

things in the world are pretty bad. Only we Secularists explain it differently from you. We put a good deal of it down to education, or health, or heredity.'

'Oh, I know—I know!' said the minister hastily, as though shrinking from the conversation he had himself evoked. 'I'm not fit to talk about it, Davy. I'm ill, I think! But there were those two things I wanted to say to you—your sister—and—'

His voice dropped. He shaded his eyes and looked away from David into the smouldering coals.

'No—no,' he resumed almost in a whisper; 'it's the *will*—it's the *will*. It's not anything he says, and Christ—*Christ*'s the only help.'

Again there was a silence. David studied his old teacher attentively, as far as the half-light availed him. The young man was simply angry with a religion which could torment a soul and body like this. Ancrum had been 'down' in this way for a long time now. Was another of his black fits approaching? If so, religion was largely responsible for them!

When at last David sighted his own door, he perceived a figure lounging on the steps.

'I say,' he said to himself with a groan, 'it's John!'

'What on earth do you want, John, at this time of night?' he demanded. But he knew perfectly.

'Look here!' said the other thickly, 'it's all straight. You're coming back in a fortnight, and you'll bring her back too!'

David laughed impatiently.

'Do you think I shall lose her in Paris or drop her in the Channel?'

'I don't know,' said Dalby, with a curiously heavy and indistinct utterance. 'She's very bad to me. She won't ever marry me; I know that. But when I think I might never see her again I'm fit to go and hang myself.'

David began to kick the pebbles in the road.

'You know what I think about it all,' he said at last, gloomily. 'I've told you before now. She couldn't care for you if she tried. It isn't a ha'p'orth of good. I don't believe she'll ever care for anybody. Anyway, she'll marry nobody who can't give her money and fine clothes. There! You may put that in your pipe and smoke it, for it's as true as you stand there.'

John turned round restlessly, laid his hands against the wall, and his head upon them.

'Well, it don't matter,' he said slowly, after a pause. 'I'll be here early. Good night!'

David stood and looked after him in mingled disgust and pity.

'I must pack him off,' he said, 'I must.'

Then he threw back his young shoulders and drew in the warm spring air with a long breath. Away with care and trouble! Things would come right—must come right. This weather was summer, and in forty-eight hours they would be in Paris!

### BOOK III

#### STORM AND STRESS

CHAPTER I

The brother and sister left Manchester about midday, and spent the night in London at a little City hotel much frequented by Nonconformist ministers, which Ancrum had recommended.

Then next day! How little those to whom all the widest opportunities of life come for the asking, can imagine such a zest, such a freshness of pleasure! David had hesitated long before the expense of the day service *via* Calais; they could have gone by night third class for half the money; or they could have taken returns by one of the cheaper and longer routes. But the eagerness to make the most of every hour of time and daylight prevailed; they were to go by Calais and come back by Dieppe, seeing thereby as much as possible on the two journeys in addition to the fortnight in Paris. The mere novelty of going and returning but third class was full of savour; Louie's self-conscious dignity as she settled herself into her corner on leaving Charing Cross caught David's eye; he saw himself reflected and laughed.

It was a glorious day, the firstling of the summer. In the blue overhead the great clouds rose intensely thunderously white, and journeyed seaward under a light westerly wind. The railway banks, the copses were all primroses; every patch of water had in it the white and azure of the sky; the lambs were lying in the still scanty shadow of the elms; every garden showed its tulips and wallflowers, and the air, the sunlight, the vividness of each hue and line bore with them an intoxicating joy, especially for eyes still adjusted to the tones and lights of Manchester in winter.

The breeze carried them merrily over a dancing sea. And once on the French side they spent their first hour in crossing from one side of their carriage to the other, pointing and calling incessantly. For the first time since certain rare moments in their childhood they were happy together and at one. Mother Earth unrolled for them a corner of her magic show, and they took it like children at the play, now shouting, now spell-bound.

David had George Sand's 'Mauprat' on his knee, but he read nothing the whole day. Never had he used his eyes so intently, so passionately. Nothing escaped them, neither the detail of that strange and beautiful fen from which Amiens rises—a country of peat and peat-cutters where the green plain is diapered with innumerable tiny lakes edged with black heaps of turf and faintly set with scattered trees—nor the delicate charm of the forest lands about Chantilly. So much thinner and gracefuller

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these woods were than English woods! French art and skill were here already in the wild country. Each tree stood out as though it had been personally thought for; every plantation was in regular lines; each woody walk drove straight from point to point, following out a plan orderly and intricate as a spider's web.

By this time Louie's fervour of curiosity and attention had very much abated; she grew tired and cross, and presently fell asleep. But, with every mile less between them and Paris, David's pulse beat faster, and his mind became more absorbed in the flying scene. He hung beside the window, thrilling with enchantment and delight, drinking in the soft air, the beauty of the evening clouds, the wonderful greens and silvers and fiery browns of the poplars. His mind was full of images—the deep lily-sprinkled lake wherein Sténio, Lélia's poet lover, plunged and died; the grandiose landscape of Victor Hugo; René sitting on the cliff-side, and looking farewell to the white home of his childhood;—of lines from 'Childe Harold' and from Shelley. His mind was in a ferment of youth and poetry, and the France he saw was not the workaday France of peasant and high road and factory, but the creation of poetic intelligence, of ignorance and fancy.

Paris came in a flash. He had realised to the full the squalid and ever-widening zone of London, had frittered away his expectations almost, in the passing it; but here the great city had hardly announced itself before they were in the midst of it, shot out into the noise, and glare, and crowd of the Nord station.

They had no luggage to wait for, and David, trembling with excitement so that he could hardly give the necessary orders, shouldered the bags, got a cab and gave the address. Outside it was still twilight, but the lamps were lit and the Boulevard into which they presently turned seemed to brother and sister a blaze of light. The young green of the trees glittered under the gas like the trees of a pantomime; the kiosks threw their lights out upon the moving crowd; shops and cafés were all shining and alive; and on either hand rose the long line of stately houses, unbroken by any London or Manchester squalors and inequalities, towering as it seemed into the skies, and making for the great spectacle of life beneath them a setting more gay, splendid, and complete than any Englishman in his own borders can ever see.

Louie had turned white with pleasure and excitement. All her dreams of gaiety and magnificence, of which the elements had been gathered from the illustrated papers and the Manchester theatres, were more than realised by these Paris gas-lights, these vast houses, these laughing and strolling crowds.

'Look at those people having their coffee out of doors,' she cried to David, 'and that white and gold place behind. Goodness! what they must spend in gas! And just look at those two girls—look, quick—there, with the young man in the black moustache—they are loud, but aren't their dresses just sweet?'

She craned her neck out of window, exclaiming—now at this,

now at that—till suddenly they passed out of the Boulevard into the comparative darkness of side ways. Here the height of the houses produced a somewhat different impression; Louie looked out none the less keenly, but her chatter ceased.

At last the cab drew up with a clatter at the side of a particularly dark and narrow street, ascending somewhat sharply to the north-west from the point where they stopped.

'Now for the *concierge*,' said David, looking round him, after he had paid the man.

And conning Barbier's directions in his mind, he turned into the gateway, and made boldly for a curtained door behind which shone a light.

The woman, who came out in answer to his knock, looked him all over from head to foot, while he explained himself in his best French.

'*Tiens*,' she said, indifferently, to a man behind her, 'it's the people for No. 26—*des Anglais*—*M. Paul te l'a dit*. Hand me the key.'

The *bonhomme* addressed—a little, stooping, wizened creature, with china-blue eyes, showing widely in his withered face under the light of the paraffin-lamp his wife was holding—reached a key from a board on the wall and gave it to her.

The woman again surveyed them both, the young man and the girl, and seemed to debate with herself whether she should take the trouble to be civil. Finally she said in an ungracious voice—

'It's the fourth floor to the right. I must take you up, I suppose.'

David thanked her, and she preceded them with the light through a door opposite and up some stone stairs.

When they had mounted two flights, she turned abruptly on the landing—

'You take the *appartement* from M. Dubois?'

'Yes,' said David, enchanted to find that, thanks to old Barbier's constant lessons, he could both understand and reply with tolerable ease; 'for a fortnight.'

'Take care; the landlord will be descending on you; M. Dubois never pays; he may be turned out any day, and his things sold. Where is Mademoiselle going to sleep?'

'But in M. Dubois' *appartement*,' said David, hoping this time, in his dismay, that he did *not* understand; 'he promised to arrange everything.'

'He has arranged nothing. Do you wish that I should provide some things? You can hire some furniture from me. And do you want service?'

The woman had a grasping eye. David's frugal instincts took alarm.

'*Merci*, Madame! My sister and I do not require much. We shall wait upon ourselves. If Madame will tell us the name of some restaurant near—'

Instead, Madame made an angry sound and thrust the key abruptly into Louie's hand, David being laden with the bags.

'There are two more flights,' she said roughly; 'then turn to the left, and go up the staircase straight in front of you—first door to the right. You've got eyes; you'll find the way.'

'Mais, Madame—' cried David, bewildered by these directions, and trying to detain her.

But she was already half-way down the flight below them, throwing back remarks which, to judge from their tone, were not complimentary.

There was no help for it. Louie was dropping with fatigue, and beginning to be much out of temper. David with difficulty assumed a hopeful air, and up they went again. Leading off the next landing but one they found a narrow passage, and at the end of it a ladder-like staircase. At the top of this they came upon a corridor at right angles, in which the first door bore the welcome figures '26.'

'All right,' said David; 'here we are. Now we'll just go in, and look about us. Then if you'll sit and rest a bit, I'll run down and see where we can get something to eat.'

'Be quick, then—do,' said Louie. 'I'm just fit to drop.'

With a beating heart he put the key into the lock of the door. It fitted, but he could not turn it. Both he and Louie tried in vain.

'What a nuisance!' said he at last. 'I must go and fetch up that woman again. You sit down and wait.'

As he spoke there was a sound below of quick steps, and of a voice, a woman's voice, humming a song.

'Some one coming,' he said to Louie; 'perhaps they understand the lock.'

They ran down to the landing below to reconnoitre. There was, of course, gas on the staircase, and as they hung over the iron railing they saw mounting towards them a young girl. She wore a light fawn-coloured dress and a hat covered with Parma violets. Hearing voices above her, she threw her head back, and stopped a moment. Louie's eye was caught by her hand and its tiny wrist as it lay on the balustrade, and by the coils and twists of her fair hair. David saw no details, only what seemed to him a miracle of grace and colour, born in an instant, out of the dark—or out of his own excited fancy?

She came slowly up the steps, looking at them, at the tall dark youth and the girl beside him. Then on the top step she paused, instead of going past them. David took off his hat, but all the practical questions he had meant to ask deserted him. His French seemed to have flown.

'You are strangers, aren't you?' she said, in a clear, high, somewhat imperious voice. 'What number do you want?'

Her expression had a certain *hauteur*, as of one defending her native ground against intruders. Under the stimulus of it David found his tongue,

'We have taken M. Paul Dubois' rooms,' he said. 'We have found his door, but the key the *concierger* gave us does not fit it.'

She laughed, a free, frank laugh, which had a certain wild note in it.

'These doors have to be coaxed,' she said; 'they don't like foreigners. Give it me. This is my way, too.'

Stepping past them, she preceded them up the narrow stairs, and was just about to try the key in the lock, when a sudden recollection seemed to flash upon her.

'I know!' she said, turning upon them. '*Tenez—que je suis bête!* You are Dubois' English friends. He told me something, and I had forgotten all about it. You are going to take his rooms?'

'For a week or two,' said David, irritated a little by the laughing malice, the sarcastic wonder of her eyes, 'while he is doing some work in Brussels. It seemed a convenient arrangement, but if we are not comfortable we shall go elsewhere. If you can open the door for us we shall be greatly obliged to you, Mademoiselle. But if not I must go down for the *concierger*. We have been travelling all day, and my sister is tired.'

'Where did you learn such good French?' she said carelessly, at the same time leaning her weight against the door, and manipulating the key in such a way that the lock turned, and the door flew open.

Behind it appeared a large dark space. The light from the gas-jet in the passage struck into it, but beyond a chair and a tall screen-like object in the middle of the floor, it seemed to David to be empty.

'That's his *atelier*, of course,' said the unknown; 'and mine is next to it, at the other end. I suppose he has a cupboard to sleep in somewhere. Most of us have. But I don't know anything about Dubois. I don't like him. He is not one of my friends.'

She spoke in a dry, masculine voice, which contrasted in the sharpest way with her youth, her dress, her dainty smallness. Then, all of a sudden, as her eyes travelled over the English pair standing bewildered on the threshold of Dubois' most uninviting apartment, she began to laugh again. Evidently the situation seemed to her extremely odd.

'Did you ask the people downstairs to get anything ready for you?' she inquired.

'No,' said David, hesitating; 'we thought we could manage for ourselves.'

'Well—perhaps—after the first,' she said, still laughing. 'But—I may as well warn you—the Merichat will be very uncivil to you if you don't manage to pay her for something. Hadn't you better explore? That thing in the middle is Dubois' easel, of course.'

David groped his way in, took some matches from his pocket, found a gas-bracket with some difficulty, and lit up. Then he

and Louie looked round them. They saw a gaunt high room, lit on one side by a huge studio-window, over which various tattered blinds were drawn; a floor of bare boards, with a few rags of carpet here and there; in the middle, a table covered with painter's apparatus of different kinds; palettes, paints, rags, tins, and, thrown down amongst them, some stale crusts of bread; a large easel, with a number of old and dirty canvases piled upon it; two chairs, one of them without the usual complement of legs; a few etchings and oil-sketches and fragments of coloured stuffs pinned against the wall in wild confusion; and, spread out casually behind the easel, an iron folding-bedstead, without either mattress or bed-clothes. In the middle of the floor stood a smeared kettle on a spirit-stove, and a few odds and ends of glass and china were on the mantelpiece, together with a paraffin-lamp. Every article in the room was thick in dust.

When she had, more or less, ascertained these attractive details, Louie stood still in the middle of M. Dubois' apartment.

'What did he tell all those lies for?' she said to David fiercely. For in the very last communication received from him, Dubois had described himself as having made all necessary preparations '*et pour la toilette et pour le manger.*' He had also asked for the rent in advance, which David with some demur had paid.

'Here's something,' cried David; and, turning a handle in the wall, he pulled a flimsy door open and disclosed what seemed a cupboard. The cupboard, however, contained a bed, some bedding, blankets, and washing arrangements; and David joyously announced his discoveries. Louie took no notice of him. She was tired, angry, disgusted. The illusion of Paris was, for the moment, all gone. She sat herself down on one of the two chairs, and, taking off her hat, she threw it from her on to the belittered table with a passionate gesture.

The French girl had so far stood just outside, leaning against the doorway, and looking on with unabashed amusement while they made their inspection. Now, however, as Louie uncovered, the spectator at the door made a little, quick sound, and then ran forward.

'*Mais, mon Dieu!* how handsome you are!' she said with a whimsical eagerness, stopping short in front of Louie, and driving her little hands deep into the pockets of her jacket. 'What a head!—what eyes! Why didn't I see before? You must sit to me—you *must!* You will, won't you? I will pay you anything you like! You sha'n't be dull—somebody shall come and amuse you. *Voyons—monsieur!*' she called imperiously.

David came up. She stood with one hand on the table leaning her light weight backward, looking at them with all her eyes—the very embodiment of masterful caprice.

'Both of them!' she said under her breath, '*superbe!*' Monsieur, look here. You and mademoiselle are tired. There is nothing in these rooms. Dubois is a scamp without a sou. He does no work, and he gambles on the Bourse. Everything he

had he has sold by degrees. If he has gone to Brussels now to work honestly, it is for the first time in his life. He lives on the hope of getting money out of an uncle in England—that I know, for he boasts of it to everybody. It is just like him to play a practical joke on strangers. No doubt you have paid him already—*n'est-ce pas?* I thought as much. Well, never mind! My rooms are next door. I am Elise Delaunay. I work in Taranne's *atelier*. I am an artist, pure and simple, and I live to please myself and nobody else. But I have a chair or two, and the woman downstairs looks after me because I make it worth her while. Come with me. I will give you some supper, and I will lend you a rug and a pillow for that bed. Then to-morrow you can decide what to do.'

David protested, stammering and smiling. But he had flushed a rosy red, and there was no real resistance in him. He explained the invitation to Louie, who had been looking helplessly from one to the other, and she at once accepted it. She understood perfectly that the French girl admired her; her face relaxed its frown; she nodded to the stranger with a sort of proud yielding, and then let herself be taken by the arm and led once more along the corridor.

Elise Delaunay unlocked her own door.

'*Bien!*' she said, putting her head in first, 'Merichat has earned her money. Now go in—go in!—and see if I don't give you some supper.'

## CHAPTER II

SHE pushed them in, and shut the door behind them. They looked round them in amazement. Here was an *atelier* precisely corresponding in size and outlook to Dubois'. But to their tired eyes the change was one from squalor to fairyland. The room was not in fact luxurious at all. But there was a Persian rug or two on the polished floor; there was a wood fire burning on the hearth, and close to it there was a low sofa or divan covered with pieces of old stuffs, and flanked by a table whereon stood a little meal, a roll, some cut ham, part of a flat fruit tart from the *pâtissier* next door, a coffee pot, and a spirit kettle ready for lighting. There were two easels in the room; one was laden with sketches and photographs; the other carried a half-finished picture of a mosque interior in Oran—a rich splash of colour, making a centre for all the rest. Everywhere indeed, on the walls, on the floor, or standing on the chairs, were studies of Algeria, done with an ostentatiously bold and rapid hand. On the mantelpiece was a small reproduction in terra cotta of one of Dalou's early statues, a peasant woman in a long cloak straining her homely baby to her breast—true and passionate. Books lay about, and in a corner was a piano, open, with a confusion of tattered music upon it. And everywhere, as it seemed to Louie,

were *shoes!*—the daintiest and most fantastic shoes imaginable—Turkish shoes, Pompadour shoes, old shoes and new shoes, shoes with heels and shoes without, shoes lined with fur, and shoes blown together, as one might think, out of cardboard and ribbons. The English girl's eyes fastened upon them at once.

'Ah, you tink my shoes pretty,' said the hostess, speaking a few words of English, '*c'est mon dada, voyez-vous—ma collection!*—*Tenez!*—I cannot say dat in English, Monsieur; explain to your sister. My shoes are my passion, next to my foot. I am not pretty, but my foot is ravishing. Dalou modelled it for his Siren. That turned my head. Sit down, Mademoiselle—we will find some plates.'

She pushed Louie into a corner of the divan, and then she went over to a cupboard standing against the wall, and beckoned to David.

'Take the plates—and this potted meat. Now for the *petit vin* my doctor cousin brought me last week from the family estate. I have stowed it away somewhere. Ah! here it is. We are from the Gironde—at least my mother was. My father was nobody—*bourgeois* from tip to toe, though he called himself an artist. It was a *mésalliance* for her when she married him. Oh, he led her a life!—she died when I was small, and last year he died, eleven months ago. I did my best to cry. *Impossible!* He had made Maman and me cry too much. And now I am perfectly alone in the world, and perfectly well-behaved. Monsieur Prudhomme may talk—I snap my finger at him. You will have your ideas, of course. No matter! If you eat my salt, you will hardly be able to speak ill of me.'

'Mademoiselle!' cried David, inwardly cursing his shyness—a shyness new to him—and his complete apparent lack of anything to say, or the means of saying it.

'Oh, don't protest!—after that journey you can't afford to waste your breath. Move a little, Monsieur—let me open the other door of the cupboard—there are some chocolates worth eating on that back shelf. Do you admire my *armoire*? It is old Breton—it belonged to my grandmother, who was from Morbihan. She brought her linen in it. It is cherry wood, you see, mounted in silver. You may search Paris for another like it. Look at that flower work on the panels. It is not *banal* at all—it has character—there is real design in it. Now take the chocolates, and these sardines—put them down over there. As for me, I make the coffee.'

She ran over to the spirit lamp, and set it going; she measured out the coffee; then sitting down on the floor, she took the bellows and blew up the logs.

'Tell me your name, Monsieur?' she said suddenly, looking round.

David gave it in full, his own name and Louie's. Then he walked up to her, making an effort to be at his ease, and said something about their French descent. His mode of speaking

was slow and bookish—correct, but wanting in life. After this year's devotion to French books, after all his compositions with Barbier, he had supposed himself so familiar with French! With the woman from the *loge*, indeed, he could have talked at large, had she been conversational instead of rude. But here, with this little glancing creature, he felt himself plunged in a perfect quagmire of ignorance and stupidity. When he spoke of being half French, she became suddenly grave, and studied him with an intent piercing look. 'No,' she said slowly, 'no, at bottom you are not French a bit, you are all English, I feel it. I should fight you—*à outrance!* *Grive!*—what a strange name! It's a bird's name. You are not like it—you do not belong to it. But *David!*—ah, that is better. *Voyons!*'

She sprang up, ran over to the furthest easel, and, routing about amongst its disorder of prints and photographs, she hit upon one, which she held up triumphantly.

'There, Monsieur!—there is your prototype. That is David—the young David—scourge of the Philistine. You are bigger and broader. I would rather fight him than you—but it is like you, all the same. Take it.'

And she held out to him a photograph of the Donatello David at Florence—the divine young hero in his shepherd's hat, fresh from the slaying of the oppressor.

He looked at it, red and wondering, then shook his head.

'What is it? Who made it, Mademoiselle?'

'Donatello—oh, I never saw it. I was never in Italy, but a friend gave it me. It is like you, I tell you. But, what use is that? You are English—yes, you *are*, in spite of your mother. It is very well to be called David—you may be Goliath all the time!'

Her tone had grown hard and dry—insulting almost. Her look sent him a challenge.

He stared at her dumbfounded. All the self-confidence with which he had hitherto governed his own world had deserted him. He was like a tongue-tied child in her hands.

She enjoyed her mastery, and his discomfiture. Her look changed and melted in an instant.

'I am rude,' she said, 'and you can't answer me back—not yet—for a day or two. *Pardon!* Monsieur David—Mademoiselle—will you come to supper?'

She put chairs and waved them to their places with the joyous animation of a child, waiting on them, fetching this and that, with the quickest, most graceful motions. She had brought from the *armoire* some fine white napkins, and now she produced a glass or two and made her guests provide themselves with the red wine which neither had ever tasted before, and over which Louie made an involuntary face. Then she began to chatter and to eat—both as fast as possible—now laughing at her own English or at David's French, and now laying down her knife and fork that she might look at Louie, with an intent professional look

which contrasted oddly with the wild freedom of her talk and movements.

Suddenly she took up a wineglass and held it out to David with a piteous childish gesture.

'Fill it, Monsieur, and then drink—drink to my good luck. I wish for something—with my *life*—my *soul*; but there are people who hate me, who would delight to see me crushed. And it will be three weeks—three long long weeks, almost—before I know.'

She was very pale, the tears had sprung to her eyes, and the hand holding the glass trembled. David flushed and frowned in the vain desire to understand her.

'What am I to do?' he said, taking the glass mechanically, but making no use of it.

'Drink!—drink to my success. I have two pictures, Monsieur, in the Salon; you know what that means? the same as your *Académie*? *Parfaitement!* ah! you understand. One is well hung, on the line; the other has been shamefully treated—but *shamefully!* And all the world knows why. I have some enemies on the jury, and they delight in a mean triumph over me—a triumph which is a scandal. But I have friends, too—good friends—and in three weeks the rewards will be voted. You understand? the medals, and the *mentions honorables*. As for a medal—no! I am only two years in the *atelier*; I am not unreasonable. But a *mention!*—ah! Monsieur David, if they don't give it me I shall be very miserable.'

Her voice had gone through a whole gamut of emotion in this speech—pride, elation, hope, anger, offended dignity—sinking finally to the plaintive note of a child asking for consolation.

And luckily David had followed her. His French novels had brought him across the Salon and the jury system; and Barbier had told him tales. His courage rose. He poured the wine into the glass with a quick, uncertain hand, and raised it to his lips.

'*A la gloire de Mademoiselle!*' he cried, tossing it down with a gesture almost as free and vivid as her own.

Her eye followed him with excitement, taking in every detail of the action—the masculine breadth of chest, the beauty of the dark head and short upper lip.

'Very good—very good!' she said, clapping her small hands. 'You did that admirably—you improve—*n'est-ce pas, Mademoiselle?*'

But Louie only stared blankly and somewhat haughtily in return. She was beginning to be tired of her silent *rôle*, and of the sort-of subordination it implied. The French girl seemed to divine it, and her.

'She does not like me,' she said, with a kind of wonder under her breath, so that David did not catch the words. 'The other is quite different.'

Then, springing up, she searched in the pockets of her jacket for something—lips pursed, brows knitted, as though the quest were important.

'Where are my cigarettes?' she demanded sharply. 'Ah! here they are. Mademoiselle—Monsieur.'

Louie laughed rudely, pushing them back without a word. Then she got up, and began boldly to look about her. The shoes attracted her, and some Algerian scarves and burnouses that were lying on a distant chair. She went to turn them over.

Mademoiselle Delaunay looked after her for a moment—with the same critical attention as before—then with a shrug she threw herself into a corner of the divan, drawing about her a bit of old embroidered stuff which lay there. It was so flung, however, as to leave one dainty foot in an embroidered silk stocking visible beyond it. The tone of the stocking was repeated in the bunch of violets at her neck, and the purples of the flowers told with charming effect against her white skin and the pale fawn colour of her dress and hair. David watched her with intoxication. She could hardly be taller than most children of fourteen, but her proportions were so small and delicate that her height, whatever it was, seemed to him the perfect height for a woman. She handled her cigarette with mannish airs; unless it were some old harridan in a collier's cottage, he had never seen a woman smoke before, and certainly he had never guessed it could become her so well. Not pretty! He was in no mood to dissect the pale irregular face with its subtleties of line and expression; but, as she sat there smoking and chatting, she was to him the realisation—the climax of his dream of Paris. All the lightness and grace of that dream, the strangeness, the thrill of it seemed to have passed into her.

'Will you stay in those rooms?' she inquired, slowly blowing away the curls of smoke in front of her.

David replied that he could not yet decide. He looked as he felt—in a difficulty.

'Oh! you will do well enough there. But your sister—*Tenez!* There is a family on the floor below—an artist and his wife. I have known them take *pensionnaires*. They are not the most distinguished persons in the world—*mais enfin!*—it is not for long. Your sister might do worse than board with them.'

David thanked her eagerly. He would make all inquiries. He had in his pocket a note of introduction from Dubois to Madame Cervin, and another, he believed, to the gentleman on the ground floor—to M. Montjoie, the sculptor.

'Ah! M. Montjoie!'

Her brows went up, her grey eyes flashed. As for her tone it was half amused, half contemptuous. She began to speak, moved restlessly, then apparently thought better of it.

'After all,' she said, in a rapid undertone, '*qu'est-ce que cela me fait? Allons.* Why did you come here at all, instead of to an hotel, for so short a time?'

He explained as well as he was able.

'You wanted to see something of French life, and French artists or writers?' she repeated slowly, 'and you come with

introductions from Xavier Dubois! *C'est drôle, ça*. Have you studied art?

He laughed.

'No—except in books.'

'What books?'

'Novels—George Sand's.'

It was her turn to laugh now.

'You are really too amusing! No, Monsieur, no; you interest me. I have the best will in the world towards you; but I cannot ask Consuelos and Teverinos to meet you. *Pas possible*. I regret—'

She fell into silence a moment, studying him with a merry look. Then she broke out again.

'Are you a connoisseur in pictures, Monsieur?'

He had reddened already under her *persiflage*. At this he grew redder still.

'I have never seen any, Mademoiselle,' he said, almost piteously; 'except once a little exhibition in Manchester.'

'Nor sculpture?'

'No,' he said honestly; 'nor sculpture.'

It seemed to him he was being held under a microscope, so keen and pitiless were her laughing eyes. But she left him no time to resent it.

'So you are a blank page, Monsieur—virgin soil—and you confess it. You interest me extremely. I should even like to teach you a little. I am the most ignorant person in the world. I know nothing about artists in books. *Mais je suis artiste, moi! fille d'artiste*. I could tell you tales—'

She threw her graceful head back against the cushion behind her, and smiled again broadly, as though her sense of humour were irresistibly tickled by the situation.

Then a whim seized her, and she sat up, grave and eager.

'I have drawn since I was eight years old,' she said; 'would you like to hear about it? It is not romantic—not the least in the world—but it is true.'

And with what seemed to his foreign ear a marvellous swiftness and fertility of phrase, she poured out her story. After her mother died she had been sent at eight years old to board at a farm near Rouen by her father, who seemed to have regarded his daughter now as plaything and model, now as an intolerable drag on the freedom of a vicious career. And at the farm the child's gift declared itself. She began with copying the illustrations, the saints and holy families in a breviary belonging to one of the farm servants; she went on to draw the lambs, the carts, the horses, the farm buildings, on any piece of white wood she could find littered about the yard, or any bit of paper saved from a parcel, till at last the old curé took pity upon her and gave her some chalks and a drawing-book. At fourteen her father, for a caprice, reclaimed her, and she found herself alone with him in Paris. To judge from the hints she threw out, her life during

the next few years had been of the roughest and wildest, protected only by her indomitable resolve to learn, to make herself an artist, come what would. 'I meant to be *famous*, and I mean it still!' she said, with a passionate emphasis which made David open his eyes. Her father refused to believe in her gift, and was far too self-indulgent and brutal to teach her. But some of his artist friends were kind to her, and taught her intermittently; by the help of some of them she got permission, although under age, to copy in the Louvre, and with hardly any technical knowledge worked there feverishly from morning to night; and at last Taranne—the great Taranne, from whose *atelier* so many considerable artists had gone out to the conquest of the public—Taranne had seen some of her drawings, heard her story, and generously taken her as a pupil.

Then emulation took hold of her—the fierce desire to be first in all the competitions of the *atelier*. David had the greatest difficulty in following her rapid speech, with its slang, its technical idioms, its extravagance and variety; but he made out that she had been for a long time deficient in sound training, and that her rivals at the *atelier* had again and again beaten her easily in spite of her gift, because of her weakness in the grammar of her art.

'And whenever they beat me I could have killed my conquerors; and whenever I beat them, I despised my judges and wanted to give the prize away. It is not my fault. *Je suis faite comme ça—voilà!* I am as vain as a peacock; yet when people admire anything I do, I think them fools—fools! I am jealous and proud and absurd—so they all say; yet a word, a look from a real artist—from one of the great men who *know*—can break me, make me cry. *Démêlez ça, Monsieur, si vous pouvez!*'

She stopped, out of breath. Their eyes were on each other. The fascination, the absorption expressed in the Englishman's look startled her. She hurriedly turned away, took up her cigarette again, and nestled into the cushion. He vainly tried to clothe some of the quick comments running through his mind in adequate French, could find nothing but the most commonplace phrases, stammered out a few, and then blushed afresh. In her pity for him she took up her story again.

After her father's sudden death, the shelter, such as it was, of his name and companionship was withdrawn. What was she to do? It turned out that she possessed a small *rente* which had belonged to her mother, and which her father had never been able to squander. Two relations from her mother's country near Bordeaux turned up to claim her, a country doctor and his sister—middle-aged, devout—to her wild eyes at least, altogether forbidding.

'They made too much of their self-sacrifice in taking me to live with them,' she said with her little ringing laugh. 'I said to them—"My good uncle and aunt, it is too much—no one could have the right to lay such a burden upon you. Go home



and forget me. I am incorrigible. I am an artist. I mean to live by myself, and work for myself. I am sure to go to the bad—good morning." They went home and told the rest of my mother's people that I was insane. But they could not keep my money from me. It is just enough for me. Besides, I shall be selling soon,—certainly I shall be selling! I have had two or three inquiries already about one of the exhibits in the Salon. Now then—*talk*, Monsieur David!' and she emphasised the words by a little frown; 'it is your turn.'

And gradually by skill and patience she made him talk, made him give her back some of her confidences. It seemed to amuse her greatly that he should be a bookseller. She knew no booksellers in Paris; she could assure him they were all pure *bourgeois*, and there was not one of them that could be likened to Donatello's David. Manchester she had scarcely heard of; she shook her fair head over it. But when he told her of his French reading, when he waxed eloquent about Rousseau and George Sand, then her mirth became uncontrollable.

'You came to France to talk of Rousseau and George Sand?' she asked him with dancing eyes—'*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* what do you take us for?'

This time his vanity was hurt. He asked her to tell him what she meant—why she laughed at him.

'I will do better than that,' she said; 'I will get some friend of mine to take you to-morrow to "*Les Trois Rats*."'

'What is "*Les Trois Rats*"?' he asked, half wounded and half mystified.

'"*Les Trois Rats*," Monsieur, is an artist's café. It is famous, it is characteristic; if you are in search of local colour you must certainly go there. When you come back you will have some fresh ideas, I promise you.'

He asked if ladies also went there.

'Some do; I don't. Conventions mean nothing to me, as you perceive, or I should have a companion here to play propriety. But like you, perhaps, I am Romantic. I believe in the grand style. I have ideas as to how men should treat me. I can read Octave Feuillet. I have a terrible weakness for those *cavaliers* of his. And garbage makes me ill. So I avoid the "*Trois Rats*."'

She fell silent, resting her little chin on her hand. Then with a sudden sly smile she bent forward and looked him in the eyes.

'Are you pious, Monsieur, like all the English? There is some religion left in your country, isn't there?'

'Yes, certainly,' he admitted, 'there was a good deal.'

Then, hesitating, he described his own early reading of Voltaire, watching its effect upon her, afraid lest here too he should say something fatuous, behind the time, as he seemed to have been doing all through.

'Voltaire!'—she shrugged her little shoulders—'Voltaire to me is just an old *perruque*—a prating philanthropical person who talked about *le bon Dieu*, and wrote just what every

*bourgeois* can understand. If he had had his will and swept away the clergy and the Church, how many fine subjects we artists should have lost!'

He sat helplessly staring at her. She enjoyed his perplexity a minute; then she returned to the charge.

'Well, my credo is very short. Its first article is art—and its second is art—and its third is art!'

Her words excited her. The delicate colour flushed into her cheek. She flung her head back and looked straight before her with half-shut eyes.

'Yes—I believe in art—and expression—and colour—and *le vrai*. Velazquez is my God, and—and he has too many prophets to mention! I was devout once for three months—since then I have never had as much faith of the Church sort as would lie on a ten-sous piece. But'—with a sudden whimsical change of voice—'I am as credulous as a Breton fisherman, and as superstitious as a gipsy! Wait and see. Will you look at my pictures?'

She sprang up and showed her sketches. She had been a winter in Algiers, and had there and in Spain taken a passion for the East, for its colour, its mystery, its suggestions of cruelty and passion. She chattered away, explaining, laughing, haranguing, and David followed her submissively from thing to thing, dumb with the interest and curiosity of this new world and language of the artist.

Louie meanwhile, who, after the refreshment of supper, had been forgetting both her fatigue and the other two in the entertainment provided her by the shoes and the Oriental dresses, had now found a little inlaid coffer on a distant table, full of Algerian trinkets, and was examining them. Suddenly a loud crash was heard from her neighbourhood.

Elise Delaunay stood still. Her quick speech died on her lips. She made one bound forward to Louie; then, with a cry, she turned deathly pale, tottered, and would have fallen, but that David ran to her.

'The glass is broken,' she said, or rather gasped; 'she has broken it—that old Venetian glass of Maman's. Oh! my pictures!—my pictures! How can I undo it? *Je suis perdue!* Oh go!—go!—go—both of you! Leave me alone! Why did I ever see you?'

She was beside herself with rage and terror. She laid hold of Louie, who stood in sullen awkwardness and dismay, and pushed her to the door so suddenly and so violently that the stronger, taller girl yielded without an attempt at resistance. Then holding the door open, she beckoned imperiously to David, while the tears streamed down her cheeks.

'Adieu, Monsieur—say nothing—there is nothing to be said—go!'

He went out bewildered, and the two in their amazement walked mechanically to their own door.

'She is mad!' said Louie, her eyes blazing, when they paused and looked at each other. 'She must be mad. What did she say?'

'What happened?' was all he could reply.

'I threw down that old glass—it wasn't my fault—I didn't see it. It was standing on the floor against a chair. I moved the chair back just a trifle, and it fell. A shabby old thing—I could have paid for another easily. Well, I'm not going there again to be treated like that.'

The girl was furious. All that chafed sense of exclusion and slighted importance which had grown upon her during David's *tête-à-tête* with their strange hostess came to violent expression in her resentment. She opened the door of their room, saying that whatever he might do she was going to bed and to sleep somewhere, if it was on the floor.

David made a melancholy light in the squalid room, and Louie went about her preparations in angry silence. When she had withdrawn into the little cupboard-room, saying carelessly that she supposed he could manage with one of the bags and his great coat, he sat down on the edge of the bare iron bedstead, and recognised with a start that he was quivering all over—with fatigue, or excitement? His chief feeling perhaps was one of utter discomfiture, flatness, and humiliation.

He had sat there in the dark without moving for some minutes, when his ear caught a low uncertain tapping at the door. His heart leapt. He sprang up and turned the key in an instant.

There on the landing stood Elise Delaunay, her arms filled with what looked like a black bearskin rug, her small tremulous face and tear-wet eyes raised to his.

'*Pardon, Monsieur,*' she said hurriedly. 'I told you I was superstitious—well, now you see. Will you take this rug?—one can sleep anywhere with it though it is so old. And has your sister what she wants? Can I do anything for her? No! *Alors*—I must talk to you about her in the morning. I have some more things in my head to say. *Pardon!—et bonsoir.*'

She pushed the rug into his hands. He was so moved that he let it drop on the floor unheeding, and as she looked at him, half audacious, half afraid, she saw a painful struggle, as of some strange new birth, pass across his dark young face. They stood so a moment, looking at each other. Then he made a quick step forward with some inarticulate words. In an instant she was halfway along the corridor, and, turning back so that her fair hair and smiling eyes caught the light she held, she said to him with the queenliest gesture of dismissal:

'*Au revoir, Monsieur David, sleep well.*'

## CHAPTER III

DAVID woke early from a restless sleep. He sprang up and dressed. Never had the May sun shone so brightly; never had life looked more alluring.

In the first place he took care to profit by the hints of the night before. He ran down to make friends with Madame Merichat—a process which was accomplished without much difficulty, as soon as a franc or two had passed, and arrangements had been made for the passing of a few more. She was to take charge of the *appartement*, and provide them with their morning coffee and bread. And upon this her grim countenance cleared. She condescended to spend a quarter of an hour gossiping with the Englishman, and she promised to stand as a buffer between him and Dubois' irate landlord.

'A job of work at Brussels, you say, Monsieur? *Bien*; I will tell the *propriétaire*. He won't believe it—Monsieur Dubois tells too many lies; but perhaps it will keep him quiet. He will think of the return—of the money in the pocket. He will bid me inform him the very moment Monsieur Dubois shows his nose, that he may descend upon him, and so you will be let alone.'

He mounted the stairs again, and stood a moment looking along the passage with a quickening pulse. There was a sound of low singing, as of one crooning over some occupation. It must be she! Then she had recovered her trouble of the night before—her strange trouble. Yet he dimly remembered that in the farm-houses of the Peak also the breaking of a looking-glass had been held to be unlucky. And, of course, in interpreting the omen she had thought of her pictures and the jury.

How could he see her again? Suddenly it occurred to him that she had spoken of taking a holiday since the Salon opened. A holiday which for her meant 'copying in the Louvre.' And where else, pray, does the tourist naturally go on the first morning of a visit to Paris?

The young fellow went back into his room with a radiant face, and spent some minutes, as Louie had not yet appeared, in elaborating his toilette. The small cracked glass above the mantelpiece was not flattering, and David was almost for the first time anxious about and attentive to what he saw there. Yet, on the whole, he was pleased with his short serge coat and his new tie. He thought they gave him something of a student air, and would not disgrace even *her* should she deign to be seen in his company. As he laid his brush down he looked at his own brown hand, and remembered hers with a kind of wonder—so small and white, the wrist so delicately rounded.

When Louie emerged she was not in a good temper. She declared that she had hardly slept a wink; that the bed was not fit to sleep on; that the cupboard was alive with mice, and smelt intolerably. David first endeavoured to appease her with the