

The Village Rector eBook

The Village Rector by Honoré de Balzac

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STORY OF A GALLEY-SLAVE

The next day Farrabesche and his son came to the chateau with game. The keeper also brought, for Francis, a cocoanut cup, elaborately carved, a genuine work of art, representing a battle. Madame Graslin was walking at the time on the terrace, in the direction which overlooked Les Tascherons. She sat down on a bench, took the cup in her hand and looked earnestly at the deft piece of work. A few tears came into her eyes.

"You must have suffered very much," she said to Farrabesche, after a few moments' silence.

"How could I help it, madame?" he replied; "for I was there without the hope of escape, which supports the life of most convicts."

"An awful life!" she said in a tone of horror, inviting Farrabesche by word and gesture to say more.

Farrabesche took the convulsive trembling and other signs of emotion he saw in Madame Graslin for the powerful interest of compassionate curiosity in himself.

Just then Madame Sauviat appeared, coming down a path as if she meant to join them; but Veronique drew out her handkerchief and made a negative sign; saying, with an asperity she had never before shown to the old woman:—

"Leave me, leave me, mother."

"Madame," said Farrabesche, "for ten years I wore there (holding out his leg) a chain fastened to a great iron ring which bound me to another man. During my time I had to live thus with three different convicts. I slept on a wooden bench; I had to work extraordinarily hard to earn a little mattress called a *serpentin*. Each dormitory contains eight hundred men. Each bed, called a *tolard*, holds twenty-four men, chained in couples. Every night the chain of each couple is passed round another great chain which is called the *filet de ramas*. This chain holds all the couples by the feet, and runs along the bottom of the *tolard*. It took me over two years to get accustomed to that iron clanking, which called out incessantly, 'Thou art a galley-slave!' If I slept an instant some vile companion moved or quarrelled, reminding me of where I was. There is a terrible apprenticeship to make before a man can learn how to sleep. I myself could not sleep until I had come to the end of my strength and to utter exhaustion. When at last sleep came I had the nights in which to forget. Oh! to *forget*, madame, that was something! Once there, a man must learn to satisfy his needs, even in the smallest things, according to the ways laid down by pitiless regulations. Imagine, madame, the effect such a life produced on a lad like me, who had lived in the woods with the birds and the squirrels! If I had not already lived for six months within prison-walls, I should, in spite



of Monsieur Bonnet's grand words—for he, I can truly say, is the father of my soul—I should, ah! I must have flung myself into the sea at the mere sight of my



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companions. Out-doors I still could live; but in the building, whether to sleep or to eat, —to eat out of buckets, and each bucket filled for three couples,—it was life no longer, it was death; the atrocious faces and language of my companions were always insufferable to me. Happily, from five o'clock in summer, and from half-past seven o'clock in winter we went, in spite of heat or cold and wind or rain, on 'fatigue,' that is, hard-labor. Thus half this life was spent in the open air; and the air was sweet after the close dormitory packed with eight hundred convicts. And that air, too, is sea-air! We could enjoy the breezes, we could be friends with the sun, we could watch the clouds as they passed above us, we could hope and pray for fine weather! As for me, I took an interest in my work—"

Farrabesche stopped; two heavy tears were rolling down his mistress's face.

"Oh! madame, I have only told you the best side of that life," he continued, taking the expression of her face as meant for him. "The terrible precautions taken by the government, the constant spying of the keepers, the blacksmith's inspection of the chains every day, night and morning, the coarse food, the hideous garments which humiliate a man at all hours, the comfortless sleep, the horrible rattling of eight hundred chains in that resounding hall, the prospect of being shot or blown to pieces by cannon if ten of those villains took a fancy to revolt, all those dreadful things are nothing, — nothing, I tell you; that is the bright side only. There's another side, madame, and a decent man, a bourgeois, would die of horror in a week. A convict is forced to live with another man; obliged to endure the company of five other men at every meal, twenty-three in his bed at night, and to hear their language! The great society of galley-slaves, madame, has its secret laws; disobey them and you are tortured; obey them, and you become a torturer. You must be either victim or executioner. If they would kill you at once it would at least be the cure of life. But no, they are wiser than that in doing evil. It is impossible to hold out against the hatred of these men; their power is absolute over any prisoner who displeases them, and they can make his life a torment far worse than death. The man who repents and endeavors to behave well is their common enemy; above all, they suspect him of informing; and an informer is put to death, often on mere suspicion. Every hall and community of eight hundred convicts has its tribunal, in which are judged the crimes committed against that society. Not to obey the usages is criminal, and a man is liable to punishment. For instance, every man must co-operate in escapes; every convict has his time assigned him to escape, and all his fellow-convicts must protect and aid him. To reveal what a comrade is doing with a view to escape is criminal. I will not speak to you of the horrible customs and morals of the galleys. No man belongs to himself; the government, in order to neutralize the attempts at revolt or escape, takes pains to chain two contrary natures and interests together; and this makes the torture of the coupling unendurable; men are linked together who hate or distrust each other."



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“How was it with you?” asked Madame Graslin.

“Ah! there,” replied Farrabesche, “I had luck; I never drew a lot to kill a convict; I never had to vote the death of any one of them; I never was punished; no man took a dislike to me; and I got on well with the three different men I was chained to; they all feared me but liked me. One reason was, my name was known and famous at the galleys before I got there. A *chauffeur*! they thought me one of those brigands. I have seen *chauffing*,” continued Farrabesche after a pause, in a low voice, “but I never either did it myself, or took any of the money obtained by it. I was a refractory, I evaded the conscription, that was all. I helped my comrades, I kept watch; I was sentinel and brought up the rear-guard; but I never shed any man’s blood except in self-defence. Ah! I told all to Monsieur Bonnet and my lawyer, and the judges knew well enough that I was no murderer. But, all the same, I am a great criminal; nothing that I ever did was morally right. However, before I got there, as I was saying, two of my comrades told of me as a man able to do great things. At the galleys, madame, nothing is so valuable as that reputation, not even money. In that republic of misery murder is a passport to tranquillity. I did nothing to destroy that opinion of me. I was sad, resigned, and they mistook the appearance of it. My gloomy manner, my silence, passed for ferocity. All that world, convicts, keepers, young and old, respected me. I was treated as first in my hall. No one interfered with my sleep; I was never suspected of informing; I behaved honorably according to their ideas; I never refused to do service; I never testified the slightest repugnance; I howled with the wolves outside, I prayed to God within. My last companion in chains was a soldier, twenty-two years of age, who had committed a theft and deserted in consequence of it. We were chained together for four years, and we were friends; wherever I may be I am certain to meet him when his time is up. This poor devil, whose name is Guepin, is not a scoundrel, he is merely heedless; his punishment may reform him. If my comrades had discovered that religion led me to submit to my trials,—that I meant, when my time was up, to live humbly in a corner, letting no one know where I was, intending to forget their horrible community and never to cross the path of any of them,—they would probably have driven me mad.”

“Then,” said Madame Graslin, “if a poor young man, a tender soul, carried away by passion, having committed a murder, was spared from death and sent to the galleys—”

“Oh! madame,” said Farrabesche, interrupting her, “there is no sparing in that. The sentence may be commuted to twenty years at the galleys, but for a decent young man, that is awful! I could not speak to you of the life that awaits him there; a thousand times better die. Yes, to die upon the scaffold is happiness in comparison.”

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“I dared not think it,” murmured Madame Graslin.

She had turned as white as wax. To hide her face she laid her forehead on the balustrade, and kept it there several minutes. Farrabesche did not know whether he ought to go or remain.

Madame Graslin raised her head at last, looked at Farrabesche with an almost majestic air, and said, to his amazement, in a voice that stirred his heart:—

“Thank you, my friend. But,” she added, after a pause, “where did you find courage to live and suffer?”

“Ah! madame, Monsieur Bonnet put a treasure within my soul! and for that I love him better than all else on earth.”

“Better than Catherine?” said Madame Graslin, smiling with a sort of bitterness.

“Almost as well, madame.”

“How did he do it?”

“Madame, the words and the voice of that man conquered me. Catherine brought him to that hole in the ground I showed you on the common; he had come fearlessly alone. He was, he said, the new rector of Montegnac; I was his parishioner, he loved me; he knew I was only misguided, not lost; he did not intend to betray me, but to save me; in short, he said many such things that stirred my soul to its depths. That man, madame, commands you to do right with as much force as those who tell you to do wrong. It was he who told me, poor dear man, that Catherine was a mother, and that I was dooming two beings to shame and desertion. ‘Well,’ I said to him, ‘they are like me; I have no future.’ He answered that I had a future, two bad futures, before me—one in another world, one in this world—if I persisted in not changing my way of life. In this world, I should die on the scaffold. If I were captured my defence would be impossible. On the contrary, if I took advantage of the leniency of the new government toward all crimes traceable to the conscription, if I delivered myself up, he believed he could save my life; he would engage a good lawyer, who would get me off with ten years at the galleys. Then Monsieur Bonnet talked to me of the other life. Catherine wept like the Magdalen—See, madame,” said Farrabesche, holding out his right arm, “her face was in that hand, and I felt it wet with tears. She implored me to live. Monsieur Bonnet promised to secure me, when I had served my sentence, a peaceful life here with my child, and to protect me against affront. He catechised me as he would a little child. After three such visits at night he made me as supple as a glove. Would you like to know how, madame?”

Farrabesche and Madame Graslin looked at each other, not explaining to themselves their mutual curiosity.



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“Well,” resumed the poor liberated convict, “when he left me the first time, and Catherine had gone with him to show the way, I was left alone. I then felt within my soul a freshness, a calmness, a sweetness, I had never known since childhood. It was like the happiness my poor Catherine had given me. The love of this dear man had come to *seek me*; that, and his thought for me, for my future, stirred my soul to its depths; it changed me. A light broke forth in my being. As long as he was there, speaking to me, I resisted. That’s not surprising; he was a priest, and we bandits don’t eat of their bread. But when I no longer heard his footsteps nor Catherine’s, oh! I was—as he told me two days later—enlightened by divine grace. God gave me thenceforth strength to bear all,—prison, sentence, irons, parting; even the life of the galleys. I believed in his word as I do in the Gospel; I looked upon my sufferings as a debt I was bound to pay. When I seemed to suffer too much, I looked across ten years and saw my home in the woods, my little Benjamin, my Catherine. He kept his word, that good Monsieur Bonnet. But one thing was lacking. When at last I was released, Catherine was not at the gate of the galleys; she was not on the common. No doubt she has died of grief. That is why I am always sad. Now, thanks to you, I shall have useful work to do; I can employ both body and soul,—and my boy, too, for whom I live.”

“I begin to understand how it is that the rector has changed the character of this whole community,” said Madame Graslin.

“Nothing can resist him,” said Farrabesche.

“Yes, yes, I know it!” replied Veronique, hastily, making a gesture of farewell to her keeper.

Farrabesche withdrew. Veronique remained alone on the terrace for a good part of the day, walking up and down in spite of a fine rain which fell till evening. When her face was thus convulsed, neither her mother nor Aline dared to interrupt her. She did not notice in the dusk that her mother was talking in the salon to Monsieur Bonnet; the old woman, anxious to put an end to this fresh attack of dreadful depression, sent little Francis to fetch her. The child took his mother’s hand and led her in. When she saw the rector she gave a start of surprise in which there seemed to be some fear. Monsieur Bonnet took her back to the terrace, saying:—

“Well, madame, what were you talking about with Farrabesche?”

In order not to speak falsely, Veronique evaded a reply; she questioned Monsieur Bonnet.

“That man was your first victory here, was he not?” she said.

“Yes,” he answered; “his conversion would, I thought, give me all Montegnac—and I was not mistaken.”

Veronique pressed Monsieur Bonnet's hand and said, with tears in her voice, "I am your penitent from this day forth, monsieur; I shall go to-morrow to the confessional."

Her last words showed a great internal effort, a terrible victory won over herself. The rector brought her back to the house without saying another word. After that he remained till dinner-time, talking about the proposed improvements at Montegnac.



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“Agriculture is a question of time,” he said; “the little that I know of it makes me understand what a gain it would be to get some good out of the winter. The rains are now beginning, and the mountains will soon be covered with snow; your operations cannot then be begun. Had you not better hasten Monsieur Grossetete?”

Insensibly, Monsieur Bonnet, who at first did all the talking, led Madame Graslin to join in the conversation and so distract her thoughts; in fact, he left her almost recovered from the emotions of the day. Madame Sauviat, however, thought her daughter too violently agitated to be left alone, and she spent the night in her room.

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CONCERNS ONE OF THE BLUNDERS OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

The following day an express, sent from Limoges by Monsieur Grossetete to Madame Graslin, brought her the following letter:—

To Madame Graslin:

My dear Child,—It was difficult to find horses, but I hope you are satisfied with those I sent you. If you want work or draft horses, you must look elsewhere. In any case, however, I advise you to do your tilling and transportation with oxen. All the countries where agriculture is carried on with horses lose capital when the horse is past work; whereas cattle always return a profit to those who use them.

I approve in every way of your enterprise, my child; you will thus employ the passionate activity of your soul, which was turning against yourself and thus injuring you.

Your second request, namely, for a man capable of understanding and seconding your projects, requires me to find you a *rara avis* such as we seldom raise in the provinces, where, if we do raise them, we never keep them. The education of that high product is too slow and too risky a speculation for country folks. Besides, men of intellect alarm us; we call them “originals.” The men belonging to the scientific category from which you will have to obtain your co-operator do not flourish here, and I was on the point of writing to you that I despaired of fulfilling your commission. You want a poet, a man of ideas,—in short, what we should here call a fool, and all our fools go to Paris. I have spoken of your plans to the young men employed in land surveying, to contractors on the canals, and makers of the embankments, and none of them see any “advantage” in what you propose. But suddenly, as good luck would have it, chance has thrown in my way the very man you want; a young man to whom I believe I render a service in naming him to you. You will see by his letter, herewith enclosed, that deeds of beneficence ought not to be done hap-hazard. Nothing needs more reflection than a good action. We never know whether that which seems best at one moment may not

prove an evil later. The exercise of beneficence, as I have lived to discover, is to usurp the role of Destiny.

As she read that sentence Madame Graslin let fall the letter and was thoughtful for several minutes.



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“My God!” she said at last, “when wilt thou cease to strike me down on all sides?”

Then she took up the letter and continued reading it:

Gerard seems to me to have a cool head and an ardent heart; that's the sort of man you want. Paris is just now a hotbed of new doctrines; I should be delighted to have the lad removed from the traps which ambitious minds are setting for the generous youth of France. While I do not altogether approve of the narrow and stupefying life of the provinces, neither do I like the passionate life of Paris, with its ardor of reformation, which is driving youth into so many unknown ways. You alone know my opinions; to my mind the moral world revolves upon its own axis, like the material world. My poor protege demands (as you will see from his letter) things impossible. No power can resist ambitions so violent, so imperious, so absolute, as those of to-day. I am in favor of low levels and slowness in political change; I dislike these social overturns to which ambitious minds subject us. To you I confide these principles of a monarchical and prejudiced old man, because you are discreet. Here I hold my tongue in the midst of worthy people, who the more they fail the more they believe in progress; but I suffer deeply at the irreparable evils already inflicted on our dear country. I have replied to the enclosed letter, telling my young man that a worthy task awaits him. He will go to see you, and though his letter will enable you to judge of him, you had better study him still further before committing yourself,—though you women understand many things from the mere look of a man. However, all the men whom you employ, even the most insignificant, ought to be thoroughly satisfactory to you. If you don't like him don't take him; but if he suits you, my dear child, I beg you to cure him of his ill-disguised ambition. Make him take to a peaceful, happy, rural life, where true beneficence is perpetually exercised; where the capacities of great and strong souls find continual exercise, and they themselves discover daily fresh sources of admiration in the works of Nature, and in real ameliorations, real progress, an occupation worthy of any man. I am not oblivious of the fact that great ideas give birth to great actions; but as those ideas are necessarily few and far between, I think it may be said that usually things are more useful than ideas. He who fertilizes a corner of the earth, who brings to perfection a fruit-tree, who makes a turf on a thankless soil, is far more useful in his generation than he who seeks new theories for humanity. How, I ask you, has Newton's science changed the condition of the country districts? Oh! my dear, I have always loved you; but to-day I, who fully understand what you are about to attempt, I adore you. No one at Limoges forgets you; we all admire your grand resolution to benefit Montegnac. Be a little grateful to us for having soul enough to admire a noble action, and do not forget that the first of your admirers is also your first friend.

F. Grossetete.



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The enclosed letter was as follows:—

To Monsieur Grossetete:

Monsieur,—You have been to me a father when you might have been only a mere protector, and therefore I venture to make you a rather sad confidence. It is to you alone, you who have made me what I am, that I can tell my troubles. I am afflicted with a terrible malady, a cruel moral malady. In my soul are feelings and in my mind convictions which make me utterly unfit for what the State and society demand of me. This may seem to you ingratitude; it is only the statement of a condition. When I was twelve years old you, my generous god-father, saw in me, the son of a mere workman, an aptitude for the exact sciences and a precocious desire to rise in life. You favored my impulse toward better things when my natural fate was to stay a carpenter like my father, who, poor man, did not live long enough to enjoy my advancement. Indeed, monsieur, you did a good thing, and there is never a day that I do not bless you for it. It may be that I am now to blame; but whether I am right or wrong it is very certain that I suffer. In making my complaint to you I feel that I take you as my judge like God Himself. Will you listen to my story and grant me your indulgence? Between sixteen and eighteen years of age I gave myself to the study of the exact sciences with an ardor, you remember, that made me ill. My future depended on my admission to the Ecole Polytechnique. At that time my studies overworked my brain, and I came near dying; I studied night and day; I did more than the nature of my organs permitted. I wanted to pass such satisfying examinations that my place in the Ecole would be not only secure, but sufficiently advanced to release me from the cost of my support, which I did not want you to pay any longer. I triumphed! I tremble to-day as I think of the frightful conscription (if I may so call it) of brains delivered over yearly to the State by family ambition. By insisting on these severe studies at the moment when a youth attains his various forms of growth, the authorities produce secret evils and kill by midnight study many precious faculties which later would have developed both strength and grandeur. The laws of nature are relentless; they do not yield in any particular to the enterprises or the wishes of society. In the moral order as in the natural order all abuses must be paid for; fruits forced in a hot-house are produced at the tree's expense and often at the sacrifice of the goodness of its product. La Quintinie killed the orange-trees to give Louis XIV. a bunch of flowers every day at all seasons. So it is with intellects. The strain upon adolescent brains discounts their future. That which is chiefly wanting to our epoch is legislative genius. Europe has had no true legislators since Jesus Christ, who, not having given to the world a political code, left his work

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incomplete. Before establishing great schools of specialists and regulating the method of recruiting for them, where were the great thinkers who could bear in mind the relation of such institutions to human powers, balancing advantages and injuries, and studying the past for the laws of the future? What inquiry has been made as to the condition of exceptional men, who, by some fatal chance, knew human sciences before their time? Has the rarity of such cases been reckoned—the result examined? Has any enquiry been made as to the means by which such men were enabled to endure the perpetual strain of thought? How many, like Pascal, died prematurely, worn-out by knowledge? Have statistics been gathered as to the age at which those men who lived the longest began their studies? Who has ever known, does any one know now, the interior construction of brains which have been able to sustain a premature burden of human knowledge? Who suspects that this question belongs, above all, to the physiology of man? For my part, I now believe the true general law is to remain a long time in the vegetative condition of adolescence; and that those exceptions where strength of organs is produced during adolescence result usually in the shortening of life. Thus the man of genius who is able to bear up under the precocious exercise of his faculties is an exception to an exception. If I am right, if what I say accords with social facts and medical observations, then the system practised in France in her technical schools is a fatal impairment and mutilation (in the style of La Quintinie) practised upon the noblest flower of youth in each generation.

But it is better to continue my history, and add my doubts as the facts develop themselves.

When I entered the Ecole Polytechnique, I worked harder than ever and with even more ardor, in order to leave it as triumphantly as I had entered it. From nineteen to twenty-one I developed every aptitude and strengthened every faculty by constant practice. Those two years were the crown and completion of the first three, during which I had only prepared myself to do well. Therefore my pride was great when I won the right to choose the career that pleased me most,—either military or naval engineering, artillery, or staff duty, or the civil engineering of mining, and *ponts et chaussees*.[*] By your advice, I chose the latter.

[*] Department of the government including everything connected with the making and repairing of roads, bridges, canals, etc.



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But where I triumphed how many others fail! Do you know that from year to year the State increases the scientific requirements of the Ecole? the studies are more severe, more exacting yearly. The preparatory studies which tried me so much were nothing to the intense work of the school itself, which has for its object to put the whole of physical science, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, and all their nomenclatures into the minds of young men of nineteen to twenty-one years of age. The State, which seems in France to wish to substitute itself in many ways for the paternal authority, has neither bowels of compassion nor fatherhood; it makes its experiments *in anima vili*. Never does it inquire into the horrible statistics of the suffering it causes. Does it know the number of brain fevers among its pupils during the last thirty-six years; or the despair and the moral destruction which decimate its youth? I am pointing out to you this painful side of the State education, for it is one of the anterior contingents of the actual result. You know that scholars whose conceptions are slow, or who are temporarily disabled from excess of mental work, are allowed to remain at the Ecole three years instead of two; they then become the object of suspicions little favorable to their capacity. This often compels young men, who might later show superior capacity, to leave the school without being employed, simply because they could not meet the final examination with the full scientific knowledge required. They are called "dried fruits"; Napoleon made sub-lieutenants of them. To-day the "dried fruits" constitute an enormous loss of capital to families and of time to individuals. However, as I say, I triumphed. At twenty-one years of age I knew the mathematical sciences up to the point to which so many men of genius have brought them, and I was impatient to distinguish myself by carrying them further. This desire is so natural that almost every pupil leaving the Ecole fixes his eyes on that moral sun called Fame. The first thought of all is to become another Newton, or Laplace, or Vauban. Such are the efforts that France demands of the young men who leave her celebrated school. Now let us see the fate of these men culled with so much care from each generation. At one-and-twenty we dream of life, and expect marvels of it. I entered the Ecole des Ponts et Chaussees; I was a pupil-engineer. I studied the science of construction, and how ardently! I am sure you remember that. I left the school in 1827, being then twenty-four years of age, still only a candidate as engineer, and the government paid me one hundred and fifty francs a month; the commonest book-keeper in Paris earns that by the time he is eighteen, giving little more than four hours a day to his work. By a most unusual piece of luck, perhaps because of the distinction my devoted studies won



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for me, I was made, in 1828, when I was twenty-five years old, engineer-in-ordinary. I was sent, as you know, to a sub-prefecture, with a salary of twenty-five hundred francs. The question of money is nothing. Certainly my fate has been more brilliant than the son of a carpenter might expect; but where will you find a grocer's boy, who, if thrown into a shop at sixteen, will not in ten years be on the high-road to an independent property? I learned then to what these terrible efforts of mental power, these gigantic exertions demanded by the State were to lead. The State now employed me to count and measure pavements and heaps of stones on the roadways; I had to keep in order, repair, and sometimes construct culverts, one-arched bridges, regulate drift-ways, clean and sometimes open ditches, lay out bounds, and answer questions about the planting and felling of trees. Such are the principal and sometimes the only occupations of ordinary engineers, together with a little levelling which the government obliges us to do ourselves, though any of our chain-bearers with their limited experience can do it better than we with all our science. There are nearly four hundred engineers-in-ordinary and pupil engineers; and as there are not more than a hundred or so of engineers-in-chief, only a limited number of the sub-engineers can hope to rise. Besides, above the grade of engineer-in-chief, there is no absorbent class; for we cannot count as a means of absorption the ten or fifteen places of inspector-generals or divisionaries,—posts that are almost as useless in our corps as colonels are in the artillery, where the battery is the essential thing. The engineer-in-ordinary, like the captain of artillery, knows the whole science. He ought not to have any one over him except an administrative head to whom no more than eighty-six engineers should report,—for one engineer, with two assistants is enough for a department. The present hierarchy in these bodies results in the subordination of active energetic capacities to the worn-out capacities of old men, who, thinking they know best, alter or nullify the plans submitted by their subordinates, —perhaps with the sole aim of making their existence felt; for that seems to me the only influence exercised over the public works of France by the Council-general of the *Ponts et Chaussées*. Suppose, however, that I become, between thirty and forty years of age, an engineer of the first-class and an engineer-in-chief before I am fifty. Alas! I see my future; it is written before my eyes. Here is a forecast of it:—My present engineer-in-chief is sixty years old; he issued with honors, as I did, from the famous Ecole; he has turned gray doing in two departments what I am doing now, and he has become the most ordinary man it is possible to imagine; he has fallen from the height to which he had really

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risen; far worse, he is no longer on the level of scientific knowledge; science has progressed, he has stayed where he was. The man who came forth ready for life at twenty-two years of age, with every sign of superiority, has nothing left to-day but the reputation of it. In the beginning, with his mind specially turned to the exact sciences and mathematics by his education, he neglected everything that was not his specialty; and you can hardly imagine his present dulness in all other branches of human knowledge. I hardly dare confide even to you the secrets of his incapacity sheltered by the fact that he was educated at the Ecole Polytechnique. With that label attached to him and on the faith of that prestige, no one dreams of doubting his ability. To you alone do I dare reveal the fact that the dulling of all his talents has led him to spend a million on a single matter which ought not to have cost the administration more than two hundred thousand francs. I wished to protest, and was about to inform the prefect; but an engineer I know very well reminded me of one of our comrades who was hated by the administration for doing that very thing. "How would you like," he said to me, "when you get to be engineer-in-chief to have your errors dragged forth by your subordinate? Before long your engineer-in-chief will be made a divisional inspector. As soon as any one of us commits a serious blunder, as he has done, the administration (which can't allow itself to appear in the wrong) will quietly retire him from active duty by making him inspector." That's how the reward of merit devolves on incapacity. All France knew of the disaster which happened in the heart of Paris to the first suspension bridge built by an engineer, a member of the Academy of Sciences; a melancholy collapse caused by blunders such as none of the ancient engineers—the man who cut the canal at Briare in Henri IV.'s time, or the monk who built the Pont Royal—would have made; but our administration consoled its engineer for his blunder by making him a member of the Council-general. Are the technical schools vast manufactories of incapables? That subject requires careful investigation. If I am right they need reforming, at any rate in their method of proceeding,—for I am not, of course, doubting the utility of such schools. Only, when we look back into the past we see that France in former days never wanted for the great talents necessary to the State; but now she prefers to hatch out talent geometrically, after the theory of Monge. Did Vauban ever go to any other Ecole than that great school we call vocation? Who was Riquet's tutor? When great geniuses arise above the social mass, impelled by vocation, they are nearly always rounded into completeness; the man is then not merely a specialist, he has the gift of universality. Do you think that an engineer from the Ecole Polytechnique could ever create one of those miracles of architecture such

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as Leonardo da Vinci knew how to build,—mechanician, architect, painter, inventor of hydraulics, indefatigable constructor of canals that he was? Trained from their earliest years to the baldness of axiom and formula, the youths who leave the Ecole have lost the sense of elegance and ornament; a column seems to them useless; they return to the point where art begins, and cling to the useful. But all this is nothing in comparison to the real malady which is undermining me. I feel an awful transformation going on within me; I am conscious that my powers and my faculties, formerly unnaturally taxed, are giving way. I am letting the prosaic influence of my life get hold of me. I who, by the very nature of my efforts, looked to do some great thing, I am face to face with none but petty ones; I measure stones, I inspect roads, I have not enough to really occupy me for two hours in my day. I see my colleagues marry, and fall into a situation contrary to the spirit of modern society. I wanted to be useful to my country. Is my ambition an unreasonable one? The country asked me to put forth all my powers; it told me to become a representative of science; yet here I am with folded arms in the depths of the provinces. I am not even allowed to leave the locality in which I am penned, to exercise my faculties in planning useful enterprises. A hidden but very real disfavor is the certain reward of any one of us who yields to an inspiration and goes beyond the special service laid down for him. No, the favor a superior man has to hope for in that case is that his talent and his presumption may not be noticed, and that his project may be buried in the archives of the administration. What think you will be the reward of Vicat, the one among us who has brought about the only real progress in the practical science of construction? The Council-general of the *Ponts et Chaussées*, composed in part of men worn-out by long and sometimes honorable service, but whose only remaining force is for negation, and who set aside everything they no longer comprehend, is the extinguisher used to snuff out the projects of audacious spirits. This Council seems to have been created to paralyze the arm of that glorious youth of France, which asks only to work and to be useful to its country. Monstrous things are done in Paris. The future of a province depends on the mere signature of men who (through intrigues I have no time to explain to you) often stop the execution of useful and much-needed work; in fact, the best plans are often those which offer most to the cupidity of commercial companies or speculators. Another five years and I shall no longer be myself; my ambition will be quenched, my desire to use the faculties my country ordered me to exercise gone forever; the faculties themselves are rusting out in the miserable corner of the world in which I



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vegetate. Taking my chances at their best, the future seems to me a poor thing. I have just taken advantage of a furlough to come to Paris; I mean to change my profession and find some other way to put my energy, my knowledge, and my activity to use. I shall send in my resignation and go to some other country, where men of my special capacity are wanted. If I find I cannot do this, then I shall throw myself into the struggle of the new doctrines, which certainly seem calculated to produce great changes in the present social order by judiciously guiding the working-classes. What are we now but workers without work, tools on the shelves of a shop? We are trained and organized as if to move the world, and nothing is given us to do. I feel within me some great thing, which is decreasing daily, and will soon vanish; I tell you so with mathematical frankness. Before making the change I want your advice; I look upon myself as your child, and I will never take any important step without consulting you, for your experience is equal to your kindness. I know very well that the State, after obtaining a class of trained men, cannot undertake for them alone great public works; there are not three hundred bridges needed a year in all France; the State can no more build great buildings for the fame of its engineers than it can declare war merely to win battles and bring to the front great generals; but, then, as men of genius have never failed to present themselves when the occasion called for them, springing from the crowd like Vauban, can there be any greater proof of the uselessness of the present institution? Can't they see that when they have stimulated a man of talent by all those preparations he will make a fierce struggle before he allows himself to become a nonentity? Is this good policy on the part of the State? On the contrary, is not the State lighting the fire of ardent ambitions, which must find fuel somewhere. Among the six hundred young men whom they put forth every year there are exceptions,—men who resist what may be called their demoralization. I know some myself, and if I could tell you their struggles with men and things when armed with useful projects and conceptions which might bring life and prosperity to the half-dead provinces where the State has sent them, you would feel that a man of power, a man of talent, a man whose nature is a miracle, is a hundredfold more unfortunate and more to be pitied than the man whose lower nature lets him submit to the shrinkage of his faculties. I have made up my mind, therefore, that I would rather direct some commercial or industrial enterprise, and live on small means while trying to solve some of the great problems still unknown to industry and to society, than remain at my present post. You will tell me, perhaps, that nothing hinders me from employing the leisure that I certainly



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have in using my intellectual powers and seeking in the stillness of this commonplace life the solution of some problem useful to humanity. Ah! monsieur, don't you know the influence of the provinces,—the relaxing effect of a life just busy enough to waste time on futile labor, and not enough to use the rich resources our education has given us? Don't think me, my dear protector, eaten up by the desire to make a fortune, nor even by an insensate desire for fame. I am too much of a calculator not to know the nothingness of glory. Neither do I want to marry; seeing the fate now before me, I think my existence a melancholy gift to offer any woman. As for money, though I regard it as one of the most powerful means given to social man to act with, it is, after all, but a means. I place my whole desire and happiness on the hope of being useful to my country. My greatest pleasure would be to work in some situation suited to my faculties. If in your region, or in the circle of your acquaintances, you should hear of any enterprise that needed the capacities you know me to possess, think of me; I will wait six months for your answer before taking any step. What I have written here, dear sir and friend, others think. I have seen many of my classmates or older graduates caught like me in the toils of some specialty,—geographical engineers, captain-professors, captains of engineers, who will remain captains all their lives, and now bitterly regret they did not enter active service with the army. Reflecting on these miserable results, I ask myself the following questions, and I would like your opinion on them, assuring you that they are the fruit of long meditation, clarified in the fires of suffering:—What is the real object of the State? Does it truly seek to obtain fine capacities? The system now pursued directly defeats that end; it has crated the most thorough mediocrities that any government hostile to superiority could desire. Does it wish to give a career to its choice minds? As a matter of fact, it affords them the meanest opportunities; there is not a man who has issued from the Ecoles who does not bitterly regret, when he gets to be fifty or sixty years of age, that he ever fell into the trap set for him by the promises of the State. Does it seek to obtain men of genius? What man of genius, what great talent have the schools produced since 1790? If it had not been for Napoleon would Cachin, the man of genius to whom France owes Cherbourg, have existed? Imperial despotism brought him forward; the constitutional regime would have smothered him. How many men from the Ecoles are to be found in the Academy of Sciences? Possibly two or three. The man of genius develops always outside of the technical schools. In the sciences which those schools teach genius obeys only its own laws; it will not develop except under conditions which man cannot control; neither the State nor the science of mankind, anthropology,



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understands them. Riquet, Perronet, Leonardo da Vinci, Cachin, Palladio, Brunelleschi, Michel-Angelo, Bramante, Vauban, Vicat, derive their genius from causes unobserved and preparatory, which we call chance,—the pet word of fools. Never, with or without schools, are mighty workmen such as these wanting to their epoch. Now comes the question, Does the State gain through these institutions the better doing of its works of public utility, or the cheaper doing of them? As for that, I answer that private enterprises of a like kind get on very well without the help of our engineers; and next, the government works are the most extravagant in the world, and the additional cost of the vast administrative staff of the *Ponts et Chaussees* is immense. In all other countries, in Germany, England, Italy, where institutions like ours do not exist, works of this character are better done and far less costly than in France. Those three nations are remarkable for new and useful inventions in this line. I know it is the fashion to say, in speaking of our Ecoles, that all Europe envies them; but for the last fifteen years Europe, which closely observes us, has not established others like them. England, that clever calculator, has better schools among her working population, from which come practical men who show their genius the moment they rise from practice to theory. Stephenson and MacAdam did not come from schools like ours. But what is the good of talking? When a few young and able engineers, full of ardor, solve, at the outset of their career, the problem of maintaining the roads of France, which need some hundred millions spent upon them every quarter of a century (and which are now in a pitiable state), they gain nothing by making known in reports and memoranda their intelligent knowledge; it is immediately engulfed in the archives of the general Direction,—that Parisian centre where everything enters and nothing issues; where old men are jealous of young ones, and all the posts of management are used to shelve old officers or men who have blundered. This is why, with a body of scientific men spread all over the face of France and constituting a part of the administration,—a body which ought to enlighten every region on the subject of its resources,—this is why we are still discussing the practicability of railroads while other countries are making theirs. If ever France was to show the excellence of her institution of technical schools, it should have been in this magnificent phase of public works, which is destined to change the face of States and nations, to double human life, and modify the laws of space and time. Belgium, the United States of America, England, none of whom have an Ecole Polytechnique, will be honeycombed with railroads when French engineers are still surveying ours, and selfish interests, hidden behind all projects, are hindering their execution.



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Thus I say that as for the State, it derives no benefit from its technical schools; as for the individual pupil of those schools, his earnings are poor, his ambition crushed, and his life a cruel deception. Most assuredly the powers he has displayed between sixteen and twenty-six years of age would, if he had been cast upon his own resources, have brought him more fame and more wealth than the government in whom he trusted will ever give him. As a commercial man, a learned man, a military man, this choice intellect would have worked in a vast centre where his precious faculties and his ardent ambition would not be idiotically and prematurely repressed. Where, then, is progress? Man and State are both kept backward by this system. Does not the experience of a whole generation demand a reform in the practical working of these institutions? The duty of culling from all France during each generation the choice minds destined to become the learned and the scientific of the nation is a sacred office, the priests of which, the arbiters of so many fates, should be trained by special study. Mathematical knowledge is perhaps less necessary to them than physiological knowledge. And do you not think that they need a little of that second-sight which is the witchcraft of great men? As it is, the examiners are former professors, honorable men grown old in harness, who limit their work to selecting the best themes. They are unable to do what is really demanded of them; and yet their functions are the noblest in the State and demand extraordinary men. Do not think, dear sir and friend, that I blame only the Ecole itself; no, I blame the system by which it is recruited. This system is the *concours*, competition,—a modern invention, essentially bad; bad not only in science, but wherever it is employed, in arts, in all selections of men, of projects, of things. If it is a reproach to our great Ecoles that they have not produced men superior to other educational establishments, it is still more shameful that the *grand prix* of the Institute has not as yet furnished a single great painter, great musician, great architect, great sculptor; just as the suffrage for the last twenty years has not elected out of its tide of mediocrities a single great statesman. My observation makes me detect, as I think, an error which vitiates in France both education and politics. It is a cruel error, and it rests on the following principle, which organizers have misconceived:—

Nothing, either in experience or in the nature of things, can give a certainty that the intellectual qualities of the adult youth will be those of the mature man.



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At this moment I am intimate with a number of distinguished men who concern themselves with all the moral maladies which are now afflicting France. They see, as I do, that our highest education is manufacturing temporary capacities,—temporary because they are without exercise and without future; that such education is without profit to the State because it is devoid of the vigor of belief and feeling. Our whole system of public education needs overhauling, and the work should be presided over by some man of great knowledge, powerful will, and gifted with that legislative genius which has never been met with among moderns, except perhaps in Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Possibly our superfluous numbers might be employed in giving elementary instruction so much needed by the people. The deplorable amount of crime and misdemeanors shows a social disease directly arising from the half-education given the masses, which tends to the destruction of social ties by making the people reflect just enough to desert the religious beliefs which are favorable to social order, and not enough to lift them to the theory of obedience and duty, which is the highest reach of the new transcendental philosophy. But as it is impossible to make a whole nation study Kant, therefore I say fixed beliefs and habits are safer for the masses than shallow studies and reasoning. If I had my life to begin over again, perhaps I would enter a seminary and become a simple village priest, or the teacher of a country district. But I am too far advanced in my profession now to be a mere primary instructor; I can, if I leave my present post, act in a wider range than that of a school or a country parish. The Saint-Simonians, to whom I have been tempted to ally myself, want now to take a course in which I cannot follow them. Nevertheless, in spite of their mistakes, they have touched on many of the sore spots which are the fruits of our present legislation, and which the State will only doctor by insufficient palliatives,—merely delaying in France the moral and political crisis that must come.

Adieu, dear Monsieur Grossetete; accept the assurance of my respectful attachment, which, notwithstanding all these observations, can only increase.

Gregoire Gerard.

According to his old habit as a banker, Grossetete had jotted down his reply on the back of the letter itself, heading it with the sacramental word, *Answered*.

It is useless, my dear Gerard, to discuss the observations made in your letter, because by a trick of chance (I use the term which is, as you say, the pet word of fools) I have a proposal to make to you which may result in withdrawing you from the situation you find so bad. Madame Graslin, the owner of the forests of Montegnac and of a barren plateau extending from the base of a chain of mountains on which are the forests, wishes to improve this vast



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domain, to clear her timber properly, and cultivate the stony plain. To put this project into execution she needs a man of your scientific knowledge and ardor, and one who has also your disinterested devotion and your ideas of practical utility. It will be little money and much work! a great result from small means! a whole region to be changed fundamentally! barren places to be made to gush with plenty! Isn't that precisely what you want,—you who are dreaming of constructing a poem? From the tone of sincerity which pervades your letter, I do not hesitate to bid you come and see me at Limoges. But, my good friend, don't send in your resignation yet; get leave of absence only, and tell your administration that you are going to study questions connected with your profession outside of the government works. In this way, you will not lose your rights, and you will have time to judge for yourself whether the project conceived by the rector of Montegnac and approved by Madame Graslin is feasible.

I will explain to you by word of mouth the advantages you will find in case this great scheme can be carried out. Rely on the friendship of

Yours, etc, T. Grossetete.

Madame Graslin replied to Grossetete in few words: "Thank you, my friend; I shall expect your *protege*." She showed the letter to the rector, saying,—

"One more wounded man for the hospital."

The rector read the letter, reread it, made two or three turns on the terrace silently; then he gave it back to Madame Graslin, saying,—

"A fine soul, and a superior man. He says the schools invented by the genius of the Revolution manufacture incapacities. For my part, I say they manufacture unbelievers; for if Monsieur Gerard is not an atheist, he is a protestant."

"We will ask him," she said, struck by an answer.

XVII

THE REVOLUTION OF JULY JUDGED AT MONTEGNAC

A fortnight later, in December, and in spite of the cold, Monsieur Grossetete came to the chateau de Montegnac, to "present his protege," whom Veronique and Monsieur Bonnet were impatiently awaiting.

"I must love you very much, my dear child," said the old man, taking Veronique's two hands in his, and kissing them with that gallantry of old men which never displeases women, "yes, I must love you well, to come from Limoges in such weather. But I



wanted to present to you myself the gift of Monsieur Gregoire Gerard here present. You'll find him a man after your own heart, Monsieur Bonnet," added the banker, bowing affectionately to the rector.

Gerard's external appearance was not prepossessing. He was of middle height, stocky in shape, the neck sunk in the shoulders, as they say vulgarly; he had yellow hair, and the pink eyes of an albino, with lashes and eyebrows almost white. Though his skin, like that of all persons of that description, was amazingly white, marks of the small-box and other very visible scars had destroyed its original brilliancy. Study had probably injured his sight, for he wore glasses.

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When he removed the great cloak of a gendarme in which he was wrapped, it was seen that his clothing did not improve his general appearance. The manner in which his garments were put on and buttoned, his untidy cravat, his rumpled shirt, were signs of the want of personal care with which men of science, all more or less absent-minded, are charged. As in the case of most thinkers, his countenance and his attitude, the development of his bust and the thinness of his legs, betrayed a sort of bodily debility produced by habits of meditation. Nevertheless, the ardor of his heart and the vigor of his mind, proofs of which were given in this letter, gleamed from his forehead, which was white as Carrara marble. Nature seemed to have reserved to herself that spot in order to place there visible signs of the grandeur, constancy, and goodness of the man. The nose, like that of most men of the true Gallic race, was flattened. His mouth, firm and straight, showed absolute discretion and the instinct of economy. But the whole mask, worn by study, looked prematurely old.

“We must begin by thanking you, monsieur,” said Madame Graslin, addressing the engineer, “for being willing to direct an enterprise in a part of the country which can offer you no other pleasure than the satisfaction of knowing that you are doing a real good.”

“Madame,” he replied, “Monsieur Grossetete has told me enough about your enterprise as we came along to make me already glad that I can in any way be useful to you; the prospect of living in close relations with you and Monsieur Bonnet seems to me charming. Unless I am dismissed from this region, I expect to end my days here.”

“We will try not to let you change your mind,” replied Madame Graslin, smiling.

“Here,” said Grossetete, addressing Veronique, whom he took aside, “are the papers which the *procureur-general* gave to me. He was quite surprised that you did not address your inquiry about Catherine Curieux to him. All that you wished has been done immediately, with the utmost promptitude and devotion. Three months hence Catherine Curieux will be sent to you.”

“Where is she?” asked Veronique.

“She is now in the hospital Saint-Louis,” replied the old man; “they are awaiting her recovery before sending her from Paris.”

“Ah! is the poor girl ill?”

“You will find all necessary information in these papers,” said Grossetete, giving Veronique a packet.

Madame Graslin returned to her guests to conduct them into the magnificent dining-room on the ground-floor. She sat at table, but did not herself take part in the dinner; since her arrival at Montegnac she had made it a rule to take her meals alone, and



Aline, who knew the reason of this withdrawal, faithfully kept the secret of it till her mistress was in danger of death.

The mayor, the *juge de paix*, and the doctor of Montegnac had been invited.



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The doctor, a young man twenty-seven years of age, named Roubaud, was extremely desirous of knowing a woman so celebrated in Limoges. The rector was all the more pleased to present him at the chateau because he wanted to gather a little society around Veronique to distract her mind and give it food. Roubaud was one of those thoroughly well-trained young physicians whom the Ecole de Medecine in Paris sends forth to the profession. He would undoubtedly have shone on the vast stage of the capital; but frightened by the clash of ambitions in Paris, and knowing himself more capable than pushing, more learned than intriguing, his gentle disposition led him to choose the narrow career of the provinces, where he hoped to be sooner appreciated than in Paris.

At Limoges, Roubaud came in contact with the settled practice of the regular physicians and the habits of the people; he therefore let himself be persuaded by Monsieur Bonnet, who, judging by the gentle and winning expression of his face, thought him well-suited to co-operate in his own work at Montegnac. Roubaud was small and fair; his general appearance was rather insipid, but his gray eyes betrayed the depths of the physiologist and the patient tenacity of a studious man. There was no physician in Montegnac except an old army-surgeon, more devoted to his cellar than to his patients, and too old to continue with any vigor the hard life of a country doctor. At the present time he was dying.

Roubaud had been in Montegnac about eighteen months, and was much liked there. But this young pupil of Desplein and the successors of Cabanis did not believe in Catholicism. He lived in a state of profound indifference as to religion, and did not desire to come out of it. The rector was in despair. Not that Roubaud did any wrong; he never spoke against religion, and his duties were excuse enough for his absence from church; besides, he was incapable of trying to undermine the faith of others, and indeed behaved outwardly as the best of Catholics; he simply prohibited himself from thinking of a problem which he considered above the range of human thought. When the rector heard him say that pantheism had been the religion of all great minds he set him down as inclining to the doctrine of Pythagoras on reincarnation.

Roubaud, who saw Madame Graslin for the first time, experienced a violent sensation when he met her. Science revealed to him in her expression, her attitude, in the ravages of her face, untold sufferings both moral and physical, a nature of almost superhuman force, great faculties which would support her under the most conflicting trials; he detected all,—even the darkest corners of that nature so carefully hidden. He felt that some evil, some malady, was devouring the heart of that fine creature; for just as the color of a fruit shows the presence of a worm within it, so certain tints in the human face enable physicians to detect a poisoning thought.



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From this moment Monsieur Roubaud attached himself so deeply to Madame Graslin that he became afraid of loving her beyond the permitted line of simple friendship. The brow, the bearing, above all, the glance of Veronique's eye had a sort of eloquence that men invariably understand; it said as plainly that she was dead to love as other women say the contrary by a reversal of the same eloquence. The doctor suddenly vowed to her, in his heart, a chivalrous worship.

He exchanged a rapid glance with the rector, who thought to himself, "Here's the thunderbolt which will convert my poor unbeliever; Madame Graslin will have more eloquence than I."

The mayor, an old countryman, amazed at the luxury of this dining-room and surprised to find himself dining with one of the richest men in the department, had put on his best clothes, which rather hampered him, and this increased his mental awkwardness. Moreover, Madame Graslin in her mourning garments seemed to him very imposing; he was therefore mute. After living all his life as a farmer at Saint-Leonard, he had bought the only habitable house in Montegnac and cultivated with his own hands the land belonging to it. Though he knew how to read and write, he would have been incapable of fulfilling his functions were it not for the help of his clerk and the *juge de paix*, who prepared his work for him. He was very anxious to have a notary established in Montegnac, in order that he might shift the burden of his responsibility on to that officer's shoulders. But the poverty of the village and its outlying districts made such a functionary almost useless, and the inhabitants had recourse when necessary to the notaries of the chief town of the arrondissement.

The *juge de paix*, named Clousier, was formerly a lawyer in Limoges, where cases had deserted him because he insisted on putting into practice that fine axiom that the lawyer is the best judge of the client and the case. In 1809 he obtained his present post, the meagre salary of which just enabled him to live. He had now reached a stage of honorable but absolute poverty. After a residence of twenty-one years in this poor village the worthy man, thoroughly countrified, looked, top-coat and all, exactly like the farmers about him.

Under this coarse exterior Clousier hid a clear-sighted mind, given to lofty meditation on public policy, though he himself had fallen into a state of complete indifference, derived from his intimate knowledge of men and their interests. This man, who baffled for a long time the rector's perspicacity and who might in a higher sphere have proved another l'Hopital, incapable of intrigue like all really profound persons, was by this time living in the contemplative state of an ancient hermit. Independent through privation, no personal consideration acted on his mind; he knew the laws and judged impartially. His life, reduced to the merest necessities, was pure and regular. The peasants loved Monsieur Clousier and respected him for the disinterested fatherly care with which he settled their differences and gave them advice in their daily affairs. The "goodman

Clousier” as all Montegnac called him, had a nephew with him as clerk, an intelligent young man, who afterwards contributed much to the prosperity of the district.



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Old Clousier's personal appearance was remarkable for a broad, high forehead and two bushes of white hair which stood out from his head on either side of it. His highly colored complexion and well-developed corpulence might have made persons think, in spite of his actual sobriety, that he cultivated Bacchus as well as Troplong and Toullier. His half-extinct voice was the sign of an oppressive asthma. Perhaps the dry air of Montegnac had contributed to fix him there. He lived in a house arranged for him by a well-to-do cobbler to whom it belonged. Clousier had already seen Veronique at church, and he had formed his opinion of her without communicating it to any one, not even to Monsieur Bonnet, with whom he was beginning to be intimate. For the first time in his life the *juge de paix* was to be thrown in with persons able to appreciate him.

When the company were seated round a table handsomely appointed (for Veronique had sent all her household belongings from Limoges to Montegnac) the six guests felt a momentary embarrassment. The doctor, the mayor and the *juge de paix* knew nothing of Grossetete and Gerard. But during the first course, old Grossetete's hearty good-humor broke the ice of a first meeting. In addition to this, Madame Graslin's cordiality led on Gerard, and encouraged Roubaud. Under her touch these souls full of fine qualities recognized their relation, and felt they had entered a sympathetic circle. So, by the time the dessert appeared on the table, when the glass and china with gilded edges sparkled, and the choicer wines were served by Aline and Champion and Grossetete's valet, the conversation became sufficiently confidential to allow these four choice minds, thus meeting by chance, to express their real thoughts on matters of importance, such as men like to discuss when they can do so and be sure of the discretion of their companions.

"Your furlough came just in time to let you witness the revolution of July," said Grossetete to Gerard, with an air as if he asked an opinion of him.

"Yes," replied the engineer. "I was in Paris during the three famous days. I saw all; and I came to sad conclusions."

"What were they?" said the rector, eagerly.

"There is no longer any patriotism except under dirty shirts," replied Gerard. "In that lies the ruin of France! July was the voluntary defeat of all superiorities,—name, fortune, talent. The ardent, devoted masses carried the day against the rich and the intelligent, to whom ardor and devotion are repugnant."

"To judge by what has happened during the past year," said Monsieur Clousier, "this change of government is simply a premium given to an evil that is sapping us,—individualism. Fifteen years hence all questions of a generous nature will be met by, *What is that to me?* —the great cry of Freedom of Will descending from the religious heights where Luther, Calvin, Zwinglius, and Knox introduced it, into even political economy. *Every one for himself; every man his own master*,—those two terrible axioms

form, with the *What is that to me?* a trinity of wisdom to the burgher and the small landowner. This egotism results from the vices of our present civil legislation (too hastily made), to which the revolution of July has just given a terrible confirmation.”



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The *juge de paix* fell back into his usual silence after thus expressing himself; but the topics he suggested must have occupied the minds of those present. Emboldened by Clousier's words, and moved by the look which Gerard exchanged with Grossetete, Monsieur Bonnet ventured to go further.

"The good King Charles X.," he said, "has just failed in the most far-sighted and salutary enterprise a monarch ever planned for the welfare of the people confided to him; and the Church ought to feel proud of the part she took in his councils. But the upper classes deserted him in heart and mind, just as they had already deserted him on the great question of the law of primogeniture,—the lasting honor of the only bold statesman the Restoration has produced, namely, the Comte de Peyronnet. To reconstitute the nation through the family; to take from the press its venomous action and confine it to its real usefulness; to recall the elective Chamber to its true functions; and to restore to religion its power over the people,—such were the four cardinal points of the internal policy of the house of Bourbon. Well, twenty years from now all France will have recognized the necessity of that grand and sound policy. Charles X. was in greater peril in the situation he chose to leave than in that in which his paternal power has been defeated. The future of our noble country—where all things will henceforth be brought periodically into question, where our rulers will discuss incessantly instead of acting, where the press, become a sovereign power, will be the instrument of base ambitions—this future will only prove the wisdom of the king who has just carried away with him the true principles of government; and history will bear in mind the courage with which he resisted his best friends after having probed the wound and seen the necessity of curative measures, which were not sustained by those for whose sake he put himself into the breach."

"Ah! monsieur," cried Gerard, "you are frank; you go straight to your thought without disguise, and I won't contradict you. Napoleon in his Russian campaign was forty years in advance of the spirit of his age; he was never understood. The Russia and England of 1830 explains the campaign of 1812. Charles X. has been misunderstood in the same way. It is quite possible that in twenty-five years from now his ordinances may become the laws of the land."

"France, too eloquent not to gabble, too full of vanity to bow down before real talent, is, in spite of the sublime good sense of its language and the mass of its people, the very last nation in which two deliberative chambers should have been attempted," said the *juge de paix*. "Or, at any rate, the weaknesses of our national character should have been guarded against by the admirable restrictions which Napoleon's experience laid upon them. Our present system may succeed in a country whose action is circumscribed by the nature of its soil,



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like England; but the law of primogeniture applied to the transmission of land is absolutely necessary; when that law is suppressed the system of legislative representation becomes absurd. England owes her existence to the quasi-feudal law which entails landed property and family mansions on the eldest son. Russia is based on the feudal right of autocracy. Consequently those two nations are to-day on the high-road of startling progress. Austria could only resist our invasions and renew the way against Napoleon by virtue of that law of primogeniture which preserves in the family the active forces of a nation, and supplies the great productions necessary to the State. The house of Bourbon, feeling that it was slipping to the third rank in Europe, by reason of liberalism, wanted to regain its rightful place and there maintain itself, and the nation has thrown it over at the very time it was about to save the nation. I am sure I don't know how low down the present system will drop us."

"If we have a war, France will be without horses, as Napoleon was in 1813, when, being reduced to those of France only, he could not profit by his two victories of Lutzen and Botzen, and so was crushed at Leipzig," cried Grossetete. "If peace continues, the evil will only increase. Twenty-five years from now the race of cattle and horses will have diminished in France by one half."

"Monsieur Grossetete is right," remarked Gerard. "So that the work you are undertaking here, madame," he added, addressing Veronique, "is really a service done to the country."

"Yes," said the *juge de paix*, "because Madame has but one son, and the inheritance will not be divided up; but how long will that condition last? For a certain length of time the magnificent culture which you are about to introduce will, let us hope, belong to only one proprietor, who will continue to breed horned beasts and horses; but sooner or later the day must come when these forests and fields will be divided up and sold in small parcels. Divided and redivided, the six thousand acres of that plain will have a thousand or twelve hundred owners, and thenceforth—no more horses and cattle!"

"Oh! as for those days"—began the mayor.

"There! don't you hear the *What is that to me?* Monsieur Clousier talked of?" cried Monsieur Grossetete. "Taken in the act! But, monsieur," resumed the banker, gravely addressing the dumfounded mayor, "those days have really come. In a radius of thirty miles round Paris the land is so divided up into small holdings that milch cows are no longer seen. The Commune of Argenteuil contains thirty-eight thousand eight hundred and eighty-five parcels of land, many of which do not return a farthing of revenue. If it were not for the rich refuse of Paris, which produces a fodder of strong quality, I don't know how dairymen would get along. As it is, this over-stimulating food and confinement in close stables produce inflammatory

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diseases, of which the cows often die. They use cows in the neighborhood of Paris as they do horses in the street. Crops more profitable than hay—vegetables, fruit, apple orchards, vineyards—are taking the place of meadow-lands. In a few years we shall see milk sent to Paris by the mail-coaches as they now send fish. What is going on around Paris is also going on round all the large cities of France; the land will thus be used up before many years are gone. Chaptel states that in 1800 there were barely two million acres of vineyard in France; a careful estimate would give ten million to-day. Divided *ad infinitum* by our present system of inheritance, Normandy will lose half her production of horses and cattle; but she will have a monopoly of milk in Paris, for her climate, happily, forbids grape culture. We shall soon see a curious phenomenon in the progressive rise in the cost of meat. In twenty years from now, in 1850, Paris, which paid seven to eleven sous for a pound of beef in 1814, will be paying twenty—unless there comes a man of genius who can carry out the plan of Charles X.”

“You have laid your finger on the mortal wound of France,” said the *juge de paix*. “The root of our evils lies in the section relating to inheritance in the Civil Code, in which the equal division of property among heirs is ordained. That’s the pestle that pounds territory into crumbs, individualizes fortunes, and takes from them their needful stability; decomposing ever and never recomposing,—a state of things which must end in the ruin of France. The French Revolution emitted a destructive virus to which the July days have given fresh activity. This vitiating element is the accession of the peasantry to the ownership of land. In the section ‘On Inheritance’ is the principle of the evil, the peasant is the means through which it works. No sooner does that class get a parcel of land into its maw than it begins to subdivide it, till there are scarcely three furrows left in each lot. And even then the peasant does not stop! He divides the three furrows across their length, as Monsieur Grossetete has just shown us at Argenteuil. The unreasonable price which the peasant attaches to the smallest scrap of his land makes it impossible to repurchase and restore a fine estate. Monsieur,” he went on, indicating Grossetete, “has just mentioned the diminution in the raising of horses and cattle; well, the Code has much to do with that. The peasant-proprietor owns cows; he looks to them for his means of living; he sells the calves, he sells his butter; he never dreams of raising cattle, still less of raising horses; but as he cannot raise enough fodder to support his cows through a dry season, he sends them to market when he can feed them no longer. If by some fatal chance the hay were to fail for two years running, you would see a startling change the third year in the price of beef, but especially in that of veal.”

“That may put a stop to ‘patriotic banquets,’” said the doctor, laughing.



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“Oh!” exclaimed Madame Graslin, looking at Roubaud, “can’t politics get on without the wit of journalism, even here?”

“In this lamentable business, the bourgeoisie plays the same *role* as the pioneers of America,” continued Clousier. “It buys up great estates, which the peasantry could not otherwise acquire. It cuts them up and then sells, either at auction or in small lots at private sale, to the peasants. Everything is judged by figures in these days, and I know none more eloquent than these. France has ninety-nine million acres, which, subtracting highways, roads, dunes, canals, and barren, uncultivated regions deserted by capital, may be reduced to eighty millions. Now out of eighty millions of acres to thirty-two millions of inhabitants we find one hundred and twenty-five millions of small lots registered on the tax-list (I don’t give fractions). Thus, you will observe, we have gone to the utmost limit of agrarian law, and yet we have not seen the last of poverty or dissatisfaction. Those who divide territory into fragments and lessen production have, of course, plenty of organs to cry out that true social justice consists in giving every man a life interest, and no more, in a parcel of land; perpetual ownership, they say, is robbery. The Saint-Simonians are already proclaiming that doctrine.”

“The magistrate has spoken,” said Grossetete, “and here’s what the banker adds to those bold considerations. The fact that the peasantry and the lesser bourgeoisie can now acquire land does France an injury which the government seems not even to suspect. We may estimate the number of peasant families, omitting paupers, at three millions. These families subsist on wages. Wages are paid in money, and not in kind —”

“Yes, that’s another blunder of our laws!” cried Clousier, interrupting the banker. “The right to pay in kind might have been granted in 1790; now, if we attempted to carry such a law, we should risk a revolution.”

“Therefore, as I was about to say, the proletariat draws to himself the money of the country,” resumed Grossetete. “Now the peasant has no other passion, desire, or will, than to die a land-owner. This desire, as Monsieur Clousier has well shown, was born of the Revolution, and is the direct result of the sale of the National domain. A man must be ignorant indeed of what is going on all over France in the country regions if he is not aware that these three million families are yearly hoarding at least fifty francs, thus subtracting a hundred and fifty millions from current use. The science of political economy has made it an axiom that a five-franc piece, passing through a hundred hands in one day, is equivalent to five hundred francs. Now, it is perfectly plain to all of us who live in the country and observe the state of affairs, that every peasant has his eye on the land he covets; he is watching and waiting for it, and he never invests his savings elsewhere;



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he buries them. In seven years the savings thus rendered inert and unproductive amount to eleven hundred million francs. But since the lesser bourgeoisie bury as much more, with the same purpose, France loses every seven years the interest of at least two thousand millions,—that is to say, about one hundred millions; a loss which in forty-two years amounts to six hundred million francs. But she not only loses six hundred millions, she fails to create with that money manufacturing or agricultural products, which represent a loss of twelve hundred millions; for, if the manufactured product were not double in value to its cost price, commerce could not exist. The proletariat actually deprives itself of six hundred millions in wages. These six hundred millions of dead loss (representing to a stern economist a loss of twelve hundred millions, through lack of the benefits of circulation) explain the condition of inferiority in which our commerce, our merchant service, and our agriculture stand, as compared with England. In spite of the difference of the two territories, which is more than two thirds in our favor, England could remount the cavalry of two French armies, and she has meat for every man. But there, as the system of landed property makes it almost impossible for the lower classes to obtain it, money is not hoarded; it becomes commercial, and is turned over. Thus, besides the evil of parcelling the land, involving that of the diminution of horses, cattle, and sheep, the section of the Code on inheritance costs us six hundred millions of interest, lost by the hoarding of the money of the peasantry and bourgeoisie, and twelve hundred millions, at least, of products; or, including the loss from non-circulation, three thousand millions in half a century!”

“The moral effect is worse than the material effect,” cried the rector. “We are making beggar-proprietors among the people and half-taught communities of the lesser bourgeoisie; and the fatal maxim ‘Each for himself,’ which had its effect upon the upper classes in July of this year, will soon have gangrened the middle classes. A proletariat devoid of sentiment, with no other god than envy, no other fanaticism than the despair of hunger, without faith, without belief, will come forward before long and put its foot on the heart of the nation. Foreigners, who have thriven under monarchical rule, will find that, having royalty, we have no king; having legality, we have no laws; having property, no owners; no government with our elections, no force with freedom, no happiness with equality. Let us hope that before that day comes God may raise up in France a providential man, one of those Elect who give a new mind to nations, and like Sylla or like Marius, whether he comes from above or rises from below, remakes society.”

“He would be sent to the assizes,” said Gerard. “The sentence pronounced against Socrates and Jesus Christ would be rendered against them in 1831. In these days as in the old days, envious mediocrity lets thinkers die of poverty, and so gets rid of the great political physicians who have studied the wounds of France, and who oppose the tendencies of their epoch. If they bear up under poverty, common minds ridicule them or call them dreamers. In France, men revolt in the moral world against the great man of the future, just as they revolt in the political world against a sovereign.”



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“In the olden time sophists talked to a limited number of men; to-day the periodical press enables them to lead astray a nation,” cried the *juge de paix*; “and that portion of the press which pleads for right ideas finds no echo.”

The mayor looked at Monsieur Clousier in amazement. Madame Graslin, glad to find in a simple *juge de paix* a man whose mind was occupied with serious questions, said to Monsieur Roubaud, her neighbor, “Do you know Monsieur Clousier?”

“Not rightly until to-day, madame. You are doing miracles,” he answered in a whisper. “And yet, look at his brow, how noble in shape! Isn’t it like the classic or traditional brow given by sculptors to Lycurgus and the Greek sages? The revolution of July has an evidently retrograde tendency,” said the doctor (who might in his student days have made a barricade himself), after carefully considering Grossetete’s calculation.

“These ideas are threefold,” continued Clousier. “You have talked of law and finance, but how is it with the government itself? The royal power, weakened by the doctrine of national sovereignty, in virtue of which the election of August 9, 1830, has just been made, will endeavor to counteract that rival principle which gives to the people the right to saddle the nation with a new dynasty every time it does not fully comprehend the ideas of its king. You will see that we shall then have internal struggles which will arrest for long periods together the progress of France.”

“All these reefs have been wisely evaded by England,” remarked Gerard. “I have been there; I admire that beehive, which sends its swarms over the universe and civilizes mankind,—a people among whom discussion is a political comedy, which satisfies the masses and hides the action of power, which then works freely in its upper sphere; a country where elections are not in the hands of a stupid bourgeoisie, as they are in France. If England were parcelled out into small holdings the nation would no longer exist. The land-owning class, the lords, guide the social mechanism. Their merchant-service, under the nose of Europe, takes possession of whole regions of the globe to meet the needs of their commerce and to get rid of their paupers and malcontents. Instead of fighting capacities, as we do, thwarting them, nullifying them, the English aristocratic class seeks out young talent, rewards it, and is constantly assimilating it. Everything which concerns the action of the government, in the choice of men and things, is prompt in England, whereas with us all is slow; and yet the English are slow by nature, while we are impatient. With them money is bold and actively employed; with us it is timid and suspicious. What Monsieur Grossetete has said of the industrial losses which the hoarding peasantry inflict on France has its proof in a fact I will show to you in two words: English capital, by its perpetual turning over, has created ten thousand millions of manufacturing and interest-bearing property; whereas French capital, which is far more abundant, has not created one tenth of that amount.”



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“And that is all the more extraordinary,” said Roubaud, “because they are lymphatic, and we, as a general thing, are sanguine and energetic.”

“Ah! monsieur,” said Clousier, “there you touch a great question, which ought to be studied: How to find institutions properly adapted to repress the temperament of a people! Assuredly Cromwell was a great legislator. He alone made the England of to-day, by inventing the ‘Navigation Act,’ which has made the English enemies of all the world, and infused into them a ferocious pride and self-conceit, which is their mainstay. But, in spite of their Malta citadel, if France and Russia will only comprehend the part the Mediterranean and the Black Sea ought to be made to play in the future, the road to Asia through Egypt or by the Euphrates, made feasible by recent discoveries, will kill England, as in former times the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope killed Venice.”

“Not one word of God’s providence in all this!” cried the rector. “Monsieur Clousier and Monsieur Roubaud are oblivious of religion. How is it with you, monsieur?” he added, turning to Gerard.

“Protestant,” put in Grossetete.

“You guessed it,” cried Veronique, looking at the rector as she took Clousier’s arm to return to the salon.

The prejudice Gerard’s appearance excited against him had been quickly dispelled, and the three notables congratulated themselves on so good an acquisition.

“Unfortunately,” said Monsieur Bonnet, “there is a cause of antagonism between Russia and the Catholic countries which border the Mediterranean, in the very unimportant schism which separates the Greek religion from the Latin religion; and it is a great misfortune for humanity.”

“We all preach our own saint,” said Madame Graslin. “Monsieur Grossetete thinks of the lost millions; Monsieur Clousier, of the overthrow of rights; the doctor here regards legislation as a question of temperaments; and the rector sees an obstacle to the good understanding of France and Russia in religion.”

“Add to that, madame,” said Gerard, “that I see, in the hoarding of capital by the peasant and the small burgher, the postponement of the building of railroads in France.”

“Then what is it you all want?” she asked.

“We want the wise State councillors who, under the Emperor, reflected on the laws, and a legislative body elected by the intelligence of the country as well as by the land-owners, whose only function would be to oppose bad legislation and capricious wars. The Chamber, as constituted to-day, will proceed, as you will soon see, to govern, and that is the first step to legal anarchy.”



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“Good God!” cried the rector, in a flush of sacred patriotism, “how can such enlightened minds as these,” and he motioned to Clousier, Roubaud, and Gerard, “how can they see evil so clearly and suggest remedies without first looking within and applying a remedy to themselves? All of you, who represent the attacked classes, recognize the necessity of the passive obedience of the masses of the State, like that of soldiers during a war; you want the unity of power, and you desire that it shall never be brought into question. What England has obtained by the development of her pride and self-interest (a part of her creed) cannot be obtained in France but through sentiments due to Catholicism, and none of you are Catholics! Here am I, a priest, obliged to leave my own ground and argue with arguers. How can you expect the masses to become religious and obedient when they see irreligion and want of discipline above them? All peoples united by any faith whatever will inevitably get the better of peoples without any faith at all. The law of public interest, which gives birth to patriotism, is destroyed by the law of private interest, which it sanctions, but which gives birth to selfishness. There is nothing solid and durable but that which is natural; and the natural thing in human policy is the Family. The family must be the point of departure for all institutions. A universal effect proves a universal cause; and what you have just been setting forth as evident on all sides comes from the social principle itself; which is now without force because it has taken for its basis independence of thought and will, and such freedom is the parent of individualism. To make happiness depend on the stability, intelligence, and capacity of all is not as wise as to make happiness depend on the stability and intelligence of institutions and the capacity of a single head. It is easier to find wisdom in one man than in a whole nation. Peoples have heart and no eyes; they feel, and see not. Governments ought to see, and not determine anything through sentiment. There is, therefore, an evident contradiction between the impulses of the multitude and the action of power whose function it is to direct and unify those impulses. To meet with a great prince is certainly a rare chance (to use your term), but to trust to a whole assembly, even though it is composed of honest men only, is folly. France is committing that folly at this moment. Alas! you are just as much convinced of that as I am. If all right-minded men, like yourselves, would only set an example around them, if all intelligent hands would raise, in the great republic of souls, the altars of the one Church which has set the interests of humanity before her, we might again behold in France the miracles our fathers did here.”

“But the difficulty is, monsieur,” said Gerard,—“if I may speak to you with the freedom of the confessional,—I look upon faith as a lie we tell to ourselves, on hope as a lie we tell about the future, and on charity as a trick for children to keep them good by the promise of sugar-plums.”



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“Still, we sleep better for being rocked by hope, monsieur,” said Madame Graslin.

This speech stopped Roubaud, who was about to reply; its effect was strengthened by a look from Grossetete and the rector.

“Is it our fault,” said Clousier, “that Jesus Christ had not the time to formulate a government in accordance with his moral teaching, as did Moses and Confucius, the two greatest human law-givers?—witness the existence, as a nation, of the Jews and Chinese, the former in spite of their dispersion over the whole earth, and the latter in spite of their isolation.”

“Ah! dear me! what work you are cutting out for me!” cried the rector naively. “But I shall triumph, I shall convert you all! You are much nearer to the true faith than you think you are. Truth always lurks behind falsehood; go on a step, turn round, and then you’ll see it.”

This little outburst of the good rector had the effect of changing the conversation.

XVIII

CATHERINE CURIEUX

Before taking his departure the next day, Monsieur Grossetete promised Veronique to associate himself in all her plans, as soon as the realization of them was a practicable thing. Madame Graslin and Gerard accompanied his carriage on horseback, and did not leave him till they reached the junction of the high-road of Montegnac with that from Bordeaux to Lyon. The engineer was so impatient to see the land he was to reclaim, and Veronique was so impatient to show it to him, that they had planned this expedition the evening before.

After bidding adieu to the kind old man, they turned off the road across the vast plain, and skirted the mountain chain from the foot of the rise which led to the chateau to the steep face of the Roche-Vive. The engineer then saw plainly the shelf or barricade of rock mentioned by Farrabesche; which forms, as it were, the lowest foundation of the hills. By so directing the water that it should not overflow the indestructible canal which Nature had built, and by clearing out the accumulation of earth which choked it up, irrigation would be helped rather than hindered by this natural sluice-way, which was raised, on an average, ten feet above the plain. The first important point was to estimate the amount of water flowing through the Gabou, and to make sure whether or not the slopes of the valley allowed any to escape in other directions.

Veronique gave Farrabesche a horse, and directed him to accompany the engineer and to explain to him everything he had himself noticed. After several days’ careful exploration, Gerard found that the base of the two parallel slopes was sufficiently solid,



though different in composition, to hold the water, allowing none to escape. During the month of January, which was rainy, he estimated the quantity of water flowing through the Gabou. This quantity, added to that of three streams which could easily be led into it, would supply water enough to irrigate a tract



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of land three times as extensive as the plain of Montegnac. The damming of the Gabou and the works necessary to direct the water of the three valleys to the plain, ought not to cost more than sixty thousand francs; for the engineer discovered on the commons a quantity of calcareous soil which would furnish the lime cheaply, the forest was close at hand, the wood and stone cost nothing, and the transportation was trifling. While awaiting the season when the Gabou would be dry (the only time suitable for the work) all the necessary preparations could be made so as to push the enterprise through rapidly when it was once begun.

But the preparation of the plain was another thing; that according to Gerard, would cost not less than two hundred thousand francs, without including the sowing and planting. The plain was to be divided into square compartments of two hundred and fifty acres each, where the ground had to be cleared, not only of its stunted growths, but of rocks. Laborers would have to dig innumerable trenches, and stone them up so as to let no water run to waste, also to direct its flow at will. This part of the enterprise needed the active and faithful arms of conscientious workers. Chance provided them with a tract of land without natural obstacles, a long even stretch of plain, where the waters, having a fall of ten feet, could be distributed at will. Nothing hindered the finest agricultural results, while at the same time, the eye would be gratified by one of those magnificent sheets of verdure which are the pride and the wealth of Lombardy. Gerard sent for an old and experienced foreman, who had already been employed by him elsewhere in this capacity, named Fresquin.

Madame Graslin wrote to Grossetete, requesting him to negotiate for her a loan of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, secured on her income from the Funds, which, if relinquished for six years, would be enough to pay both capital and interest. This loan was obtained in March. By this time the preliminary preparations carried on by Gerard and his foreman, Fresquin, were fully completed; also, the surveying, estimating, levelling, and sounding. The news of this great enterprise spreading about the country, stimulated the laboring population. The indefatigable Farrabesche, Colorat, Clousier, the mayor of Montegnac, Roubaud, and others, interested either in the welfare of the neighborhood or in Madame Graslin, selected such of these laborers as seemed the poorest, or were most deserving of employment. Gerard bought for himself and for Monsieur Grossetete a thousand acres on the other side of the high-road to Montegnac. Fresquin, the foreman, bought five hundred, and sent for his wife and children.

Early in April, 1832, Monsieur Grossetete came to see the land bought for him by Gerard, though his journey was chiefly occasioned by the advent of Catherine Curieux, who had come from Paris to Limoges by the diligence. Grossetete now brought her with him to Montegnac. He found Madame Graslin just starting for church. Monsieur

Bonnet was to say a mass to implore the blessing of heaven on the works that were then beginning. All the laborers with their wives and children were present.



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“Here is your protegee,” said the old gentleman, presenting to Veronique a feeble, suffering woman, apparently about thirty years of age.

“Are you Catherine Curieux?” asked Madame Graslin.

“Yes, madame.”

Veronique looked at Catherine for a moment. She was rather tall, well-made, and fair; her features wore an expression of extreme gentleness which the beautiful gray tones of the eyes did not contradict. The outline of the face, the shape of the brow had a nobility both simple and august, such as we sometimes meet with in country regions among very young girls,—a sort of flower of beauty, which field labors, the constant cares of the household, the burning of the sun, and want of personal care, remove with terrible rapidity. Her movements had that ease of motion characteristic of country girls, to which certain habits unconsciously contracted in Paris gave additional grace. If Catherine had remained in the Correze she would by this time have looked like an old woman, wrinkled and withered; her complexion, once rosy, would have coarsened; but Paris, though it paled her, had preserved her beauty. Illness, toil, and grief had endowed her with the mysterious gifts of melancholy, the inward vitalizing thought, which is lacking to poor country-folk whose lives are almost animal. Her dress, full of that Parisian taste which all women, even the least coquettish, contract so readily, distinguished her still further from an ordinary peasant-woman. In her ignorance as to what was before her, and having no means of judging Madame Graslin, she appeared very shy and shame-faced.

“Do you still love Farrabesche?” asked Veronique, when Grossetete left them for a moment.

“Yes, madame,” she replied coloring.

“Why, then, having sent him a thousand francs during his imprisonment, did you not join him after his release? Have you any repugnance to him? Speak to me as though I were your mother. Are you afraid he has become altogether corrupt; or did you fear he no longer wanted you?”

“Neither, madame; but I do not know how to read or write, and I was serving a very exacting old lady; she fell ill and I had to nurse her. Though I knew the time when Jacques would be released, I could not get away from Paris until after the lady’s death. She did not leave me anything, notwithstanding my devotion to her interests and to her personally. After that I wanted to be cured of an ailment caused by night-watching and hard work, and as I had used up my savings, I resolved to go to the hospital of Saint-Louis, which I have just left, cured.”



“Very good, my child,” said Madame Graslin, touched by this simple explanation. “But tell me now why you abandoned your parents so abruptly, why you left your child behind you, and why you did not send any news of yourself, or get some one to write for you.”

For all answer Catherine wept.



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“Madame,” she said at last, reassured by the pressure of Madame Graslin’s hand, “I may have done wrong, but I hadn’t the strength to stay here. I did not fear myself, but others; I feared gossip, scandal. So long as Jacques was in danger, I was necessary to him and I stayed; but after he had gone I had no strength left,—a girl with a child and no husband! The worst of creatures was better than I. I don’t know what would have become of me had I stayed to hear a word against my boy or his father; I should have gone mad; I might have killed myself. My father or my mother in a moment of anger might have reproached me. I am too sensitive to bear a quarrel or an insult, gentle as I am. I have had my punishment in not seeing my child, I who have never passed a day without thinking of him in all these years! I wished to be forgotten, and I have been. No one thought of me,—they believed me dead; and yet, many a time, I thought of leaving all just to come here for a day and see my child.”

“Your child—see, here he is.”

Catherine then saw Benjamin, and began to tremble violently.

“Benjamin,” said Madame Graslin, “come and kiss your mother.”

“My mother!” cried Benjamin, surprised. He jumped into Catherine’s arms and she pressed him to her breast with almost savage force. But the boy escaped her and ran off crying out: “I’ll go and fetch *him*.”

Madame Graslin made Catherine, who was almost fainting, sit down. At this moment she saw Monsieur Bonnet and could not help blushing as she met a piercing look from her confessor, which read her heart.

“I hope,” she said, trembling, “that you will consent to marry Farrabesche and Catherine at once. Don’t you recognize Monsieur Bonnet, my dear? He will tell you that Farrabesche, since his liberation has behaved as an honest man; the whole neighborhood thinks well of him, and if there is a place in the world where you may live happy and respected it is at Montegnac. You can make, by God’s help, a good living as my farmers; for Farrabesche has recovered citizenship.”

“That is all true, my dear child,” said the rector.

Just then Farrabesche appeared, pulled along by his son. He was pale and speechless in presence of Catherine and Madame Graslin. His heart told him actively benevolent the one had been, and how deeply the other had suffered in his absence. Veronique led away the rector, who, on his side, was anxious to talk with her alone.

As soon as they were far enough away not to be overheard, Monsieur Bonnet looked fixedly at Veronique; she colored and dropped her eyes like a guilty person.

“You degrade well-doing,” he said, sternly.

“How?” she asked, raising her head.



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“Well-doing,” he replied, “is a passion as superior to that of love as humanity is superior to the individual creature. Now, you have not done this thing from the sole impulse and simplicity of virtue. You have fallen from the heights of humanity to the indulgence of the individual creature. Your benevolence to Farrabesche and Catherine carries with it so many memories and forbidden thoughts that it has lost all merit in the eyes of God. Tear from your heart the remains of the javelin evil planted there. Do not take from your actions their true value. Come at last to that saintly ignorance of the good you do which is the grace supreme of human actions.”

Madame Graslin had turned away to wipe the tears that told the rector his words had touched the bleeding wound that was still unhealed in her heart.

Farrabesche, Catherine, and Benjamin now came up to thank their benefactress, but she made them a sign to go away and leave her alone with the rector.

“See how that grieves them,” she said to him as they sadly walked away. The rector, whose heart was tender, recalled them by a sign.

“You shall be completely happy,” she then said, giving to Farrabesche a paper which she was holding in her hand. “Here is the ordinance which gives you back your rights of citizenship and exempts you from humiliating inspection.”

Farrabesche respectfully kissed the hand held toward him and looked at Veronique with an eye both tender and submissive, calm and devoted, the expression of a devotion which nothing could ever change, the look of a dog to his master.

“If Jacques has suffered, madame,” said Catherine, her fine eyes lighting with pleasure, “I hope I can give him enough happiness to make up for his pain, for, no matter what he has done, he is not bad.”

Madame Graslin turned away her head; she seemed overcome by the sight of that happy family. The rector now left her to enter the church, whither she dragged herself presently on the arm of Monsieur Grossetete.

After breakfast every one, even the aged people of the village, assembled to see the beginning of the great work. From the slope leading up to the chateau, Monsieur Grossetete and Monsieur Bonnet, between whom was Veronique, could see the direction of the four first cuttings marked out by piles of gathered stones. At each cutting five laborers were digging out and piling up the good loam along the edges; clearing a space about eighteen feet wide, the width of each road. On either side, four other men were digging the ditches and also piling up the loam at the sides to make a bank. Behind them, as the banks were made, two men were digging holes in which others planted trees. In each of these divisions, thirty old paupers, a score of women, and forty or more girls and children were picking up stones, which special laborers piled



in heaps along the roadside so as to keep a record of the quantity gathered by each group. Thus the work went on rapidly, with picked workmen full of ardor. Grossetete promised Madame Graslin to send her some trees and to ask her other friends to do the same; for the nurseries of the chateau would evidently not suffice to supply such an extensive plantation. Toward the close of the day, which was to end in a grand dinner at the chateau, Farrabesche requested Madame Graslin to grant him an audience for a few moments.



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“Madame,” he said, presenting himself with Catherine, “you were so good as to offer me the farm at the chateau. By granting me so great a favor I know you intended to put me in the way of making my fortune. But Catherine has ideas about our future which we desire to submit to you. If I were to succeed and make money there would certainly be persons envious of my good fortune; a word is soon said; I might have quarrels,—I fear them; besides, Catherine would always be uneasy. In short, too close intercourse with the world will not suit us. I have come therefore to ask you to give us only the land at the opening of the Gabou on the commons, with a small piece of the woodland behind the Roche-Vive. In July you will have a great many workmen here, and it would be very easy then to build a farmhouse in a good position on the slope of the hill. We should be happy there. I will send for Guepin. My poor comrade will work like a horse; perhaps I could marry him here. My son is not a do-nothing either. No one would put us out of countenance; we could colonize this corner of the estate, and I should make it my ambition to turn it into a fine farm for you. Moreover, I want to propose as farmer of your great farm near the chateau a cousin of Catherine, who has money and would therefore be more capable than I could be of managing such a large affair as that farm. If it please God to bless your enterprise, in five years from now you will have five or six thousand horned beasts or horses on that plain below, and it wants a better head than mine to manage them.”

Madame Graslin agreed to his request, doing justice to the good sense of it.

From the time the work on the plain began, Veronique’s life assumed the regularity of country existence. In the morning she heard mass, took care of her son, whom she idolized, and went to see her laborers. After dinner she received her friends from Montegnac in the little salon to the right of the clock-tower. She taught Roubaud, Clousier, and the rector to play whist, which Gerard knew already. The rubbers usually ended at nine o’clock, after which the company withdrew. This peaceful life had no other events to mark it than the success of the various parts of the great enterprise.

In June the torrent of the Gabou went dry, and Gerard established his headquarters in the keeper’s house. Farrabesche had already built his farmhouse, which he called Le Gabou. Fifty masons, brought from Paris, joined the two mountains by a wall twenty feet thick, with a foundation twelve feet deep and heavily cemented. The wall, or dam, rose nearly sixty feet and tapered in until it was not more than ten feet thick at the summit. Gerard backed this wall on the valley side with a cemented slope, about twelve feet wide at its base. On the side toward the commons a similar slope, covered with several feet of arable earth, still further supported this great work, which no rush of water could possibly damage. The engineer provided in case of unusual rains an overflow at a proper height. The masonry was inserted into the flank of each mountain until the granite or the hard-pan was reached, so that the water had absolutely no outlet at the sides.



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This dam was finished by the middle of August. At the same time Gerard was preparing three canals in the principal valleys, and none of these works came up to his estimated costs. The chateau farm could now be finished. The irrigation channels through the plain, superintended by Fresquin, started from the canal made by nature along the base of the mountains on the plain side, through which culverts were cut to the irrigating channels. Water-gates were fitted into those channels, the sides of which the abundance of rock had enabled them to stone up, so as to keep the flow of water at an even height along the plain.

Every Sunday after mass, Veronique, the engineer, the rector, the doctor, and the mayor walked down through the park to see the course of the waters. The winter of 1832 and 1833 was extremely rainy. The water of the three streams which had been directed to the torrent, swollen by the water of the rains, now formed three ponds in the valley of the Gabou, carefully placed at different levels so as to create a steady reserve in case of a severe drought. At certain places where the valley widened Gerard had taken advantage of a few hillocks to make islands and plant them with trees of varied foliage. These vast operations completely changed the face of the country; but five or six years were of course needed to bring out their full character. "The country was naked," said Farrabesche, "and madame has clothed it."

Since these great undertakings were begun, Veronique had been called "Madame" throughout the whole neighborhood. When the rains ceased in June, 1833, they tried the irrigating channels through the planted fields, and the young verdure thus nourished soon showed the superior qualities of the *marciti* of Italy and the meadows of Switzerland. The system of irrigation, modelled on that of the farms in Lombardy, watered the earth evenly, and kept the surface as smooth as a carpet. The nitre of the snow dissolving in these channels no doubt added much to the quality of the herbage. The engineer hoped to find in the products of succeeding years some analogy with those of Switzerland, to which this nitrous substance is, as we know, a source of perpetual riches.

The plantations along the roads, sufficiently moistened by the water allowed to run through the ditches, made rapid growth. So that in 1838, six years after Madame Graslin had begun her enterprise, the stony plain, regarded as hopelessly barren by twenty generations, was verdant, productive, and well planted throughout. Gerard had built five farmhouses with their dependencies upon it, with a thousand acres to each. Gerard's own farm and those of Grossetete and Fresquin, which received the overflow from Madame's domains, were built on the same plan and managed by the same methods. The engineer also built a charming little house for himself on his own property. When all was completely finished, the inhabitants of Montegnac, instigated by the present mayor, who was anxious to retire, elected Gerard to the mayoralty of the district.



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In 1840 the departure of the first herd of cattle sent from Montegnac to the Paris markets was made the occasion of a rural fete. The farms of the plain raised fine beasts and horses; for it was found, after the land was cleaned up, that there were seven inches of good soil which the annual fall of leaves, the manure left by the pasturage of animals, and, above all, the melting of the snows contained in the valley of the Gabou, increased in fertility.

It was in this year that Madame Graslin found it necessary to obtain a tutor for her son, who was now eleven years of age. She did not wish to part with him, and yet she was anxious to make him a thoroughly well-educated man. Monsieur Bonnet wrote to the Seminary. Madame Graslin, on her side, said a few words as to her wishes and the difficulty of obtaining the right person to Monsieur Dutheil, recently appointed archbishop. The choice of such a man, who would live nine years familiarly in the chateau, was a serious matter. Gerard had already offered to teach mathematics to his friend Francis; but he could not, of course, take the place of a regular tutor. This question agitated Madame Graslin's mind, and all the more because she knew that her health was beginning to fail.

The more prosperous grew her dear Montegnac, the more she increased the secret austerities of her life. Monseigneur Dutheil, with whom she corresponded regularly, found at last the man she wanted. He sent her from his late diocese a young professor, twenty-five years of age, named Ruffin, whose mind had a special vocation for the art of teaching. This young man's knowledge was great, and his nature was one of deep feeling, which, however, did not preclude the sternness necessary in the management of youth. In him religion did not in any way hamper knowledge; he was also patient, and extremely agreeable in appearance and manner. "I make you a fine present, my dear daughter," wrote the prelate; "this young man is fit to educate a prince; therefore I think you will be glad to arrange the future with him, for he can undoubtedly be a spiritual father to your son."

Monsieur Ruffin proved so satisfactory to Madame Graslin's faithful friends that his arrival made no change in the various intimacies that grouped themselves around this beloved idol, whose hours and moments were claimed by each with jealous eagerness.

By the year 1843 the prosperity of Montegnac had increased beyond all expectation. The farm of the Gabou rivalled the farms of the plain, and that of the chateau set an example of constant improvement to all. The five other farms, increasing in value, obtained higher rent, reaching the sum of thirty thousand francs for each at the end of twelve years. The farmers, who were beginning to gather in the fruits of their sacrifices and those of Madame Graslin, now began to improve the grass of the plains, sowing seed of better quality, there being no longer any occasion to fear drought.



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During this year a man from Montegnac started a diligence between the chief town of the arrondissement and Limoges, leaving both places each day. Monsieur Clousier's nephew sold his office and obtained a license as notary in Montegnac. The government appointed Fresquin collector of the district. The new notary built himself a pretty house in the upper part of Montegnac, planted mulberries in the grounds, and became after a time assistant-mayor to his friend Gerard.

The engineer, encouraged by so much success, now conceived a scheme of a nature to render Madame Graslin's fortune colossal,—she herself having by this time recovered possession of the income which had been mortgaged for the repayment of the loan. Gerard's new scheme was to make a canal of the little river, and turn into it the superabundant waters of the Gabou. This canal, which he intended to carry into the Vienne, would form a waterway by which to send down timber from the twenty thousand acres of forest land belonging to Madame Graslin in Montegnac, now admirably managed by Colorat, but which, for want of transportation, returned no profit. A thousand acres could be cut over each year without detriment to the forest, and if sent in this way to Limoges, would find a ready market for building purposes.

This was the original plan of Monsieur Graslin himself, who had paid very little attention to the rector's scheme relating to the plain, being much more attracted by that of turning the little river into a canal.

XIX

A DEATH BLOW

At the beginning of the following year, in spite of Madame Graslin's assumption of strength, her friends began to notice symptoms which foreshadowed her coming death. To all the doctor's remarks, and to the inquiries of the most clear-sighted of her friends, Veronique made the invariable answer that she was perfectly well. But when the spring opened she went round to visit her forests, farms, and beautiful meadows with a childlike joy and delight which betrayed to those who knew her best a sad foreboding.

Finding himself obliged to build a small cemented wall between the dam of the Gabou and the park of Montegnac along the base of the hill called especially La Correze, Gerard took up the idea of enclosing the whole forest and thus uniting it with the park. Madame Graslin agreed to this, and appointed thirty thousand francs a year to this work, which would take seven years to accomplish and would then withdraw that fine forest from the rights exercised by government over the non-enclosed forests of private individuals. The three ponds of the Gabou would thus become a part of the park. These ponds, ambitiously called lakes, had each its island.



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This year, Gerard had prepared, in collusion with Grossetete, a surprise for Madame Graslin's birthday. He had built a little hermitage on the largest of the islands, rustic on the outside and elegantly arranged within. The old banker took part in the conspiracy, in which Farrabesche, Fresquin, Clousier's nephew, and nearly all the well-to-do people in Montegnac co-operated. Grossetete sent down some beautiful furniture. The clock tower, copied from that at Vevay, made a charming effect in the landscape. Six boats, two for each pond, were secretly built, painted, and rigged during the winter by Farrabesche and Guepin, assisted by the carpenter of Montegnac.

When the day arrived (about the middle of May) after a breakfast Madame Graslin gave to her friends, she was taken by them across the park—which was finely laid out by Gerard, who, for the last five years, had improved it like a landscape architect and naturalist—to the pretty meadow of the valley of the Gabou, where, at the shore of the first lake, two of the boats were floating. This meadow, watered by several clear streamlets, lay at the foot of the fine amphitheatre where the valley of the Gabou begins. The woods, cleared in a scientific manner, so as to produce noble masses and vistas that were charming to the eye, enclosed the meadow and gave it a solitude that was grateful to the soul. Gerard had reproduced on an eminence that chalet in the valley of Sion above the road to Brieg which travellers admire so much; here were to be the dairy and the cow-sheds of the chateau. From its gallery the eye roved over the landscape created by the engineer which the three lakes made worthy of comparison with the beauties of Switzerland.

The day was beautiful. In the blue sky, not a cloud; on earth, all the charming, graceful things the soil offers in the month of May. The trees planted ten years earlier on the banks—weeping willows, osier, alder, ash, the aspen of Holland, the poplars of Italy and Virginia, hawthorns and roses, acacias, birches, all choice growths arranged as their nature and the lay of the land made suitable—held amid their foliage a few fleecy vapors, born of the waters, which rose like a slender smoke. The surface of the lakelet, clear as a mirror and calm as the sky, reflected the tall green masses of the forest, the tops of which, distinctly defined in the limpid atmosphere, contrasted with the groves below wrapped in their pretty veils. The lakes, separated by broad causeways, were three mirrors showing different reflections, the waters of which flowed from one to another in melodious cascades. These causeways were used to go from lake to lake without passing round the shores. From the chalet could be seen, through a vista among the trees, the thankless waste of the chalk commons, resembling an open sea and contrasting with the fresh beauty of the lakes and their verdure.

When Veronique saw the joyousness of her friends as they held out their hands to help her into the largest of the boats, tears came into her eyes and she kept silence till they touched the bank of the first causeway. As she stepped into the second boat she saw the hermitage with Grossetete sitting on a bench before it with all his family.



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“Do they wish to make me regret dying?” she said to the rector.

“We wish to prevent you from dying,” replied Clousier.

“You cannot make the dead live,” she answered.

Monsieur Bonnet gave her a stern look which recalled her to herself.

“Let me take care of your health,” said Roubaud, in a gentle, persuasive voice. “I am sure I can save to this region its living glory, and to all our friends their common tie.”

Veronique bowed her head, and Gerard rowed slowly toward the island in the middle of the lake, the largest of the three, into which the overflowing water of the first was rippling with a sound that gave a voice to that delightful landscape.

“You have done well to make me bid farewell to this ravishing nature on such a day,” she said, looking at the beauty of the trees, all so full of foliage that they hid the shore. The only disapprobation her friends allowed themselves was to show a gloomy silence; and Veronique, receiving another glance from Monsieur Bonnet, sprang lightly ashore, assuming a lively air, which she did not relinquish. Once more the hostess, she was charming, and the Grossetete family felt she was again the beautiful Madame Graslin of former days.

“Indeed, you can still live, if you choose!” said her mother in a whisper.

At this gay festival, amid these glorious creations produced by the resources of nature only, nothing seemed likely to wound Veronique, and yet it was here and now that she received her death-blow.

The party were to return about nine o'clock by way of the meadows, the road through which, as lovely as an English or an Italian road, was the pride of its engineer. The abundance of small stones, laid aside when the plain was cleared, enabled him to keep it in good order; in fact, for the last five years it was, in a way, macadamized. Carriages were awaiting the company at the opening of the last valley toward the plain, almost at the base of the Roche-Vive. The horses, raised at Montegnac, were among the first that were ready for the market. The manager of the stud had selected a dozen for the stables of the chateau, and their present fine appearance was part of the programme of the fete. Madame Graslin's own carriage, a gift from Grossetete, was drawn by four of the finest animals, plainly harnessed.

After dinner the happy party went to take coffee in a little wooden kiosk, made like those on the Bosphorus, and placed on a point of the island from which the eye could reach to the farther lake beyond. From this spot Madame Graslin thought she saw her son Francis near the nursery-ground formerly planted by Farrabesche. She looked again, but did not see him; and Monsieur Ruffin pointed him out to her, playing on the bank

with Grossetete's children. Veronique became alarmed lest he should meet with some accident. Not listening to remonstrance, she ran down from the kiosk, and jumping into a boat, began to row toward



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her son. This little incident caused a general departure. Monsieur Grossetete proposed that they should all follow her and walk on the beautiful shore of the lake, along the curves of the mountainous bluffs. On landing there Madame Graslin saw her son in the arms of a woman in deep mourning. Judging by the shape of her bonnet and the style of her clothes, the woman was a foreigner. Veronique was startled, and called to her son, who presently came toward her.

“Who is that woman?” she asked the children round about her; “and why did Francis leave you to go to her?”

“The lady called him by name,” said a little girl.

At that instant Madame Sauviat and Gerard, who had outstripped the rest of the company, came up.

“Who is that woman, my dear child?” asked Madame Graslin as soon as Francis reached her.

“I don’t know,” he answered; “but she kissed me as you and grandmamma kissed me—she cried,” whispered Francis in his mother’s ear.

“Shall I go after her?” asked Gerard.

“No!” said Madame Graslin, with an abruptness that was not usual in her.

With a delicacy for which Veronique was grateful, Gerard led away the children and went back to detain the rest of the party, leaving Madame Sauviat, Madame Graslin, and Francis alone.

“What did she say to you?” asked Madame Sauviat of her grandson.

“I don’t know; she did not speak French.”

“Couldn’t you understand anything she said?” asked Veronique.

“No; but she kept saying over and over,—and that’s why I remember it, —*My dear brother!*”

Veronique took her mother’s arm and led her son by the hand, but she had scarcely gone a dozen steps before her strength gave way.

“What is the matter? what has happened?” said the others, who now came up, to Madame Sauviat.



“Oh! my daughter is in danger!” said the old woman, in guttural tones.

It was necessary to carry Madame Graslin to her carriage. She signed to Aline to get into it with Francis, and also Gerard.

“You have been in England,” she said to the latter as soon as she recovered herself, “and therefore no doubt you speak English; tell me the meaning of the words, *my dear brother*.”

On being told, Veronique exchanged a look with Aline and her mother which made them shudder; but they restrained their feelings.

The shouts and joyous cries of those who were assisting in the departure of the carriages, the splendor of the setting sun as it lay upon the meadows, the perfect gait of the beautiful horses, the laughter of her friends as they followed her on horseback at a gallop, —none of these things roused Madame Graslin from her torpor. Her mother ordered the coachman to hasten his horses, and their carriage reached the chateau some time before the others. When the company were again assembled, they were told that Veronique had gone to her rooms and was unable to see any one.



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"I fear," said Gerard to his friends, "that Madame Graslin has had some fatal shock."

"Where? how?" they asked.

"To her heart," he answered.

The following day Roubaud started for Paris. He had seen Madame Graslin, and found her so seriously ill that he wished for the assistance and advice of the ablest physician of the day. But Veronique had only received Roubaud to put a stop to her mother and Aline's entreaties that she would do something to benefit her; she herself knew that death had stricken her. She refused to see Monsieur Bonnet, sending word to him that the time had not yet come. Though all her friends who had come from Limoges to celebrate her birthday wished to be with her, she begged them to excuse her from fulfilling the duties of hospitality, saying that she desired to remain in the deepest solitude. After Roubaud's departure the other guests returned to Limoges, less disappointed than distressed; for all those whom Grossetete had brought with him adored Veronique. They were lost in conjecture as to what might have caused this mysterious disaster.

One evening, two days after the departure of the company, Aline brought Catherine to Madame Graslin's apartment. La Farrabesche stopped short, horrified at the change so suddenly wrought in her mistress, whose face seemed to her almost distorted.

"Good God, madame!" she cried, "what harm that girl has done! If we had only foreseen it, Farrabesche and I, we would never have taken her in. She has just heard that madame is ill, and sends me to tell Madame Sauviat she wants to speak to her."

"Here!" cried Veronique. "Where is she?"

"My husband took her to the chalet."

"Very good," said Madame Graslin; "tell Farrabesche to go elsewhere. Inform that lady that my mother will go to her; tell her to expect the visit."

As soon as it was dark Veronique, leaning on her mother's arm, walked slowly through the park to the chalet. The moon was shining with all its brilliancy, the air was soft, and the two women, visibly affected, found encouragement, of a sort, in the things of nature. The mother stopped now and then, to rest her daughter, whose sufferings were poignant, so that it was well-nigh midnight before they reached the path that goes down from the woods to the sloping meadow where the silvery roof of the chalet shone. The moonlight gave to the surface of the quiet water, the tint of pearls. The little noises of the night, echoing in the silence, made softest harmony. Veronique sat down on the bench of the chalet, amid this beautiful scene of the starry night. The murmur of two voices and the footfall of two persons still at a distance on the sandy shore were

brought by the water, which sometimes, when all is still, reproduces sounds as faithfully as it reflects objects on the surface. Veronique recognized at once the exquisite voice of the rector, and the rustle of his cassock, also the movement of some silken stuff that was probably the material of a woman's gown.



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“Let us go in,” she said to her mother.

Madame Sauviat and her daughter sat down on a crib in the lower room, which was intended for a stable.

“My child,” they heard the rector saying, “I do not blame you,—you are quite excusable; but your return may be the cause of irreparable evil; she is the soul of this region.”

“Ah! monsieur, then I had better go away to-night,” replied the stranger. “Though—I must tell you—to leave my country once more is death to me. If I had stayed a day longer in that horrible New York, where there is neither hope, nor faith, nor charity, I should have died without being ill. The air I breathed oppressed my chest, food did not nourish me, I was dying while full of life and vigor. My sufferings ceased the moment I set foot upon the vessel to return. I seemed to be already in France. Oh! monsieur, I saw my mother and one of my sisters-in-law die of grief. My grandfather and grandmother Tascheron are dead; dead, my dear Monsieur Bonnet, in spite of the prosperity of Tascheronville,—for my father founded a village in Ohio and gave it that name. That village is now almost a town, and a third of all the land is cultivated by members of our family, whom God has constantly protected. Our tillage succeeded, our crops have been enormous, and we are rich. The town is Catholic, and we have managed to build a Catholic church; we do not allow any other form of worship, and we hope to convert by our example the many sects which surround us. True religion is in a minority in that land of money and selfish interests, where the soul is cold. Nevertheless, I will return to die there, sooner than do harm or cause distress to the mother of our Francis. Only, Monsieur Bonnet, take me to-night to the parsonage that I may pray upon *his* tomb, the thought of which has brought me here; the nearer I have come to where *he* is, the more I felt myself another being. No, I never expected to feel so happy again as I do here.”

“Well, then,” said the rector, “come with me now. If there should come a time when you might return without doing injury, I will write to you, Denise; but perhaps this visit to your birthplace will stop the homesickness, and enable you to live over there without suffering—”

“Oh! to leave this country, now so beautiful! What wonders Madame Graslin has done for it!” she exclaimed, pointing to the lake as it lay in the moonlight. “All this fine domain will belong to our dear Francis.”

“You shall not go away, Denise,” said Madame Graslin, who was standing at the stable door.

Jean-Francois Tascheron’s sister clasped her hands on seeing the spectre which addressed her. At that moment the pale Veronique, standing in the moonlight, was like



a shade defined upon the darkness of the open door-way. Her eyes alone shone like stars.

“No, my child, you shall not leave the country you have come so far to see again; you shall be happy here, or God will refuse to help me; it is He, no doubt, who has brought you back.”



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She took the astonished Denise by the hand, and led her away by a path toward the other shore of the lake, leaving her mother and the rector, who seated themselves on the bench.

“Let her do as she wishes,” said Madame Sauviat.

A few moments later Veronique returned alone, and was taken back to the chateau by her mother and Monsieur Bonnet. Doubtless she had formed some plan which required secrecy, for no one in the neighborhood either saw Denise or heard any mention of her.

Madame Graslin took to her bed that day and never but once left it again; she went from bad to worse daily, and seemed annoyed and thwarted that she could not rise,—trying to do so on several occasions, and expressing a desire to walk out into the park. A few days, however, after the scene we have just related, about the beginning of June, she made a violent effort, rose, dressed as if for a gala day, and begged Gerard to give her his arm, declaring that she was resolved to take a walk. She gathered up all her strength and expended it on this expedition, accomplishing her intention in a paroxysm of will which had, necessarily, a fatal reaction.

“Take me to the chalet, and alone,” she said to Gerard in a soft voice, looking at him with a sort of coquetry. “This is my last excursion; I dreamed last night the doctors arrived and captured me.”

“Do you want to see your woods?” asked Gerard.

“For the last time, yes,” she answered. “But what I really want,” she added, in a coaxing voice, “is to make you a singular proposition.”

She asked Gerard to embark with her in one of the boats on the second lake, to which she went on foot. When the young man, surprised at her intention, began to move the oars, she pointed to the hermitage as the object of her coming.

“My friend,” she said, after a long pause, during which she had been contemplating the sky and water, the hills and shores, “I have a strange request to make of you; but I think you are a man who would obey my wishes—”

“In all things, sure that you can wish only what is good.”

“I wish to marry you,” she answered; “if you consent you will accomplish the wish of a dying woman, which is certain to secure your happiness.”

“I am too ugly,” said the engineer.

“The person to whom I refer is pretty; she is young, and wishes to live at Montegnac. If you will marry her you will help to soften my last hours. I will not dwell upon her virtues



now; I only say her nature is a rare one; in the matter of grace and youth and beauty, one look will suffice; you are now about to see her at the hermitage. As we return home you must give me a serious yes or no.”

Hearing this confidence, Gerard unconsciously quickened his oars, which made Madame Graslin smile. Denise, who was living alone, away from all eyes, at the hermitage, recognized Madame Graslin and immediately opened the door. Veronique and Gerard entered. The poor girl could not help a blush as she met the eyes of the young man, who was greatly surprised at her beauty.



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“I hope Madame Farrabesche has not let you want for anything?” said Veronique.

“Oh no! madame, see!” and she pointed to her breakfast.

“This is Monsieur Gerard, of whom I spoke to you,” went on Veronique. “He is to be my son’s guardian, and after my death you shall live together at the chateau until his majority.”

“Oh! madame, do not talk in that way!”

“My dear child, look at me!” replied Veronique, addressing Denise, in whose eyes the tears rose instantly. “She has just arrived from New York,” she added, by way of introduction to Gerard.

The engineer put several questions about the new world to the young woman, while Veronique, leaving them alone, went to look at the third and more distant lake of the Gabou. It was six o’clock as Veronique and Gerard returned in the boat toward the chalet.

“Well?” she said, looking at him.

“You have my promise.”

“Though you are, I know, without prejudices,” she went on, “I must not leave you ignorant of the reason why that poor girl, brought back here by homesickness, left the place originally.”

“A false step?”

“Oh, no!” said Veronique. “Should I offer her to you if that were so? She is the sister of a workman who died on the scaffold—”

“Ah! Tascheron,” he said, “the murderer of old Pingret.”

“Yes, she is the sister of a murderer,” said Madame Graslin, in a bitter tone; “you are at liberty to take back your promise and—”

She did not finish, and Gerard was obliged to carry her to the bench before the chalet, where she remained unconscious for some little time. When she opened her eyes Gerard was on his knees before her and he said instantly:—

“I will marry Denise.”

Madame Graslin took his head in both hands and kissed him on the forehead; then, seeing his surprise at so much gratitude, she pressed his hand and said:



“Before long you will know the secret of all this. Let us go back to the terrace, for it is late; I am very tired, but I must look my last on that dear plain.”

Though the day had been insupportably hot, the storms which during this year devastated parts of Europe and of France but respected the Limousin, had run their course in the basin of the Loire, and the atmosphere was singularly clear. The sky was so pure that the eye could seize the slightest details on the horizon. What language can render the delightful concert of busy sounds produced in the village by the return of the workers from the fields? Such a scene, to be rightly given, needs a great landscape artist and also a great painter of the human face. Is there not, by the bye, in the lassitude of Nature and that of man a curious affinity which is difficult to grasp? The depressing heat of a dog-day and the rarification of the air give to the least sound made by human beings all its signification. The women seated on their doorsteps and waiting for their



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husbands (who often bring back the children) gossip with each other while still at work. The roofs are casting up the lines of smoke which tell of the evening meal, the gayest among the peasantry; after which, they sleep. All actions express the tranquil cheerful thoughts of those whose day's work is over. Songs are heard very different in character from those of the morning; in this the peasants imitate the birds, whose warbling at night is totally unlike their notes at dawn. All nature sings a hymn to rest, as it sang a hymn of joy to the coming sun. The slightest movements of living beings seem tinted then with the soft, harmonious colors of the sunset cast upon the landscape and lending even to the dusty roadways a placid air. If any dared deny the influence of this hour, the loveliest of the day, the flowers would protest and intoxicate his senses with their penetrating perfumes, which then exhale and mingle with the tender hum of insects and the amorous note of birds.

The brooks which threaded the plain beyond the village were veiled in fleecy vapor. In the great meadows through which the high-road ran, —bordered with poplars, acacias, and ailanthus, wisely intermingled and already giving shade,—enormous and justly celebrated herds of cattle were scattered here and there, some still grazing, others ruminating. Men, women, and children were ending their day's work in the hay-field, the most picturesque of all the country toils. The night air, freshened by distant storms, brought on its wings the satisfying odors of the newly cut grass or the finished hay. Every feature of this beautiful panorama could be seen perfectly; those who feared a coming storm were finishing in haste the hay-stacks, while others followed with their pitchforks to fill the carts as they were driven along the rows. Others in the distance were still mowing, or turning the long lines of fallen grass to dry it, or hastening to pile it into cocks. The joyous laugh of the merry workers mingling with the shouts of the children tumbling each other in the hay, rose on the air. The eye could distinguish the pink, red, or blue petticoats, the kerchiefs, and the bare legs and arms of the women, all wearing broad-brimmed hats of a coarse straw, and the shirts and trousers of the men, the latter almost invariably white. The last rays of the sun were filtering through the long lines of poplars planted beside the trenches which divided the plain into meadows of unequal size, and caressing the groups of horses and carts, men, women, children, and cattle. The cattlemen and the shepherd-girls were beginning to collect their flocks to the sound of rustic horns.

The scene was noisy, yet silent,—a paradoxical statement, which will surprise only those to whom the character of country life is still unknown. From all sides came the carts, laden with fragrant fodder. There was something, I know not what, of torpor in the scene. Veronique walked slowly and silently between Gerard and the rector, who had joined her on the terrace.



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Through the openings made by the rural lanes running down below the terrace to the main street of Montegnac Gerard and Monsieur Bonnet could see the faces of men, women, and children turned toward them; watching more particularly, no doubt, for Madame Graslin. How much of tenderness and gratitude was expressed on those faces! How many benedictions followed Veronique's footsteps! With what reverent attention were the three benefactors of a whole community regarded! Man was adding a hymn of gratitude to the other chants of evening.

While Madame Graslin walked on with her eyes fastened on the long, magnificent green pastures, her most cherished creation, the priest and the mayor did not take their eyes from the groups below, whose expression it was impossible to misinterpret; pain, sadness, and regret, mingled with hope, were plainly on all those faces. No one in Montegnac or its neighborhood was ignorant that Monsieur Roubaud had gone to Paris to bring the best physician science afforded, or that the benefactress of the whole district was in the last stages of a fatal illness. In all the markets through a circumference of thirty miles the peasants asked those of Montegnac,—

"How is your good woman now?"

The great vision of death hovered over the land, and dominated that rural picture. Afar, in the fields, more than one reaper sharpening his scythe, more than one young girl, her arms resting on her fork, more than one farmer stacking his hay, seeing Madame Graslin, stood mute and thoughtful, examining that noble woman, the blessing of the Correze, seeking some favorable sign or merely looking to admire her, impelled by a feeling that arrested their work.

"She is out walking; therefore she must be better."

These simple words were on every lip.

Madame Graslin's mother, seated on the iron bench which Veronique had formerly placed at the end of the terrace, studied every movement of her daughter; she watched her step in walking, and a few tears rolled from her eyes. Aware of the secret efforts of that superhuman courage, she knew that Veronique at that moment was suffering the tortures of a horrible agony, and only maintained herself erect by the exercise of her heroic will. The tears—they seemed almost red—which forced their way from those aged eyes, and furrowed that wrinkled face, the parchment of which seemed incapable of softening under any emotion, excited those of young Graslin, whom Monsieur Ruffin had between his knees.

"What is the matter, my boy?" said the tutor, anxiously.

"My grandmother is crying," he answered.



Monsieur Ruffin, whose eyes were on Madame Graslin as she came toward them, now looked at Madame Sauviat, and was powerfully struck by the aspect of that old head, like that of a Roman matron, petrified with grief and moistened with tears.

“Madame, why did you not prevent her from coming out?” said the tutor to the old mother, august and sacred in her silent grief.



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As Veronique advanced majestically with her naturally fine and graceful step, Madame Sauviat, driven by despair at the thought of surviving her daughter, allowed the secret of many things that awakened curiosity to escape her.

“How can she walk like that,” she cried, “wearing a horrible horsehair shirt, which pricks into her skin perpetually?”

The words horrified the young man, who was not insensible to the exquisite grace of Veronique’s movements; he shuddered as he thought of the constant and terrific struggle of the soul to maintain its empire thus over the body.

“She has worn it thirteen years,—ever since she ceased to nurse the boy,” said the old woman. “She has done miracles here, but if her whole life were known they ought to canonize her. Since she came to Montegnac no one has ever seen her eat, and do you know why? Aline serves her three times a day a piece of dry bread, and vegetables boiled in water, without salt, on a common plate of red earth like those they feed the dogs on. Yes, that’s how the woman lives who has given new life to this whole canton. She kneels to say her prayers on the edge of that hair-shirt. She says she could not have that smiling air you know she always has unless she practised these austerities. I tell you this,” added the old woman, sinking her voice, “so that you may repeat it to the doctor that Monsieur Roubaud has gone to fetch. If they could prevent my daughter from continuing these penances, perhaps they might still save her, though death has laid its hand upon her head. See for yourself! Ah! I must be strong indeed to have borne so many things these fifteen years.”

The old woman took her grandson’s hand and passed it over her forehead and cheeks as if the child’s touch shed a healing balm there; then she kissed it with an affection the secret of which belongs to grandmothers as much as it belongs to mothers.

Veronique was now only a few feet from the bench, in company with Clousier, the rector, and Gerard. Illuminated by the glow of the setting sun, she shone with a dreadful beauty. Her yellow forehead, furrowed with long wrinkles massed one above the other like layers of clouds, revealed a fixed thought in the midst of inward troubles. Her face, devoid of all color, entirely white with the dead, greenish whiteness of plants without light, was thin, though not withered, and bore the signs of terrible physical sufferings produced by mental anguish. She fought her soul with her body, and *vice versa*. She was so completely destroyed that she no more resembled herself than an old woman resembles her portrait as a girl. The ardent expression of her eyes declared the despotic empire exercised by a devout will over a body reduced to what religion requires it to be. In this woman the soul dragged the flesh as the Achilles of profane story dragged Hector; for fifteen years she dragged it victoriously along the stony paths of life around the celestial Jerusalem she hoped to



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enter, not by a vile deception, but with acclamation. No solitary that ever lived in the dry and arid deserts of Africa was ever more master of his senses than was Veronique in her magnificent chateau, among the soft, voluptuous scenery of that opulent land, beneath the protecting mantle of that rich forest, whence science, the heir of Moses' wand, had called forth plenty, prosperity, and happiness for a whole region. She contemplated the results of twelve years' patience, a work which might have made the fame of many a superior man, with a gentle modesty such as Pontorno has painted in the sublime face of his "Christian Chastity caressing the Celestial Unicorn." The mistress of the manor, whose silence was respected by her companions when they saw that her eyes were roving over those vast plains, once arid, and now fertile by her will, walked on, her arms folded, with a distant look, as if to some far horizon, on her face.

XX

THE LAST STRUGGLE

Suddenly she stopped, a few feet from her mother, who looked at her as the mother of Christ must have looked at her son upon the cross. She raised her hand, and pointing to the spot where the road to Montegnac branched from the highway, she said, smiling:

"See that carriage with the post-horses; Monsieur Roubaud is returning to us. We shall now know how many hours I have to live."

"Hours?" said Gerard.

"Did I not tell you I was taking my last walk?" she replied. "I have come here to see for the last time this glorious scene in all its splendor!" She pointed first to the village where the whole population seemed to be collected in the church square, and then to the beautiful meadows glowing in the last rays of the setting sun. "Ah!" she said, "let me see the benediction of God in the strange atmospheric condition to which we owe the safety of our harvest. Around us, on all sides, tempests, hail, lightning, have struck incessantly and pitilessly. The common people think thus, why not I? I do so need to see in this a happy augury for what awaits me after death!"

The child stood up and took his mother's hand and laid it on his head. Veronique, deeply affected by the action, so full of eloquence, took up her son with supernatural strength, seating him on her left arm as though he were still an infant at her breast, saying, as she kissed him:—

"Do you see that land, my son? When you are a man, continue there your mother's work."



“Madame,” said the rector, in a grave voice, “a few strong and privileged beings are able to contemplate their coming death face to face, to fight, as it were, a duel with it, and to display a courage and an ability which challenge admiration. You show us this terrible spectacle; but perhaps you have too little pity for us; leave us at least the hope that you may be mistaken, and that God will allow you to finish that which you have begun.”

“All I have done is through you, my friends,” she said. “I have been useful, I can be so no longer. All is fruitful around us now; nothing is barren and desolated here except my heart. You well know, my dear rector, that I can only find peace and pardon *there*.”



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She stretched her hand toward the cemetery. Never had she said as much since the day of her arrival, when she was taken with sudden illness at the same spot. The rector looked attentively at his penitent, and the habit of penetration he had long acquired made him see that in those simple words he had won another triumph. Veronique must have made a mighty effort over herself to break her twelve years' silence with a speech that said so much. The rector clasped his hands with a fervent gesture that was natural to him as he looked with deep emotion at the members of this family whose secrets had passed into his heart.

Gerard, to whom the words "peace and pardon" must have seemed strange, was bewildered. Monsieur Ruffin, with his eyes fixed on Veronique, was stupefied. At this instant the carriage came rapidly up the avenue.

"There are five of them!" cried the rector, who could see and count the travellers.

"Five!" exclaimed Gerard. "Can five know more than two?"

"Ah," cried Madame Graslin suddenly, grasping the rector's arm, "the *procureur-general* is among them! What is he doing here?"

"And papa Grossetete, too!" cried Francis.

"Madame," said the rector, supporting Veronique, and leading her apart a few steps, "show courage; be worthy of yourself."

"But what can he want?" she replied, leaning on the balustrade. "Mother!" (the old woman ran to her daughter with an activity that belied her years.) "I shall see him again," she said.

"As he comes with Monsieur Grossetete," said the rector, "he can have none but good intentions."

"Ah! monsieur, my child will die!" cried Madame Sauviat, seeing the effect of the rector's words on her daughter's face. "How can her heart survive such emotions? Monsieur Grossetete has always hitherto prevented that man from seeing Veronique."

Madame Graslin's face was on fire.

"Do you hate him so much?" said the Abbe Bonnet.

"She left Limoges to escape the sight of him, and to escape letting the whole town into her secrets," said Madame Sauviat, terrified at the change she saw on Madame Graslin's features.



“Do you not see that he will poison my few remaining hours? When I ought to be thinking of heaven he will nail me to earth,” cried Veronique.

The rector took her arm and constrained her to walk aside with him. When they were alone he stopped and gave her one of those angelic looks with which he was able to calm the violent convulsions of the soul.

“If it is really so,” he said, “as your confessor, I order you to receive him, to be kind and affectionate to him, to quit that garment of wrath, and forgive him as God will forgive you. Can there still be the remains of passion of a soul I believed to be purified. Burn this last incense on the altar of your penitence, or else your repentance is a lie.”

“There was still that effort to make—and it is made,” she answered, wiping her eyes. “The devil lurked in that last fold of my heart, and God, no doubt, put into Monsieur de Grandville’s mind the thought that brings him here. Ah! how many times must God strike me?” she cried.



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She stopped, as if to say a mental prayer; then she returned to Madame Sauviat and said in a low voice:

“My dear mother, be kind and gentle to Monsieur de Grandville.”

The old woman clasped her hands with a feverish shudder.

“There is no longer any hope,” she said, seizing the rector’s hand.

The carriage, announced by the postilion’s whip, was now coming up the last slope; the gates were opened, it entered the courtyard, and the travellers came at once to the terrace. They were the illustrious Archbishop Dutheil, who was on his way to consecrate Monseigneur Gabriel de Rastignac, the *procureur-general*, Monsieur de Grandville, Monsieur Grossetete, Monsieur Roubaud, and one of the most celebrated physicians in Paris, Horace Bianchon.

“You are very welcome,” said Veronique, advancing toward them,—“you particularly,” she added, offering her hand to Monsieur de Grandville, who took it and pressed it.

“I counted on the intervention of Monseigneur and on that of my friend Monsieur Grossetete to obtain for me a favorable reception,” said the *procureur-general*. “It would have been a life-long regret to me if I did not see you again.”

“I thank those who brought you here,” replied Veronique, looking at the Comte de Grandville for the first time in fifteen years. “I have felt averse to you for a very long time, but I now recognize the injustice of my feelings; and you shall know why, if you can stay till the day after to-morrow at Montegnac.” Then turning to Horace Bianchon and bowing to him, she added: “Monsieur will no doubt confirm my apprehensions. God must have sent you, Monseigneur,” she said, turning to the archbishop. “In memory of our old friendship you will not refuse to assist me in my last moments. By whose mercy is it that I have about me all the beings who have loved and supported me in life?”

As she said the word *loved* she turned with a gracious look to Monsieur de Grandville, who was touched to tears by this mark of feeling. Silence fell for a few moments on every one. The doctors wondered by what occult power this woman could still keep her feet, suffering as she must have suffered. The other three men were so shocked at the ravages disease had suddenly made in her that they communicated their thoughts by their eyes only.

“Allow me,” she said, with her accustomed grace, “to leave you now with these gentlemen; the matter is urgent.”



She bowed to her guests, gave an arm to each of the doctors, and walked toward the chateau feebly and slowly, with a difficulty which told only too plainly of the coming catastrophe.

“Monsieur Bonnet,” said the archbishop, looking at the rector, “you have accomplished a miracle.”

“Not I, but God, Monseigneur,” he replied.

“They said she was dying,” said Monsieur Grossetete, “but she is dead; there is nothing left of her but spirit.”

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"A soul," said Gerard.

"And yet she is still the same," cried the *procureur-general*.

"A stoic after the manner of the Porch philosophers," said the tutor.

They walked in silence the whole length of the balustrade, looking at the landscape still red with the declining light.

"To me who saw this scene thirteen years ago," said the archbishop, pointing to the fertile plain, the valley, and the mountains of Montegnac, "this miracle is as extraordinary as that we have just witnessed. But how comes it that you allow Madame Graslin to walk about? She ought to be in her bed."

"She was there," said Madame Sauviat; "for ten days she did not leave it; but to-day she insisted on getting up to take a last look at the landscape."

"I can understand that she wanted to bid farewell to her great creation," said Monsieur de Grandville; "but she risked expiring on this terrace."

"Monsieur Roubaud told us not to thwart her," said Madame Sauviat.

"What a stupendous work! what a miracle has been accomplished!" said the archbishop, whose eyes were roving over the scene before him. "She has literally sown the desert! But we know, monsieur," he added, turning to Gerard, "that your scientific knowledge and your labors have a large share in it."

"They have been only the workmen," replied the mayor. "Yes, the hands only; she has been the thought."

Madame Sauviat here left the group, to hear, if possible, the decision of the doctors.

"We need some heroism ourselves," said Monsieur de Grandville to the rector and the archbishop, "to enable us to witness this death."

"Yes," said Monsieur Grossetete, who overheard him, "but we ought to do much for such a friend."

After several turns up and down the terrace, these persons, full of solemn thoughts, saw two farmers approaching them, sent as a deputation from the village, where the inhabitants were in a state of painful anxiety to know the sentence pronounced by the physician from Paris.

"They are still consulting, and as yet we know nothing, my friends," said the archbishop.



As he spoke, Monsieur Roubaud appeared coming toward them, and they all hurried to meet him.

“Well?” said the mayor.

“She cannot live forty-eight hours longer,” replied Monsieur Roubaud. “During my absence the disease has fully developed; Monsieur Bianchon does not understand how it was possible for her to have walked. Such phenomenal exhibitions of strength are always caused by great mental exaltation. So, gentlemen,” said the doctor to the priests, “she belongs to you now; science is useless, and my illustrious fellow-physician thinks you have barely time enough for your last offices.”

“Let us go now and say the prayers for the forty hours,” said the rector to his parishioners, turning to leave the terrace. “His Grace will doubtless administer the last sacraments.”



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The archbishop bowed his head; he could not speak; his eyes were full of tears. Every one sat down, or leaned against the balustrade, absorbed in his own thought. The church bells presently sent forth a few sad calls, and then the whole population were seen hurrying toward the porch. The gleam of the lighted tapers shone through the trees in Monsieur Bonnet's garden; the chants resounded. No color was left in the landscape but the dull red hue of the dusk; even the birds had hushed their songs; the tree-frog alone sent forth its long, clear, melancholy note.

"I will go and do my duty," said the archbishop, turning away with a slow step like a man overcome with emotion.

The consultation had taken place in the great salon of the chateau. This vast room communicated with a state bedchamber, furnished in red damask, in which Graslin had displayed a certain opulent magnificence. Veronique had not entered it six times in fourteen years; the grand apartments were quite useless to her, and she never received her friends there. But now the effort she had made to accomplish her last obligation, and to overcome her last repugnance had exhausted her strength, and she was wholly unable to mount the stairs to her own rooms.

When the illustrious physician had taken the patient's hand and felt her pulse he looked at Monsieur Roubaud and made him a sign; then together they lifted her and carried her into the chamber. Aline hastily opened the doors. Like all state beds the one in this room had no sheets, and the two doctors laid Madame Graslin on the damask coverlet. Roubaud opened the windows, pushed back the outer blinds, and called. The servants and Madame Sauviat went in. The tapers in the candelabra were lighted.

"It is ordained," said the dying woman, smiling, "that my death shall be what that of a Christian should be—a festival!"

During the consultation she said:—

"The *procureur-general* has done his professional duty; I was going, and he has pushed me on."

The old mother looked at her and laid a finger on her lips.

"Mother, I shall speak," replied Veronique. "See! the hand of God is in all this; I am dying in a red room—"

Madame Sauviat went out, unable to bear those words.

"Aline," she said, "she will speak! she will speak!"

"Ah! madame is out of her mind," cried the faithful maid, who was bringing sheets. "Fetch the rector, madame."



“Your mistress must be undressed,” said Bianchon to the maid.

“It will be very difficult to do it, monsieur; madame is wrapped in a hair-cloth garment.”

“What! in the nineteenth-century can such horrors be revived?” said the great doctor.

“Madame Graslin has never allowed me to touch her stomach,” said Roubaud. “I have been able to judge of the progress of the disease only from her face and her pulse, and the little information I could get from her mother and the maid.”



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Veronique was now placed on a sofa while the bed was being made. The doctors spoke together in a low voice. Madame Sauviat and Aline made the bed. The faces of the two women were full of anguish; their hearts were wrung by the thought, "We are making her bed for the last time —she will die here!"

The consultation was not long. But Bianchon exacted at the outset that Aline should, in spite of the patient's resistance, cut off the hair shirt and put on a night-dress. The doctors returned to the salon while this was being done. When Aline passed them carrying the instrument of torture wrapped in a napkin, she said:—

"Madame's body is one great wound."

The doctors returned to the bedroom.

"Your will is stronger than that of Napoleon, madame," said Bianchon, after asking a few questions, to which Veronique replied very clearly. "You keep your mind and your faculties in the last stages of a disease which robbed the Emperor of his brilliant intellect. From what I know of you I think I ought to tell you the truth."

"I implore you to do so," she said. "You are able to estimate what strength remains to me; and I have need of all my vigor for a few hours."

"Think only of your salvation," replied Bianchon.

"If God has given me grace to die in possession of all my faculties," she said with a celestial smile, "be sure that this favor will be used to the glory of his Church. The possession of my mind and senses is necessary to fulfil a command of God, whereas Napoleon had accomplished all his destiny."

The doctors looked at each other in astonishment at hearing these words, said with as much ease as though Madame Graslin were still presiding in her salon.

"Ah! here is the doctor who is to cure me," she said presently, when the archbishop, summoned by Roubaud, entered the room.

She collected all her strength and rose to a sitting posture, in order to bow graciously to Monsieur Bianchon, and beg him to accept something else than money for the good news he gave her. She said a few words in her mother's ear, and Madame Sauviat immediately led away the doctors; then Veronique requested the archbishop to postpone their interview till the rector could come to her, expressing a wish to rest for a while. Aline watched beside her.

At midnight Madame Graslin awoke, and asked for the archbishop and rector, whom Aline silently showed her close at hand, praying for her. She made a sign dismissing her mother and the maid, and, at another sign, the two priests came to the bedside.



“Monseigneur, and you, my dear rector,” she said, “will hear nothing you do not already know. You were the first, Monseigneur, to cast your eyes into my inner self; you read there nearly all my past; and what you read sufficed you. My confessor, that guardian angel whom heaven placed near me, knows more; I have told him all. You, whose minds are enlightened by the spirit of the Church, I wish to consult you as to the manner in which I ought as a true Christian to leave this life. You, austere and saintly spirits, think you that if God deigns to pardon one whose repentance is the deepest, the most absolute, that ever shook a human soul, think you that even then I have made my full expiation here below?”



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“Yes,” said the archbishop; “yes, my daughter.”

“No, my father, no!” she said rising in her bed, the lightning flashing from her eyes. “Not far from here there is a grave, where an unhappy man is lying beneath the weight of a dreadful crime; here in this sumptuous home is a woman, crowned with the fame of benevolence and virtue. This woman is blessed; that poor young man is cursed. The criminal is covered with obloquy; I receive the respect of all. I had the largest share in the sin; he has a share, a large share in the good which has won for me such glory and such gratitude. Fraud that I am, I have the honor; he, the martyr to his loyalty, has the shame. I shall die in a few hours, and the canton will mourn me; the whole department will ring with my good deeds, my piety, my virtue; but he died covered with insults, in sight of a whole population rushing, with hatred to a murderer, to see him die. You, my judges, you are indulgent to me; yet I hear within myself an imperious voice which will not let me rest. Ah! the hand of God, less tender than yours, strikes me from day to day, as if to warn me that all is not expiated. My sins cannot be redeemed except by a public confession. He is happy! criminal, he gave his life with ignominy in face of earth and heaven; and I, I cheat the world as I cheated human justice. The homage I receive humiliates me; praise sears my heart. Do you not see, in the very coming of the *procureur-general*, a command from heaven echoing the voice in my own soul which cries to me: Confess!”

The two priests, the prince of the Church as well as the humble rector, these two great lights, each in his own way, stood with their eyes lowered and were silent. Deeply moved by the grandeur and the resignation of the guilty woman, the judges could not pronounce her sentence.

“My child,” said the archbishop at last, raising his noble head, macerated by the customs of his austere life, “you are going beyond the commandments of the Church. The glory of the Church is to make her dogma conform to the habits and manners of each age; for the Church goes on from age to age in company with humanity. According to her present decision secret confession has taken the place of public confession. This substitution has made the new law. The sufferings you have endured suffice. Die in peace: God has heard you.”

“But is not this desire of a guilty woman in conformity with the law of the first Church, which has enriched heaven with as many saints and martyrs and confessing souls as there are stars in the firmament?” persisted Veronique, vehemently. “Who said: *Confess yourselves to one another*? Was it not the disciples, who lived with the Saviour? Let me confess my shame publicly on my knees. It will redeem my sin to the world, to that family exiled and almost extinct through me. The world ought to know that my benefactions are not an offering, but the payment of a debt. Suppose that later, after my death, something tore from my memory the lying veil which covers me. Ah! that idea is more than I can bear, it is death indeed!”



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“I see in this too much of calculation, my child,” said the archbishop, gravely. “Passions are still too strong in you; the one I thought extinct is—”

“Oh! I swear to you, Monseigneur,” she said, interrupting the prelate and fixing her eyes, full of horror, upon him, “my heart is as purified as that of a guilty and repentant woman can be; there is nothing now within me but the thought of God.”

“Monseigneur,” said the rector in a tender voice, “let us leave celestial justice to take its course. It is now four years since I have strongly opposed this wish; it is the only difference that has ever come between my penitent and myself. I have seen to the depths of that soul, and I know this earth has no longer any hold there. Though the tears, the remorse, the contrition of fifteen years relate to the mutual sin of those two persons, believe me there are no remains of earthly passion in this long and terrible bewailing. Memory no longer mingles its flames with those of an ardent penitence. Yes, tears have at last extinguished that great fire. I guarantee,” he said, stretching his hand over Madame Graslin’s head, and letting his moistened eyes be seen, “I guarantee the purity of that angelic soul. And also I see in this desire the thought of reparation to an absent family, a member of which God has brought back here by one of those events which reveal His providence.”

Veronique took the trembling hand of the rector and kissed it.

“You have often been very stern to me, dear pastor, but at this moment I see where you keep your apostolic gentleness. You,” she said, looking at the archbishop, “you, the supreme head of this corner of God’s kingdom, be to me, in this moment of ignominy, a support. I must bow down as the lowest of women, but you will lift me up pardoned and—possibly—the equal of those who never sinned.”

The archbishop was silent, weighing no doubt all the considerations his practised eye perceived.

“Monseigneur,” said the rector, “religion has had some heavy blows. This return to ancient customs, brought about by the greatness of the sin and its repentance, may it not be a triumph we have no right to refuse?”

“But they will say we are fanatics! They will declare we have exacted this cruel scene!”

And again the archbishop was silent and thoughtful.

At this moment Horace Bianchon and Roubaud entered the room, after knocking. As the door opened Veronique saw her mother, her son, and all the servants of the household on their knees praying. The rectors of the two adjacent parishes had come to assist Monsieur Bonnet, and also, perhaps, to pay their respects to the great prelate, for whom the French clergy now desired the honors of the cardinalate, hoping that the

clearness of his intellect, which was thoroughly Gallican, would enlighten the Sacred College.



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Horace Bianchon returned to Paris; before departing, he came to bid farewell to the dying woman and thank her for her munificence. Slowly he approached, perceiving from the faces of the priests that the wounds of the soul had been the determining cause of those of the body. He took Madame Graslin's hand, laid it on the bed and felt the pulse. The deep silence, that of a summer night in a country solitude, gave additional solemnity to the scene. The great salon, seen through the double doors, was lighted up for the little company of persons who were praying there; all were on their knees except the two priests who were seated and reading their breviaries. On either side of the grand state bed were the prelate in his violet robes, the rector, and the two physicians.

"She is agitated almost unto death," said Horace Bianchon, who, like all men of great talent, sometimes used speech as grand as the occasion that called it forth.

The archbishop rose as if some inward impulse drove him; he called to Monsieur Bonnet, and together they crossed the room, passed through the salon, and went out upon the terrace, where they walked up and down for some moments. When they returned, after discussing this case of ecclesiastical discipline, Roubaud met them.

XXI

CONFESSION AT THE GATES OF THE TOMB

At ten o'clock in the morning the archbishop, wearing his pontifical robes, came into Madame Graslin's chamber. The prelate, as well as the rector, had such confidence in this woman that they gave her no advice or instructions as to the limits within which she ought to make her confession.

Veronique now saw an assemblage of clergy from all the neighboring districts. Monseigneur was assisted by four vicars. The magnificent vessels she had bestowed upon her dear parish church were brought to the house and gave splendor to the ceremony. Eight choristers in their white and red surplices stood in two rows from the bed to the door of the salon, each holding one of the large bronze-gilt candelabra which Veronique had ordered from Paris. The cross and the church banner were held on either side of the bed by white-haired sacristans. Thanks to the devotion of her servants, a wooden altar brought from the sacristy had been erected close to the door of the salon, and so prepared and decorated that Monseigneur could say mass upon it.

Madame Graslin was deeply touched by these attentions, which the Church, as a general thing, grants only to royal personages. The folding doors between the salon and the dining-room were open, and she could see a vista of the ground-floor rooms filled with the village population. Her friends had thought of everything; the salon was occupied exclusively by themselves and the servants of the household. In the front rank and grouped before the door of the bedroom were her nearest friends, those on whose



discretion reliance could be placed. MM. Grossetete, de Grandville, Roubaud, Gerard, Clousier, Ruffin, took the first places. They had arranged among themselves that they should rise and stand in a group, thus preventing the words of the repentant woman from being heard in the farther rooms; but their tears and sobs would, in any case, have drowned her voice.



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At this moment and before all else in that audience, two persons presented, to an observer, a powerfully affecting sight. One was Denise Tascheron. Her foreign garments, of Quaker simplicity, made her unrecognizable by her former village acquaintance. The other was quite another personage, an acquaintance not to be forgotten, and his apparition there was like a streak of lurid light. The *procureur-general* came suddenly to a perception of the truth; the part that he had played to Madame Graslin unrolled itself before him; he divined it to its fullest extent. Less influenced, as a son of the nineteenth century, by the religious aspect of the matter, Monsieur de Grandville's heart was filled with an awful dread; for he saw before him, he contemplated the drama of that woman's hidden self at the hotel Graslin during the trial of Jean-Francois Tascheron. That tragic period came back distinctly to his memory,—lighted even now by the mother's eyes, shining with hatred, which fell upon him where he stood, like drops of molten lead. That old woman, standing ten feet from him, forgave nothing. That man, representing human justice, trembled. Pale, struck to the heart, he dared not cast his eyes upon the bed where lay the woman he had loved so well, now livid beneath the hand of death, gathering strength to conquer agony from the greatness of her sin and its repentance. The mere sight of Veronique's thin profile, sharply defined in white upon the crimson damask, caused him a vertigo.

At eleven o'clock the mass began. After the epistle had been read by the rector of Vizay the archbishop removed his dalmatic and advanced to the threshold of the bedroom door.

“Christians, gather here to assist in the ceremony of extreme unction which we are about to administer to the mistress of this house,” he said, “you who join your prayers to those of the Church and intercede with God to obtain from Him her eternal salvation, you are now to learn that she does not feel herself worthy, in this, her last hour, to receive the holy viaticum without having made, for the edification of her fellows, a public confession of the greatest of her sins. We have resisted her pious wish, although this act of contrition was long in use during the early ages of Christianity. But, as this poor woman tells us that her confession may serve to rehabilitate an unfortunate son of this parish, we leave her free to follow the inspirations of her repentance.”

After these words, said with pastoral unction and dignity, the archbishop turned aside to give place to Veronique. The dying woman came forward, supported by her old mother and the rector,—the mother from whom she derived her body, the Church, the spiritual mother of her soul. She knelt down on a cushion, clasped her hands, and seemed to collect herself for a few moments, as if to gather from some source descending from heaven the power to speak. At this moment the silence was almost terrifying. None dared look at their neighbor. All eyes were lowered. And yet the eyes of Veronique, when she raised them, encountered those of the *procureur-general*, and the expression on that blanched face brought the color to hers.



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"I could not die in peace," said Veronique, in a voice of deep emotion, "if I suffered the false impression you all have of me to remain. You see in me a guilty woman, who asks your prayers, and who seeks to make herself worthy of pardon by this public confession of her sin. That sin was so great, its consequences were so fatal, that perhaps no penance can atone for it. But the more humiliation I submit to here on earth, the less I may have to dread the wrath of God in the heavenly kingdom to which I am going. My father, who had great confidence in me, commended to my care (now twenty years ago) a son of this parish, in whom he had seen a great desire to improve himself, an aptitude for study, and fine characteristics. I mean the unfortunate Jean-Francois Tascheron, who thenceforth attached himself to me as his benefactress. How did the affection I felt for him become a guilty one? I think myself excused from explaining this. Perhaps it could be shown that the purest sentiments by which we act in this world were insensibly diverted from their course by untold sacrifices, by reasons arising from our human frailty, by many causes which might appear to dismiss the evil of my sin. But even if the noblest affections moved me, was I less guilty? Rather let me confess that I, who by education, by position in the world, might consider myself superior to the youth my father confided to me, and from whom I was separated by the natural delicacy of our sex,—I listened, fatally, to the promptings of the devil. I soon found myself too much the mother of that young man to be insensible to his mute and delicate admiration. He alone, he first, recognized my true value. But perhaps a horrible calculation entered my mind. I thought how discreet a youth would be who owed his all to me, and whom the chances of life had put so far away from me, though we were born equals. I made even my reputation for benevolence, my pious occupations, a cloak to screen my conduct. Alas!—and this is doubtless one of my greatest sins—I hid my passion under cover of the altar. The most virtuous of my actions—the love I bore my mother, the acts of devotion which were sincere and true in the midst of my wrong-doing—all, all were made to serve the ends of a desperate passion, and were links in the chain that held me. My poor beloved mother, who hears me now, was for a long time, ignorantly, an accomplice in my sin. When her eyes were opened, too many dangerous facts existed not to give her mother's heart the strength to be silent. Silence with her has been the highest virtue. Her love for her daughter has gone beyond her love to God. Ah! I here discharge her solemnly from the heavy burden of secrecy which she has borne. She shall end her days without compelling either eyes or brow to lie. Let her motherhood stand clear of blame; let that noble, sacred old age, crowned with virtue, shine with its natural lustre, freed of that link which bound her indirectly to infamy!"



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Tears checked the dying woman's voice for an instant; Aline gave her salts to inhale.

"There is no one who has not been better to me than I deserve," she went on,—“even the devoted servant who does this last service; she has feigned ignorance of what she knew, but at least she was in the secret of the penances by which I have destroyed the flesh that sinned. I here beg pardon of the world for the long deception to which I have been led by the terrible logic of society. Jean-Francois Tascheron was not as guilty as he seemed. Ah! you who hear me, I implore you to remember his youth, and the madness excited in him partly by the remorse that seized upon me, partly by involuntary seductions. More than that! it was a sense of honor, though a mistaken honor, which caused the most awful of these evils. Neither of us could endure our perpetual deceit. He appealed, unhappy man, to my own right feeling; he sought to make our fatal love as little wounding to others as it could be. We meant to hide ourselves away forever. Thus I was the cause, the sole cause, of his crime. Driven by necessity, the unhappy man, guilty of too much devotion to an idol, chose from all evil acts the one which might be hereafter reparable. I knew nothing of it till the moment of execution. At that moment the hand of God threw down that scaffolding of false contrivances—I heard the cries; they echo in my ears! I divined the struggle, which I could not stop, —I, the cause of it! Tascheron was maddened; I swear it.”

Here Veronique turned her eyes upon Monsieur de Grandville, and a sob was heard to issue from Denise Tascheron's breast.

“He lost his mind when he saw what he thought his happiness destroyed by unforeseen circumstances. The unhappy man, misled by his love, went headlong from a delinquent act to crime—from robbery to a double murder. He left my mother's house an innocent man, he returned a guilty one. I alone knew that there was neither premeditation nor any of the aggravating circumstances on which he was sentenced to death. A hundred times I thought of betraying myself to save him; a hundred times a horrible and necessary restraint stopped the words upon my lips. Undoubtedly, my presence near the scene had contributed to give him the odious, infamous, ignoble courage of a murderer. Were it not for me, he would have fled. I had formed that soul, trained that mind, enlarged that heart; I knew it; he was incapable of cowardice or meanness. Do justice to that involuntarily guilty arm, do justice to him, whom God, in his mercy, has allowed to sleep in his quiet grave, where you have wept for him, suspecting, it may be, the extenuating truth. Punish, curse the guilty creature before you! Horrified by the crime when once committed, I did my best to hide my share in it. Trusted by my father —I, who was childless—to lead a child to God, I led him to the scaffold! Ah! punish me, curse me, the hour has come!”



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Saying these words, her eyes shone with the stoic pride of a savage. The archbishop, standing behind her, and as if protecting her with the pastoral cross, abandoned his impassible demeanor and covered his eyes with his right hand. A muffled cry was heard, as though some one were dying. Two persons, Gerard and Roubaud, received and carried away in their arms, Denise Tascheron, unconscious. That sight seemed for an instant to quench the fire in Veronique's eyes; she was evidently uneasy; but soon her self-control and serenity of martyrdom resumed their sway.

"You now know," she continued, "that I deserve neither praise or blessing for my conduct here. I have led in sight of Heaven, a secret life of bitter penance which Heaven will estimate. My life before men has been an immense reparation for the evils I have caused; I have marked my repentance ineffaceably on the earth; it will last almost eternally here below. It is written on those fertile fields, in the prosperous village, in the rivulets brought from the mountains to water the plain once barren and fruitless, now green and fertile. Not a tree will be cut for a hundred years to come but the people of this region will know of the remorse that made it grow. My repentant soul will still live here among you. What you will owe to its efforts, to a fortune honorably acquired, is the heritage of its repentance,—the repentance of her who caused the crime. All has been repaired so far as society is concerned; but I am still responsible for that life, crushed in its bud,—a life confided to me and for which I am now required to render an account."

The flame of her eyes was veiled in tears.

"There is here, before me, a man," she continued, "who, because he did his duty strictly, has been to me an object of hatred which I thought eternal. He was the first inflictor of my punishment. My feet were still too deep in blood, I was too near the deed, not to hate justice. So long as that root of anger lay in my heart, I knew there was still a lingering remnant of condemnable passion. I had nothing to forgive that man, I have only had to purify that corner of my heart where Evil lurked. However hard it may have been to win that victory, it is won."

Monsieur de Grandville turned a face to Veronique that was bathed in tears. Human justice seemed at that moment to feel remorse. When the confessing woman raised her head as if to continue, she met the agonizing look of old man Grossetete, who stretched his supplicating hands to her as if to say, "Enough, enough!" At the same instant a sound of tears and sobs was heard. Moved by such sympathy, unable to bear the balm of this general pardon, she was seized with faintness. Seeing that her daughter's vital force was gone at last, the old mother summoned the vigor of her youth to carry her away.

"Christians," said the archbishop, "you have heard the confession of that penitent woman; it confirms the sentence of human justice. You ought to see in this fresh reason to join your prayers to those of the Church which offers to God the holy sacrifice of the mass, to implore his mercy in favor of so deep a repentance."



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The services went on. Veronique, lying on the bed, followed them with a look of such inward contentment that she seemed, to every eye, no longer the same woman. On her face was the candid and virtuous expression of the pure young girl such as she had been in her parents' home. The dawn of eternal life was already whitening her brow and glorifying her face with its celestial tints. Doubtless she heard the mystic harmonies, and gathered strength to live from her desire to unite herself once more with God in the last communion. The rector came beside the bed and gave her absolution. The archbishop administered the sacred oils with a fatherly tenderness that showed to all there present how dear the lost but now recovered lamb had been to him. Then, with the sacred anointing, he closed to the things of earth those eyes which had done such evil, and laid the seal of the Church upon the lips that were once too eloquent. The ears, by which so many evil inspirations had penetrated her mind, were closed forever. All the senses, deadened by repentance, were thus sanctified, and the spirit of evil could have no further power within her soul.

Never did assistants of this ceremony more fully understand the grandeur and profundity of the sacrament than those who now saw the acts of the Church justly following the confession of that dying woman.

Thus prepared, Veronique received the body of Jesus Christ with an expression of hope and joy which melted the ice of unbelief against which the rector had so often bruised himself. Roubaud, confounded in all his opinions, became a Catholic on the spot. The scene was touching and yet awesome; the solemnity of its every feature was so great that painters might have found there the subject of a masterpiece.

When this funeral part was over, and the dying woman heard the priests begin the reading of the gospel of Saint John, she signed to her mother to bring her son, who had been taken from the room by his tutor. When she saw Francis kneeling by the bedside the pardoned mother felt she had the right to lay her hand upon his head and bless him. Doing so, she died.

Old Madame Sauviat was there, at her post, erect as she had been for twenty years. This woman, heroic after her fashion, closed her daughter's eyes—those eyes that had wept so much—and kissed them. All the priests, followed by the choristers, surrounded the bed. By the flaming light of the torches they chanted the terrible *De Profundis*, the echoes of which told the population kneeling before the chateau, the friends praying in the salon, the servants in the adjoining rooms, that the mother of the canton was dead. The hymn was accompanied with moans and tears. The confession of that grand woman had not been audible beyond the threshold of the salon, and none but loving ears had heard it.

When the peasants of the neighborhood, joining with those of Montegnac, came, one by one, to lay upon their benefactress the customary palm, together with their last farewell mingled with prayers and tears, they saw the man of justice, crushed by grief, holding

the hand of the woman whom, without intending it, he had so cruelly but so justly stricken.



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Two days later the *procureur-general*, Grossetete, the archbishop, and the mayor, holding the corners of the black pall, conducted the body of Madame Graslin to its last resting-place. It was laid in the grave in deep silence; not a word was said; no one had strength to speak; all eyes were full of tears. "She is now a saint!" was said by the peasants as they went away along the roads of the canton to which she had given prosperity,—saying the words to her creations as though they were animate beings.

No one thought it strange that Madame Graslin was buried beside the body of Jean-Francois Tascheron. She had not asked it; but the old mother, as the last act of her tender pity, had requested the sexton to make the grave there,—putting together those whom earth had so violently parted, and whose souls were now reunited through repentance in purgatory.

Madame Graslin's will was found to be all that was expected of it. She founded scholarships and hospital beds at Limoges solely for working-men; she assigned a considerable sum—three hundred thousand francs in six years—for the purchase of that part of the village called Les Tascherons, where she directed that a hospital should be built. This hospital, intended for the indigent old persons of the canton, for the sick, for lying-in women if paupers, and for foundlings, was to be called the Tascheron Hospital. Veronique ordered it to be placed in charge of the Gray Sisters, and fixed the salaries of the surgeon and the physician at four thousand francs for each. She requested Roubaud to be the first physician of this hospital, placing upon him the choice of the surgeon, and requesting him to superintend the erection of the building with reference to sanitary arrangements, conjointly with Gerard, who was to be the architect. She also gave to the village of Montegnac an extent of pasture land sufficient to pay all its taxes. The church, she endowed with a fund to be used for a special purpose, namely: watch was to be kept over young workmen, and cases discovered in which some village youth might show a disposition for art, or science, or manufactures; the interest of the fund was then to be used in fostering it. The intelligent benevolence of the testatrix named the sum that should be taken for each of these encouragements.

The news of Madame Graslin's death, received throughout the department as a calamity, was not accompanied by any rumor injurious to the memory of this woman. This discretion was a homage rendered to so many virtues by the hard-working Catholic population, which renewed in this little corner of France the miracles of the "Lettres Edifiantes."

Gerard, appointed guardian of Francis Graslin, and obliged, by terms of the will, to reside at the chateau, moved there. But he did not marry Denise Tascheron until three months after Veronique's death. In her, Francis found a second mother.

ADDENDUM



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

Bianchon, Horace

Father Goriot

The Atheist's Mass

Cesar Birotteau

The Commission in Lunacy

Lost Illusions

A Distinguished Provincial at Paris

A Bachelor's Establishment

The Secrets of a Princess

The Government Clerks

Pierrette

A Study of Woman

Scenes from a Courtesan's Life

Honorine

The Seamy Side of History

The Magic Skin

A Second Home

A Prince of Bohemia

Letters of Two Brides

The Muse of the Department

The Imaginary Mistress

The Middle Classes

Cousin Betty

In addition, M. Bianchon narrated the following:

Another Study of Woman

La Grande Breteche

Brezacs (The)

The Government Clerks

Grandville, Vicomte de

A Second Home

A Daughter of Eve

Grossetete (younger brother of F. Grossetete)

The Muse of the Department

Navarreins, Duc de

A Bachelor's Establishment

Colonel Chabert

The Muse of the Department

The Thirteen



Jealousies of a Country Town
The Peasantry
Scenes from a Courtesan's Life
The Magic Skin
The Gondreville Mystery
The Secrets of a Princess

Rastignac, Monseigneur Gabriel de
Father Goriot
A Daughter of Eve