

Albert Savarus eBook

Albert Savarus by Honoré de Balzac

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Contents

Albert Savarus eBook.....	1
Contents.....	2
Table of Contents.....	5
Page 1.....	6
Page 2.....	7
Page 3.....	8
Page 4.....	9
Page 5.....	11
Page 6.....	12
Page 7.....	14
Page 8.....	16
Page 9.....	18
Page 10.....	19
Page 11.....	21
Page 12.....	23
Page 13.....	25
Page 14.....	27
Page 15.....	29
Page 16.....	31
Page 17.....	33
Page 18.....	34
Page 19.....	35
Page 20.....	37
Page 21.....	38
Page 22.....	40

Page 23.....	42
Page 24.....	44
Page 25.....	46
Page 26.....	47
Page 27.....	48
Page 28.....	49
Page 29.....	50
Page 30.....	51
Page 31.....	53
Page 32.....	55
Page 33.....	56
Page 34.....	58
Page 35.....	59
Page 36.....	61
Page 37.....	63
Page 38.....	65
Page 39.....	67
Page 40.....	69
Page 41.....	71
Page 42.....	73
Page 43.....	74
Page 44.....	76
Page 45.....	78
Page 46.....	79
Page 47.....	80
Page 48.....	82

Page 49.....	84
Page 50.....	86
Page 51.....	88
Page 52.....	90
Page 53.....	92
Page 54.....	94
Page 55.....	96
Page 56.....	97
Page 57.....	99
Page 58.....	101
Page 59.....	103
Page 60.....	105
Page 61.....	107

Table of Contents

Section	Table of Contents	Page
Start of eBook		1
AMBITION FOR LOVE'S SAKE		1
ADDENDUM		61

Page 1

AMBITION FOR LOVE'S SAKE

In 1823 two young men, having agreed as a plan for a holiday to make a tour through Switzerland, set out from Lucerne one fine morning in the month of July in a boat pulled by three oarsmen. They started for Fluelen, intending to stop at every notable spot on the lake of the Four Cantons. The views which shut in the waters on the way from Lucerne to Fluelen offer every combination that the most exacting fancy can demand of mountains and rivers, lakes and rocks, brooks and pastures, trees and torrents. Here are austere solitudes and charming headlands, smiling and trimly kept meadows, forests crowning perpendicular granite cliffs, like plumes, deserted but verdant reaches opening out, and valleys whose beauty seems the lovelier in the dreamy distance.

As they passed the pretty hamlet of Gersau, one of the friends looked for a long time at a wooden house which seemed to have been recently built, enclosed by a paling, and standing on a promontory, almost bathed by the waters. As the boat rowed past, a woman's head was raised against the background of the room on the upper story of this house, to admire the effect of the boat on the lake. One of the young men met the glance thus indifferently given by the unknown fair.

"Let us stop here," said he to his friend. "We meant to make Lucerne our headquarters for seeing Switzerland; you will not take it amiss, Leopold, if I change my mind and stay here to take charge of our possessions. Then you can go where you please; my journey is ended. Pull to land, men, and put us out at this village; we will breakfast here. I will go back to Lucerne to fetch all our luggage, and before you leave you will know in which house I take a lodging, where you will find me on your return."

"Here or at Lucerne," replied Leopold, "the difference is not so great that I need hinder you from following your whim."

These two youths were friends in the truest sense of the word. They were of the same age; they had learned at the same school; and after studying the law, they were spending their holiday in the classical tour in Switzerland. Leopold, by his father's determination, was already pledged to a place in a notary's office in Paris. His spirit of rectitude, his gentleness, and the coolness of his senses and his brain, guaranteed him to be a docile pupil. Leopold could see himself a notary in Paris; his life lay before him like one of the highroads that cross the plains of France, and he looked along its whole length with philosophical resignation.

Page 2

The character of his companion, whom we will call Rodolphe, presented a strong contrast with Leopold's, and their antagonism had no doubt had the result of tightening the bond that united them. Rodolphe was the natural son of a man of rank, who was carried off by a premature death before he could make any arrangements for securing the means of existence to a woman he fondly loved and to Rodolphe. Thus cheated by a stroke of fate, Rodolphe's mother had recourse to a heroic measure. She sold everything she owed to the munificence of her child's father for a sum of more than a hundred thousand francs, bought with it a life annuity for herself at a high rate, and thus acquired an income of about fifteen thousand francs, resolving to devote the whole of it to the education of her son, so as to give him all the personal advantages that might help to make his fortune, while saving, by strict economy, a small capital to be his when he came of age. It was bold; it was counting on her own life; but without this boldness the good mother would certainly have found it impossible to live and to bring her child up suitably, and he was her only hope, her future, the spring of all her joys.

Rodolphe, the son of a most charming Parisian woman, and a man of mark, a nobleman of Brabant, was cursed with extreme sensitiveness. From his infancy he had in everything shown a most ardent nature. In him mere desire became a guiding force and the motive power of his whole being, the stimulus to his imagination, the reason of his actions. Notwithstanding the pains taken by a clever mother, who was alarmed when she detected this predisposition, Rodolphe wished for things as a poet imagines, as a mathematician calculates, as a painter sketches, as a musician creates melodies. Tender-hearted, like his mother, he dashed with inconceivable violence and impetus of thought after the object of his desires; he annihilated time. While dreaming of the fulfilment of his schemes, he always overlooked the means of attainment. "When my son has children," said his mother, "he will want them born grown up."

This fine frenzy, carefully directed, enabled Rodolphe to achieve his studies with brilliant results, and to become what the English call an accomplished gentleman. His mother was then proud of him, though still fearing a catastrophe if ever a passion should possess a heart at once so tender and so susceptible, so vehement and so kind. Therefore, the judicious mother had encouraged the friendship which bound Leopold to Rodolphe and Rodolphe to Leopold, since she saw in the cold and faithful young notary, a guardian, a comrade, who might to a certain extent take her place if by some misfortune she should be lost to her son. Rodolphe's mother, still handsome at three-and-forty, had inspired Leopold with an ardent passion. This circumstance made the two young men even more intimate.

Page 3

So Leopold, knowing Rodolphe well, was not surprised to find him stopping at a village and giving up the projected journey to Saint-Gothard, on the strength of a single glance at the upper window of a house. While breakfast was prepared for them at the Swan Inn, the friends walked round the hamlet and came to the neighborhood of the pretty new house; here, while gazing about him and talking to the inhabitants, Rodolphe discovered the residence of some decent folk, who were willing to take him as a boarder, a very frequent custom in Switzerland. They offered him a bedroom looking over the lake and the mountains, and from whence he had a view of one of those immense sweeping reaches which, in this lake, are the admiration of every traveler. This house was divided by a roadway and a little creek from the new house, where Rodolphe had caught sight of the unknown fair one's face.

For a hundred francs a month Rodolphe was relieved of all thought for the necessities of life. But, in consideration of the outlay the Stopfer couple expected to make, they bargained for three months' residence and a month's payment in advance. Rub a Swiss ever so little, and you find the usurer. After breakfast, Rodolphe at once made himself at home by depositing in his room such property as he had brought with him for the journey to the Saint-Gothard, and he watched Leopold as he set out, moved by the spirit of routine, to carry out the excursion for himself and his friend. When Rodolphe, sitting on a fallen rock on the shore, could no longer see Leopold's boat, he turned to examine the new house with stolen glances, hoping to see the fair unknown. Alas! he went in without its having given a sign of life. During dinner, in the company of Monsieur and Madame Stopfer, retired coopers from Neufchatel, he questioned them as to the neighborhood, and ended by learning all he wanted to know about the lady, thanks to his hosts' loquacity; for they were ready to pour out their budget of gossip without any pressing.

The fair stranger's name was Fanny Lovelace. This name (pronounced *Loveless*) is that of an old English family, but Richardson has given it to a creation whose fame eclipses all others! Miss Lovelace had come to settle by the lake for her father's health, the physicians having recommended him the air of Lucerne. These two English people had arrived with no other servant than a little girl of fourteen, a dumb child, much attached to Miss Fanny, on whom she waited very intelligently, and had settled, two winters since, with monsieur and Madame Bergmann, the retired head-gardeners of His Excellency Count Borromeo of Isola Bella and Isola Madre in the Lago Maggiore. These Swiss, who were possessed of an income of about a thousand crowns a year, had let the top story of their house to the Lovelaces for three years, at a rent of two hundred francs a year. Old Lovelace, a man of ninety, and much broken, was too poor to allow himself any gratifications, and very rarely went out; his daughter worked to maintain him, translating English books, and writing some herself, it was said. The Lovelaces could not afford to hire boats to row on the lake, or horses and guides to explore the neighborhood.

Page 4

Poverty demanding such privation as this excites all the greater compassion among the Swiss, because it deprives them of a chance of profit. The cook of the establishment fed the three English boarders for a hundred francs a month inclusive. In Gersau it was generally believed, however, that the gardener and his wife, in spite of their pretensions, used the cook's name as a screen to net the little profits of this bargain. The Bergmanns had made beautiful gardens round their house, and had built a hothouse. The flowers, the fruit, and the botanical rarities of this spot were what had induced the young lady to settle on it as she passed through Gersau. Miss Fanny was said to be nineteen years old; she was the old man's youngest child, and the object of his adulation. About two months ago she had hired a piano from Lucerne, for she seemed to be crazy about music.

"She loves flowers and music, and she is unmarried!" thought Rodolphe; "what good luck!"

The next day Rodolphe went to ask leave to visit the hothouses and gardens, which were beginning to be somewhat famous. The permission was not immediately granted. The retired gardeners asked, strangely enough, to see Rodolphe's passport; it was sent to them at once. The paper was not returned to him till next morning, by the hands of the cook, who expressed her master's pleasure in showing him their place. Rodolphe went to the Bergmanns', not without a certain trepidation, known only to persons of strong feelings, who go through as much passion in a moment as some men experience in a whole lifetime.

After dressing himself carefully to gratify the old gardeners of the Borromean Islands, whom he regarded as the warders of his treasure, he went all over the grounds, looking at the house now and again, but with much caution; the old couple treated him with evident distrust. But his attention was soon attracted by the little English deaf-mute, in whom his discernment, though young as yet, enabled him to recognize a girl of African, or at least of Sicilian, origin. The child had the golden-brown color of a Havana cigar, eyes of fire, Armenian eyelids with lashes of very un-British length, hair blacker than black; and under this almost olive skin, sinews of extraordinary strength and feverish alertness. She looked at Rodolphe with amazing curiosity and effrontery, watching his every movement.

"To whom does that little Moresco belong?" he asked worthy Madame Bergmann.

"To the English," Monsieur Bergmann replied.

"But she never was born in England!"

"They may have brought her from the Indies," said Madame Bergmann.

“I have been told that Miss Lovelace is fond of music. I should be delighted if, during my residence by the lake to which I am condemned by my doctor’s orders, she would allow me to join her.”

“They receive no one, and will not see anybody,” said the old gardener.

Page 5

Rodolphe bit his lips and went away, without having been invited into the house, or taken into the part of the garden that lay between the front of the house and the shore of the little promontory. On that side the house had a balcony above the first floor, made of wood, and covered by the roof, which projected deeply like the roof of a chalet on all four sides of the building, in the Swiss fashion. Rodolphe had loudly praised the elegance of this arrangement, and talked of the view from that balcony, but all in vain. When he had taken leave of the Bergmanns it struck him that he was a simpleton, like any man of spirit and imagination disappointed of the results of a plan which he had believed would succeed.

In the evening he, of course, went out in a boat on the lake, round and about the spit of land, to Brunnen and to Schwytz, and came in at nightfall. From afar he saw the window open and brightly lighted; he heard the sound of a piano and the tones of an exquisite voice. He made the boatman stop, and gave himself up to the pleasure of listening to an Italian air delightfully sung. When the singing ceased, Rodolphe landed and sent away the boat and rowers. At the cost of wetting his feet, he went to sit down under the water-worn granite shelf crowned by a thick hedge of thorny acacia, by the side of which ran a long lime avenue in the Bergmanns' garden. By the end of an hour he heard steps and voices just above him, but the words that reached his ears were all Italian, and spoken by two women.

He took advantage of the moment when the two speakers were at one end of the walk to slip noiselessly to the other. After half an hour of struggling he got to the end of the avenue, and there took up a position whence, without being seen or heard, he could watch the two women without being observed by them as they came towards him. What was Rodolphe's amazement on recognizing the deaf-mute as one of them; she was talking to Miss Lovelace in Italian.

It was now eleven o'clock at night. The stillness was so perfect on the lake and around the dwelling, that the two women must have thought themselves safe; in all Gersau there could be no eyes open but theirs. Rodolphe supposed that the girl's dumbness must be a necessary deception. From the way in which they both spoke Italian, Rodolphe suspected that it was the mother tongue of both girls, and concluded that the name of English also hid some disguise.

"They are Italian refugees," said he to himself, "outlaws in fear of the Austrian or Sardinian police. The young lady waits till it is dark to walk and talk in security."

He lay down by the side of the hedge, and crawled like a snake to find a way between two acacia shrubs. At the risk of leaving his coat behind him, or tearing deep scratches in his back, he got through the hedge when the so-called Miss Fanny and her pretended deaf-and-dumb maid were at the other end of the path; then, when they had come within twenty yards of him without seeing him, for he was in the shadow of the hedge, and the moon was shining brightly, he suddenly rose.

Page 6

"Fear nothing," said he in French to the Italian girl, "I am not a spy. You are refugees, I have guessed that. I am a Frenchman whom one look from you has fixed at Gersau."

Rodolphe, startled by the acute pain caused by some steel instrument piercing his side, fell like a log.

"*Nel lago con pietra!*" said the terrible dumb girl.

"Oh, Gina!" exclaimed the Italian.

"She has missed me," said Rodolphe, pulling from his wound a stiletto, which had been turned by one of the false ribs. "But a little higher up it would have been deep in my heart.—I was wrong, Francesca," he went on, remembering the name he had heard little Gina repeat several times; "I owe her no grudge, do not scold her. The happiness of speaking to you is well worth the prick of a stiletto. Only show me the way out; I must get back to the Stopfers' house. Be easy; I shall tell nothing."

Francesca, recovering from her astonishment, helped Rodolphe to rise, and said a few words to Gina, whose eyes filled with tears. The two girls made him sit down on a bench and take off his coat, his waistcoat and cravat. Then Gina opened his shirt and sucked the wound strongly. Francesca, who had left them, returned with a large piece of sticking-plaster, which she applied to the wound.

"You can now walk as far as your house," she said.

Each took an arm, and Rodolphe was conducted to a side gate, of which the key was in Francesca's apron pocket.

"Does Gina speak French?" said Rodolphe to Francesca.

"No. But do not excite yourself," replied Francesca with some impatience.

"Let me look at you," said Rodolphe pathetically, "for it may be long before I am able to come again——"

He leaned against one of the gate-posts contemplating the beautiful Italian, who allowed him to gaze at her for a moment under the sweetest silence and the sweetest night which ever, perhaps, shone on this lake, the king of Swiss lakes.

Francesca was quite of the Italian type, and such as imagination supposes or pictures, or, if you will, dreams, that Italian women are. What first struck Rodolphe was the grace and elegance of a figure evidently powerful, though so slender as to appear fragile. An amber paleness overspread her face, betraying sudden interest, but it did not dim the voluptuous glance of her liquid eyes of velvety blackness. A pair of hands as beautiful as ever a Greek sculptor added to the polished arms of a statue grasped Rodolphe's



arm, and their whiteness gleamed against his black coat. The rash Frenchman could but just discern the long, oval shape of her face, and a melancholy mouth showing brilliant teeth between the parted lips, full, fresh, and brightly red. The exquisite lines of this face guaranteed to Francesca permanent beauty; but what most struck Rodolphe was the adorable freedom, the Italian frankness of this woman, wholly absorbed as she was in her pity for him.

Page 7

Francesca said a word to Gina, who gave Rodolphe her arm as far as the Stopfers' door, and fled like a swallow as soon as she had rung.

"These patriots do not play at killing!" said Rodolphe to himself as he felt his sufferings when he found himself in his bed. "*Nel lago!*" Gina would have pitched me into the lake with a stone tied to my neck."

Next day he sent to Lucerne for the best surgeon there, and when he came, enjoined on him absolute secrecy, giving him to understand that his honor depended on it.

Leopold returned from his excursion on the day when his friend first got out of bed. Rodolphe made up a story, and begged him to go to Lucerne to fetch their luggage and letters. Leopold brought back the most fatal, the most dreadful news: Rodolphe's mother was dead. While the two friends were on their way from Bale to Lucerne, the fatal letter, written by Leopold's father, had reached Lucerne the day they left for Fluelen.

In spite of Leopold's utmost precautions, Rodolphe fell ill of a nervous fever. As soon as Leopold saw his friend out of danger, he set out for France with a power of attorney, and Rodolphe could thus remain at Gersau, the only place in the world where his grief could grow calmer. The young Frenchman's position, his despair, the circumstances which made such a loss worse for him than for any other man, were known, and secured him the pity and interest of every one in Gersau. Every morning the pretended dumb girl came to see him and bring him news of her mistress.

As soon as Rodolphe could go out he went to the Bergmanns' house, to thank Miss Fanny Lovelace and her father for the interest they had taken in his sorrow and his illness. For the first time since he had lodged with the Bergmanns the old Italian admitted a stranger to his room, where Rodolphe was received with the cordiality due to his misfortunes and to his being a Frenchman, which excluded all distrust of him. Francesca looked so lovely by candle-light that first evening that she shed a ray of brightness on his grieving heart. Her smiles flung the roses of hope on his woe. She sang, not indeed gay songs, but grave and solemn melodies suited to the state of Rodolphe's heart, and he observed this touching care.

At about eight o'clock the old man left the young people without any sign of uneasiness, and went to his room. When Francesca was tired of singing, she led Rodolphe on to the balcony, whence they perceived the sublime scenery of the lake, and signed to him to be seated by her on a rustic wooden bench.

"Am I very indiscreet in asking how old you are, cara Francesca?" said Rodolphe.

"Nineteen," said she, "well past."

“If anything in the world could soothe my sorrow,” he went on, “it would be the hope of winning you from your father, whatever your fortune may be. So beautiful as you are, you seem to be richer than a prince’s daughter. And I tremble as I confess to you the feelings with which you have inspired me; but they are deep—they are eternal.”

Page 8

“Zitto!” said Francesca, laying a finger of her right hand on her lips. “Say no more; I am not free. I have been married these three years.”

For a few minutes utter silence reigned. When the Italian girl, alarmed at Rodolphe’s stillness, went close to him, she found that he had fainted.

“Povero!” she said to herself. “And I thought him cold.”

She fetched him some salts, and revived Rodolphe by making him smell at them.

“Married!” said Rodolphe, looking at Francesca. And then his tears flowed freely.

“Child!” said she. “But there is still hope. My husband is—”

“Eighty?” Rodolphe put in.

“No,” said she with a smile, “but sixty-five. He has disguised himself as much older to mislead the police.”

“Dearest,” said Rodolphe, “a few more shocks of this kind and I shall die. Only when you have known me twenty years will you understand the strength and power of my heart, and the nature of its aspirations for happiness. This plant,” he went on, pointing to the yellow jasmine which covered the balustrade, “does not climb more eagerly to spread itself in the sunbeams than I have clung to you for this month past. I love you with unique passion. That love will be the secret fount of my life—I may possibly die of it.”

“Oh! Frenchman, Frenchman!” said she, emphasizing her exclamation with a little incredulous grimace.

“Shall I not be forced to wait, to accept you at the hands of time?” said he gravely. “But know this: if you are in earnest in what you have allowed to escape you, I will wait for you faithfully, without suffering any other attachment to grow up in my heart.”

She looked at him doubtfully.

“None,” said he, “not even a passing fancy. I have my fortune to make; you must have a splendid one, nature created you a princess——”

At this word Francesca could not repress a faint smile, which gave her face the most bewildering expression, something subtle, like what the great Leonardo has so well depicted in the *Gioconda*. This smile made Rodolphe pause. “Ah yes!” he went on, “you must suffer much from the destitution to which exile has brought you. Oh, if you would make me happy above all men, and consecrate my love, you would treat me as a

friend. Ought I not to be your friend?—My poor mother has left sixty thousand francs of savings; take half.”

Francesca looked steadily at him. This piercing gaze went to the bottom of Rodolphe’s soul.

“We want nothing; my work amply supplies our luxuries,” she replied in a grave voice.

“And can I endure that a Francesca should work?” cried he. “One day you will return to your country and find all you left there.” Again the Italian girl looked at Rodolphe. “And you will then repay me what you may have condescended to borrow,” he added, with an expression full of delicate feeling.

Page 9

“Let us drop the subject,” said she, with incomparable dignity of gesture, expression, and attitude. “Make a splendid fortune, be one of the remarkable men of your country; that is my desire. Fame is a drawbridge which may serve to cross a deep gulf. Be ambitious if you must. I believe you have great and powerful talents, but use them rather for the happiness of mankind than to deserve me; you will be all the greater in my eyes.”

In the course of this conversation, which lasted two hours, Rodolphe discovered that Francesca was an enthusiast for Liberal ideas, and for that worship of liberty which had led to the three revolutions in Naples, Piemont, and Spain. On leaving, he was shown to the door by Gina, the so-called mute. At eleven o'clock no one was astir in the village, there was no fear of listeners; Rodolphe took Gina into a corner, and asked her in a low voice and bad Italian, “Who are your master and mistress, child? Tell me, I will give you this fine new gold piece.”

“Monsieur,” said the girl, taking the coin, “my master is the famous bookseller Lamporani of Milan, one of the leaders of the revolution, and the conspirator of all others whom Austria would most like to have in the Spielberg.”

“A bookseller’s wife! Ah, so much the better,” thought he; “we are on an equal footing. —And what is her family?” he added, “for she looks like a queen.”

“All Italian women do,” replied Gina proudly. “Her father’s name is Colonna.”

Emboldened by Francesca’s modest rank, Rodolphe had an awning fitted to his boat and cushions in the stern. When this was done, the lover came to propose to Francesca to come out on the lake. The Italian accepted, no doubt to carry out her part of a young English Miss in the eyes of the villagers, but she brought Gina with her. Francesca Colonna’s lightest actions betrayed a superior education and the highest social rank. By the way in which she took her place at the end of the boat Rodolphe felt himself in some sort cut off from her, and, in the face of a look of pride worthy of an aristocrat, the familiarity he had intended fell dead. By a glance Francesca made herself a princess, with all the prerogatives she might have enjoyed in the Middle Ages. She seemed to have read the thoughts of this vassal who was so audacious as to constitute himself her protector.

Already, in the furniture of the room where Francesca had received him, in her dress, and in the various trifles she made use of, Rodolphe had detected indications of a superior character and a fine fortune. All these observations now recurred to his mind; he became thoughtful after having been trampled on, as it were, by Francesca’s dignity. Gina, her half-grown-up *confidante*, also seemed to have a mocking expression as she gave a covert or a side glance at Rodolphe. This obvious disagreement between the Italian lady’s rank and her manners was a fresh puzzle to Rodolphe, who suspected some further trick like Gina’s assumed dumbness.

Page 10

"Where would you go, Signora Lamporani?" he asked.

"Towards Lucerne," replied Francesca in French.

"Good!" said Rodolphe to himself, "she is not startled by hearing me speak her name; she had, no doubt, foreseen that I should ask Gina —she is so cunning.—What is your quarrel with me?" he went on, going at last to sit down by her side, and asking her by a gesture to give him her hand, which she withdrew. "You are cold and ceremonious; what, in colloquial language, we should call *short*."

"It is true," she replied with a smile. "I am wrong. It is not good manners; it is vulgar. In French you would call it inartistic. It is better to be frank than to harbor cold or hostile feelings towards a friend, and you have already proved yourself my friend. Perhaps I have gone too far with you. You must take me to be a very ordinary woman." — Rodolphe made many signs of denial.—"Yes," said the bookseller's wife, going on without noticing this pantomime, which, however, she plainly saw. "I have detected that, and naturally I have reconsidered my conduct. Well! I will put an end to everything by a few words of deep truth. Understand this, Rodolphe: I feel in myself the strength to stifle a feeling if it were not in harmony with my ideas or anticipation of what true love is. I could love—as we can love in Italy, but I know my duty. No intoxication can make me forget it. Married without my consent to that poor old man, I might take advantage of the liberty he so generously gives me; but three years of married life imply acceptance of its laws. Hence the most vehement passion would never make me utter, even involuntarily, a wish to find myself free.

"Emilio knows my character. He knows that without my heart, which is my own, and which I might give away, I should never allow anyone to take my hand. That is why I have just refused it to you. I desire to be loved and waited for with fidelity, nobleness, ardor, while all I can give is infinite tenderness of which the expression may not overstep the boundary of the heart, the permitted neutral ground. All this being thoroughly understood—Oh!" she went on with a girlish gesture, "I will be as coquettish, as gay, as glad, as a child which knows nothing of the dangers of familiarity."

This plain and frank declaration was made in a tone, an accent, and supported by a look which gave it the deepest stamp of truth.

"A Princess Colonna could not have spoken better," said Rodolphe, smiling.

"Is that," she answered with some haughtiness, "a reflection on the humbleness of my birth? Must your love flaunt a coat-of-arms? At Milan the noblest names are written over shop-doors: Sforza, Canova, Visconti, Trivulzio, Ursini; there are Archintos apothecaries; but, believe me, though I keep a shop, I have the feelings of a duchess."

"A reflection? Nay, madame, I meant it for praise."

“By a comparison?” she said archly.

Page 11

“Ah, once for all,” said he, “not to torture me if my words should ill express my feelings, understand that my love is perfect; it carries with it absolute obedience and respect.”

She bowed as a woman satisfied, and said, “Then monsieur accepts the treaty?”

“Yes,” said he. “I can understand that in a rich and powerful feminine nature the faculty of loving ought not to be wasted, and that you, out of delicacy, wished to restrain it. Ah! Francesca, at my age tenderness requited, and by so sublime, so royally beautiful a creature as you are—why, it is the fulfilment of all my wishes. To love you as you desire to be loved—is not that enough to make a young man guard himself against every evil folly? Is it not to concentrate all his powers in a noble passion, of which in the future he may be proud, and which can leave none but lovely memories? If you could but know with what hues you have clothed the chain of Pilatus, the Rigi, and this superb lake—”

“I want to know,” said she, with the Italian artlessness which has always a touch of artfulness.

“Well, this hour will shine on all my life like a diamond on a queen’s brow.”

Francesca’s only reply was to lay her hand on Rodolphe’s.

“Oh dearest! for ever dearest!—Tell me, have you never loved?”

“Never.”

“And you allow me to love you nobly, looking to heaven for the utmost fulfilment?” he asked.

She gently bent her head. Two large tears rolled down Rodolphe’s cheeks.

“Why! what is the matter?” she cried, abandoning her imperial manner.

“I have now no mother whom I can tell of my happiness; she left this earth without seeing what would have mitigated her agony—”

“What?” said she.

“Her tenderness replaced by an equal tenderness——”

“*Povero mio!*” exclaimed the Italian, much touched. “Believe me,” she went on after a pause, “it is a very sweet thing, and to a woman, a strong element of fidelity to know that she is all in all on earth to the man she loves; to find him lonely, with no family, with nothing in his heart but his love—in short, to have him wholly to herself.”

When two lovers thus understand each other, the heart feels delicious peace, supreme tranquillity. Certainty is the basis for which human feelings crave, for it is never lacking to religious sentiment; man is always certain of being fully repaid by God. Love never believes itself secure but by this resemblance to divine love. And the raptures of that moment must have been fully felt to be understood; it is unique in life; it can never return no more, alas! than the emotions of youth. To believe in a woman, to make her your human religion, the fount of life, the secret luminary of all your least thoughts!—is not this a second birth? And a young man mingles with this love a little of the feeling he had for his mother.

Page 12

Rodolphe and Francesca for some time remained in perfect silence, answering each other by sympathetic glances full of thoughts. They understood each other in the midst of one of the most beautiful scenes of Nature, whose glories, interpreted by the glory in their hearts, helped to stamp on their minds the most fugitive details of that unique hour. There had not been the slightest shade of frivolity in Francesca's conduct. It was noble, large, and without any second thought. This magnanimity struck Rodolphe greatly, for in it he recognized the difference between the Italian and the Frenchwoman. The waters, the land, the sky, the woman, all were grandiose and suave, even their love in the midst of this picture, so vast in its expanse, so rich in detail, where the sternness of the snowy peaks and their hard folds standing clearly out against the blue sky, reminded Rodolphe of the circumstances which limited his happiness; a lovely country shut in by snows.

This delightful intoxication of soul was destined to be disturbed. A boat was approaching from Lucerne; Gina, who had been watching it attentively, gave a joyful start, though faithful to her part as a mute. The bark came nearer; when at length Francesca could distinguish the faces on board, she exclaimed, "Tito!" as she perceived a young man. She stood up, and remained standing at the risk of being drowned. "Tito! Tito!" cried she, waving her handkerchief.

Tito desired the boatmen to slacken, and the two boats pulled side by side. The Italian and Tito talked with such extreme rapidity, and in a dialect unfamiliar to a man who hardly knew even the Italian of books, that Rodolphe could neither hear nor guess the drift of this conversation. But Tito's handsome face, Francesca's familiarity, and Gina's expression of delight, all aggrieved him. And indeed no lover can help being ill pleased at finding himself neglected for another, whoever he may be. Tito tossed a little leather bag to Gina, full of gold no doubt, and a packet of letters to Francesca, who began to read them, with a farewell wave of the hand to Tito.

"Get quickly back to Gersau," she said to the boatmen, "I will not let my poor Emilio pine ten minutes longer than he need."

"What has happened?" asked Rodolphe, as he saw Francesca finish reading the last letter.

"*La liberta!*" she exclaimed, with an artist's enthusiasm.

"*E denaro!*" added Gina, like an echo, for she had found her tongue.

"Yes," said Francesca, "no more poverty! For more than eleven months have I been working, and I was beginning to be tired of it. I am certainly not a literary woman."

"Who is this Tito?" asked Rodolphe.

“The Secretary of State to the financial department of the humble shop of the Colonnas, in other words, the son of our *ragionato*. Poor boy! he could not come by the Saint-Gothard, nor by the Mont-Cenis, nor by the Simplon; he came by sea, by Marseilles, and had to cross France. Well, in three weeks we shall be at Geneva, and living at our ease. Come, Rodolphe,” she added, seeing sadness overspread the Parisian’s face, “is not the Lake of Geneva quite as good as the Lake of Lucerne?”

Page 13

"But allow me to bestow a regret on the Bergmanns' delightful house," said Rodolphe, pointing to the little promontory.

"Come and dine with us to add to your associations, *povero mio*," said she. "This is a great day; we are out of danger. My mother writes that within a year there will be an amnesty. Oh! *la cara patria*!"

These three words made Gina weep. "Another winter here," said she, "and I should have been dead!"

"Poor little Sicilian kid!" said Francesca, stroking Gina's head with an expression and an affection which made Rodolphe long to be so caressed, even if it were without love.

The boat grounded; Rodolphe sprang on to the sand, offered his hand to the Italian lady, escorted her to the door of the Bergmanns' house, and went to dress and return as soon as possible.

When he joined the librarian and his wife, who were sitting on the balcony, Rodolphe could scarcely repress an exclamation of surprise at seeing the prodigious change which the good news had produced in the old man. He now saw a man of about sixty, extremely well preserved, a lean Italian, as straight as an I, with hair still black, though thin and showing a white skull, with bright eyes, a full set of white teeth, a face like Caesar, and on his diplomatic lips a sardonic smile, the almost false smile under which a man of good breeding hides his real feelings.

"Here is my husband under his natural form," said Francesca gravely.

"He is quite a new acquaintance," replied Rodolphe, bewildered.

"Quite," said the librarian; "I have played many a part, and know well how to make up. Ah! I played one in Paris under the Empire, with Bourrienne, Madame Murat, Madame d'Abrantis *e tutte quanti*. Everything we take the trouble to learn in our youth, even the most futile, is of use. If my wife had not received a man's education—an unheard-of thing in Italy—I should have been obliged to chop wood to get my living here. *Povera Francesca!* who would have told me that she would some day maintain me!"

As he listened to this worthy bookseller, so easy, so affable, so hale, Rodolphe scented some mystification, and preserved the watchful silence of a man who has been duped.

"*Che avete, signor?*" Francesca asked with simplicity. "Does our happiness sadden you?"

"Your husband is a young man," he whispered in her ear.

She broke into such a frank, infectious laugh that Rodolphe was still more puzzled.

“He is but sixty-five, at your service,” said she; “but I can assure you that even that is something—to be thankful for!”

“I do not like to hear you jest about an affection so sacred as this, of which you yourself prescribed the conditions.”

Page 14

“Zitto!” said she, stamping her foot, and looking whether her husband were listening. “Never disturb the peace of mind of that dear man, as simple as a child, and with whom I can do what I please. He is under my protection,” she added. “If you could know with what generosity he risked his life and fortune because I was a Liberal! for he does not share my political opinions. Is not that love, Monsieur Frenchman?—But they are like that in his family. Emilio’s younger brother was deserted for a handsome youth by the woman he loved. He thrust his sword through his own heart ten minutes after he had said to his servant, ‘I could of course kill my rival, but that would grieve the *Diva* too deeply.’”

This mixture of dignity and banter, of haughtiness and playfulness, made Francesca at this moment the most fascinating creature in the world. The dinner and the evening were full of cheerfulness, justified, indeed, by the relief of the two refugees, but depressing to Rodolphe.

“Can she be fickle?” he asked himself as he returned to the Stopfers’ house. “She sympathized in my sorrow, and I cannot take part in her joy!”

He blamed himself, justifying this girl-wife.

“She has no taint of hypocrisy, and is carried away by impulse,” thought he, “and I want her to be like a Parisian woman.”

* * * * *

Next day and the following days, in fact, for twenty days after, Rodolphe spent all his time at the Bergmanns’, watching Francesca without having determined to watch her. In some souls admiration is not independent of a certain penetration. The young Frenchman discerned in Francesca the imprudence of girlhood, the true nature of a woman as yet unbroken, sometimes struggling against her love, and at other moments yielding and carried away by it. The old man certainly behaved to her as a father to his daughter, and Francesca treated him with a deeply felt gratitude which roused her instinctive nobleness. The situation and the woman were to Rodolphe an impenetrable enigma, of which the solution attracted him more and more.

These last days were full of secret joys, alternating with melancholy moods, with tiffs and quarrels even more delightful than the hours when Rodolphe and Francesca were of one mind. And he was more and more fascinated by this tenderness apart from wit, always and in all things the same, an affection that was jealous of mere nothings—already!

“You care very much for luxury?” said he one evening to Francesca, who was expressing her wish to get away from Gersau, where she missed many things.

"I!" cried she. "I love luxury as I love the arts, as I love a picture by Raphael, a fine horse, a beautiful day, or the Bay of Naples. Emilio," she went on, "have I ever complained here during our days of privation."

"You would not have been yourself if you had," replied the old man gravely.

Page 15

"After all, is it not in the nature of plain folks to aspire to grandeur?" she asked, with a mischievous glance at Rodolphe and at her husband. "Were my feet made for fatigue?" she added, putting out two pretty little feet. "My hands"—and she held one out to Rodolphe—"were those hands made to work?—Leave us," she said to her husband; "I want to speak to him."

The old man went into the drawing-room with sublime good faith; he was sure of his wife.

"I will not have you come with us to Geneva," she said to Rodolphe. "It is a gossiping town. Though I am far above the nonsense the world talks, I do not choose to be calumniated, not for my own sake, but for his. I make it my pride to be the glory of that old man, who is, after all, my only protector. We are leaving; stay here a few days. When you come on to Geneva, call first on my husband, and let him introduce you to me. Let us hide our great and unchangeable affection from the eyes of the world. I love you; you know it; but this is how I will prove it to you—you shall never discern in my conduct anything whatever that may arouse your jealousy."

She drew him into a corner of the balcony, kissed him on the forehead, and fled, leaving him in amazement.

Next day Rodolphe heard that the lodgers at the Bergmanns' had left at daybreak. It then seemed to him intolerable to remain at Gersau, and he set out for Vevay by the longest route, starting sooner than was necessary. Attracted to the waters of the lake where the beautiful Italian awaited him, he reached Geneva by the end of October. To avoid the discomforts of the town he took rooms in a house at Eaux-Vives, outside the walls. As soon as he was settled, his first care was to ask his landlord, a retired jeweler, whether some Italian refugees from Milan had not lately come to reside at Geneva.

"Not so far as I know," replied the man. "Prince and Princess Colonna of Rome have taken Monsieur Jeanrenaud's place for three years; it is one of the finest on the lake. It is situated between the Villa Diodati and that of Monsieur Lafin-de-Dieu, let to the Vicomtesse de Beauseant. Prince Colonna has come to see his daughter and his son-in-law Prince Gandolphini, a Neopolitan, or if you like, a Sicilian, an old adherent of King Murat's, and a victim of the last revolution. These are the last arrivals at Geneva, and they are not Milanese. Serious steps had to be taken, and the Pope's interest in the Colonna family was invoked, to obtain permission from the foreign powers and the King of Naples for the Prince and Princess Gandolphini to live here. Geneva is anxious to do nothing to displease the Holy Alliance to which it owes its independence. *Our* part is not to ruffle foreign courts; there are many foreigners here, Russians and English."

"Even some Gevenese?"

“Yes, monsieur, our lake is so fine! Lord Byron lived here about seven years at the Villa Diodati, which every one goes to see now, like Coppet and Ferney.”

Page 16

"You cannot tell me whether within a week or so a bookseller from Milan has come with his wife—named Lamporani, one of the leaders of the last revolution?"

"I could easily find out by going to the Foreigners' Club," said the jeweler.

Rodolphe's first walk was very naturally to the Villa Diodati, the residence of Lord Byron, whose recent death added to its attractiveness: for is not death the consecration of genius?

The road to Eaux-Vives follows the shore of the lake, and, like all the roads in Switzerland, is very narrow; in some spots, in consequence of the configuration of the hilly ground, there is scarcely space for two carriages to pass each other.

At a few yards from the Jeanrenauds' house, which he was approaching without knowing it, Rodolphe heard the sound of a carriage behind him, and, finding himself in a sunk road, he climbed to the top of a rock to leave the road free. Of course he looked at the approaching carriage—an elegant English phaeton, with a splendid pair of English horses. He felt quite dizzy as he beheld in this carriage Francesca, beautifully dressed, by the side of an old lady as hard as a cameo. A servant blazing with gold lace stood behind. Francesca recognized Rodolphe, and smiled at seeing him like a statue on a pedestal. The carriage, which the lover followed with his eyes as he climbed the hill, turned in at the gate of a country house, towards which he ran.

"Who lives here?" he asked the gardener.

"Prince and Princess Colonna, and Prince and Princess Gandolphini."

"Have they not just driven in?"

"Yes, sir."

In that instant a veil fell from Rodolphe's eyes; he saw clearly the meaning of the past.

"If only this is her last piece of trickery!" thought the thunder-struck lover to himself.

He trembled lest he should have been the plaything of a whim, for he had heard what a *capriccio* might mean in an Italian. But what a crime had he committed in the eyes of a woman—in accepting a born princess as a citizen's wife! in believing that a daughter of one of the most illustrious houses of the Middle Ages was the wife of a bookseller! The consciousness of his blunders increased Rodolphe's desire to know whether he would be ignored and repelled. He asked for Prince Gandolphini, sending in his card, and was immediately received by the false Lamporani, who came forward to meet him, welcomed him with the best possible grace, and took him to walk on a terrace whence there was a view of Geneva, the Jura, the hills covered with villas, and below them a wide expanse of the lake.



“My wife is faithful to the lakes, you see,” he remarked, after pointing out the details to his visitor. “We have a sort of concert this evening,” he added, as they returned to the splendid Villa Jeanrenaud. “I hope you will do me and the Princess the pleasure of seeing you. Two months of poverty endured in intimacy are equal to years of friendship.”

Page 17

Though he was consumed by curiosity, Rodolphe dared not ask to see the Princess; he slowly made his way back to Eaux-Vives, looking forward to the evening. In a few hours his passion, great as it had already been, was augmented by his anxiety and by suspense as to future events. He now understood the necessity for making himself famous, that he might some day find himself, socially speaking, on a level with his idol. In his eyes Francesca was made really great by the simplicity and ease of her conduct at Gersau. Princess Colonna's haughtiness, so evidently natural to her, alarmed Rodolphe, who would find enemies in Francesca's father and mother—at least so he might expect; and the secrecy which Princess Gandolphini had so strictly enjoined on him now struck him as a wonderful proof of affection. By not choosing to compromise the future, had she not confessed that she loved him?

At last nine o'clock struck; Rodolphe could get into a carriage and say with an emotion that is very intelligible, "To the Villa Jeanrenaud—to Prince Gandolphini's."

At last he saw Francesca, but without being seen by her. The Princess was standing quite near the piano. Her beautiful hair, so thick and long, was bound with a golden fillet. Her face, in the light of wax candles, had the brilliant pallor peculiar to Italians, and which looks its best only by artificial light. She was in full evening dress, showing her fascinating shoulders, the figure of a girl and the arms of an antique statue. Her sublime beauty was beyond all possible rivalry, though there were some charming women of Geneva, and other Italians, among them the dazzling and illustrious Princess Varese, and the famous singer Tinti, who was at that moment singing.

Rodolphe, leaning against the door-post, looked at the Princess, turning on her the fixed, tenacious, attracting gaze, charged with the full, insistent will which is concentrated in the feeling called desire, and thus assumes the nature of a vehement command. Did the flame of that gaze reach Francesca? Was Francesca expecting each instant to see Rodolphe? In a few minutes she stole a glance at the door, as though magnetized by this current of love, and her eyes, without reserve, looked deep into Rodolphe's. A slight thrill quivered through that superb face and beautiful body; the shock to her spirit reacted: Francesca blushed! Rodolphe felt a whole life in this exchange of looks, so swift that it can only be compared to a lightning flash. But to what could his happiness compare? He was loved. The lofty Princess, in the midst of her world, in this handsome villa, kept the pledge given by the disguised exile, the capricious beauty of Bergmanns' lodgings. The intoxication of such a moment enslaves a man for life! A faint smile, refined and subtle, candid and triumphant, curled Princess Gandolphini's lips, and at a moment when she did not feel herself observed she looked at Rodolphe with an expression which seemed to ask his pardon for having deceived him as to her rank.

Page 18

When the song was ended Rodolphe could make his way to the Prince, who graciously led him to his wife. Rodolphe went through the ceremonial of a formal introduction to Princess and Prince Colonna, and to Francesca. When this was over, the Princess had to take part in the famous quartette, *Mi manca la voce*, which was sung by her with Tinti, with the famous tenor Genovese, and with a well-known Italian Prince then in exile, whose voice, if he had not been a Prince, would have made him one of the Princes of Art.

"Take that seat," said Francesca to Rodolphe, pointing to her own chair. "*Oime!* I think there is some mistake in my name; I have for the last minute been Princess Rodolphini."

It was said with the artless grace which revived, in this avowal hidden beneath a jest, the happy days at Gersau. Rodolphe reveled in the exquisite sensation of listening to the voice of the woman he adored, while sitting so close to her that one cheek was almost touched by the stuff of her dress and the gauze of her scarf. But when, at such a moment, *Mi manca la voce* is being sung, and by the finest voices in Italy, it is easy to understand what it was that brought the tears to Rodolphe's eyes.

In love, as perhaps in all else, there are certain circumstances, trivial in themselves, but the outcome of a thousand little previous incidents, of which the importance is immense, as an epitome of the past and as a link with the future. A hundred times already we have felt the preciousness of the one we love; but a trifle—the perfect touch of two souls united during a walk perhaps by a single word, by some unlooked-for proof of affection, will carry the feeling to its supremest pitch. In short, to express this truth by an image which has been pre-eminently successful from the earliest ages of the world, there are in a long chain points of attachment needed where the cohesion is stronger than in the intermediate loops of rings. This recognition between Rodolphe and Francesca, at this party, in the face of the world, was one of those intense moments which join the future to the past, and rivet a real attachment more deeply in the heart. It was perhaps of these incidental rivets that Bossuet spoke when he compared to them the rarity of happy moments in our lives—he who had such a living and secret experience of love.

Next to the pleasure of admiring the woman we love, comes that of seeing her admired by every one else. Rodolphe was enjoying both at once. Love is a treasury of memories, and though Rodolphe's was already full, he added to it pearls of great price; smiles shed aside for him alone, stolen glances, tones in her singing which Francesca addressed to him alone, but which made Tinti pale with jealousy, they were so much applauded. All his strength of desire, the special expression of his soul, was thrown over the beautiful Roman, who became unchangeably the beginning and the end of all his thoughts and actions.

Page 19

Rodolphe loved as every woman may dream of being loved, with a force, a constancy, a tenacity, which made Francesca the very substance of his heart; he felt her mingling with his blood as purer blood, with his soul as a more perfect soul; she would henceforth underlie the least efforts of his life as the golden sand of the Mediterranean lies beneath the waves. In short, Rodolphe's lightest aspiration was now a living hope.

At the end of a few days, Francesca understood this boundless love; but it was so natural, and so perfectly shared by her, that it did not surprise her. She was worthy of it.

"What is there that is strange?" said she to Rodolphe, as they walked on the garden terrace, when he had been betrayed into one of those outbursts of conceit which come so naturally to Frenchmen in the expression of their feelings—"what is extraordinary in the fact of your loving a young and beautiful woman, artist enough to be able to earn her living like Tinti, and of giving you some of the pleasures of vanity? What lout but would then become an Amadis? This is not in question between you and me. What is needed is that we both love faithfully, persistently; at a distance from each other for years, with no satisfaction but that of knowing that we are loved."

"Alas!" said Rodolphe, "will you not consider my fidelity as devoid of all merit when you see me absorbed in the efforts of devouring ambition? Do you imagine that I can wish to see you one day exchange the fine name of Gandolphini for that of a man who is a nobody? I want to become one of the most remarkable men of my country, to be rich, great—that you may be as proud of my name as of your own name of Colonna."

"I should be grieved to see you without such sentiments in your heart," she replied, with a bewitching smile. "But do not wear yourself out too soon in your ambitious labors. Remain young. They say that politics soon make a man old."

One of the rarest gifts in women is a certain gaiety which does not detract from tenderness. This combination of deep feeling with the lightness of youth added an enchanting grace at this moment to Francesca's charms. This is the key to her character; she laughs and she is touched; she becomes enthusiastic, and returns to arch raillery with a readiness, a facility, which makes her the charming and exquisite creature she is, and for which her reputation is known outside Italy. Under the graces of a woman she conceals vast learning, thanks to the excessively monotonous and almost monastic life she led in the castle of the old Colonnas.

This rich heiress was at first intended for the cloister, being the fourth child of Prince and Princess Colonna; but the death of her two brothers, and of her elder sister, suddenly brought her out of her retirement, and made her one of the most brilliant matches in the Papal States. Her elder sister had been betrothed to Prince Gandolphini, one of the richest landowners in Sicily; and Francesca was married to him instead, so that nothing

might be changed in the position of the family. The Colonnas and Gandolphinis had always intermarried.

Page 20

From the age of nine till she was sixteen, Francesca, under the direction of a Cardinal of the family, had read all through the library of the Colonnas, to make weight against her ardent imagination by studying science, art, and letters. But in these studies she acquired the taste for independence and liberal ideas, which threw her, with her husband, into the ranks of the revolution. Rodolphe had not yet learned that, besides five living languages, Francesca knew Greek, Latin, and Hebrew. The charming creature perfectly understood that, for a woman, the first condition of being learned is to keep it deeply hidden.

Rodolphe spent the whole winter at Geneva. This winter passed like a day. When spring returned, notwithstanding the infinite delights of the society of a clever woman, wonderfully well informed, young and lovely, the lover went through cruel sufferings, endured indeed with courage, but which were sometimes legible in his countenance, and betrayed themselves in his manners or speech, perhaps because he believed that Francesca shared them. Now and again it annoyed him to admire her calmness. Like an Englishwoman, she seemed to pride herself on expressing nothing in her face; its serenity defied love; he longed to see her agitated; he accused her of having no feeling, for he believed in the tradition which ascribes to Italian women a feverish excitability.

"I am a Roman!" Francesca gravely replied one day when she took quite seriously some banter on this subject from Rodolphe.

There was a depth of tone in her reply which gave it the appearance of scathing irony, and which set Rodolphe's pulses throbbing. The month of May spread before them the treasures of her fresh verdure; the sun was sometimes as powerful as at midsummer. The two lovers happened to be at a part of the terrace where the rock arises abruptly from the lake, and were leaning over the stone parapet that crowns the wall above a flight of steps leading down to a landing-stage. From the neighboring villa, where there is a similar stairway, a boat presently shot out like a swan, its flag flaming, its crimson awning spread over a lovely woman comfortably reclining on red cushions, her hair wreathed with real flowers; the boatman was a young man dressed like a sailor, and rowing with all the more grace because he was under the lady's eye.

"They are happy!" exclaimed Rodolphe, with bitter emphasis. "Claire de Bourgogne, the last survivor of the only house which can ever vie with the royal family of France—"

"Oh! of a bastard branch, and that a female line."

"At any rate, she is Vicomtesse de Beauseant; and she did not—"

"Did not hesitate, you would say, to bury herself here with Monsieur Gaston de Nueil, you would say," replied the daughter of the Colonnas. "She is only a Frenchwoman; I am an Italian, my dear sir!"

Page 21

Francesca turned away from the parapet, leaving Rodolphe, and went to the further end of the terrace, whence there is a wide prospect of the lake. Watching her as she slowly walked away, Rodolphe suspected that he had wounded her soul, at once so simple and so wise, so proud and so humble. It turned him cold; he followed Francesca, who signed to him to leave her to herself. But he did not heed the warning, and detected her wiping away her tears. Tears! in so strong a nature.

“Francesca,” said he, taking her hand, “is there a single regret in your heart?”

She was silent, disengaged her hand which held her embroidered handkerchief, and again dried her eyes.

“Forgive me!” he said. And with a rush, he kissed her eyes to wipe away the tears.

Francesca did not seem aware of his passionate impulse, she was so violently agitated. Rodolphe, thinking she consented, grew bolder; he put his arm round her, clasped her to his heart, and snatched a kiss. But she freed herself by a dignified movement of offended modesty, and, standing a yard off, she looked at him without anger, but with firm determination.

“Go this evening,” she said. “We meet no more till we meet at Naples.”

This order was stern, but it was obeyed, for it was Francesca’s will.

* * * * *

On his return to Paris Rodolphe found in his rooms a portrait of Princess Gandolphini painted by Schinner, as Schinner can paint. The artist had passed through Geneva on his way to Italy. As he had positively refused to paint the portraits of several women, Rodolphe did not believe that the Prince, anxious as he was for a portrait of his wife, would be able to conquer the great painter’s objections; but Francesca, no doubt, had bewitched him, and obtained from him—which was almost a miracle—an original portrait for Rodolphe, and a duplicate for Emilio. She told him this in a charming and delightful letter, in which the mind indemnified itself for the reserve required by the worship of the proprieties. The lover replied. Thus began, never to cease, a regular correspondence between Rodolphe and Francesca, the only indulgence they allowed themselves.

Rodolphe, possessed by an ambition sanctified by his love, set to work. First he longed to make his fortune, and risked his all in an undertaking to which he devoted all his faculties as well as his capital; but he, an inexperienced youth, had to contend against duplicity, which won the day. Thus three years were lost in a vast enterprise, three years of struggling and courage.



The Villele ministry fell just when Rodolphe was ruined. The valiant lover thought he would seek in politics what commercial industry had refused him; but before braving the storms of this career, he went, all wounded and sick at heart, to have his bruises healed and his courage revived at Naples, where the Prince and Princess had been reinstated in their place and rights on the King's accession. This, in the midst of his warfare, was a respite full of delights; he spent three months at the Villa Gandolphini, rocked in hope.

Page 22

Rodolphe then began again to construct his fortune. His talents were already known; he was about to attain the desires of his ambition; a high position was promised him as the reward of his zeal, his devotion, and his past services, when the storm of July 1830 broke, and again his bark was swamped.

She, and God! These are the only witnesses of the brave efforts, the daring attempts of a young man gifted with fine qualities, but to whom, so far, the protection of luck—the god of fools—has been denied. And this indefatigable wrestler, upheld by love, comes back to fresh struggles, lighted on his way by an always friendly eye, an ever faithful heart.

Lovers! Pray for him!

* * * * *

As she finished this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville's cheeks were on fire; there was a fever in her blood. She was crying—but with rage. This little novel, inspired by the literary style then in fashion, was the first reading of the kind that Rosalie had ever had the chance of devouring. Love was depicted in it, if not by a master-hand, at any rate by a man who seemed to give his own impressions; and truth, even if unskilled, could not fail to touch a virgin soul. Here lay the secret of Rosalie's terrible agitation, of her fever and her tears; she was jealous of Francesca Colonna.

She never for an instant doubted the sincerity of this poetical flight; Albert had taken pleasure in telling the story of his passion, while changing the names of persons and perhaps of places. Rosalie was possessed by infernal curiosity. What woman but would, like her, have wanted to know her rival's name—for she too loved! As she read these pages, to her really contagious, she had said solemnly to herself, "I love him!"—She loved Albert, and felt in her heart a gnawing desire to fight for him, to snatch him from this unknown rival. She reflected that she knew nothing of music, and that she was not beautiful.

"He will never love me!" thought she.

This conclusion aggravated her anxiety to know whether she might not be mistaken, whether Albert really loved an Italian Princess, and was loved by her. In the course of this fateful night, the power of swift decision, which had characterized the famous Watteville, was fully developed in his descendant. She devised those whimsical schemes, round which hovers the imagination of most young girls when, in the solitude to which some injudicious mothers confine them, they are roused by some tremendous event which the system of repression to which they are subjected could neither foresee nor prevent. She dreamed of descending by a ladder from the kiosk into the garden of the house occupied by Albert; of taking advantage of the lawyer's being asleep to look through the window into his private room. She thought of writing to him, or of bursting

the fetters of Besancon society by introducing Albert to the drawing-room of the Hotel de Rupt. This enterprise, which to the Abbe de Grancey even would have seemed the climax of the impossible, was a mere passing thought.

Page 23

“Ah!” said she to herself, “my father has a dispute pending as to his land at les Rouxey. I will go there! If there is no lawsuit, I will manage to make one, and *he* shall come into our drawing-room!” she cried, as she sprang out of bed and to the window to look at the fascinating gleam which shone through Albert’s nights. The clock struck one; he was still asleep.

“I shall see him when he gets up; perhaps he will come to his window.”

At this instant Mademoiselle de Watteville was witness to an incident which promised to place in her power the means of knowing Albert’s secrets. By the light of the moon she saw a pair of arms stretched out from the kiosk to help Jerome, Albert’s servant, to get across the coping of the wall and step into the little building. In Jerome’s accomplice Rosalie at once recognized Mariette the lady’s-maid.

“Mariette and Jerome!” said she to herself. “Mariette, such an ugly girl! Certainly they must be ashamed of themselves.”

Though Mariette was horribly ugly and six-and-thirty, she had inherited several plots of land. She had been seventeen years with Madame de Watteville, who valued her highly for her bigotry, her honesty, and long service, and she had no doubt saved money and invested her wages and perquisites. Hence, earning about ten louis a year, she probably had by this time, including compound interest and her little inheritance, not less than ten thousand francs.

In Jerome’s eyes ten thousand francs could alter the laws of optics; he saw in Mariette a neat figure; he did not perceive the pits and seams which virulent smallpox had left on her flat, parched face; to him the crooked mouth was straight; and ever since Savaron, by taking him into his service, had brought him so near to the Watteilles’ house, he had laid siege systematically to the maid, who was as prim and sanctimonious as her mistress, and who, like every ugly old maid, was far more exacting than the handsomest.

If the night-scene in the kiosk is thus fully accounted for to all perspicacious readers, it was not so to Rosalie, though she derived from it the most dangerous lesson that can be given, that of a bad example. A mother brings her daughter up strictly, keeps her under her wing for seventeen years, and then, in one hour, a servant girl destroys the long and painful work, sometimes by a word, often indeed by a gesture! Rosalie got into bed again, not without considering how she might take advantage of her discovery.

Next morning, as she went to Mass accompanied by Mariette—her mother was not well—Rosalie took the maid’s arm, which surprised the country wench not a little.

“Mariette,” said she, “is Jerome in his master’s confidence?”

“I do not know, mademoiselle.”

“Do not play the innocent with me,” said Mademoiselle de Watteville drily. “You let him kiss you last night under the kiosk; I no longer wonder that you so warmly approved of my mother’s ideas for the improvements she planned.”

Page 24

Rosalie could feel how Mariette was trembling by the shaking of her arm.

"I wish you no ill," Rosalie went on. "Be quite easy; I shall not say a word to my mother, and you can meet Jerome as often as you please."

"But, mademoiselle," said Mariette, "it is perfectly respectable; Jerome honestly means to marry me—"

"But then," said Rosalie, "why meet at night?"

Mariette was dumfounded, and could make no reply.

"Listen, Mariette; I am in love too! In secret and without any return. I am, after all, my father's and mother's only child. You have more to hope for from me than from any one else in the world—"

"Certainly, mademoiselle, and you may count on us for life or death," exclaimed Mariette, rejoiced at the unexpected turn of affairs.

"In the first place, silence for silence," said Rosalie. "I will not marry Monsieur de Soulas; but one thing I will have, and must have; my help and favor are yours on one condition only."

"What is that?"

"I must see the letters which Monsieur Savaron sends to the post by Jerome."

"But what for?" said Mariette in alarm.

"Oh! merely to read them, and you yourself shall post them afterwards. It will cause a little delay; that is all."

At this moment they went into church, and each of them, instead of reading the order of Mass, fell into her own train of thought.

"Dear, dear, how many sins are there in all that?" thought Mariette.

Rosalie, whose soul, brain, and heart were completely upset by reading the story, by this time regarded it as history, written for her rival. By dint of thinking of nothing else, like a child, she ended by believing that the *Eastern Review* was no doubt forwarded to Albert's lady-love.

"Oh!" said she to herself, her head buried in her hands in the attitude of a person lost in prayer; "oh! how can I get my father to look through the list of people to whom the *Review* is sent?"

After breakfast she took a turn in the garden with her father, coaxing and cajoling him, and brought him to the kiosk.

“Do you suppose, my dear little papa, that our *Review* is ever read abroad?”

“It is but just started—”

“Well, I will wager that it is.”

“It is hardly possible.”

“Just go and find out, and note the names of any subscribers out of France.”

Two hours later Monsieur de Watteville said to his daughter:

“I was right; there is not one foreign subscriber as yet. They hope to get some at Neufchatel, at Berne, and at Geneva. One copy, is in fact, sent to Italy, but it is not paid for—to a Milanese lady at her country house at Belgirate, on Lago Maggiore.

“What is her name?”

“The Duchesse d’Argaiolo.”

“Do you know her, papa?”

“I have heard about her. She was by birth a Princess Soderini, a Florentine, a very great lady, and quite as rich as her husband, who has one of the largest fortunes in Lombardy. Their villa on the Lago Maggiore is one of the sights of Italy.”

Page 25

Two days after, Mariette placed the following letter in Mademoiselle de Watteville's hand:—

Albert Savaron to Leopold Hannequin.

“Yes, 'tis so, my dear friend; I am at Besancon, while you thought I was traveling. I would not tell you anything till success should begin, and now it is dawning. Yes, my dear Leopold, after so many abortive undertakings, over which I have shed the best of my blood, have wasted so many efforts, spent so much courage, I have made up my mind to do as you have done—to start on a beaten path, on the highroad, as the longest but the safest. I can see you jump with surprise in your lawyer's chair!“But do not suppose that anything is changed in my personal life, of which you alone in the world know the secret, and that under the reservations *she* insists on. I did not tell you, my friend; but I was horribly weary of Paris. The outcome of the first enterprise, on which I had founded all my hopes, and which came to a bad end in consequence of the utter rascality of my two partners, who combined to cheat and fleece me—me, though everything was done by my energy—made me give up the pursuit of a fortune after the loss of three years of my life. One of these years was spent in the law courts, and perhaps I should have come worse out of the scrape if I had not been made to study law when I was twenty.“I made up my mind to go into politics solely, to the end that I may some day find my name on a list for promotion to the Senate under the title of Comte Albert Savaron de Savarus, and so revive in France a good name now extinct in Belgium—though indeed I am neither legitimate nor legitimized.”

“Ah! I knew it! He is of noble birth!” exclaimed Rosalie, dropping the letter.

“You know how conscientiously I studied, how faithful and useful I was as an obscure journalist, and how excellent a secretary to the statesman who, on his part, was true to me in 1829. Flung to the depths once more by the revolution of July just when my name was becoming known, at the very moment when, as Master of Appeals, I was about to find my place as a necessary wheel in the political machine, I committed the blunder of remaining faithful to the fallen, and fighting for them, without them. Oh! why was I but three-and-thirty, and why did I not apply to you to make me eligible? I concealed from you all my devotedness and my dangers. What would you have? I was full of faith. We should not have agreed.“Ten months ago, when you saw me so gay and contented, writing my political articles, I was in despair; I foresaw my fate, at the age of thirty-seven, with two thousand francs for my whole fortune, without the smallest fame, just having failed in a noble undertaking, the founding, namely, of a daily paper answering only to a need of the future instead of appealing to the passions of the moment.

Page 26

I did not know which way to turn, and I felt my own value! I wandered about, gloomy and hurt, through the lonely places of Paris—Paris which had slipped through my fingers—thinking of my crushed ambitions, but never giving them up. Oh, what frantic letters I wrote at that time to *her*, my second conscience, my other self! Sometimes I would say to myself, 'Why did I sketch so vast a programme of life? Why demand everything? Why not wait for happiness while devoting myself to some mechanical employment.' "I then looked about me for some modest appointment by which I might live. I was about to get the editorship of a paper under a manager who did not know much about it, a man of wealth and ambition, when I took fright. 'Would *she* ever accept as her husband a man who had stooped so low?' I wondered. "This reflection made me two-and-twenty again. But, oh, my dear Leopold, how the soul is worn by these perplexities! What must not the caged eagles suffer, and imprisoned lions!—They suffer what Napoleon suffered, not at Saint Helena, but on the Quay of the Tuileries, on the 10th of August, when he saw Louis XVI. defending himself so badly while he could have quelled the insurrection; as he actually did, on the same spot, a little later, in Vendemiaire. Well, my life has been a torment of that kind, extending over four years. How many a speech to the Chamber have I not delivered in the deserted alleys of the Bois de Boulogne! These wasted harangues have at any rate sharpened my tongue and accustomed my mind to formulate its ideas in words. And while I was undergoing this secret torture, you were getting married, you had paid for your business, you were made law-clerk to the Maire of your district, after gaining a cross for a wound at Saint-Merri. "Now, listen. When I was a small boy and tortured cock-chafers, the poor insects had one form of struggle which used almost to put me in a fever. It was when I saw them making repeated efforts to fly but without getting away, though they could spread their wings. We used to say, 'They are marking time.' Now was this sympathy? Was it a vision of my own future?—Oh! to spread my wings and yet be unable to fly! That has been my predicament since that fine undertaking by which I was disgusted, but which has now made four families rich. "At last, seven months ago, I determined to make myself a name at the Paris Bar, seeing how many vacancies had been left by the promotion of several lawyers to eminent positions. But when I remembered the rivalry I had seen among men of the press, and how difficult it is to achieve anything of any kind in Paris, the arena where so many champions meet, I came to a determination painful to myself, but certain in its results, and perhaps quicker than any other. In the course of our conversations you had given me a picture of the society of Besancon,

Page 27

of the impossibility for a stranger to get on there, to produce the smallest effect, to get into society, or to succeed in any way whatever. It was there that I determined to set up my flag, thinking, and rightly, that I should meet with no opposition, but find myself alone to canvass for the election. The people of the Comte will not meet the outsider? The outsider will meet them! They refuse to admit him to their drawing-rooms, he will never go there! He never shows himself anywhere, not even in the streets! But there is one class that elects the deputies—the commercial class. I am going especially to study commercial questions, with which I am already familiar; I will gain their lawsuits, I will effect compromises, I will be the greatest pleader in Besancon. By and by I will start a *Review*, in which I will defend the interests of the country, will create them, or preserve them, or resuscitate them. When I shall have won a sufficient number of votes, my name will come out of the urn. For a long time the unknown barrister will be treated with contempt, but some circumstance will arise to bring him to the front—some unpaid defence, or a case which no other pleader will undertake. “Well, my dear Leopold, I packed up my books in eleven cases, I bought such law-books as might prove useful, and I sent everything off, furniture and all, by carrier to Besancon. I collected my diplomas, and I went to bid you good-bye. The mail coach dropped me at Besancon, where, in three days’ time, I chose a little set of rooms looking out over some gardens. I sumptuously arranged the mysterious private room where I spend my nights and days, and where the portrait of my divinity reigns—of her to whom my life is dedicate, who fills it wholly, who is the mainspring of my efforts, the secret of my courage, the cause of my talents. Then, as soon as the furniture and books had come, I engaged an intelligent man-servant, and there I sat for five months like a hibernating marmot. “My name had, however, been entered on the list of lawyers in the town. At last I was called one day to defend an unhappy wretch at the Assizes, no doubt in order to hear me speak for once! One of the most influential merchants of Besancon was on the jury; he had a difficult task to fulfil; I did my utmost for the man, and my success was absolute and complete. My client was innocent; I very dramatically secured the arrest of the real criminals, who had come forward as witnesses. In short, the Court and the public were united in their admiration. I managed to save the examining magistrate’s pride by pointing out the impossibility of detecting a plot so skilfully planned. “Then I had to fight a case for my merchant, and won his suit. The Cathedral Chapter next chose me to defend a tremendous action against the town, which had been going on for four years; I won that. Thus, after three trials, I had become the most famous advocate of Franche-Comte.

Page 28

"But I bury my life in the deepest mystery, and so hide my aims. I have adopted habits which prevent my accepting any invitations. I am only to be consulted between six and eight in the morning; I go to bed after my dinner, and work at night. The Vicar-General, a man of parts, and very influential, who placed the Chapter's case in my hands after they had lost it in the lower Court, of course professed their gratitude. 'Monsieur,' said I, 'I will win your suit, but I want no fee; I want more' (start of alarm on the Abbe's part). 'You must know that I am a great loser by putting myself forward in antagonism to the town. I came here only to leave the place as deputy. I mean to engage only in commercial cases, because commercial men return the members; they will distrust me if I defend "the priests"—for to them you are simply priests. If I undertake your defence, it is because I was, in 1828, private secretary to such a Minister' (again a start of surprise on the part of my Abbe), 'and Master of Appeals, under the name of Albert de Savarus' (another start). 'I have remained faithful to monarchical opinions; but, as you have not the majority of votes in Besancon, I must gain votes among the citizens. So the fee I ask of you is the votes you may be able secretly to secure for me at the opportune moment. Let us each keep our own counsel, and I will defend, for nothing, every case to which a priest of this diocese may be a party. Not a word about my previous life, and we will be true to each other.'"When he came to thank me afterwards, he gave me a note for five hundred francs, and said in my ear, 'The votes are a bargain all the same.'—I have in the course of five interviews made a friend, I think, of this Vicar-General."Now I am overwhelmed with business, and I undertake no cases but those brought to me by merchants, saying that commercial questions are my specialty. This line of conduct attaches business men to me, and allows me to make friends with influential persons. So all goes well. Within a few months I shall have found a house to purchase in Besancon, so as to secure a qualification. I count on your lending me the necessary capital for this investment. If I should die, if I should fail, the loss would be too small to be any consideration between you and me. You will get the interest out of the rental, and I shall take good care to look out for something cheap, so that you may lose nothing by this mortgage, which is indispensable."Oh! my dear Leopold, no gambler with the last remains of his fortune in his pocket, bent on staking it at the Cercle des Etrangers for the last time one night, when he must come away rich or ruined, ever felt such a perpetual ringing in his ears, such a nervous moisture on his palms, such a fevered tumult in his brain, such inward qualms in his body as I go through every day now that I am playing my last card in the game of ambition.

Page 29

Alas! my dear and only friend, for nearly ten years now I have been struggling. This battle with men and things, in which I have unceasingly poured out my strength and energy, and so constantly worn the springs of desire, has, so to speak, undermined my vitality. With all the appearance of a strong man of good health, I feel myself a wreck. Every day carries with it a shred of my inmost life. At every fresh effort I feel that I should never be able to begin again. I have no power, no vigor left but for happiness; and if it should never come to crown my head with roses, the *me* that is really me would cease to exist, I should be a ruined thing. I should wish for nothing more in the world. I should want to cease from living. You know that power and fame, the vast moral empire that I crave, is but secondary; it is to me only a means to happiness, the pedestal for my idol. "To reach the goal and die, like the runner of antiquity! To see fortune and death stand on the threshold hand in hand! To win the beloved woman just when love is extinct! To lose the faculty of enjoyment after earning the right to be happy!—Of how many men has this been the fate!" But there surely is a moment when Tantalus rebels, crosses his arms, and defies hell, throwing up his part of the eternal dupe. That is what I shall come to if anything should thwart my plan; if, after stooping to the dust of provincial life, prowling like a starving tiger round these tradesmen, these electors, to secure their votes; if, after wrangling in these squalid cases, and giving them my time—the time I might have spent on Lago Maggiore, seeing the waters she sees, basking in her gaze, hearing her voice—if, after all, I failed to scale the tribune and conquer the glory that should surround the name that is to succeed to that of Argaiolo! Nay, more than this, Leopold; there are days when I feel a heady languor; deep disgust surges up from the depths of my soul, especially when, abandoned to long day-dreams, I have lost myself in anticipation of the joys of blissful love! May it not be that our desire has only a certain modicum of power, and that it perishes, perhaps, of a too lavish effusion of its essence? For, after all, at this present, my life is fair, illuminated by faith, work, and love.

"Farewell, my friend; I send love to your children, and beg you to remember me to your excellent wife.—Yours,
"ALBERT."

Rosalie read this letter twice through, and its general purport was stamped on her heart. She suddenly saw the whole of Albert's previous existence, for her quick intelligence threw light on all the details, and enabled her to take it all in. By adding this information to the little novel published in the *Review*, she now fully understood Albert. Of course, she exaggerated the greatness, remarkable as it was, of this lofty soul and potent will, and her love for Albert thenceforth became a passion, its violence enhanced

Page 30

by all the strength of her youth, the weariness of her solitude, and the unspent energy of her character. Love is in a young girl the effect of a natural law; but when her craving for affection is centered in an exceptional man, it is mingled with the enthusiasm which overflows in a youthful heart. Thus Mademoiselle de Watteville had in a few days reached a morbid and very dangerous stage of enamored infatuation. The Baroness was much pleased with her daughter, who, being under the spell of her absorbing thoughts, never resisted her will, seemed to be devoted to feminine occupations, and realized her mother's ideal of a docile daughter.

The lawyer was now engaged in Court two or three times a week. Though he was overwhelmed with business, he found time to attend the trials, call on the litigious merchants, and conduct the *Review*; keeping up his personal mystery, from the conviction that the more covert and hidden was his influence, the more real it would be. But he neglected no means of success, reading up the list of electors of Besancon, and finding out their interests, their characters, their various friendships and antipathies. Did ever a Cardinal hoping to be made Pope give himself more trouble?

One evening Mariette, on coming to dress Rosalie for an evening party, handed to her, not without many groans over this treachery, a letter of which the address made Mademoiselle de Watteville shiver and redden and turn pale again as she read the address:

To Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo
(nee Princesse Soderini)
At Belgirate,
Lago Maggiore, Italy.

In her eyes this direction blazed as the words *Mene, Tekel, Upharsin*, did in the eyes of Belshazzar. After concealing the letter, Rosalie went downstairs to accompany her mother to Madame de Chavoncourt's; and as long as the endless evening lasted, she was tormented by remorse and scruples. She had already felt shame at having violated the secrecy of Albert's letter to Leopold; she had several times asked herself whether, if he knew of her crime, infamous inasmuch as it necessarily goes unpunished, the high-minded Albert could esteem her. Her conscience answered an uncompromising "No."

She had expiated her sin by self-imposed penances; she fasted, she mortified herself by remaining on her knees, her arms outstretched for hours, and repeating prayers all the time. She had compelled Mariette to similar sets of repentance; her passion was mingled with genuine asceticism, and was all the more dangerous.

"Shall I read that letter, shall I not?" she asked herself, while listening to the Chavoncourt girls. One was sixteen, the other seventeen and a half. Rosalie looked

upon her two friends as mere children because they were not secretly in love.—“If I read it,” she finally decided, after hesitating for an hour between Yes and No, “it shall, at any rate, be the last. Since I have gone so far as to see what he wrote to his friend, why should I not know what he says to *her*? If it is a horrible crime, is it not a proof of love? Oh, Albert! am I not your wife?”

Page 31

When Rosalie was in bed she opened the letter, dated from day to day, so as to give the Duchess a faithful picture of Albert's life and feelings.

"25th.

"My dear Soul, all is well. To my other conquests I have just added an invaluable one: I have done a service to one of the most influential men who work the elections. Like the critics, who make other men's reputations but can never make their own, he makes deputies though he never can become one. The worthy man wanted to show his gratitude without loosening his purse-strings by saying to me, 'Would you care to sit in the Chamber? I can get you returned as deputy.'

"'If I ever make up my mind to enter on a political career,' replied I hypocritically, 'it would be to devote myself to the Comte, which I love, and where I am appreciated.'

"'Well,' he said, 'we will persuade you, and through you we shall have weight in the Chamber, for you will distinguish yourself there.'

"And so, my beloved angel, say what you will, my perseverance will be rewarded. Ere long I shall, from the high place of the French Tribune, come before my country, before Europe. My name will be flung to you by the hundred voices of the French press." "Yes, as you tell me, I was old when I came to Besancon, and Besancon has aged me more; but, like Sixtus V., I shall be young again the day after my election. I shall enter on my true life, my own sphere. Shall we not then stand in the same line? Count Savaron de Savarus, Ambassador I know not where, may surely marry a Princess Soderini, the widow of the Duc d'Argaiolo! Triumph restores the youth of men who have been preserved by incessant struggles. Oh, my Life! with what gladness did I fly from my library to my private room, to tell your portrait of this progress before writing to you! Yes, the votes I can command, those of the Vicar-General, of the persons I can oblige, and of this client, make my election already sure.

"26th.

"We have entered on the twelfth year since that blest evening when, by a look, the beautiful Duchess sealed the promises made by the exile Francesca. You, dear, are thirty-two, I am thirty-five; the dear Duke is seventy-seven—that is to say, ten years more than yours and mine put together, and he still keeps well! My patience is almost as great as my love, and indeed I need a few years yet to rise to the level of your name. As you see, I am in good spirits to-day, I can laugh; that is the effect of hope. Sadness or gladness, it all comes to me through you. The hope of success always carries me back to the day following that one on which I saw you for the first time, when my life became one with yours as the earth turns to the light. *Qual pianto* are these

eleven years, for this is the 26th of December, the anniversary of my arrival at your villa on the Lake of Geneva. For eleven years have I been crying to you, while you shine like a star set too high for man to reach it.

“27th.

Page 32

"No, dearest, do not go to Milan; stay at Belgirate. Milan terrifies me. I do not like that odious Milanese fashion of chatting at the Scala every evening with a dozen persons, among whom it is hard if no one says something sweet. To me solitude is like the lump of amber in whose heart an insect lives for ever in unchanging beauty. Thus the heart and soul of a woman remains pure and unaltered in the form of their first youth. Is it the *Tedeschi* that you regret?

"28th.

"Is your statue never to be finished? I should wish to have you in marble, in painting, in miniature, in every possible form, to beguile my impatience. I still am waiting for the view of Belgirate from the south, and that of the balcony; these are all that I now lack. I am so extremely busy that to-day I can only write you nothing—but that nothing is everything. Was it not of nothing that God made the world? That nothing is a word, God's word: I love you!

"30th.

"Ah! I have received your journal. Thanks for your punctuality. —So you found great pleasure in seeing all the details of our first acquaintance thus set down? Alas! even while disguising them I was sorely afraid of offending you. We had no stories, and a *Review* without stories is a beauty without hair. Not being inventive by nature, and in sheer despair, I took the only poetry in my soul, the only adventure in my memory, and pitched it in the key in which it would bear telling; nor did I ever cease to think of you while writing the only literary production that will ever come from my heart, I cannot say from my pen. Did not the transformation of your fierce Sormano into Gina make you laugh?" You ask after my health. Well, it is better than in Paris. Though I work enormously, the peacefulness of the surroundings has its effect on the mind. What really tries and ages me, dear angel, is the anguish of mortified vanity, the perpetual friction of Paris life, the struggle of rival ambitions. This peace is a balm. "If you could imagine the pleasure your letter gives me!—the long, kind letter in which you tell me the most trivial incidents of your life. No! you women can never know to what a degree a true lover is interested in these trifles. It was an immense pleasure to see the pattern of your new dress. Can it be a matter of indifference to me to know what you wear? If your lofty brow is knit? If our writers amuse you? If Canalis' songs delight you? I read the books you read. Even to your boating on the lake every incident touched me. Your letter is as lovely, as sweet as your soul! Oh! flower of heaven, perpetually adored, could I have lived without those dear letters, which for eleven years have upheld me in my difficult path like a light, like a perfume, like a steady chant, like some divine nourishment, like everything which can soothe and comfort life.

"Do not fail me! If you knew what anxiety I suffer the day before they are due, or the pain a day's delay can give me! Is she ill? Is *he*? I am midway between hell and paradise.

Page 33

"*O mia cara diva*, keep up your music, exercise your voice, practise. I am enchanted with the coincidence of employments and hours by which, though separated by the Alps, we live by precisely the same rule. The thought charms me and gives me courage. The first time I undertook to plead here—I forget to tell you this—I fancied that you were listening to me, and I suddenly felt the flash of inspiration which lifts the poet above mankind. If I am returned to the Chamber—oh! you must come to Paris to be present at my first appearance there!

"30th, Evening.

"Good heavens, how I love you! Alas! I have intrusted too much to my love and my hopes. An accident which should sink that overloaded bark would end my life. For three years now I have not seen you, and at the thought of going to Belgirate my heart beats so wildly that I am forced to stop.—To see you, to hear that girlish caressing voice! To embrace in my gaze that ivory skin, glistening under the candlelight, and through which I can read your noble mind! To admire your fingers playing on the keys, to drink in your whole soul in a look, in the tone of an *Oime* or an *Alberto*! To walk by the blossoming orange-trees, to live a few months in the bosom of that glorious scenery!—That is life. What folly it is to run after power, a name, fortune! But at Belgirate there is everything; there is poetry, there is glory! I ought to have made myself your steward, or, as that dear tyrant whom we cannot hate proposed to me, live there as *cavaliere servente*, only our passion was too fierce to allow of it." Farewell, my angel, forgive me my next fit of sadness in consideration of this cheerful mood; it has come as a beam of light from the torch of Hope, which has hitherto seemed to me a Will-o'-the-wisp."

"How he loves her!" cried Rosalie, dropping the letter, which seemed heavy in her hand. "After eleven years to write like this!"

"Mariette," said Mademoiselle de Watteville to her maid next morning, "go and post this letter. Tell Jerome that I know all I wish to know, and that he is to serve Monsieur Albert faithfully. We will confess our sins, you and I, without saying to whom the letters belonged, nor to whom they were going. I was in the wrong; I alone am guilty."

"Mademoiselle has been crying?" said Mariette.

"Yes, but I do not want that my mother should perceive it; give me some very cold water."

In the midst of the storms of her passion Rosalie often listened to the voice of conscience. Touched by the beautiful fidelity of these two hearts, she had just said her prayers, telling herself that there was nothing left to her but to be resigned, and to respect the happiness of two beings worthy of each other, submissive to fate, looking to God for everything, without allowing themselves any criminal acts or wishes. She felt a better woman, and had a certain sense of satisfaction after coming to this resolution,

inspired by the natural rectitude of youth. And she was confirmed in it by a girl's idea: She was sacrificing herself for *him*.

Page 34

"She does not know how to love," thought she. "Ah! if it were I—I would give up everything to a man who loved me so.—To be loved! —When, by whom shall I be loved? That little Monsieur de Soulas only loves my money; if I were poor, he would not even look at me."

"Rosalie, my child, what are you thinking about? You are working beyond the outline," said the Baroness to her daughter, who was making worsted-work slippers for the Baron.

* * * * *

Rosalie spent the winter of 1834-35 torn by secret tumults; but in the spring, in the month of April, when she reached the age of nineteen, she sometimes thought that it would be a fine thing to triumph over a Duchesse d'Argaiolo. In silence and solitude the prospect of this struggle had fanned her passion and her evil thoughts. She encouraged her romantic daring by making plan after plan. Although such characters are an exception, there are, unfortunately, too many Rosalies in the world, and this story contains a moral that ought to serve them as a warning.

In the course of this winter Albert de Savarus had quietly made considerable progress in Besancon. Confident of success, he now impatiently awaited the dissolution of the Chamber. Among the men of the moderate party he had won the suffrages of one of the makers of Besancon, a rich contractor, who had very wide influence.

Wherever they settled the Romans took immense pains, and spent enormous sums to have an unlimited supply of good water in every town of their empire. At Besancon they drank the water from Arcier, a hill at some considerable distance from Besancon. The town stands in a horseshoe circumscribed by the river Doubs. Thus, to restore an aqueduct in order to drink the same water that the Romans drank, in a town watered by the Doubs, is one of those absurdities which only succeed in a country place where the most exemplary gravity prevails. If this whim could be brought home to the hearts of the citizens, it would lead to considerable outlay; and this expenditure would benefit the influential contractor.

Albert Savaron de Savarus opined that the water of the river was good for nothing but to flow under the suspension bridge, and that the only drinkable water was that from Arcier. Articles were printed in the *Review* which merely expressed the views of the commercial interest of Besancon. The nobility and the citizens, the moderates and the legitimists, the government party and the opposition, everybody, in short, was agreed that they must drink the same water as the Romans, and boast of a suspension bridge. The question of the Arcier water was the order of the day at Besancon. At Besancon—as in the matter of the two railways to Versailles—as for every standing abuse—there were private interests unconfessed which gave vital force to this idea. The reasonable folk in opposition to this scheme, who were indeed but few, were regarded as

Page 35

old women. No one talked of anything but of Savaron's two projects. And thus, after eighteen months of underground labor, the ambitious lawyer had succeeded in stirring to its depths the most stagnant town in France, the most unyielding to foreign influence, in finding the length of its foot, to use a vulgar phrase, and exerting a preponderant influence without stirring from his own room. He had solved the singular problem of how to be powerful without being popular.

In the course of this winter he won seven lawsuits for various priests of Besancon. At moments he could breathe freely at the thought of his coming triumph. This intense desire, which made him work so many interests and devise so many springs, absorbed the last strength of his terribly overstrung soul. His disinterestedness was lauded, and he took his clients' fees without comment. But this disinterestedness was, in truth, moral usury; he counted on a reward far greater to him than all the gold in the world.

In the month of October 1834 he had brought, ostensibly to serve a merchant who was in difficulties, with money lent him by Leopold Hannequin, a house which gave him a qualification for election. He had not seemed to seek or desire this advantageous bargain.

"You are really a remarkable man," said the Abbe de Grancey, who, of course, had watched and understood the lawyer. The Vicar-General had come to introduce to him a Canon who needed his professional advice. "You are a priest who has taken the wrong turning." This observation struck Savarus.

Rosalie, on her part, had made up her mind, in her strong girl's head, to get Monsieur de Savarus into the drawing-room and acquainted with the society of the Hotel de Rupt. So far she had limited her desires to seeing and hearing Albert. She had compounded, so to speak, and a composition is often no more than a truce.

Les Rouxey, the inherited estate of the Wattevelles, was worth just ten thousand francs a year; but in other hands it would have yielded a great deal more. The Baron in his indifference—for his wife was to have, and in fact had, forty thousand francs a year—left the management of les Rouxey to a sort of factotum, an old servant of the Wattevelles named Modinier. Nevertheless, whenever the Baron and his wife wished to go out of the town, they went to les Rouxey, which is very picturesquely situated. The chateau and the park were, in fact, created by the famous Watteville, who in his active old age was passionately attached to this magnificent spot.

Between two precipitous hills—little peaks with bare summits known as the great and the little Rouxey—in the heart of a ravine where the torrents from the heights, with the Dent de Vilard at their head, come tumbling to join the lovely upper waters of the Doubs, Watteville had a huge dam constructed, leaving two cuttings for the overflow. Above

this dam he made a beautiful lake, and below it two cascades; and these, uniting a few yards below the falls, formed a lovely little river to irrigate the barren, uncultivated valley, and these two hills he enclosed in a ring fence, and built himself a retreat on the dam, which he widened to two acres by accumulating above it all the soil which had to be removed to make a channel for the river and the irrigation canals.

Page 36

When the Baron de Watteville thus obtained the lake above his dam he was owner of the two hills, but not of the upper valley thus flooded, through which there had been at all times a right-of-way to where it ends in a horseshoe under the Dent de Vilard. But this ferocious old man was so widely dreaded, that so long as he lived no claim was urged by the inhabitants of Riceys, the little village on the further side of the Dent de Vilard. When the Baron died, he left the slopes of the two Rouxey hills joined by a strong wall, to protect from inundation the two lateral valleys opening into the valley of Rouxey, to the right and left at the foot of the Dent de Vilard. Thus he died the master of the Dent de Vilard.

His heirs asserted their protectorate of the village of Riceys, and so maintained the usurpation. The old assassin, the old renegade, the old Abbe Watteville, ended his career by planting trees and making a fine road over the shoulder of one of the Rouxey hills to join the highroad. The estate belonging to this park and house was extensive, but badly cultivated; there were chalets on both hills and neglected forests of timber. It was all wild and deserted, left to the care of nature, abandoned to chance growths, but full of sublime and unexpected beauty. You may now imagine les Rouxey.

It is unnecessary to complicate this story by relating all the prodigious trouble and the inventiveness stamped with genius, by which Rosalie achieved her end without allowing it to be suspected. It is enough to say that it was in obedience to her mother that she left Besancon in the month of May 1835, in an antique traveling carriage drawn by a pair of sturdy hired horses, and accompanied her father to les Rouxey.

To a young girl love lurks in everything. When she rose, the morning after her arrival, Mademoiselle de Watteville saw from her bedroom window the fine expanse of water, from which the light mists rose like smoke, and were caught in the firs and larches, rolling up and along the hills till they reached the heights, and she gave a cry of admiration.

"They loved by the lakes! *She* lives by a lake! A lake is certainly full of love!" she thought.

A lake fed by snows has opalescent colors and a translucency that makes it one huge diamond; but when it is shut in like that of les Rouxey, between two granite masses covered with pines, when silence broods over it like that of the Savannas or the Steppes, then every one must exclaim as Rosalie did.

"We owe that," said her father, "to the notorious Watteville."

"On my word," said the girl, "he did his best to earn forgiveness. Let us go in a boat to the further end; it will give us an appetite for breakfast."

The Baron called two gardener lads who knew how to row, and took with him his prime minister Modinier. The lake was about six acres in breadth, in some places ten or twelve, and four hundred in length. Rosalie soon found herself at the upper end shut in by the Dent de Vilard, the Jungfrau of that little Switzerland.

Page 37

"Here we are, Monsieur le Baron," said Modinier, signing to the gardeners to tie up the boat; "will you come and look?"

"Look at what?" asked Rosalie.

"Oh, nothing!" exclaimed the Baron. "But you are a sensible girl; we have some little secrets between us, and I may tell you what ruffles my mind. Some difficulties have arisen since 1830 between the village authorities of Riceys and me, on account of this very Dent de Vilard, and I want to settle the matter without your mother's knowing anything about it, for she is stubborn; she is capable of flinging fire and flames broadcast, particularly if she should hear that the Mayor of Riceys, a republican, got up this action as a sop to his people."

Rosalie had presence of mind enough to disguise her delight, so as to work more effectually on her father.

"What action?" said she.

"Mademoiselle, the people of Riceys," said Modinier, "have long enjoyed the right of grazing and cutting fodder on their side of the Dent de Vilard. Now Monsieur Chantonit, the Maire since 1830, declares that the whole Dent belongs to his district, and maintains that a hundred years ago, or more, there was a way through our grounds. You understand that in that case we should no longer have them to ourselves. Then this barbarian would end by saying, what the old men in the village say, that the ground occupied by the lake was appropriated by the Abbe de Watteville. That would be the end of les Rouxey; what next?"

"Indeed, my child, between ourselves, it is the truth," said Monsieur de Watteville simply. "The land is an usurpation, with no title-deed but lapse of time. And, therefore, to avoid all worry, I should wish to come to a friendly understanding as to my border line on this side of the Dent de Vilard, and I will then raise a wall."

"If you give way to the municipality, it will swallow you up. You ought to have threatened Riceys."

"That is just what I told the master last evening," said Modinier. "But in confirmation of that view I proposed that he should come to see whether, on this side of the Dent or on the other, there may not be, high or low, some traces of an enclosure."

For a century the Dent de Vilard had been used by both parties without coming to extremities; it stood as a sort of party wall between the communes of Riceys and les Rouxey, yielding little profit. Indeed, the object in dispute, being covered with snow for six months in the year, was of a nature to cool their ardor. Thus it required all the hot blast by which the revolution of 1830 inflamed the advocates of the people, to stir up

this matter, by which Monsieur Chantonnit, the Maire of Riceys, hoped to give a dramatic turn to his career on the peaceful frontier of Switzerland, and to immortalize his term of office. Chantonnit, as his name shows, was a native of Neuchatel.

Page 38

"My dear father," said Rosalie, as they got into the boat again, "I agree with Modinier. If you wish to secure the joint possession of the Dent de Vilard, you must act with decision, and get a legal opinion which will protect you against this enterprising Chantonnit. Why should you be afraid? Get the famous lawyer Savaron—engage him at once, lest Chantonnit should place the interests of the village in his hands. The man who won the case for the Chapter against the town can certainly win that of Watteville *versus* Riceys! Besides," she added, "les Rouxey will some day be mine—not for a long time yet, I trust.— Well, then do not leave me with a lawsuit on my hands. I like this place, I shall often live here, and add to it as much as possible. On those banks," and she pointed to the feet of the two hills, "I shall cut flowerbeds and make the loveliest English gardens. Let us go to Besancon and bring back with us the Abbe de Grancey, Monsieur Savaron, and my mother, if she cares to come. You can then make up your mind; but in your place I should have done so already. Your name is Watteville, and you are afraid of a fight! If you should lose your case—well, I will never reproach you by a word!"

"Oh, if that is the way you take it," said the Baron, "I am quite ready; I will see the lawyer."

"Besides a lawsuit is really great fun. It brings some interest into life, with coming and going and raging over it. You will have a great deal to do before you can get hold of the judges.—We did not see the Abbe de Grancey for three weeks, he was so busy!"

"But the very existence of the Chapter was involved," said Monsieur de Watteville; "and then the Archbishop's pride, his conscience, everything that makes up the life of the priesthood, was at stake. That Savaron does not know what he did for the Chapter! He saved it!"

"Listen to me," said his daughter in his ear, "if you secure Monsieur de Savaron, you will gain your suit, won't you? Well, then, let me advise you. You cannot get at Monsieur Savaron excepting through Monsieur de Grancey. Take my word for it, and let us together talk to the dear Abbe without my mother's presence at the interview, for I know a way of persuading him to bring the lawyer to us."

"It will be very difficult to avoid mentioning it to your mother!"

"The Abbe de Grancey will settle that afterwards. But just make up your mind to promise your vote to Monsieur Savaron at the next election, and you will see!"

"Go to the election! take the oath?" cried the Baron de Watteville.

"What then!" said she.

"And what will your mother say?"

“She may even desire you to do it,” replied Rosalie, knowing as she did from Albert’s letter to Leopold how deeply the Vicar-General had pledged himself.

Four days after, the Abbe de Grancey called very early one morning on Albert de Savarus, having announced his visit the day before. The old priest had come to win over the great lawyer to the house of the Watteviles, a proceeding which shows how much tact and subtlety Rosalie must have employed in an underhand way.

Page 39

"What can I do for you, Monsieur le Vicaire-General?" asked Savarus.

The Abbe, who told his story with admirable frankness, was coldly heard by Albert.

"Monsieur l'Abbe," said he, "it is out of the question that I should defend the interests of the Watteviles, and you shall understand why. My part in this town is to remain perfectly neutral. I will display no colors; I must remain a mystery till the eve of my election. Now, to plead for the Watteviles would mean nothing in Paris, but here! — Here, where everything is discussed, I should be supposed by every one to be an ally of your Faubourg Saint-Germain."

"What! do you suppose that you can remain unknown on the day of the election, when the candidates must oppose each other? It must then become known that your name is Savaron de Savarus, that you have held the appointment of Master of Appeals, that you are a man of the Restoration!"

"On the day of the election," said Savarus, "I will be all I am expected to be; and I intend to speak at the preliminary meetings."

"If you have the support of Monsieur de Watteville and his party, you will get a hundred votes in a mass, and far more to be trusted than those on which you rely. It is always possible to produce division of interests; convictions are inseparable."

"The deuce is in it!" said Savarus. "I am attached to you, and I could do a great deal for you, Father! Perhaps we may compound with the Devil. Whatever Monsieur de Watteville's business may be, by engaging Girardet, and prompting him, it will be possible to drag the proceedings out till the elections are over. I will not undertake to plead till the day after I am returned."

"Do this one thing," said the Abbe. "Come to the Hotel de Rupt: there is a young person of nineteen there who, one of these days, will have a hundred thousand francs a year, and you can seem to be paying your court to her—"

"Ah! the young lady I sometimes see in the kiosk?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle Rosalie," replied the Abbe de Grancey. "You are ambitious. If she takes a fancy to you, you may be everything an ambitious man can wish—who knows? A Minister perhaps. A man can always be a Minister who adds a hundred thousand francs a year to your amazing talents."

"Monsieur l'Abbe, if Mademoiselle de Watteville had three times her fortune, and adored me into the bargain, it would be impossible that I should marry her—"

"You are married?" exclaimed the Abbe.

“Not in church nor before the Maire, but morally speaking,” said Savarus.

“That is even worse when a man cares about it as you seem to care,” replied the Abbe. “Everything that is not done, can be undone. Do not stake your fortune and your prospects on a woman’s liking, any more than a wise man counts on a dead man’s shoes before starting on his way.”

“Let us say no more about Mademoiselle de Watteville,” said Albert gravely, “and agree as to the facts. At your desire—for I have a regard and respect for you—I will appear for Monsieur de Watteville, but after the elections. Until then Girardet must conduct the case under my instructions. That is the most I can do.”

Page 40

"But there are questions involved which can only be settled after inspection of the localities," said the Vicar-General.

"Girardet can go," said Savarus. "I cannot allow myself, in the face of a town I know so well, to take any step which might compromise the supreme interests that lie beyond my election."

The Abbe left Savarus after giving him a keen look, in which he seemed to be laughing at the young athlete's uncompromising politics, while admiring his firmness.

"Ah! I would have dragged my father into a lawsuit—I would have done anything to get him here!" cried Rosalie to herself, standing in the kiosk and looking at the lawyer in his room, the day after Albert's interview with the Abbe, who had reported the result to her father. "I would have committed any mortal sin, and you will not enter the Wattevelles' drawing-room; I may not hear your fine voice! You make conditions when your help is required by the Wattevelles and the Rupts!—Well, God knows, I meant to be content with these small joys; with seeing you, hearing you speak, going with you to les Rouxey, that your presence might to me make the place sacred. That was all I asked. But now—now I mean to be your wife.—Yes, yes; look at *her* portrait, at *her* drawing-room, *her* bedroom, at the four sides of *her* villa, the points of view from *her* gardens. You expect her statue? I will make her marble herself towards you!—After all, the woman does not love. Art, science, books, singing, music, have absorbed half her senses and her intelligence. She is old, too; she is past thirty; my Albert will not be happy!"

"What is the matter that you stay here, Rosalie?" asked her mother, interrupting her reflections. "Monsieur de Soulas is in the drawing-room, and he observed your attitude, which certainly betrays more thoughtfulness than is due at your age."

"Then, is Monsieur de Soulas a foe to thought?" asked Rosalie.

"Then you were thinking?" said Madame de Watteville.

"Why, yes, mamma."

"Why, no! you were not thinking. You were staring at that lawyer's window with an attention that is neither becoming, nor decent, and which Monsieur de Soulas, of all men, ought never to have observed."

"Why?" said Rosalie.

"It is time," said the Baroness, "that you should know what our intentions are. Amedee likes you, and you will not be unhappy as Comtesse de Soulas."

Rosalie, as white as a lily, made no reply, so completely was she stupefied by contending feelings. And yet in the presence of the man she had this instant begun to

hate vehemently, she forced the kind of smile which a ballet-dancer puts on for the public. Nay, she could even laugh; she had the strength to conceal her rage, which presently subsided, for she was determined to make use of this fat simpleton to further her designs.

“Monsieur Amedee,” said she, at the moment when her mother was walking ahead of them in the garden, affecting to leave the young people together, “were you not aware that Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus is a Legitimist?”

Page 41

“A Legitimist?”

“Until 1830 he was Master of Appeals to the Council of State, attached to the supreme Ministerial Council, and in favor with the Dauphin and Dauphiness. It would be very good of you to say nothing against him, but it would be better still if you would attend the election this year, carry the day, and hinder that poor Monsieur de Chavoncourt from representing the town of Besancon.”

“What sudden interest have you in this Savaron?”

“Monsieur Albert Savaron de Savarus, the natural son of the Comte de Savarus—pray keep the secret of my indiscretion—if he is returned deputy, will be our advocate in the suit about les Rouxey. Les Rouxey, my father tells me, will be my property; I intend to live there, it is a lovely place! I should be broken-hearted at seeing that fine piece of the great de Watteville’s work destroyed.”

“The devil!” thought Amedee, as he left the house. “The heiress is not such a fool as her mother thinks her.”

Monsieur de Chavoncourt is a Royalist, of the famous 221. Hence, from the day after the revolution of July, he always preached the salutary doctrine of taking the oaths and resisting the present order of things, after the pattern of the Tories against the Whigs in England. This doctrine was not acceptable to the Legitimists, who, in their defeat, had the wit to divide in their opinions, and to trust to the force of inertia and to Providence. Monsieur de Chavoncourt was not wholly trusted by his own party, but seemed to the Moderates the best man to choose; they preferred the triumph of his half-hearted opinions to the acclamation of a Republican who should combine the votes of the enthusiasts and the patriots. Monsieur de Chavoncourt, highly respected in Besancon, was the representative of an old parliamentary family; his fortune, of about fifteen thousand francs a year, was not an offence to anybody, especially as he had a son and three daughters. With such a family, fifteen thousand francs a year are a mere nothing. Now when, under these circumstances, the father of the family is above bribery, it would be hard if the electors did not esteem him. Electors wax enthusiastic over a *beau ideal* of parliamentary virtue, just as the audience in the pit do at the representation of the generous sentiments they so little practise.

Madame de Chavoncourt, at this time a woman of forty, was one of the beauties of Besancon. While the Chamber was sitting, she lived meagrely in one of their country places to recoup herself by economy for Monsieur de Chavoncourt’s expenses in Paris. In the winter she received very creditably once a week, on Tuesdays, understanding her business as mistress of the house. Young Chavoncourt, a youth of two-and-twenty, and another young gentleman, named Monsieur de Vauchelles, no richer than Amedee and his school-friend, were his intimate allies. They made excursions together to Granvelle,

and sometimes went out shooting; they were so well known to be inseparable that they were invited to the country together.

Page 42

Rosalie, who was intimate with the Chavoncourt girls, knew that the three young men had no secrets from each other. She reflected that if Monsieur de Soulas should repeat her words, it would be to his two companions. Now, Monsieur de Vauchelles had his matrimonial plans, as Amedee had his; he wished to marry Victoire, the eldest of the Chavoncourts, on whom an old aunt was to settle an estate worth seven thousand francs a year, and a hundred thousand francs in hard cash, when the contract was to be signed. Victoire was this aunt's god-daughter and favorite niece. Consequently, young Chavoncourt and his friend Vauchelles would be sure to warn Monsieur de Chavoncourt of the danger he was in from Albert's candidature.

But this did not satisfy Rosalie. She sent the Prefet of the department a letter written with her left hand, signed "*A friend to Louis Philippe*," in which she informed him of the secret intentions of Monsieur Albert de Savarus, pointing out the serious support a Royalist orator might give to Berryer, and revealing to him the deeply artful course pursued by the lawyer during his two years' residence at Besancon. The Prefet was a capable man, a personal enemy of the Royalist party, devoted by conviction to the Government of July—in short, one of those men of whom, in the Rue de Grenelle, the Minister of the Interior could say, "We have a capital Prefet at Besancon." —The Prefet read the letter, and, in obedience to its instructions, he burnt it.

Rosalie aimed at preventing Albert's election, so as to keep him five years longer at Besancon.

At that time an election was a fight between parties, and in order to win, the Ministry chose its ground by choosing the moment when it would give battle. The elections were therefore not to take place for three months yet. When a man's whole life depends on an election, the period that elapses between the issuing of the writs for convening the electoral bodies, and the day fixed for their meetings, is an interval during which ordinary vitality is suspended. Rosalie fully understood how much latitude Albert's absorbed state would leave her during these three months. By promising Mariette—as she afterwards confessed—to take both her and Jerome into her service, she induced the maid to bring her all the letters Albert might send to Italy, and those addressed to him from that country. And all the time she was pondering these machinations, the extraordinary girl was working slippers for her father with the most innocent air in the world. She even made a greater display than ever of candor and simplicity, quite understanding how valuable that candor and innocence would be to her ends.

"My daughter grows quite charming!" said Madame de Watteville.

Page 43

Two months before the election a meeting was held at the house of Monsieur Boucher senior, composed of the contractor who expected to get the work for the aqueduct for the Arcier waters; of Monsieur Boucher's father-in-law; of Monsieur Granet, the influential man to whom Savarus had done a service, and who was to nominate him as a candidate; of Girardet the lawyer; of the printer of the *Eastern Review*; and of the President of the Chamber of Commerce. In fact, the assembly consisted of twenty-seven persons in all, men who in the provinces are regarded as bigwigs. Each man represented on an average six votes, but in estimating their values they said ten, for men always begin by exaggerating their own influence. Among these twenty-seven was one who was wholly devoted to the Prefet, one false brother who secretly looked for some favor from the Ministry, either for himself or for some one belonging to him.

At this preliminary meeting, it was agreed that Savaron the lawyer should be named as candidate, a motion received with such enthusiasm as no one looked for from Besancon. Albert, waiting at home for Alfred Boucher to fetch him, was chatting with the Abbe de Grancey, who was interested in this absorbing ambition. Albert had appreciated the priest's vast political capacities; and the priest, touched by the young man's entreaties, had been willing to become his guide and adviser in this culminating struggle. The Chapter did not love Monsieur de Chavoncourt, for it was his wife's brother-in-law, as President of the Tribunal, who had lost the famous suit for them in the lower Court.

"You are betrayed, my dear fellow," said the shrewd and worthy Abbe, in that gentle, calm voice which old priests acquire.

"Betrayed!" cried the lover, struck to the heart.

"By whom I know not at all," the priest replied. "But at the Prefecture your plans are known, and your hand read like a book. At this moment I have no advice to give you. Such affairs need consideration. As for this evening, take the bull by the horns, anticipate the blow. Tell them all your previous life, and thus you will mitigate the effect of the discovery on the good folks of Besancon."

"Oh, I was prepared for it," said Albert in a broken voice.

"You would not benefit by my advice; you had the opportunity of making an impression at the Hotel de Rupt; you do not know the advantage you would have gained—"

"What?"

"The unanimous support of the Royalists, an immediate readiness to go to the election—in short, above a hundred votes. Adding to these what, among ourselves, we call the ecclesiastical vote, though you were not yet nominated, you were master of the votes by ballot. Under such circumstances, a man may temporize, may make his way—"

Alfred Boucher when he came in, full of enthusiasm, to announce the decision of the preliminary meeting, found the Vicar-General and the lawyer cold, calm, and grave.

Page 44

“Good-night, Monsieur l’Abbe,” said Albert. “We will talk of your business at greater length when the elections are over.”

And he took Alfred’s arm, after pressing Monsieur de Grancey’s hand with meaning. The priest looked at the ambitious man, whose face at that moment wore the lofty expression which a general may have when he hears the first gun fired for a battle. He raised his eyes to heaven, and left the room, saying to himself, “What a priest he would make!”

Eloquence is not at the Bar. The pleader rarely puts forth the real powers of his soul; if he did, he would die of it in a few years. Eloquence is, nowadays, rarely in the pulpit; but it is found on certain occasions in the Chamber of Deputies, when an ambitious man stakes all to win all, or, stung by a myriad darts, at a given moment bursts into speech. But it is still more certainly found in some privileged beings, at the inevitable hour when their claims must either triumph or be wrecked, and when they are forced to speak. Thus at this meeting, Albert Savarus, feeling the necessity of winning himself some supporters, displayed all the faculties of his soul and the resources of his intellect. He entered the room well, without awkwardness or arrogance, without weakness, without cowardice, quite gravely, and was not dismayed at finding himself among twenty or thirty men. The news of the meeting and of its determination had already brought a few docile sheep to follow the bell.

Before listening to Monsieur Boucher, who was about to deluge him with a speech announcing the decision of the Boucher Committee, Albert begged for silence, and, as he shook hands with Monsieur Boucher, tried to warn him, by a sign, of an unexpected danger.

“My young friend, Alfred Boucher, has just announced to me the honor you have done me. But before that decision is irrevocable,” said the lawyer, “I think that I ought to explain to you who and what your candidate is, so as to leave you free to take back your word if my declaration should disturb your conscience!”

This exordium was followed by profound silence. Some of the men thought it showed a noble impulse.

Albert gave a sketch of his previous career, telling them his real name, his action under the Restoration, and revealing himself as a new man since his arrival at Besancon, while pledging himself for the future. This address held his hearers breathless, it was said. These men, all with different interests, were spellbound by the brilliant eloquence that flowed at boiling heat from the heart and soul of this ambitious spirit. Admiration silenced reflection. Only one thing was clear—the thing which Albert wished to get into their heads:



Was it not far better for the town to have one of those men who are born to govern society at large than a mere voting-machine? A statesman carries power with him. A commonplace deputy, however incorruptible, is but a conscience. What a glory for Provence to have found a Mirabeau, to return the only statesman since 1830 that the revolution of July had produced!

Page 45

Under the pressure of this eloquence, all the audience believed it great enough to become a splendid political instrument in the hands of their representative. They all saw in Albert Savaron, Savarus the great Minister. And, reading the secret calculations of his constituents, the clever candidate gave them to understand that they would be the first to enjoy the right of profiting by his influence.

This confession of faith, this ambitious programme, this retrospect of his life and character was, according to the only man present who was capable of judging of Savarus (he has since become one of the leading men of Besancon), a masterpiece of skill and of feeling, of fervor, interest, and fascination. This whirlwind carried away the electors. Never had any man had such a triumph. But, unfortunately, speech, a weapon only for close warfare, has only an immediate effect. Reflection kills the word when the word ceases to overpower reflection. If the votes had then been taken, Albert's name would undoubtedly have come out of the ballot-box. At the moment, he was conqueror. But he must conquer every day for two months.

Albert went home quivering. The townsfolk had applauded him, and he had achieved the great point of silencing beforehand the malignant talk to which his early career might give rise. The commercial interest of Besancon had nominated the lawyer, Albert Savaron de Savarus, as its candidate.

Alfred Boucher's enthusiasm, at first infectious, presently became blundering.

The Prefet, alarmed by this success, set to work to count the Ministerial votes, and contrived to have a secret interview with Monsieur de Chavoncourt, so as to effect a coalition in their common interests. Every day, without Albert's being able to discover how, the voters in the Boucher committee diminished in number.

Nothing could resist the slow grinding of the Prefecture. Three of four clever men would say to Albert's clients, "Will the deputy defend you and win your lawsuits? Will he give you advice, draw up your contracts, arrange your compromises?—He will be your slave for five years longer, if, instead of returning him to the Chamber, you only hold out the hope of his going there five years hence."

This calculation did Savarus all the more mischief, because the wives of some of the merchants had already made it. The parties interested in the matter of the bridge and that of the water from Arcier could not hold out against a talking-to from a clever Ministerialist, who proved to them that their safety lay at the Prefecture, and not in the hands of an ambitious man. Each day was a check for Savarus, though each day the battle was led by him and fought by his lieutenants—a battle of words, speeches, and proceedings. He dared not go to the Vicar-General, and the Vicar-General never showed himself. Albert rose and went to bed in a fever, his brain on fire.

Page 46

At last the day dawned of the first struggle, practically the show of hands; the votes are counted, the candidates estimate their chances, and clever men can prophesy their failure or success. It is a decent hustings, without the mob, but formidable; agitation, though it is not allowed any physical display, as it is in England, is not the less profound. The English fight these battles with their fists, the French with hard words. Our neighbors have a scrimmage, the French try their fate by cold combinations calmly worked out. This particular political business is carried out in opposition to the character of the two nations.

The Radical party named their candidate; Monsieur de Chavoncourt came forward; then Albert appeared, and was accused by the Chavoncourt committee and the Radicals of being an uncompromising man of the Right, a second Berryer. The Ministry had their candidate, a stalking-horse, useful only to receive the purely Ministerial votes. The votes, thus divided, gave no result. The Republican candidate had twenty, the Ministry got fifty, Albert had seventy, Monsieur de Chavoncourt obtained sixty-seven. But the Prefet's party had perfidiously made thirty of its most devoted adherents vote for Albert, so as to deceive the enemy. The votes for Monsieur de Chavoncourt, added to the eighty votes—the real number—at the disposal of the Prefecture, would carry the election, if only the Prefet could succeed in gaining over a few of the Radicals. A hundred and sixty votes were not recorded: those of Monsieur de Grancey's following and the Legitimists.

The show of hands at an election, like a dress rehearsal at a theatre, is the most deceptive thing in the world. Albert Savarus came home, putting a brave face on the matter, but half dead. He had had the wit, the genius, or the good luck to gain, within the last fortnight, two staunch supporters—Girardet's father-in-law and a very shrewd old merchant to whom Monsieur de Grancey had sent him. These two worthy men, his self-appointed spies, affected to be Albert's most ardent opponents in the hostile camp. Towards the end of the show of hands they informed Savarus, through the medium of Monsieur Boucher, that thirty voters, unknown, were working against him in his party, playing the same trick that they were playing for his benefit on the other side.

A criminal marching to execution could not suffer as Albert suffered as he went home from the hall where his fate was at stake. The despairing lover could endure no companionship. He walked through the streets alone, between eleven o'clock and midnight. At one in the morning, Albert, to whom sleep had been unknown for the past three days, was sitting in his library in a deep armchair, his face as pale as if he were dying, his hands hanging limp, in a forlorn attitude worthy of the Magdalen. Tears hung on his long lashes, tears that dim the eyes, but do not fall; fierce thought drinks them up, the fire of the soul consumes them. Alone, he might weep. And then, under the kiosk, he saw a white figure, which reminded him of Francesca.

Page 47

“And for three months I have had no letter from her! What has become of her? I have not written for two months, but I warned her. Is she ill? Oh, my love! My life! Will you ever know what I have gone through? What a wretched constitution is mine! Have I an aneurism?” he asked himself, feeling his heart beat so violently that its pulses seemed audible in the silence like little grains of sand dropping on a big drum.

At this moment three distinct taps sounded on his door; Albert hastened to open it, and almost fainted with joy at seeing the Vicar-General’s cheerful and triumphant mien. Without a word, he threw his arms round the Abbe de Grancey, held him fast, and clasped him closely, letting his head fall on the old man’s shoulder. He was a child again; he cried as he had cried on hearing that Francesca Soderini was a married woman. He betrayed his weakness to no one but to this priest, on whose face shone the light of hope. The priest had been sublime, and as shrewd as he was sublime.

“Forgive me, dear Abbe, but you come at one of those moments when the man vanishes, for you are not to think me vulgarly ambitious.”

“Oh! I know,” replied the Abbe. “You wrote *‘Ambition for love’s sake!’*—Ah! my son, it was love in despair that made me a priest in 1786, at the age of two-and-twenty. In 1788 I was in charge of a parish. I know life.—I have refused three bishoprics already; I mean to die at Besancon.”

“Come and see her!” cried Savarus, seizing a candle, and leading the Abbe into the handsome room where hung the portrait of the Duchesse d’Argaiolo, which he lighted up.

“She is one of those women who are born to reign!” said the Vicar-General, understanding how great an affection Albert showed him by this mark of confidence. “But there is pride on that brow; it is implacable; she would never forgive an insult! It is the Archangel Michael, the angel of Execution, the inexorable angel—‘All or nothing’ is the motto of this type of angel. There is something divinely pitiless in that head.”

“You have guessed well,” cried Savarus. “But, my dear Abbe, for more than twelve years now she had reigned over my life, and I have not a thought for which to blame myself—”

“Ah! if you could only say the same of God!” said the priest with simplicity. “Now, to talk of your affairs. For ten days I have been at work for you. If you are a real politician, this time you will follow my advice. You would not be where you are now if you would have gone to the Watteviles when I first told you. But you must go there to-morrow; I will take you in the evening. The Rouxey estates are in danger; the case must be defended within three days. The election will not be over in three days. They will take good care not to appoint examiners the first day. There will be several voting days, and you will be elected by ballot—”

“How can that be?” asked Savarus.

Page 48

"By winning the Rouxey lawsuit you will gain eighty Legitimist votes; add them to the thirty I can command, and you have a hundred and ten. Then, as twenty remain to you of the Boucher committee, you will have a hundred and thirty in all."

"Well," said Albert, "we must get seventy-five more."

"Yes," said the priest, "since all the rest are Ministerial. But, my son, you have two hundred votes, and the Prefecture no more than a hundred and eighty."

"I have two hundred votes?" said Albert, standing stupid with amazement, after starting to his feet as if shot up by a spring.

"You have those of Monsieur de Chavoncourt," said the Abbe.

"How?" said Albert.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt."

"Never!"

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," the priest repeated coldly.

"But you see—she is inexorable," said Albert, pointing to Francesca.

"You will marry Mademoiselle Sidonie de Chavoncourt," said the Abbe calmly for the third time.

This time Albert understood. The Vicar-General would not be implicated in a scheme which at last smiled on the despairing politician. A word more would have compromised the priest's dignity and honor.

"To-morrow evening at the Hotel de Rupt you will meet Madame de Chavoncourt and her second daughter. You can thank her beforehand for what she is going to do for you, and tell her that your gratitude is unbounded, that you are hers body and soul, that henceforth your future is that of her family. You are quite disinterested, for you have so much confidence in yourself that you regard the nomination as deputy as a sufficient fortune.

"You will have a struggle with Madame de Chavoncourt; she will want you to pledge your word. All your future life, my son, lies in that evening. But, understand clearly, I have nothing to do with it. I am answerable only for Legitimist voters; I have secured Madame de Watteville, and that means all the aristocracy of Besancon. Amedee de Soulas and Vauchelles, who will both vote for you, have won over the young men; Madame de Watteville will get the old ones. As to my electors, they are infallible."

“And who on earth has gained over Madame de Chavoncourt?” asked Savarus.

“Ask me no questions,” replied the Abbe. “Monsieur de Chavoncourt, who has three daughters to marry, is not capable of increasing his wealth. Though Vauchelles marries the eldest without anything from her father, because her old aunt is to settle something on her, what is to become of the two others? Sidonie is sixteen, and your ambition is as good as a gold mine. Some one has told Madame de Chavoncourt that she will do better by getting her daughter married than by sending her husband to waste his money in Paris. That some one manages Madame de Chavoncourt, and Madame de Chavoncourt manages her husband.”

Page 49

"That is enough, my dear Abbe. I understand. When once I am returned as deputy, I have somebody's fortune to make, and by making it large enough I shall be released from my promise. In me you have a son, a man who will owe his happiness to you. Great heavens! what have I done to deserve so true a friend?"

"You won a triumph for the Chapter," said the Vicar-General, smiling. "Now, as to all this, be as secret as the tomb. We are nothing, we have done nothing. If we were known to have meddled in election matters, we should be eaten up alive by the Puritans of the Left—who do worse—and blamed by some of our own party, who want everything. Madame de Chavoncourt has no suspicion of my share in all this. I have confided in no one but Madame de Watteville, whom we may trust as we trust ourselves."

"I will bring the Duchess to you to be blessed!" cried Savarus.

After seeing out the old priest, Albert went to bed in the swaddling clothes of power.

* * * * *

Next evening, as may well be supposed, by nine o'clock Madame la Baronne de Watteville's rooms were crowded by the aristocracy of Besancon in convocation extraordinary. They were discussing the exceptional step of going to the poll, to oblige the daughter of the Rupts. It was known that the former Master of Appeals, the secretary of one of the most faithful ministers under the Elder Branch, was to be presented that evening. Madame de Chavoncourt was there with her second daughter Sidonie, exquisitely dressed, while her elder sister, secure of her lover, had not indulged in any of the arts of the toilet. In country towns these little things are remarked. The Abbe de Grancey's fine and clever head was to be seen moving from group to group, listening to everything, seeming to be apart from it all, but uttering those incisive phrases which sum up a question and direct the issue.

"If the Elder Branch were to return," said he to an old statesman of seventy, "what politicians would they find?"—"Berryer, alone on his bench, does not know which way to turn; if he had sixty votes, he would often scotch the wheels of the Government and upset Ministries!"—"The Duc de Fitz-James is to be nominated at Toulouse."—"You will enable Monsieur de Watteville to win his lawsuit."—"If you vote for Monsieur Savarus, the Republicans will vote with you rather than with the Moderates!" *etc., etc.*

At nine o'clock Albert had not arrived. Madame de Watteville was disposed to regard such delay as an impertinence.

"My dear Baroness," said Madame de Chavoncourt, "do not let such serious issues turn on such a trifle. The varnish on his boots is not dry—or a consultation, perhaps, detains Monsieur de Savarus."

Rosalie shot a side glance at Madame de Chavoncourt.

“She is very lenient to Monsieur de Savarus,” she whispered to her mother.

“You see,” said the Baroness with a smile, “there is a question of a marriage between Sidonie and Monsieur de Savarus.”

Page 50

Mademoiselle de Watteville hastily went to a window looking out over the garden.

At ten o'clock Albert de Savarus had not yet appeared. The storm that threatened now burst. Some of the gentlemen sat down to cards, finding the thing intolerable. The Abbe de Grancey, who did not know what to think, went to the window where Rosalie was hidden, and exclaimed aloud in his amazement, "He must be dead!"

The Vicar-General stepped out into the garden, followed by Monsieur de Watteville and his daughter, and they all three went up to the kiosk. In Albert's rooms all was dark; not a light was to be seen.

"Jerome!" cried Rosalie, seeing the servant in the yard below. The Abbe looked at her with astonishment. "Where in the world is your master?" she asked the man, who came to the foot of the wall.

"Gone—in a post-chaise, mademoiselle."

"He is ruined!" exclaimed the Abbe de Grancey, "or he is happy!"

The joy of triumph was not so effectually concealed on Rosalie's face that the Vicar-General could not detect it. He affected to see nothing.

"What can this girl have had to do with this business?" he asked himself.

They all three returned to the drawing-room, where Monsieur de Watteville announced the strange, the extraordinary, the prodigious news of the lawyer's departure, without any reason assigned for his evasion. By half-past eleven only fifteen persons remained, among them Madame de Chavoncourt and the Abbe de Godenars, another Vicar-General, a man of about forty, who hoped for a bishopric, the two Chavoncourt girls, and Monsieur de Vauchelles, the Abbe de Grancey, Rosalie, Amedee de Soulas, and a retired magistrate, one of the most influential members of the upper circle of Besancon, who had been very eager for Albert's election. The Abbe de Grancey sat down by the Baroness in such a position as to watch Rosalie, whose face, usually pale, wore a feverish flush.

"What can have happened to Monsieur de Savarus?" said Madame de Chavoncourt.

At this moment a servant in livery brought in a letter for the Abbe de Grancey on a silver tray.

"Pray read it," said the Baroness.

The Vicar-General read the letter; he saw Rosalie suddenly turn as white as her kerchief.

“She recognizes the writing,” said he to himself, after glancing at the girl over his spectacles. He folded up the letter, and calmly put it in his pocket without a word. In three minutes he had met three looks from Rosalie which were enough to make him guess everything.

“She is in love with Albert Savarus!” thought the Vicar-General.

He rose and took leave. He was going towards the door when, in the next room, he was overtaken by Rosalie, who said:

“Monsieur de Grancey, it was from Albert!”

“How do you know that it was his writing, to recognize it from so far?”

The girl’s reply, caught as she was in the toils of her impatience and rage, seemed to the Abbe sublime.

Page 51

"I love him!—What is the matter?" she said after a pause.

"He gives up the election."

Rosalie put her finger to her lip.

"I ask you to be as secret as if it were a confession," said she before returning to the drawing-room. "If there is an end of the election, there is an end of the marriage with Sidonie."

* * * * *

In the morning, on her way to Mass, Mademoiselle de Watteville heard from Mariette some of the circumstances which had prompted Albert's disappearance at the most critical moment of his life.

"Mademoiselle, an old gentleman from Paris arrived yesterday morning at the Hotel National; he came in his own carriage with four horses, and a courier in front, and a servant. Indeed, Jerome, who saw the carriage returning, declares he could only be a prince or a *milord*."

"Was there a coronet on the carriage?" asked Rosalie.

"I do not know," said Mariette. "Just as two was striking he came to call on Monsieur Savarus, and sent in his card; and when he saw it, Jerome says Monsieur turned as pale as a sheet, and said he was to be shown in. As he himself locked the door, it is impossible to tell what the old gentleman and the lawyer said to each other; but they were together above an hour, and then the old gentleman, with the lawyer, called up his servant. Jerome saw the servant go out again with an immense package, four feet long, which looked like a great painting on canvas. The old gentleman had in his hand a large parcel of papers. Monsieur Savaron was paler than death, and he, so proud, so dignified, was in a state to be pitied. But he treated the old gentleman so respectfully that he could not have been politer to the King himself. Jerome and Monsieur Albert Savaron escorted the gentleman to his carriage, which was standing with the horses in. The courier started on the stroke of three.

"Monsieur Savaron went straight to the Prefecture, and from that to Monsieur Gentillet, who sold him the old traveling carriage that used to belong to Madame de Saint-Vier before she died; then he ordered post horses for six o'clock. He went home to pack; no doubt he wrote a lot of letters; finally, he settled everything with Monsieur Girardet, who went to him and stayed till seven. Jerome carried a note to Monsieur Boucher, with whom his master was to have dined; and then, at half-past seven, the lawyer set out, leaving Jerome with three months' wages, and telling him to find another place.



“He left his keys with Monsieur Girardet, whom he took home, and at his house, Jerome says, he took a plate of soup, for at half-past seven Monsieur Girardet had not yet dined. When Monsieur Savaron got into the carriage he looked like death. Jerome, who, of course, saw his master off, heard him tell the postilion ‘The Geneva Road!’”

“Did Jerome ask the name of the stranger at the Hotel National?”

Page 52

“As the old gentleman did not mean to stay, he was not asked for it. The servant, by his orders no doubt, pretended not to speak French.”

“And the letter which came so late to Abbe de Grancey?” said Rosalie.

“It was Monsieur Girardet, no doubt, who ought to have delivered it; but Jerome says that poor Monsieur Girardet, who was much attached to lawyer Savaron, was as much upset as he was. So he who came so mysteriously, as Mademoiselle Galard says, is gone away just as mysteriously.”

After hearing this narrative, Mademoiselle de Watteville fell into a brooding and absent mood, which everybody could see. It is useless to say anything of the commotion that arose in Besancon on the disappearance of Monsieur Savaron. It was understood that the Prefect had obliged him with the greatest readiness by giving him at once a passport across the frontier, for he was thus quit of his only opponent. Next day Monsieur de Chavoncourt was carried to the top by a majority of a hundred and forty votes.

“Jack is gone by the way he came,” said an elector on hearing of Albert Savaron’s flight.

This event lent weight to the prevailing prejudice at Besancon against strangers; indeed, two years previously they had received confirmation from the affair of the Republican newspaper. Ten days later Albert de Savarus was never spoken of again. Only three persons—Girardet the attorney, the Vicar-General, and Rosalie—were seriously affected by his disappearance. Girardet knew that the white-haired stranger was Prince Soderini, for he had seen his card, and he told the Vicar-General; but Rosalie, better informed than either of them, had known for three months past that the Duc d’Argaiolo was dead.

In the month of April 1836 no one had had any news from or of Albert de Savarus. Jerome and Mariette were to be married, but the Baroness confidentially desired her maid to wait till her daughter was married, saying that the two weddings might take place at the same time.

“It is time that Rosalie should be married,” said the Baroness one day to Monsieur de Watteville. “She is nineteen, and she is fearfully altered in these last months.”

“I do not know what ails her,” said the Baron.

“When fathers do not know what ails their daughters, mothers can guess,” said the Baroness; “we must get her married.”

“I am quite willing,” said the Baron. “I shall give her les Rouxey now that the Court has settled our quarrel with the authorities of Riceys by fixing the boundary line at three

hundred feet up the side of the Dent de Vilard. I am having a trench made to collect all the water and carry it into the lake. The village did not appeal, so the decision is final."

"It has never occurred to you," said Madame de Watteville, "that this decision cost me thirty thousand francs handed over to Chantonnet. That peasant would take nothing else; he sold us peace.—If you give away les Rouxey, you will have nothing left," said the Baroness.

Page 53

"I do not need much," said the Baron; "I am breaking up."

"You eat like an ogre!"

"Just so. But however much I may eat, I feel my legs get weaker and weaker—"

"It is from working the lathe," said his wife.

"I do not know," said he.

"We will marry Rosalie to Monsieur de Soulas; if you give her les Rouxey, keep the life interest. I will give them fifteen thousand francs a year in the funds. Our children can live here; I do not see that they are much to be pitied."

"No. I shall give them les Rouxey out and out. Rosalie is fond of les Rouxey."

"You are a queer man with your daughter! It does not occur to you to ask me if I am fond of les Rouxey."

Rosalie, at once sent for, was informed that she was to marry Monsieur de Soulas one day early in the month of May.

"I am very much obliged to you, mother, and to you too, father, for having thought of settling me; but I do not mean to marry; I am very happy with you."

"Mere speeches!" said the Baroness. "You are not in love with Monsieur de Soulas, that is all."

"If you insist on the plain truth, I will never marry Monsieur de Soulas—"

"Oh! the *never* of a girl of nineteen!" retorted her mother, with a bitter smile.

"The *never* of Mademoiselle de Watteville," said Rosalie with firm decision. "My father, I imagine, has no intention of making me marry against my wishes?"

"No, indeed no!" said the poor Baron, looking affectionately at his daughter.

"Very well!" said the Baroness, sternly controlling the rage of a bigot startled at finding herself unexpectedly defied, "you yourself, Monsieur de Watteville, may take the responsibility of settling your daughter. Consider well, mademoiselle, for if you do not marry to my mind you will get nothing out of me!"

The quarrel thus begun between Madame de Watteville and her husband, who took his daughter's part, went so far that Rosalie and her father were obliged to spend the summer at les Rouxey; life at the Hotel de Rupt was unendurable. It thus became

known in Besancon that Mademoiselle de Watteville had positively refused the Comte de Soulas.

After their marriage Mariette and Jerome came to les Rouxey to succeed to Modinier in due time. The Baron restored and repaired the house to suit his daughter's taste. When she heard that these improvements had cost about sixty thousand francs, and that Rosalie and her father were building a conservatory, the Baroness understood that there was a leaven of spite in her daughter. The Baron purchased various outlying plots, and a little estate worth thirty thousand francs. Madame de Watteville was told that, away from her, Rosalie showed masterly qualities, that she was taking steps to improve the value of les Rouxey, that she had treated herself to a riding habit and rode about; her father, whom she made very happy, who no longer complained of his health, and who was growing fat, accompanied her in her expeditions. As the Baroness' name-day grew near—her name was Louise—the Vicar-General came one day to les Rouxey, deputed, no doubt, by Madame de Watteville and Monsieur de Soulas, to negotiate a peace between mother and daughter.

Page 54

"That little Rosalie has a head on her shoulders," said the folk of Besancon.

After handsomely paying up the ninety thousand francs spent on les Rouxey, the Baroness allowed her husband a thousand francs a month to live on; she would not put herself in the wrong. The father and daughter were perfectly willing to return to Besancon for the 15th of August, and to remain there till the end of the month.

When, after dinner, the Vicar-General took Mademoiselle de Watteville apart, to open the question of the marriage, by explaining to her that it was vain to think any more of Albert, of whom they had had no news for a year past, he was stopped at once by a sign from Rosalie. The strange girl took Monsieur de Grancey by the arm, and led him to a seat under a clump of rhododendrons, whence there was a view of the lake.

"Listen, dear Abbe," said she. "You whom I love as much as my father, for you had an affection for my Albert, I must at last confess that I committed crimes to become his wife, and he must be my husband.—Here; read this."

She held out to him a number of the *Gazette* which she had in her apron pocket, pointing out the following paragraph under the date of Florence, May 25th:—

"The wedding of Monsieur le Duc de Rhetore, eldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, the former Ambassador, to Madame la Duchesse d'Argaiolo, *nee* Princess Soderini, was solemnized with great splendor. Numerous entertainments given in honor of the marriage are making Florence gay. The Duchess' fortune is one of the finest in Italy, for the late Duke left her everything."

"The woman he loved is married," said she. "I divided them."

"You? How?" asked the Abbe.

Rosalie was about to reply, when she was interrupted by a loud cry from two of the gardeners, following on the sound of a body falling into the water; she started, and ran off screaming, "Oh! father!"—The Baron had disappeared.

In trying to reach a piece of granite on which he fancied he saw the impression of a shell, a circumstance which would have contradicted some system of geology, Monsieur de Watteville had gone down the slope, lost his balance, and slipped into the lake, which, of course, was deepest close under the roadway. The men had the greatest difficulty in enabling the Baron to catch hold of a pole pushed down at the place where the water was bubbling, but at last they pulled him out, covered with mud, in which he had sunk; he was getting deeper and deeper in, by dint of struggling. Monsieur de Watteville had dined heavily, digestion was in progress, and was thus checked.

When he had been undressed, washed, and put to bed, he was in such evident danger that two servants at once set out on horseback: one to ride to Besancon, and the other

to fetch the nearest doctor and surgeon. When Madame de Watteville arrived, eight hours later, with the first medical aid from Besancon, they found Monsieur de Watteville past all hope, in spite of the intelligent treatment of the Rouxey doctor. The fright had produced serious effusion on the brain, and the shock to the digestion was helping to kill the poor man.

Page 55

This death, which would never have happened, said Madame de Watteville, if her husband had stayed at Besancon, was ascribed by her to her daughter's obstinacy. She took an aversion for Rosalie, abandoning herself to grief and regrets that were evidently exaggerated. She spoke of the Baron as "her dear lamb!"

The last of the Watteviles was buried on an island in the lake at les Rouxey, where the Baroness had a little Gothic monument erected of white marble, like that called the tomb of Heloise at Pere-Lachaise.

A month after this catastrophe the mother and daughter had settled in the Hotel de Rupt, where they lived in savage silence. Rosalie was suffering from real sorrow, which had no visible outlet; she accused herself of her father's death, and she feared another disaster, much greater in her eyes, and very certainly her own work; neither Girardet the attorney nor the Abbe de Grancey could obtain any information concerning Albert. This silence was appalling. In a paroxysm of repentance she felt that she must confess to the Vicar-General the horrible machinations by which she had separated Francesca and Albert. They had been simple, but formidable. Mademoiselle de Watteville had intercepted Albert's letters to the Duchess as well as that in which Francesca announced her husband's illness, warning her lover that she could write to him no more during the time while she was devoted, as was her duty, to the care of the dying man. Thus, while Albert was wholly occupied with election matters, the Duchess had written him only two letters; one in which she told him that the Duc d'Argaiolo was in danger, and one announcing her widowhood—two noble and beautiful letters which Rosalie kept back.

After several nights' labor she succeeded in imitating Albert's writing very perfectly. She had substituted three letters of her own writing for three of Albert's, and the rough copies which she showed to the old priest made him shudder—the genius of evil was revealed in them to such perfection. Rosalie, writing in Albert's name, had prepared the Duchess for a change in the Frenchman's feelings, falsely representing him as faithless, and she had answered the news of the Duc d'Argaiolo's death by announcing the marriage ere long of Albert and Mademoiselle de Watteville. The two letters, intended to cross on the road, had, in fact, done so. The infernal cleverness with which the letters were written so much astonished the Vicar-General that he read them a second time. Francesca, stabbed to the heart by a girl who wanted to kill love in her rival, had answered the last in these four words: "You are free. Farewell."

"Purely moral crimes, which give no hold to human justice, are the most atrocious and detestable," said the Abbe severely. "God often punishes them on earth; herein lies the reason of the terrible catastrophes which to us seem inexplicable. Of all secret crimes buried in the mystery of private life, the most disgraceful is that of breaking the seal of a letter, or of reading it surreptitiously. Every one, whoever it may be, and urged by whatever reason, who is guilty of such an act has stained his honor beyond retrieving.



Page 56

"Do you not feel all that is touching, that is heavenly in the story of the youthful page, falsely accused, and carrying the letter containing the order for his execution, who sets out without a thought of ill, and whom Providence protects and saves—miraculously, we say! But do you know wherein the miracle lies? Virtue has a glory as potent as that of innocent childhood.

"I say these things not meaning to admonish you," said the old priest, with deep grief. "I, alas! am not your spiritual director; you are not kneeling at the feet of God; I am your friend, appalled by dread of what your punishment may be. What has become of that unhappy Albert? Has he, perhaps, killed himself? There was tremendous passion under his assumption of calm. I understand now that old Prince Soderini, the father of the Duchess d'Argaiolo, came here to take back his daughter's letters and portraits. This was the thunderbolt that fell on Albert's head, and he went off, no doubt, to try to justify himself. But how is it that in fourteen months he has given us no news of himself?"

"Oh! if I marry him, he will be so happy!"

"Happy?—He does not love you. Besides, you have no great fortune to give him. Your mother detests you; you made her a fierce reply which rankles, and which will be your ruin. When she told you yesterday that obedience was the only way to repair your errors, and reminded you of the need for marrying, mentioning Amedee—'If you are so fond of him, marry him yourself, mother!'—Did you, or did you not, fling these words in her teeth?"

"Yes," said Rosalie.

"Well, I know her," Monsieur de Grancey went on. "In a few months she will be Comtesse de Soulas! She will be sure to have children; she will give Monsieur de Soulas forty thousand francs a year; she will benefit him in other ways, and reduce your share of her fortune as much as possible. You will be poor as long as she lives, and she is but eight-and-thirty! Your whole estate will be the land of les Rouxey, and the small share left to you after your father's legal debts are settled, if, indeed, your mother should consent to forego her claims on les Rouxey. From the point of view of material advantages, you have done badly for yourself; from the point of view of feeling, I imagine you have wrecked your life. Instead of going to your mother—" Rosalie shook her head fiercely.

"To your mother," the priest went on, "and to religion, where you would, at the first impulse of your heart, have found enlightenment, counsel, and guidance, you chose to act in your own way, knowing nothing of life, and listening only to passion!"

These words of wisdom terrified Mademoiselle de Watteville.

“And what ought I to do now?” she asked after a pause.

“To repair your wrong-doing, you must ascertain its extent,” said the Abbe.

“Well, I will write to the only man who can know anything of Albert’s fate, Monsieur Leopold Hannequin, a notary in Paris, his friend since childhood.”

Page 57

“Write no more, unless to do honor to truth,” said the Vicar-General. “Place the real and the false letters in my hands, confess everything in detail as though I were the keeper of your conscience, asking me how you may expiate your sins, and doing as I bid you. I shall see—for, above all things, restore this unfortunate man to his innocence in the eyes of the woman he had made his divinity on earth. Though he has lost his happiness, Albert must still hope for justification.”

Rosalie promised to obey the Abbe, hoping that the steps he might take would perhaps end in bringing Albert back to her.

Not long after Mademoiselle de Watteville’s confession a clerk came to Besancon from Monsieur Leopold Hannequin, armed with a power of attorney from Albert; he called first on Monsieur Girardet, begging his assistance in selling the house belonging to Monsieur Savaron. The attorney undertook to do this out of friendship for Albert. The clerk from Paris sold the furniture, and with the proceeds could repay some money owed by Savaron to Girardet, who on the occasion of his inexplicable departure had lent him five thousand francs while undertaking to collect his assets. When Girardet asked what had become of the handsome and noble pleader, to whom he had been so much attached, the clerk replied that no one knew but his master, and that the notary had seemed greatly distressed by the contents of the last letter he had received from Monsieur Albert de Savarus.

On hearing this, the Vicar-General wrote to Leopold. This was the worthy notary’s reply:
—

“To Monsieur l’Abbe de Grancey,
Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besancon.

“PARIS.

“Alas, monsieur, it is in nobody’s power to restore Albert to the life of the world; he has renounced it. He is a novice in the monastery of the Grand Chartreuse near Grenoble. You know, better than I who have but just learned it, that on the threshold of that cloister everything dies. Albert, foreseeing that I should go to him, placed the General of the Order between my utmost efforts and himself. I know his noble soul well enough to be sure that he is the victim of some odious plot unknown to us; but everything is at an end. The Duchesse d’Argaiolo, now Duchesse de Rhetore, seems to me to have carried severity to an extreme. At Belgirate, which she had left when Albert flew thither, she had left instructions leading him to believe that she was living in London. From London Albert went in search of her to Naples, and from Naples to Rome, where she was now engaged to the Duc de Rhetore. When Albert succeeded in seeing Madame d’Argaiolo, at Florence, it was at the ceremony of her marriage. “Our poor friend swooned in the church, and even when he was in danger of death he could never obtain

any explanation from this woman, who must have had I know not what in her heart. For seven months Albert had traveled in pursuit

Page 58

of a cruel creature who thought it sport to escape him; he knew not where or how to catch her. "I saw him on his way through Paris; and if you had seen him, as I did, you would have felt that not a word might be spoken about the Duchess, at the risk of bringing on an attack which might have wrecked his reason. If he had known what his crime was, he might have found means to justify himself; but being falsely accused of being married!—what could he do? Albert is dead, quite dead to the world. He longed for rest; let us hope that the deep silence and prayer into which he has thrown himself may give him happiness in another guise. You, monsieur, who have known him, must greatly pity him; and pity his friends also.

"Yours, *etc.*"

As soon as he received this letter the good Vicar-General wrote to the General of the Carthusian order, and this was the letter he received from Albert Savarus:—

"Brother Albert to Monsieur l'Abbe de Grancey,
Vicar-General of the Diocese of Besancon.

"LA GRANDE CHARTREUSE.

"I recognized your tender soul, dear and well-beloved Vicar-General, and your still youthful heart, in all that the Reverend Father General of our Order has just told me. You have understood the only wish that lurks in the depths of my heart so far as the things of the world are concerned—to get justice done to my feelings by her who has treated me so badly! But before leaving me at liberty to avail myself of your offer, the General wanted to know that my vocation was sincere; he was so kind as to tell me his idea, on finding that I was determined to preserve absolute silence on this point. If I had yielded to the temptation to rehabilitate the man of the world, the friar would have been rejected by this monastery. Grace has certainly done her work, but, though short, the struggle was not the less keen or the less painful. Is not this enough to show you that I could never return to the world?" Hence my forgiveness, which you ask for the author of so much woe, is entire and without a thought of vindictiveness. I will pray to God to forgive that young lady as I forgive her, and as I shall beseech Him to give Madame de Rhetore a life of happiness. Ah! whether it be death, or the obstinate hand of a young girl madly bent on being loved, or one of the blows ascribed to chance, must we not all obey God? Sorrow in some souls makes a vast void through which the Divine Voice rings. I learned too late the bearings of this life on that which awaits us; all in me is worn out; I could not serve in the ranks of the Church Militant, and I lay the remains of an almost extinct life at the foot of the altar. "This is the last time I shall ever write. You alone, who loved me, and whom I loved so well, could make me break the law of oblivion I imposed on myself when I entered these headquarters of Saint Bruno, but you are always especially named in the prayers of

“BROTHER ALBERT.

Page 59

"November 1836."

"Everything is for the best perhaps," thought the Abbe de Grancey.

When he showed this letter to Rosalie, who, with a pious impulse, kissed the lines which contained her forgiveness, he said to her:

"Well, now that he is lost to you, will you not be reconciled to your mother and marry the Comte de Soulas?"

"Only if Albert should order it," said she.

"But you see it is impossible to consult him. The General of the Order would not allow it."

"If I were to go to see him?"

"No Carthusian sees any visitor. Besides, no woman but the Queen of France may enter a Carthusian monastery," said the Abbe. "So you have no longer any excuse for not marrying young Monsieur de Soulas."

"I do not wish to destroy my mother's happiness," retorted Rosalie.

"Satan!" exclaimed the Vicar-General.

Towards the end of that winter the worthy Abbe de Grancey died. This good friend no longer stood between Madame de Watteville and her daughter, to soften the impact of those two iron wills.

The event he had foretold took place. In the month of August 1837 Madame de Watteville was married to Monsieur de Soulas in Paris, whither she went by Rosalie's advice, the girl making a show of kindness and sweetness to her mother. Madame de Watteville believed in this affection on the part of her daughter, who simply desired to go to Paris to give herself the luxury of a bitter revenge; she thought of nothing but avenging Savarus by torturing her rival.

Mademoiselle de Watteville had been declared legally of age; she was, in fact, not far from one-and-twenty. Her mother, to settle with her finally, had resigned her claims on les Rouxey, and the daughter had signed a release for all the inheritance of the Baron de Watteville. Rosalie encouraged her mother to marry the Comte de Soulas and settle all her own fortune on him.

"Let us each be perfectly free," she said.

Madame de Soulas, who had been uneasy as to her daughter's intentions, was touched by this liberality, and made her a present of six thousand francs a year in the funds as conscience money. As the Comtesse de Soulas had an income of forty-eight thousand francs from her own lands, and was quite incapable of alienating them in order to diminish Rosalie's share, Mademoiselle de Watteville was still a fortune to marry, of eighteen hundred thousand francs; les Rouxey, with the Baron's additions, and certain improvements, might yield twenty thousand francs a year, besides the value of the house, rents, and preserves. So Rosalie and her mother, who soon adopted the Paris style and fashions, easily obtained introductions to the best society. The golden key—eighteen hundred thousand francs—embroidered on Mademoiselle de Watteville's stomacher, did more for the Comtesse de Soulas than her pretensions *a la* de Rupt, her inappropriate pride, or even her rather distant great connections.

Page 60

In the month of February 1838 Rosalie, who was eagerly courted by many young men, achieved the purpose which had brought her to Paris. This was to meet the Duchesse de Rhetore, to see this wonderful woman, and to overwhelm her with perennial remorse. Rosalie gave herself up to the most bewildering elegance and vanities in order to face the Duchess on an equal footing.

They first met at a ball given annually after 1830 for the benefit of the pensioners on the old Civil List. A young man, prompted by Rosalie, pointed her out to the Duchess, saying:

“There is a very remarkable young person, a strong-minded young lady too! She drove a clever man into a monastery—the Grand Chartreuse—a man of immense capabilities, Albert de Savarus, whose career she wrecked. She is Mademoiselle de Watteville, the famous Besancon heiress——”

The Duchess turned pale. Rosalie’s eyes met hers with one of those flashes which, between woman and woman, are more fatal than the pistol shots of a duel. Francesca Soderini, who had suspected that Albert might be innocent, hastily quitted the ballroom, leaving the speaker at his wits’ end to guess what terrible blow he had inflicted on the beautiful Duchesse de Rhetore.

“If you want to hear more about Albert, come to the Opera ball on Tuesday with a marigold in your hand.”

This anonymous note, sent by Rosalie to the Duchess, brought the unhappy Italian to the ball, where Mademoiselle de Watteville placed in her hand all Albert’s letters, with that written to Leopold Hannequin by the Vicar-General, and the notary’s reply, and even that in which she had written her confession to the Abbe de Grancey.

“I do not choose to be the only sufferer,” she said to her rival, “for one has been as ruthless as the other.”

After enjoying the dismay stamped on the Duchess’ beautiful face, Rosalie went away; she went out no more, and returned to Besancon with her mother.

* * * * *

Mademoiselle de Watteville, who lived alone on her estate of les Rouxey, riding, hunting, refusing two or three offers a year, going to Besancon four or five times in the course of the winter, and busying herself with improving her land, was regarded as a very eccentric personage. She was one of the celebrities of the Eastern provinces.

Madame de Soulas has two children, a boy and a girl, and she has grown younger; but Monsieur de Soulas has aged a good deal.

“My fortune has cost me dear,” said he to young Chavoncourt. “Really to know a bigot it is unfortunately necessary to marry her!”

Mademoiselle de Watteville behaves in the most extraordinary manner. “She has vagaries,” people say. Every year she goes to gaze at the walls of the Grande Chartreuse. Perhaps she dreams of imitating her grand-uncle by forcing the walls of the monastery to find a husband, as Watteville broke through those of his monastery to recover his liberty.

Page 61

She left Besancon in 1841, intending, it was said, to get married; but the real reason of this expedition is still unknown, for she returned home in a state which forbids her ever appearing in society again. By one of those chances of which the Abbe de Grancey had spoken, she happened to be on the Loire in a steamboat of which the boiler burst. Mademoiselle de Watteville was so severely injured that she lost her right arm and her left leg; her face is marked with fearful scars, which have bereft her of her beauty; her health, cruelly upset, leaves her few days free from suffering. In short, she now never leaves the Chartreuse of les Rouxey, where she leads a life wholly devoted to religious practices.

PARIS, May 1842.

ADDENDUM

The following personages appear in other stories of the Human Comedy.

Beauseant, Vicomtesse de
Father Goriot
The Deserted Woman

Genovese
Massimilla Doni

Hannequin, Leopold
Beatrix
Cousin Betty
Cousin Pons

Jeanrenaud
The Commission in Lunacy

Nueil, Gaston de
The Deserted Woman

Rhetore, Duc Alphonse de
A Bachelor's Establishment
A Distinguished Provincial at Paris
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life
Letters of Two Brides
The Member for Arcis

Savaron de Savarus
The Quest of the Absolute

Savarus, Albert Savaron de
The Quest of the Absolute

Schinner, Hippolyte
The Purse
A Bachelor's Establishment
Pierre Grassou
A Start in Life
The Government Clerks
Modeste Mignon
The Imaginary Mistress
The Unconscious Humorists

Tinti, Clarina
Massimilla Doni