wholly that of thought; she judged it in its causes instead of its effect, and saw only its objectionable side. Her superior mind refused to make the abdication by which a married woman begins that life; she keenly felt the value of independence, and was conscious of disgust for the duties of maternity.

It is necessary to give these details to explain the anomalies presented by the life of Camille Maupin. She had known neither father nor mother; she had been her own mistress from childhood; her guardian was an old archaeologist. Chance had flung her into the regions of knowledge and of imagination, into the world of literature, instead of holding her within the rigid circle defined by the futile education given to women, and by maternal instructions as to dress, hypocritical propriety, and the hunting graces of their sex. Thus, long before she became celebrated, a glance might have told an observer that she had never played with dolls.

Toward the close of the year 1817 Felicite des Touches began to perceive, not the fading of her beauty, but the beginning of a certain lassitude of body. She saw that a change would presently take place in her person as the result of her obstinate celibacy. She wanted to retain her youth and beauty, to which at that time she clung. Science warned her of the sentence pronounced

by Nature upon all her creations, which perish as much by the misconception of her laws as by the abuse of them. The macerated face of her aunt returned to her memory and made her shudder. Placed between marriage and love, her desire was to keep her freedom; but she was now no longer indifferent to homage and the admiration that surrounded her. She was, at the moment when this history begins, almost exactly what she was in 1817. Eighteen years had passed over her head and respected it. At forty she might have been thought no more than twenty-five.

Therefore to describe her in 1836 is to picture her as she was in 1817. Women who know the conditions of temperament and happiness in which a woman should live to resist the ravages of time will understand how and why Felicite des Touches enjoyed this great privilege as they study a portrait for which were reserved the brightest tints of Nature's palette, and the richest setting.

Brittany presents a curious problem to be solved in the predominance of dark hair, brown eyes, and swarthy complexions in a region so near England that the atmospheric effects are almost identical. Does this problem belong to the great question of races? to hitherto unobserved physical influences? Science may some day find the reason of this peculiarity, which ceases in the adjoining province of Normandy. Waiting its solution, this odd fact is there before our eyes; fair complexions are rare in Brittany, where the women's eyes are as black and lively as those of Southern women; but instead of possessing

the tall figures and swaying lines of Italy and Spain, they are usually short, close-knit, well set-up and firm, except in the higher classes which are crossed by their alliances.

Mademoiselle des Touches, a true Breton, is of medium height, though she looks taller than she really is. This effect is produced by the character of her face, which gives height to her form. She has that skin, olive by day and dazzling by candlelight, which distinguishes a beautiful Italian; you might, if you pleased, call it animated ivory. The light glides along a skin of that texture as on a polished surface; it shines; a violent emotion is necessary to bring the faintest color to the centre of the cheeks, where it goes away almost immediately. This peculiarity gives to her face the calm impassibility of the savage. The face, more long than oval, resembles that of some beautiful Isis in the Egyptian bas-reliefs; it has the purity of the heads of sphinxes, polished by the fire of the desert, kissed by a Coptic sun. The tones of the skin are in harmony with the faultless modelling of the head. The black and abundant hair descends in heavy masses beside the throat, like the coif of the statues at Memphis, and carries out magnificently the general severity of form. The forehead is full, broad, and swelling about the temples, illuminated by surfaces which catch the light, and modelled like the brow of the hunting Diana, a powerful and determined brow, silent and self-contained. The arch of the eye-brows, vigorously drawn, surmounts a pair of eyes whose flame scintillates at times like that of a fixed star. The white of the eye is neither bluish, nor

strewn with scarlet threads, nor is it purely white; it has the texture of horn, but the tone is warm. The pupil is surrounded by an orange circle; it is of bronze set in gold, but vivid gold and animated bronze. This pupil has depth; it is not underlaid, as in certain eyes, by a species of foil, which sends back the light and makes such eyes resemble those of cats or tigers; it has not that terrible inflexibility which makes a sensitive person shudder; but this depth has in it something of the infinite, just as the external radiance of the eyes suggests the absolute. The glance of an observer may be lost in that soul, which gathers itself up and retires with as much rapidity as it gushed for a second into those velvet eyes. In moments of passion the eyes of Camille Maupin are sublime; the gold of her glance illuminates them and they flame. But in repose they are dull; the torpor of meditation often lends them an appearance of stupidity[1]; in like manner, when the glow of the soul is absent the lines of the face are sad.

The lashes of the eyelids are short, but thick and black as the tip of an ermine's tail; the eyelids are brown and strewn with red fibrils, which give them grace and strength, – two qualities which are seldom united in a woman. The circle round the eyes shows not the slightest blemish nor the smallest wrinkle. There, again, we find the granite of an Egyptian statue softened by the ages. But the line of the cheek-bones, though soft, is more

[1] George Sand says of herself, in "L'Histoire de Ma Vie," published long after the above was written: "The habit of meditation gave me *l'air bete* (a stupid air). I say the word frankly, for all my life I have been told this, and therefore it must be true." – TR.

pronounced than in other women and completes the character of strength which the face expresses. The nose, thin and straight, parts into two oblique nostrils, passionately dilated at times, and showing the transparent pink of their delicate lining. This nose is an admirable continuation of the forehead, with which it blends in a most delicious line. It is perfectly white from its spring to its tip, and the tip is endowed with a sort of mobility which does marvels if Camille is indignant, or angry, or rebellious. There, above all, as Talma once remarked, is seen depicted the anger or the irony of great minds. The immobility of the human nostril indicates a certain narrowness of soul; never did the nose of a miser oscillate; it contracts like the lips; he locks up his face as he does his money.

Camille's mouth, arching at the corners, is of a vivid red; blood abounds there, and supplies the living, thinking oxide which gives such seduction to the lips, reassuring the lover whom the gravity of that majestic face may have dismayed. The upper lip is thin, the furrow which unites it with the nose comes low, giving it a centre curve which emphasizes its natural disdain. Camille has little to do to express anger. This beautiful lip is supported by the strong red breadth of its lower mate, adorable in kindness, swelling with love, a lip like the outer petal of a pomegranate such as Phidias might have carved, and the color of which it has. The chin is firm and rather full; but it expresses resolution and fitly ends this profile, royal if not divine. It is necessary to add that the upper lip beneath

the nose is lightly shaded by a charming down. Nature would have made a blunder had she not cast that tender mist upon the face. The ears are delicately convoluted, – a sign of secret refinement. The bust is large, the waist slim and sufficiently rounded. The hips are not prominent, but very graceful; the line of the thighs is magnificent, recalling Bacchus rather than the Venus Callipyge. There we may see the shadowy line of demarcation which separates nearly every woman of genius from her sex; there such women are found to have a certain vague similitude to man; they have neither the suppleness nor the soft abandonment of those whom Nature destines for maternity; their gait is not broken by faltering motions. This observation may be called bi-lateral; it has its counterpart in men, whose thighs are those of women when they are sly, cunning, false, and cowardly. Camille's neck, instead of curving inward at the nape, curves out in a line that unites the head to the shoulders without sinuosity, a most signal characteristic of force. The neck itself presents at certain moments an athletic magnificence. The spring of the arms from the shoulders, superb in outline, seems to belong to a colossal woman. The arms are vigorously modelled, ending in wrists of English delicacy and charming hands, plump, dimpled, and adorned with rosy, almond-shaped nails; these hands are of a whiteness which reveals that the body, so round, so firm, so well set-up, is of another complexion altogether than the face. The firm, cold carriage of the head is corrected by the mobility of the lips, their changing expression, and the artistic play of the

nostrils.

And yet, in spite of all these promises – hidden, perhaps, from the profane – the calm of that countenance has something, I know not what, that is vexatious. More sad, more serious than gracious, that face is marked by the melancholy of constant meditation. For this reason Mademoiselle des Touches listens more than she talks. She startles by her silence and by that deep-reaching glance of intense fixity. No educated person could see her without thinking of Cleopatra, that dark little woman who almost changed the face of the world. But in Camille the natural animal is so complete, so self-sufficing, of a nature so leonine, that a man, however little of a Turk he may be, regrets the presence of so great a mind in such a body, and could wish that she were wholly woman. He fears to find the strange distortion of an abnormal soul. Do not cold analysis and matter-of-fact theory point to passions in such a woman? Does she judge, and not feel? Or, phenomenon more terrible, does she not feel and judge at one and the same time? Able for all things through her brain, ought her course to be circumscribed by the limitations of other women? Has that intellectual strength weakened her heart? Has she no charm? Can she descend to those tender nothings by which a woman occupies, and soothes and interests the man she loves? Will she not cast aside a sentiment when it no longer responds to some vision of infinitude which she grasps and contemplates in her soul? Who can scale the heights to which her eyes have risen? Yes, a man fears to find in such a

woman something unattainable, unpossessable, unconquerable. The woman of strong mind should remain a symbol; as a reality she must be feared. Camille Maupin is in some ways the living image of Schiller's Isis, seated in the darkness of the temple, at whose feet her priests find the dead bodies of the daring men who have consulted her.

The adventures of her life declared to be true by the world, and which Camille has never disavowed, enforce the questions suggested by her personal appearance. Perhaps she likes those calumnies.

The nature of her beauty has not been without its influence on her fame; it has served it, just as her fortune and position have maintained her in society. If a sculptor desires to make a statue of Brittany let him take Mademoiselle des Touches for his model. That full-blooded, powerful temperament is the only nature capable of repelling the action of time. The constant nourishment of the pulp, so to speak, of that polished skin is an arm given to women by Nature to resist the invasion of wrinkles; in Camille's case it was aided by the calm impassibility of her features.

In 1817 this charming young woman opened her house to artists, authors of renown, learned and scientific men, and publicists, – a society toward which her tastes led her. Her salon resembled that of Baron Gerard, where men of rank mingled with men of distinction of all kinds, and the elite of Parisian women came. The parentage of Mademoiselle des Touches, and

her fortune, increased by that of her aunt the nun, protected her in the attempt, always very difficult in Paris, to create a society. Her worldly independence was one reason of her success. Various ambitious mothers indulged in the hope of inducing her to marry their sons, whose fortunes were out of proportion to the age of their escutcheons. Several peers of France, allured by the prospect of eighty thousand francs a year and a house magnificently appointed, took their womenkind, even the most fastidious and intractable, to visit her. The diplomatic world, always in search of amusements of the intellect, came there and found enjoyment. Thus Mademoiselle des Touches, surrounded by so many forms of individual interests, was able to study the different comedies which passion, covetousness, and ambition make the generality of men perform, – even those who are highest in the social scale. She saw, early in life, the world as it is; and she was fortunate enough not to fall early into absorbing love, which warps the mind and faculties of a woman and prevents her from judging soberly.

Ordinarily a woman feels, enjoys, and judges, successively; hence three distinct ages, the last of which coincides with the mournful period of old age. In Mademoiselle des Touches this order was reversed. Her youth was wrapped in the snows of knowledge and the ice of reflection. This transposition is, in truth, an additional explanation of the strangeness of her life and the nature of her talent. She observed men at an age when most women can only see one man; she despised what other

women admired; she detected falsehood in the flatteries they accept as truths; she laughed at things that made them serious. This contradiction of her life with that of others lasted long; but it came to a terrible end; she was destined to find in her soul a first love, young and fresh, at an age when women are summoned by Nature to renounce all love.

Meantime, a first affair in which she was involved has always remained a secret from the world. Felicite, like other women, was induced to believe that beauty of body was that of soul. She fell in love with a face, and learned, to her cost, the folly of a man of gallantry, who saw nothing in her but a mere woman. It was some time before she recovered from the disgust she felt at this episode. Her distress was perceived by a friend, a man, who consoled her without personal after-thought, or, at any rate, he concealed any such motive if he had it. In him Felicite believed she found the heart and mind which were lacking to her former lover. He did, in truth, possess one of the most original minds of our age. He, too, wrote under a pseudonym, and his first publications were those of an adorer of Italy. Travel was the one form of education which Felicite lacked. A man of genius, a poet and a critic, he took Felicite to Italy in order to make known to her that country of all Art. This celebrated man, who is nameless, may be regarded as the master and maker of "Camille Maupin." He bought into order and shape the vast amount of knowledge already acquired by Felicite; increased it by study of the masterpieces with which Italy teems; gave her the frankness,

freedom, and grace, epigrammatic, and intense, which is the character of his own talent (always rather fanciful as to form) which Camille Maupin modified by delicacy of sentiment and the softer terms of thought that are natural to a woman. He also roused in her a taste for German and English literature and made her learn both languages while travelling. In Rome, in 1820, Felicite was deserted for an Italian. Without that misery she might never have been celebrated. Napoleon called misfortune the midwife of genius. This event filled Mademoiselle des Touches, and forever, with that contempt for men which later was to make her so strong. Felicite died, Camille Maupin was born.

She returned to Paris with Conti, the great musician, for whom she wrote the librettos of two operas. But she had no more illusions, and she became, at heart, unknown to the world, a sort of female Don Juan, without debts and without conquests. Encouraged by success, she published the two volumes of plays which at once placed the name of Camille Maupin in the list of illustrious anonymas. Next, she related her betrayed and deluded love in a short novel, one of the masterpieces of that period. This book, of a dangerous example, was classed with "Adolphe," a dreadful lamentation, the counterpart of which is found in Camille's work. The true secret of her literary metamorphosis and pseudonym has never been fully understood. Some delicate minds have thought it lay in a feminine desire to escape fame and remain obscure, while offering a man's name and work to criticism.

In spite of any such desire, if she had it, her celebrity increased daily, partly through the influence of her salon, partly from her own wit, the correctness of her judgments, and the solid worth of her acquirements. She became an authority; her sayings were quoted; she could no longer lay aside at will the functions with which Parisian society invested her. She came to be an acknowledged exception. The world bowed before the genius and position of this strange woman; it recognized and sanctioned her independence; women admired her mind, men her beauty. Her conduct was regulated by all social conventions. Her friendships seemed purely platonic. There was, moreover, nothing of the female author about her. Mademoiselle des Touches is charming as a woman of the world, – languid when she pleases, indolent, coquettish, concerned about her toilet, pleased with the airy nothings so seductive to women and to poets. She understands very well that after Madame de Stael there is no place in this century for a Sappho, and that Ninon could not exist in Paris without *grands seigneurs* and a voluptuous court. She is the Ninon of the intellect; she adores Art and artists; she goes from the poet to the musician, from the sculptor to the prose-writer. Her heart is noble, endowed with a generosity that makes her a dupe; so filled is she with pity for sorrow, – filled also with contempt for the prosperous. She has lived since 1830, the centre of a choice circle, surrounded by tried friends who love her tenderly and esteem each other. Far from the noisy fuss of Madame de Stael, far from political strifes, she jokes about Camille Maupin,

that junior of George Sand (whom she calls her brother Cain), whose recent fame has now eclipsed her own. Mademoiselle des Touches admires her fortunate rival with angelic composure, feeling no jealousy and no secret vexation.

Until the period when this history begins, she had led as happy a life as a woman strong enough to protect herself can be supposed to live. From 1817 to 1834 she had come some five or six times to Les Touches. Her first stay was after her first disillusion in 1818. The house was uninhabitable, and she sent her man of business to Guerande and took a lodging for herself in the village. At that time she had no suspicion of her coming fame; she was sad, she saw no one; she wanted, as it were, to contemplate herself after her great disaster. She wrote to Paris to have the furniture necessary for a residence at Les Touches sent down to her. It came by a vessel to Nantes, thence by small boats to Croisic, from which little place it was transported, not without difficulty, over the sands to Les Touches. Workmen came down from Paris, and before long she occupied Les Touches, which pleased her immensely. She wanted to meditate over the events of her life, like a cloistered nun.

At the beginning of the winter she returned to Paris. The little town of Guerande was by this time roused to diabolical curiosity; its whole talk was of the Asiatic luxury displayed at Les Touches. Her man of business gave orders after her departure that visitors should be admitted to view the house. They flocked from the village of Batz, from Croisic, and from Savenay, as well as from

Guerande. This public curiosity brought in an enormous sum to the family of the porter and gardener, not less, in two years, than seventeen francs.

After this, Mademoiselle des Touches did not revisit Les Touches for two years, not until her return from Italy. On that occasion she came by way of Croisic and was accompanied by Conti. It was some time before Guerande became aware of her presence. Her subsequent apparitions at Les Touches excited comparatively little interest. Her Parisian fame did not precede her; her man of business alone knew the secret of her writings and of her connection with the celebrity of Camille Maupin. But at the period of which we are now writing the contagion of the new ideas had made some progress in Guerande, and several persons knew of the dual form of Mademoiselle des Touches' existence. Letters came to the post-office, directed to Camille Maupin at Les Touches. In short, the veil was rent away. In a region so essentially Catholic, archaic, and full of prejudice, the singular life of this illustrious woman would of course cause rumors, some of which, as we have seen, had reached the ears of the Abbe Grimont and alarmed him; such a life could never be comprehended in Guerande; in fact, to every mind, it seemed unnatural and improper.

Felicite, during her present stay, was not alone in Les Touches. She had a guest. That guest was Claude Vignon, a scornful and powerful writer who, though doing criticism only, has found means to give the public and literature the impression of a certain

superiority. Mademoiselle des Touches had received this writer for the last seven years, as she had so many other authors, journalists, artists, and men of the world. She knew his nerveless nature, his laziness, his utter penury, his indifference and disgust for all things, and yet by the way she was now conducting herself she seemed inclined to marry him. She explained her conduct, incomprehensible to her friends, in various ways, – by ambition, by the dread she felt of a lonely old age; she wanted to confide her future to a superior man, to whom her fortune would be a stepping-stone, and thus increase her own importance in the literary world.

With these apparent intentions she had brought Claude Vignon from Paris to Les Touches, as an eagle bears away a kid in its talons, – to study him, and decide upon some positive course. But, in truth, she was misleading both Calyste and Claude; she was not even thinking of marriage; her heart was in the throes of the most violent convulsion that could agitate a soul as strong as hers. She found herself the dupe of her own mind; too late she saw life lighted by the sun of love, shining as love shines in a heart of twenty.

Let us now see Camille's convent where this was happening.

VII. LES TOUCHES

A few hundred yards from Guerande the soil of Brittany comes to an end; the salt-marshes and the sandy dunes begin. We descend into a desert of sand, which the sea has left for a margin between herself and earth, by a rugged road through a ravine that has never seen a carriage. This desert contains waste tracts, ponds of unequal size, round the shores of which the salt is made on muddy banks, and a little arm of the sea which separates the mainland from the island of Croisic. Geographically, Croisic is really a peninsula; but as it holds to Brittany only by the beaches which connect it with the village of Batz (barren quicksands very difficult to cross), it may be more correct to call it an island.

At the point where the road from Croisic to Guerande turns off from the main road of *terra firma*, stands a country-house, surrounded by a large garden, remarkable for its trimmed and twisted pine-trees, some being trained to the shape of sun-shades, others, stripped of their branches, showing their reddened trunks in spots where the bark has peeled. These trees, victims of hurricanes, growing against wind and tide (for them the saying is literally true), prepare the mind for the strange and depressing sight of the marshes and dunes, which resemble a stiffened ocean. The house, fairly well built of a species of slaty stone with granite courses, has no architecture; it presents to the eye a plain wall with windows at regular intervals. These windows have small

leaded panes on the ground-floor and large panes on the upper floor. Above are the attics, which stretch the whole length of an enormously high pointed roof, with two gables and two large dormer windows on each side of it. Under the triangular point of each gable a circular window opens its cyclopic eye, westerly to the sea, easterly on Guerande. One facade of the house looks on the road to Guerande, the other on the desert at the end of which is Croisic; beyond that little town is the open sea. A brook escapes through an opening in the park wall which skirts the road to Croisic, crosses the road, and is lost in the sands beyond it.

The grayish tones of the house harmonize admirably with the scene it overlooks. The park is an oasis in the surrounding desert, at the entrance of which the traveller comes upon a mud-hut, where the custom-house officials lie in wait for him. This house without land (for the bulk of the estate is really in Guerande) derives an income from the marshes and a few outlying farms of over ten thousand francs a year. Such is the fief of Les Touches, from which the Revolution lopped its feudal rights. The *paludiers*, however, continue to call it "the chateau," and they would still say "seigneur" if the fief were not now in the female line. When Felicite set about restoring Les Touches, she was careful, artist that she is, not to change the desolate exterior which gives the look of a prison to the isolated structure. The sole change was at the gate, which she enlivened by two brick columns supporting an arch, beneath which carriages pass into the court-yard where she planted trees.

The arrangement of the ground-floor is that of nearly all country houses built a hundred years ago. It was, evidently, erected on the ruins of some old castle formerly perched there. A large panelled entrance-hall has been turned by Felicite into a billiard-room; from it opens an immense salon with six windows, and the dining-room. The kitchen communicates with the dining-room through an office. Camille has displayed a noble simplicity in the arrangement of this floor, carefully avoiding all splendid decoration. The salon, painted gray, is furnished in old mahogany with green silk coverings. The furniture of the dining-room comprises four great buffets, also of mahogany, chairs covered with horsehair, and superb engravings by Audran in mahogany frames. The old staircase, of wood with heavy balusters, is covered all over with a green carpet.

On the floor above are two suites of rooms separated by the staircase. Mademoiselle des Touches has taken for herself the one that looks toward the sea and the marshes, and arranged it with a small salon, a large chamber, and two cabinets, one for a dressing-room, the other for a study and writing-room. The other suite, she has made into two separate apartments for guests, each with a bedroom, an antechamber, and a cabinet. The servants have rooms in the attic. The rooms for guests are furnished with what is strictly necessary, and no more. A certain fantastic luxury has been reserved for her own apartment. In that sombre and melancholy habitation, looking out upon the sombre and melancholy landscape, she wanted the most fantastic

creations of art that she could find. The little salon is hung with Gobelin tapestry, framed in marvellously carved oak. The windows are draped with the heavy silken hangings of a past age, a brocade shot with crimson and gold against green and yellow, gathered into mighty pleats and trimmed with fringes and cords and tassels worthy of a church. This salon contains a chest or cabinet worth in these days seven or eight thousand francs, a carved ebony table, a secretary with many drawers, inlaid with arabesques of ivory and bought in Venice, with other noble Gothic furniture. Here too are pictures and articles of choice workmanship bought in 1818, at a time when no one suspected the ultimate value of such treasures. Her bedroom is of the period of Louis XV. and strictly exact to it. Here we see the carved wooden bedstead painted white, with the arched head-board surmounted by Cupids scattering flowers, and the canopy above it adorned with plumes; the hangings of blue silk; the Pompadour dressing-table with its laces and mirror; together with bits of furniture of singular shape, – a "duchesse," a chaise-longue, a stiff little sofa, – with window-curtains of silk, like that of the furniture, lined with pink satin, and caught back with silken ropes, and a carpet of Savonnerie; in short, we find here all those elegant, rich, sumptuous, and dainty things in the midst of which the women of the eighteenth century lived and made love.

The study, entirely of the present day, presents, in contrast with the Louis XV. gallantries, a charming collection of mahogany furniture; it resembles a boudoir; the bookshelves

are full, but the fascinating trivialities of a woman's existence encumber it; in the midst of which an inquisitive eye perceives with uneasy surprise pistols, a narghile, a riding-whip, a hammock, a rifle, a man's blouse, tobacco, pipes, a knapsack, – a bizarre combination which paints Felicite.

Every great soul, entering that room, would be struck with the peculiar beauty of the landscape which spreads its broad savanna beyond the park, the last vegetation on the continent. The melancholy squares of water, divided by little paths of white salt crust, along which the salt-makers pass (dressed in white) to rake up and gather the salt into *mulons*; a space which the saline exhalations prevent all birds from crossing, stifling thus the efforts of botanic nature; those sands where the eye is soothed only by one little hardy persistent plant bearing rosy flowers and the Chartreux pansy; that lake of salt water, the sandy dunes, the view of Croisic, a miniature town afloat like Venice on the sea; and, finally the mighty ocean tossing its foaming fringe upon the granite rocks as if the better to bring out their weird formations – that sight uplifts the mind although it saddens it; an effect produced at last by all that is sublime, creating a regretful yearning for things unknown and yet perceived by the soul on far-off heights. These wild and savage harmonies are for great spirits and great sorrows only.

This desert scene, where at times the sun rays, reflected by the water, by the sands, whitened the village of Batz and rippled on the roofs of Croisic with pitiless brilliancy, filled Camille's

dreaming mind for days together. She seldom looked to the cool, refreshing scenes, the groves, the flowery meadows around Guerande. Her soul was struggling to endure a horrible inward anguish.

No sooner did Calyste see the vanes of the two gables shooting up beyond the furze of the roadside and the distorted heads of the pines, than the air seemed lighter; Guerande was a prison to him; his life was at Les Touches. Who will not understand the attraction it presented to a youth in his position. A love like that of Cherubin, had flung him at the feet of a person who was a great and grand thing to him before he thought of her as a woman, and it had survived the repeated and inexplicable refusals of Felicite. This sentiment, which was more the need of loving than love itself, had not escaped the terrible power of Camille for analysis; hence, possibly, her rejection, – a generosity unperceived, of course, by Calyste.

At Les Touches were displayed to the ravished eyes of the ignorant young countryman, the riches of a new world; he heard, as it were, another language, hitherto unknown to him and sonorous. He listened to the poetic sounds of the finest music, that surpassing music of the nineteenth century, in which melody and harmony blend or struggle on equal terms, – a music in which song and instrumentation have reached a hitherto unknown perfection. He saw before his eyes the works of modern painters, those of the French school, to-day the heir of Italy, Spain, and Flanders, in which talent has become so common that

hearts, weary of talent, are calling aloud for genius. He read there those works of imagination, those amazing creations of modern literature which produced their full effect upon his unused heart. In short, the great Nineteenth Century appeared to him, in all its collective magnificence, its criticising spirit, its desires for renovation in all directions, and its vast efforts, nearly all of them on the scale of the giant who cradled the infancy of the century in his banners and sang to it hymns with the lullaby of cannon.

Initiated by Felicite into the grandeur of all these things, which may, perhaps, escape the eyes of those who work them, Calyste gratified at Les Touches the taste for the glorious, powerful at his age, and that artless admiration, the first love of adolescence, which is always irritated by criticism. It is so natural that flame should rise! He listened to that charming Parisian raillery, that graceful satire which revealed to him French wit and the qualities of the French mind, and awakened in him a thousand ideas, which might have slumbered forever in the soft torpor of his family life. For him, Mademoiselle des Touches was the mother of his intellect. She was so kind to him; a woman is always adorable to a man in whom she inspires love, even when she seems not to share it.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.