

come and lift them past the mud they are dabbling in, with its hideous wrecks and *débris*, out and away to the great sea, to the infinite beyond of experience and feeling! you, too, feel with me?—you, too, see it like that? Ah! when one has seen and felt Italy—the East,—the South—lived heart to heart with a wild nature, or with the great embodied thought of the past,—lived at large, among great things, great sights, great emotions, then there comes purification! There is no other way out—no, none!

So for another hour Regnault led the English boy up and down and along the quays, talking in the frankest openest way to this acquaintance of a night. It was as though he were wrestling his own way through his own life-problem. Very often David could hardly follow. The joys, the passions, the temptations of the artist, struggling with the life of thought and aspiration, the craving to know everything, to feel everything, at war with the hunger for a moral unity and a stainless self-respect—there was all this in his troubled, discursive talk, and there was besides the magic touch of genius, youth, and poetry.

'Well, this is strange!' he said at last, stopping at a point between the Louvre on the one hand and the Institute on the other, the moonlit river lying between.—'My friends come to me at Rome or at Tangiers, and they complain of me, "Regnault, you have grown morose, no one can get a word out of you"—and they go away wounded—I have seen it often. And it was always true. For months I have had no words. I have been in the dark, wrestling with my art and with this goading, torturing world, which the artist with his puny forces has somehow to tame and render. Then—the other day—ah! well, no matter!—but the dark broke, and there was light! and when I saw your face, your stranger's face, in that crowd to-night, listening to those things, it drew me. I wanted to say my say. I don't make excuses. Very likely we shall never meet again—but for this hour we have been friends. Good night!—good night! Look,—the dawn is coming!'

And he pointed to where, behind the towers of Notre-Dame, the first whiteness of the coming day was rising into the starry blue.

They shook hands.

'You go back to England soon?'

'In a—a—week or two.'

'Only believe this—we have things better worth seeing than "Les Trois Rats"—things that represent us better. That is what the foreigner is always doing; he spends his time in wondering at our monkey tricks; there is no nation can do them so well as we; and the great France—the undying France!—disappears in a splutter of *blague*!'

He leant over the parapet, forgetting his companion, his eyes fixed on the great cathedral, on the slender shaft of the Sainte Chapelle, on the sky filling with light.

Then suddenly he turned round, laid a quick hand on his companion's shoulder.

'If you ever feel inclined to write to me, the *École des Beaux-Arts* will find me. Adieu.'

And drawing his coat round him in the chilliness of the dawn, he walked off quickly across the bridge.

David also hurried away, speeding along the deserted pavements till again he was in his own dark street. The dawn was growing from its first moment of mysterious beauty into a grey disillusioning light. But he felt no reaction. He crept up the squalid stairs to his room. It was heavy with the scent of the narcissus.

He took them, and stole along the passage to Elise's door. There were three steps outside it. He sat down on the lowest, putting his flowers beside him. There was something awful to him even in this nearness; he dare not have gone higher.

He sat there for long—his heart beating, beating. Every part of his French experience so far, whether by sympathy or recoil, had helped to bring him to this intoxication of sense and soul. Regnault had spoken of the 'great things' of life. Had he too come to understand them—thus?

At last he left his flowers there, kissing the step on which they were laid, and which her foot must touch. He could hardly sleep; the slight fragrance which clung to the old bearskin in which he wrapt himself helped to keep him restless; it was the faint heliotrope scent he had noticed in her room.

CHAPTER VI

'He loves me—he does really! Poor boy!'

The speaker was Elise Delaunay. She was sitting alone on the divan in her *atelier*, trying on a pair of old Pompadour shoes, with large faded rosettes and pink heels, which she had that moment routed out of a broker's shop in the Rue de Seine, on her way back from the Luxembourg with David. They made her feet look enchantingly small, and she was holding back her skirts that she might get a good look at them.

Her conviction of David's passion did not for some time lessen her interest in the shoes, but at last she kicked them off, and flung herself back on the divan, to think out the situation a little.

Yes, the English youth's adoration could no longer be ignored. It had become evident, even to her own acquaintances and comrades in the various galleries she was now haunting in this byetime of the artistic year. Whenever she and he appeared together now, there were sly looks and smiles.

The scandal of it did not affect her in the least. She belonged to Bohemia, so apparently did he. She had been perfectly honest till now; but she had never let any convention stand in her way. All her conceptions of the relations between men and women were of an extremely free kind. Her mother's blood in her accounted both for a certain coldness and a certain personal refinement which

both divided and protected her from a great many of her acquaintance, but through her father she had been acquainted for years with the type of life and *ménage* which prevails among a certain section of the French artist class, and if the occasion were but strong enough she had no instincts inherited or acquired which would stand in the way of the gratification of passion.

On the contrary, her reasoned opinions so far as she had any were all in favour of *l'union libre*—that curious type of association which held the artist Théodore Rousseau for life to the woman who passed as his wife, and which obtains to a remarkable extent, with all those accompaniments of permanence, fidelity, and mutual service, which are commonly held to belong only to *l'union légale*, in one or two strata of French society. She was capable of sentiment; she had hidden veins of womanish weakness; but at the same time the little creature's prevailing temper was one of remarkable coolness and audacity. She judged for herself; she had read for herself, observed for herself. Such a temper had hitherto preserved her from adventures; but, upon occasion, it might as easily land her in one. She was at once a daughter of art and a daughter of the people, with a cross strain of gentle breeding and intellectual versatility thrown in, which made her more interesting and more individual than the rest of her class.

'We are a pair of Romantics out of date, you and I,' she had said once to David, half mocking, half in earnest, and the phrase fitted the relation and position of the pair very nearly. In spite of the enormous difference of their habits and training they had at bottom similar tastes—the same capacity for the excitements of art and imagination, the same shrinking from the coarse and ugly sides of the life amid which they moved, the same cravings for novelty and experience.

David went no more to the 'Trois Rats,' and when, in obedience to Lenain's recommendation, he had bought and begun to read a novel of the Goncourts, he threw it from him in a disgust beyond expression. Her talk, meanwhile, was in some respects of the freest; she would discuss subjects impossible to the English girl of the same class; she asked very few questions as to the people she mixed with; and he was, by now, perfectly acquainted with her view, that on the whole marriage was for the *bourgeois*, and had few attractions for people who were capable of penetrating deeper into the rich growths of life. But there was no *personal* taint or license in what she said; and she herself could be always happily divided from her topics. Their Bohemia was canopied with illusions, but the illusions on the whole were those of poetry.

Were all David's illusions hers, however? *Love!* She thought of it, half laughing, as she lay on the divan. She knew nothing about it—she was for *art*. Yet what a brow, what eyes, what a gait—like a young Achilles!

She sprang up to look at a sketch of him, dashed off the day

before, which was on the easel. Yes, it was like. There was the quick ardent air, the southern colour, the clustering black hair, the young parting of the lips. The invitation of the eyes was irresistible—she smiled into them—the little pale face flushing.

But at the same moment her attention was caught by a sketch pinned against the wall just behind the easel.

'Ah! my cousin, my good cousin!' she said, with a little mocking twist of the mouth; 'how strange that you have not been here all this time—never once! There was something said, I remember, about a visit to Bordeaux about now. Ah! well—*tant mieux*—for you would be rather jealous, my cousin!'

Then she sat down with her hands on her knees, very serious. How long since they met? A week. How long till the temporary closing of the Salon and the voting of the rewards? A fortnight. Well, should it go on till then? Yes or no? As soon as she knew her fate—or at any rate if she got her *mention*—she would go back to work. She had two subjects in her mind; she would work at home, and Taranne had promised to come and advise her. Then she would have no time for handsome English boys. But till then?

She took an anemone from a bunch David had brought her, and began to pluck off the petals, alternating 'yes' and 'no.' The last petal fell to 'yes.'

'I should have done just the same if it had been "no,"' she said, laughing. 'Allons, he amuses me, and I do him no harm. When I go back to work he can do his business. He has done none yet. He will forget me and make some money.'

She paced up and down the studio thinking again. She was conscious of some remorse for her part in sending the Englishman's sister to the Cervins. The matter had never been mentioned again between her and David; yet she knew instinctively that he was often ill at ease. The girl was perpetually in Montjoie's studio, and surrounded in public places by a crew of his friends. Madame Cervin was constantly in attendance no doubt, but if it came to a struggle she would have no power with the English girl, whose obstinacy was in proportion to her ignorance.

Elise had herself once stopped Madame Cervin on the stairs, and said some frank things of the sculptor, in order to quiet an uncomfortable conscience.

'Ah! you do not like Monsieur Montjoie?' said the other, looking hard at her.

Elise coloured, then she recovered herself.

'All the world knows that Monsieur Montjoie has no scruples, madame,' she cried angrily. 'You know it yourself. It is a shame. That girl understands nothing.'

Madame Cervin laughed.

'Certainly she understands everything that she pleases, mademoiselle. But if there is any anxiety, let her brother come and look after her. He can take her where she wants to go. 1

should be glad indeed. I am as tired as a dog. Since she came it is one *tapage* from morning till night.'

And Elise retired, discomfited before those small malicious eyes. Since David's adoration for the girl artist in No. 27 had become more or less public property, Madame Cervin, who had seen from the beginning that Louie was a burden on her brother, had decidedly the best of the situation.

'Has she lent Montjoie money?'

Elise meditated. The little *bourgeoise* had a curious weakness for posing as the patron of the various artists in the house. 'Very possible! and she looks on the Mænad as the only way of getting it back? She would sell her soul for a napoleon—I always knew that. *Canaille*, all of them!'

And the meditation ended in the impatient conclusion that neither she nor the brother had any responsibility. After all, any decent girl, French or English, could soon see for herself what manner of man was Jules Montjoie! And now for the 'private view' of a certain artistic club to which she had promised to take her English acquaintance. All the members of the club were young—of the new rebellious school of '*plein air*'—the afternoon promised to be amusing.

So the companionship of these two went on, and David passed from one golden day to another. How she lectured him, the little, vain, imperious thing; and how meek he was with her, how different from his Manchester self! The woman's cleverness filled the field. The man, wholly preoccupied with other things, did not care to produce himself, and in the first ardour of his new devotion kept all the self-assertive elements of his own nature in the background, caring for nothing but to watch her eyes as she talked, to have her voice in his ears, to keep her happy and content in his company.

Yet she was not taken in. With other people he must be proud, argumentative, self-willed—that she was sure of; but her conviction only made her realise her power over him with the more pleasure. His naïve respect for her own fragmentary knowledge, his unbounded admiration for her talent, his quick sympathy for all she did and was, these things, little by little, tended to excite, to preoccupy her.

Especially was she bent upon his artistic education. She carried him hither and thither, to the Louvre, the Luxembourg, the Salon, insisting with a feverish eloquence and invention that he should worship all that she worshipped—no matter if he did not understand!—let him worship all the same—till he had learnt his new alphabet with a smiling docility, and caught her very tricks of phrase. Especially were they hauntings of the sculptures in the Louvre, where, because of the difficulty of it, she piqued herself most especially on knowledge, and could convict him most triumphantly of a barbarian ignorance. Up and down they wandered, and she gave him eyes, whether for Artemis, or Aphrodite, or Apollo, or still more for the significant and

troubling art of the Renaissance, French and Italian. She would flit before him, perching here and there like a bird, and quivering through and through with a voluble enjoyment.

Then from these lingerings amid a world charged at every point with the elements of passion and feeling, they would turn into the open air, into the May sunshine, which seemed to David's northern eyes so lavish and inexhaustible, carrying with it inevitably the kindness of the gods! They would sit out of doors either in the greenwood paths of the Bois, where he could lie at her feet, and see nothing but her face and the thick young wood all round them, or in some corner of the Champs-Élysées, or the sun-beaten Quai de la Conférence, where the hurrying life of the town brushed past them incessantly, yet without disturbing for a moment their absorption in or entertainment of each other.

Yet all through she maintained her mastery of the situation. She was a riddle to him often, poor boy! One moment she would lend herself in bewildering unexpected ways to his passion, the next she would allow him hardly the privileges of the barest acquaintance, hardly the carrying of her cloak, the touch of her hand. But she had no qualms. It was but to last another fortnight; the friendship soothed and beguiled for her these days of excited waiting; and a woman, when she is an artist and a Romantic, may at least sit, smoke, and chat with whomsoever she likes, provided it be a time of holiday, and she is not betraying her art.

Meanwhile the real vulgarity of her nature—its insatiable vanity, its reckless ambition—was masked from David mainly by the very jealousy and terror which her artist's life soon produced in him. He saw no sign of other lovers; she had many acquaintances but no intimates; and the sketch in her room had been carelessly explained to him as the portrait of her cousin. But the *atelier*, and the rivalries it represented:—after three days with her he had learnt that what had seemed to him the extravagance, the pose of her first talk with him, was in truth the earnest, the reality of her existence. She told him that since she was a tiny child she had dreamed of *fame*—dreamed of people turning in the streets when she passed—of a glory that should lift her above all the commonplaces of existence, and all the disadvantages of her own start in life.

'I am neither beautiful, nor rich, nor well-born; but if I have talent, what matter? Everyone will be at my feet. And if I have no talent—*grand Dieu!*—what is there left for me but to kill myself?'

And she would clasp her hands round her knees, and look at him with fierce, drawn brows, as though defying him to say a single syllable in favour of any meaner compromise with fate.

This fever of the artist and the *concurrent*—in a woman above all—how it bewildered him! He soon understood enough of it, however, to be desperately jealous of it, to realise something of the preliminary bar it placed between any lover and the girl's heart and life.

Above all was he jealous of her teachers. Taranne clearly could beat her down with a word, reduce her to tears with an unfavourable criticism; then he had but to hold up a finger, to say, 'Mademoiselle, you have worked well this week, your drawing shows improvement, I have hopes of you,' to bring her to his feet with delight and gratitude. It was a monstrous power, this power of the master with his pupil! How could women submit to it?

Yet his lover's instincts led him safely through many perils. He was infinitely complaisant towards all her artistic talk, all her gossip of the *atelier*. It seemed to him—but then his apprehension of this strange new world was naturally a somewhat confused one—that Elise was not normally on terms with any of her fellow-students.

'If I don't get my *mention*,' she would say passionately, 'I tell you again it will be intrigue: it will be those *creatures* in the *atelier* who want to get rid of me—to finish with me. Ah! I will crush them all yet. And I have been good to them all—every one—I vow I have—even to that animal of a Bréal, who is always robbing me of my place at the *concours*, and taking mean advantages. *Misérables!*'

And the tears would stand in her angry eyes; her whole delicate frame would throb with fierce feeling.

Gradually he learnt how to deal with these fits, even when they chilled him with a dread, a conviction he dared not analyse. He would soothe and listen to her, so ply her with the praises of her gift, which came floated to him on the talk of those acquaintances of hers to whom she had introduced him, that her most deep-rooted irritations would give way for a time. The woman would reappear; she would yield to the charm of his admiring eyes, his stammered flatteries; her whole mood would break up, dissolve into eager softness, and she would fall into a childish plaintiveness, saying wild generous things even of her rivals, now there seemed to be no one under heaven to take their part, and at last, even, letting her little hand fall into those eager brown ones which lay in wait for it, letting it linger there—forgotten.

Especially was she touched in his favour by the way in which Regnault had singled him out. After he had given her the history of that midnight walk, he saw clearly that he had risen to a higher plane in her esteem. She had no heroes exactly; but she had certain artistic passions, certain romantic fancies, which seemed to touch deep fibres in her. Her admiration for Regnault was one of these; but David soon understood that he had no cause whatever to be jealous of it. It was a matter purely of the mind and the imagination.

So the days passed—the hot lengthening days. Sometimes in the long afternoons they pushed far afield into the neighbourhood of Paris. The green wooded hills of Sèvres and St. Cloud, the blue curves and reaches of the Seine, the flashing lights and

figures, the pleasures of companionship, self-revelation, independence—the day was soon lost in these quick impressions, and at night they would come back in a fragrant moonlight, descending from their train into the noise and glitter of the streets, only to draw closer together—for surely on these crowded pavements David might claim her little arm in his for safety's sake—till at last they stood in the dark passage between his door and hers, and she would suddenly pelt him with a flower, spring up her small stairway, and lock her door behind her, before, in his emotion, he could find his voice or a farewell. Then he would make his way into his own den, and sit there in the dark, lost in a thronging host of thoughts and memories,—feeling life one vibrating delight.

At last one morning he awoke to the fact that only four days more remained before the date on which, according to their original plan, they were to go back to Manchester. He laughed aloud when the recollection first crossed his mind; then, having a moment to himself, he sat down and scrawled a few hasty words to John. Business detained him yet a while—would detain him a few weeks—let John manage as he pleased, his employer trusted everything to him—and money was enclosed. Then he wrote another hurried note to the bank where he had placed his six hundred pounds. Let them send him twenty pounds at once, in Bank of England notes. He felt himself a young king as he gave the order—king of this mean world and of its dross. All his business projects had vanished from his mind. He could barely have recalled them if he had tried. During the first days of his acquaintance with Elise he had spent a few spare hours in turning over the boxes on the quays, in talks with booksellers in the Rue de Seine or the Rue de Lille, in preliminary inquiries respecting some commissions he had undertaken. But now, every hour, every thought were hers. What did money matter, in the name of Heaven? Yet when his twenty pounds came, he changed his notes and pocketed his napoleons with a vast satisfaction. For they meant power, they meant opportunity; every one should be paid away against so many hours by her side, at her feet.

Meanwhile day after day he had reminded himself of Louie, and day after day he had forgotten her again, absolutely, altogether. Once or twice he met her on the stairs, started, remembered, and tried to question her as to what she was doing. But she was still angry with him for his interference on the day of the pose; and he could get very little out of her. Let him only leave her alone; she was not a school-child to be meddled with; that he would find out. As to Madame Cervin, she was a little fool, and her meanness in money matters was disgraceful; but she, Louie, could put up with her. One of these meetings took place on the day of his letters to the bank and to John. Louie asked him abruptly when he thought of returning. He flushed

deeply, stammered, said he was inclined to stay longer, but of course she could be sent home. An escort could be found for her. She stared at him; then suddenly her black eyes sparkled, and she laughed so that the sound echoed up the dark stairs. David hotly inquired what she meant; but she ran up still laughing loudly, and he was left to digest her scornful amusement as best he could.

Not long after he found the Cervins' door open as he passed, and in the passage saw a group of people, mostly men; Montjoie in front, just lighting a cigar; Louie's black hat in the background. David hurried past; he loathed the sculptor's battered look, his insolent eye, his slow ambiguous manner; he still burnt with the anger and humiliation of his ineffectual descent on the man's domain. But Madame Cervin, catching sight of him from the back of the party, pursued him panting and breathless to his own door. Would monsieur please attend to her; he was so hard to get hold of; never, in fact, at home! Would he settle her little bill, and give her more money for current expenses? Mademoiselle Louie required to be kept amused—*mon Dieu!*—from morning to night! She had no objection, provided it were made worth her while. And how much longer did monsieur think of remaining in Paris?

David answered recklessly that he did not know, paid her bill for Louie's board and extras without looking at it, and gave her a napoleon in hand, wherewith she departed, her covetous eyes aglow, her mouth full of excited civilities.

She even hesitated a moment at the door and then came back to assure him that she was really all discretion with regard to his sister; no doubt monsieur had heard some unpleasant stories, for instance, of M. Montjoie; she could understand perfectly, that coming from such a quarter, they had affected monsieur's mind; but he would see that she could not make a sudden quarrel with one of her husband's old friends; Mademoiselle Louie (who was already her *chérie*) had taken a fancy to pose for this statue; it was surely better to indulge her than to rouse her self-will, but she could assure monsieur that she had looked after her as though it had been her own daughter.

David stood impatiently listening. In a few minutes he was to be with Elise at the corner of the Rue Lafitte. Of course it was all right!—and if it were not, he could not mend it. The woman was vulgar and grasping, but what reason was there to think anything else that was evil of her? Probably she had put up with Louie more easily than a woman of a higher type would have done. At any rate she was doing her best, and what more could be asked of him than he had done? Louie behaved outrageously in Manchester; he could not help it, either there or here. He had interfered again and again, and had always been a fool for his pains. Let her choose for herself. A number of old and long-hidden exasperations seemed now to emerge whenever he thought of his sister.

Five minutes later he was in the Rue Lafitte.

It was Elise's caprice that they should always meet in this way, out of doors; at the corner of their own street; on the steps of the Madeleine; beneath the Vendôme Column; in front of a particular bonbon shop; or beside the third tree from the Place de la Concorde in the northern alley of the Tuileries Gardens. He had been only once inside her studio since the first evening of their acquaintance.

His mind was full of excitement, for the Salon had been closed since the day before; and the awards of the jury would be informally known, at least in some cases, by the evening. Elise's excitement since the critical hours began had been pitiful to see. As he stood waiting he gave his whole heart to her and her ambitions, flinging away from him with a passionate impatience every other interest, every other thought.

When she came she looked tired and white. 'I can't go to galleries, and I can't paint,' she said, shortly. 'What shall we do?'

Her little black hat was drawn forward, but through the dainty veil he could see the red spot on either cheek. Her hands were pushed deep into the pockets of her light grey jacket, recalling the energetic attitude in which she had stood over Louie on the occasion of their first meeting. He guessed at once that she had not slept, and that she was beside herself with anxiety. How to manage her?—how to console her? He felt himself so young and raw; yet already his passion had awakened in him a hundred new and delicate perceptions.

'Look at the weather!' he said to her. 'Come out of town! let us make for the Gare St. Lazare, and spend the day at St. Germain.'

She hesitated.

'Taranne will write to me directly he knows—directly! He might write any time this evening. No, no!—I can't go! I must be on the spot.'

'He can't write *before* the evening. You said yourself before seven nothing could be known. We will get back in ample time, I swear.'

They were standing in the shade of a shop awning, and he was looking down at her, eagerly, persuasively. She had a debate with herself, then with a despairing gesture of the hands, she turned abruptly—

'Well then—to the station!'

When they had started, she lay back in the empty carriage he had found for her, and shut her eyes. The air was oppressive, for the day before had been showery, and the heat this morning was a damp heat which relaxed the whole being. But before the train moved, she felt a current of coolness, and hastily looking up she saw that David had possessed himself of the cheap fan which had been lying on her lap, and was fanning her with his gaze fixed upon her, a gaze which haunted her as her eyelids fell again.

Suddenly she fell into an inward perplexity, an inward impatience on the subject of her companion, and her relation to him. It had been all very well till yesterday! But now the artistic and professional situation had become so strained, so intense, she could hardly give him a thought. His presence there, and its tacit demands upon her, tried her nerves. Her mind was full of a hundred *misères d'atelier*, of imaginary enemies and intrigues; one minute she was all hope, the next all fear; and she turned sick when she thought of Taranne's letter.

What had she been entangling herself for? she whose whole life and soul belonged to art and ambition! This comradeship, begun as a caprice, an adventure, was becoming too serious. It must end!—end probably to-day, as she had all along determined. Then, as she framed the thought, she became conscious of a shrinking, a difficulty, which enraged and frightened her.

She sat up abruptly and threw back her veil.

David made a little exclamation as he dropped the fan.

'Yes!' she said, looking at him with a little frown, 'yes—what did you say?'

Then she saw that his whole face was working with emotion.

'I wish you would have stayed like that,' he said, in a voice which trembled.

'Why?'

'Because—because it was so sweet!'

She gave a little start, and a sudden red sprang into her cheek.

His heart leapt. He had never seen her blush for any word of his before.

'I prefer the air itself,' she said, bending forward and looking away from him out of the open window at the villas they were passing.

Yet, all the while, as the country houses succeeded each other and her eyes followed them, she saw not their fragrant, flowery gardens, but the dark face and tall young form opposite. He was handsomer even than when she had seen him first—handsomer far than her portrait of him. Was it the daily commerce with new forms of art and intelligence which Paris and her companionship had brought him?—or simply the added care which a man in love instinctively takes of the little details of his dress and social conduct?—which had given him this look of greater maturity, greater distinction? Her heart fluttered a little—then she fell back on the thought of Taranne's letter.

They emerged from the station at St. Germain into a fierce blaze of sun, which burned on the square red mass of the old châteaueau, and threw a blinding glare on the white roads.

'Quick! for the trees!' she said, and they both hurried over the open space which lay between them and the superb chestnut grove which borders the famous terrace. Once there all was well, and they could wander from alley to alley in a green shade, the white blossom-spikes shining in the sun overhead, and to

their right the blue and purple plain, with the Seine winding and dimpling, the river polders with their cattle, and far away the dim heights of Montmartre just emerging behind the great mass of Mont Valérien, which blocked the way to Paris. Such lights and shades, such spring leaves, such dancing airs!

Elise drew a long breath, slipped off her jacket which he made a joy of carrying, and loosened the black lace at her throat which fell so prettily over the little pink cotton underneath.

Then she looked at her companion unsteadily. There was excitement in this light wind, this summer sun. Her great resolve to 'end it' began to look less clear to her. Nay, she stood still and smiled up into his face, a very siren of provocation and wild charm—the wind blowing a loose lock about her eyes.

'Is this better than England—than your Manchester?' she asked him scornfully, and he—traitor!—flinging out of his mind all the bounties of an English May, all his memories of the white-thorn and waving fern and foaming streams set in the deep purple breast of the Scout—vowed to her that nowhere else could there be spring or beauty or sunshine, but only here in France and at St. Germain.

At this she smiled and blushed—no woman could have helped the blush. In truth, his will, steadily bent on one end, while hers was distracted by half a dozen different impulses, was beginning to affect her in a troubling, paralysing way. For all her parade of a mature and cynical enlightenment, she was just twenty; it was such a May day as never was; and when once she had let herself relax towards him again, the inward ache of jealous ambition made this passionate worship beside her, irrelevant as it was, all the more soothing, all the more luring.

Still she felt that something must be done to stem the tide, and again she fell back upon luncheon. They had bought some provisions on their way to the station in Paris. He might subsist on scenery and æsthetics if he pleased—as for her, she was a common person with common needs, and must eat.

'Oh, not here!' he cried, 'why, this is all in public. Look at the nursemaids, and the boys playing, and the carriages on the terrace. Come on a little farther. You remember that open place with the thorns and the stream?—there we should be in peace.'

She did not know that she wanted to be in peace; but she gave way.

So they wandered on past the chestnuts into the tangled depths of the old forest. A path sunk in brambles and fern took them through beech wood to the little clearing David had in his mind. A tiny stream much choked by grass and last year's leaves ran along one side of it. A fallen log made a seat, and the beech trees spread their new green fans overhead, or flung them out to right and left around the little space, and for some distance in front, till the green sprays and the straight grey stems were lost on all sides in a brownish pinkish mist which betrayed a girdle of oaks not yet conquered by the summer.

She took her seat on the log, and he flung himself beside her. Out came the stores in his pockets, and once more they made themselves childishly merry over a scanty meal, which left them still hungry.

Then for an hour or two they sat lounging and chattering in the warm shade, while the gentle wind brought them every spring scent, every twitter of the birds, every swaying murmur of the forest. David lay on his back against the log, his eyes now plunging into the forest, now watching the curls of smoke from his pipe mounting against the background of green, or the moist fleecy clouds which seemed to be actually tangled in the tree-tops, now fixed as long as they dared on his companion's face. She was not beautiful? Let her say it! For she had the softest mouth which drooped like a child with a grievance when she was silent, and melted into the subtlest curves when she talked. She had, as a rule, no colour, but her clear paleness, as contrasted with the waves of her light-gold hair, seemed to him an exquisite beauty. The eyebrows had an oriental trick of mounting at the corners, but the effect, taken with the droop of the mouth, was to give the face in repose a certain charming look of delicate and plaintive surprise. Above all it was her smallness which entranced him; her feet and hands, her tiny waist, the *finesse* of her dress and movements. All the women he had ever seen, Lucy and Dora among them, served at this moment only to make a foil in his mind for this little Parisian beside him.

How she talked this afternoon! In her quick reaction towards him she was after all more the woman than she had ever been. She chattered of her forlorn childhood, of her mother's woes and her father's iniquities, using the frankest language about these last; then of herself and her troubles. He listened and laughed; his look as she poured herself out to him was in itself a caress. Moreover, unconsciously to both, their relation had changed somewhat. The edge of his first ignorance and shyness had rubbed off. He was no longer a mere slave at her feet. Rather a new and sweet equality seemed at last after all these days to have arisen between them; a bond more simple, more natural. Every now and then he caught his breath under the sense of a coming crisis; meanwhile the May day was a dream of joy, and life an intoxication.

But he controlled himself long, being indeed in desperate fear of breaking the spell which held her to him this heavenly afternoon. The hours slipped by; the air grew stiller and sultrier. Presently, just as the sun was sinking into the western wood, a woman, carrying a bundle and with a couple of children, crossed the glade. One child was on her arm; the other, whimpering with heat and fatigue, dragged wearily behind her, a dead weight on its mother's skirts. The woman looked worn out, and was scolding the crying child in a thin exasperated voice. When she came to the stream, she put down her bundle, and finding a seat by the water, she threw back her cotton bonnet and began to

wipe her brow, with long breaths which were very near to groans. Then the child on her lap set up a shout of hunger, while the child behind her began to cry louder than before. The woman hastily raised the baby, unfastened her dress, and gave it the breast, so stifling its cries; then, first slapping the other child with angry vehemence, she groped in the bundle for a piece of sausage roll, and by dint of alternately shaking the culprit and stuffing the food into its poor open mouth, succeeded in reducing it to a chewing and sobbing silence. The mother herself was clearly at the last gasp, and when at length the children were quiet, as she turned her harshly outlined head so as to see who the other occupants of the glade might be, her look had in it the dull hostility of the hunted creature whose powers of self-defence are almost gone.

But she could not rest long. After ten minutes, at longest, she dragged herself up from the grass with another groan, and they all disappeared into the trees, one of the children crying again—a pitiable trio.

Elise had watched the group closely, and the sight seemed in some unexplained way to chill and irritate the girl.

'There is one of the drudges that men make,' she said bitterly, looking after the woman.

'Men?' he demurred; 'I suspect the husband is a drudge too.'

'Not he!' she cried. 'At least he has liberty, choice, comrades. He is not battered out of all pleasure, all individuality, that other human beings may have their way and be cooked for, and this wretched human race may last. The woman is always the victim, say what you like. But for some of us at least there is a way out!'

She looked at him defiantly.

A tremor swept through him under the suddenness of this jarring note. Then a delicious boldness did away with the tremor. He met her eyes straight.

'Yes—love can always find it,' he said under his breath—'or make it.'

She wavered an instant, then she made a rally.

'I know nothing about that,' she said scornfully; 'I was thinking of art. Art breaks all chains, or accepts none. The woman that has art is free, and she alone; for she has scaled the men's heaven and stolen their sacred fire.'

She clasped her hands tightly on her knee; her face was full of aggression.

David sat looking at her, trying to smile, but his heart sank within him.

He threw away his pipe, and laid his head down against the log, not far from her, drawing his hat over his eyes. So they sat in silence a little while, till he looked up and said, in a bright beseeching tone:

'Finish me that scene in *Hernani*!'

The day before, after a *matinée* of *Andromaque* at the Théâtre-Français, in a moment of rebellion and reaction against all things classical, they had both thrown themselves upon *Hernani*. She had read it aloud to him in a green corner of the Bois, having a faculty that way, and bidding him take it as a French lesson. He took it, of course, as a lesson in nothing but the art of making wild speeches to the woman one loves.

But now she demurred.

'It is not here.'

He produced it out of his pocket.

She shrugged her shoulders.

'I am not in the vein.'

'You said last week you were not in the vein,' he said, laughing tremulously, 'and you read me that scene from *Ruy Blas*, so that when we went to see Sarah Bernhardt in the evening I was disappointed!'

She smiled, not being able to help it, for all flattery was sweet to her.

'We must catch our train. I would never speak to you again if we were late!'

He held up his watch to her.

'An hour—it is, at the most, half an hour's walk.'

'*Ah, mon Dieu!*' she cried, clasping her hands. 'It is all over, the vote is given. Perhaps Taranne is writing to me now, at this moment!'

'Read—read! and forget it half an hour more.'

She caught up the book in a frenzy, and began to read, first carelessly and with unintelligible haste; but before a page was over, the artist had recaptured her, she had slackened, she had begun to interpret.

It was the scene in the third act where *Hernani* the outlaw, who has himself bidden his love, *Dofia Sol*, marry her kinsman the old Duke, rather than link her fortunes to those of a ruined chief of banditti, comes in upon the marriage he has sanctioned, nay commanded. The bridegroom's wedding gifts are there on the table. He and *Dofia Sol* are alone.

The scene begins with a speech of bitter irony from *Hernani*. His friends have been defeated and dispersed. He is alone in the world; a price is on his head; his lot is more black and hopeless than before. Yet his heart is bursting within him. He had bidden her, indeed, but how could she have obeyed! *Traitress!* false love! false heart!

He takes up the jewels one by one.

'*This necklace is brave work,—and the bracelet is rare—though not so rare as the woman who beneath a brow so pure can bear about with her a heart so vile! And what in exchange? A little love? Bah!—a mere trifle! . . . Great God! that one can betray like this—and feel no shame—and live!*'

For answer, *Dofia Sol* goes proudly up to the wedding casket and, with a gesture matching his own, takes out the dagger from

its lowest depth. 'You stop halfway!' she says to him calmly, and he understands. In an instant he is at her feet, tortured with remorse and passion, and the magical love scene of the act develops. What ingenuity of tenderness, yet what truth!

'*She has pardoned me, and loves me! Ah, who will make it possible that I too, after such words, should love *Hernani* and forgive him? Tears!—thou weepst, and again it is my fault! And who will punish me? for thou wilt but forgive again! Ah, my friends are all dead!—and it is a madman speaks to thee. Forgive! I would fain love—I know not how. And yet, what deeper love could there be than this? Oh! Weep not, but die with me! If I had but a world, and could give it thee!*'

The voice of the reader quivered. A hand came upon the book and caught her hand. She looked up and found herself face to face with David, kneeling beside her. They stared at each other. Then he said, half choked:

'I can't bear it any more! I love you with all my heart—oh, you know—you know I do!'

She was stupefied for a moment, and then with a sudden gesture she drew herself away, and pushed him from her.

'Leave me alone—leave me free—this moment!' she said passionately. 'Why do you persecute and pursue me? What right have you? I have been kind to you, and you lay snares for me. I will have nothing more to do with you. Let me go home, and let us part.'

She got up, and with feverish haste tied her veil over her hat. He had fallen with his arms across the log, and his face hidden upon them. She paused irresolutely.

'Monsieur David!'

He made no answer.

She bent down and touched him.

He shook his head.

'No, no!—go!' he said thickly.

She bit her lip. The breath under her little lace tippet rose and fell with furious haste. Then she sat down beside him, and with her hands clasped on her knee began to plead with him in tremulous light tones, as though they were a pair of children. Why was he so foolish? Why had he tried to spoil their beautiful afternoon? She must go. The train would not wait for them. But he must come too. *He must.*

After a little he rose without a word, gathered up the book and her wrap, and off they set along the forest path.

She stole a glance at him. It seemed to her that he walked as if he did not know where he was or who was beside him.

Her heart smote her. When they were deep in a hazel thicket, she stole out a small impulsive hand, and slipped it into his, which hung beside him. He started. Presently she felt a slight pressure, but it relaxed instantly, and she took back her hand, feeling ashamed of herself, and aggrieved besides. She shot on in front of him, and he followed.

So they walked through the chestnuts and across the white road to the station in the red glow of the evening sun. He followed her into the railway carriage, did her every little service with perfect gentleness; then when they started he took the opposite corner, and turning away from her, stared, with eyes that evidently saw nothing, at the villas beside the line, at the children in the streets, at the boats on the dazzling river.

She in her corner tried to be angry, to harden her heart, to possess herself only with the thought of Taranne's letter. But the evening was not as the morning. That dark teasing figure at the other end, outlined against the light of the window, intruded, took up a share in her reverie she resented but could not prevent—nay, presently absorbed it altogether. Absurd! she had had love made to her before, and had known how to deal with it. The artist must have comrades, and the comrades may play false; well, then the artist must take care of herself.

She had done no harm; she was not to blame; she had let him know from the beginning that she only lived for art. What folly, and what treacherous, inconsiderate folly, it had all been!

So she lashed herself up. But her look stole incessantly to that opposite corner, and every now and then she felt her lips trembling and her eyes growing hot in a way which annoyed her.

When they reached Paris she said to him imperiously as he helped her out of the carriage, 'A cab, please!'

He found one for her, and would have closed the door upon her.

'No, come in!' she said to him with the same accent.

His look in return was like a blow to her, there was such an inarticulate misery in it. But he got in, and they drove on in silence.

When they reached the Rue Chantal she sprang out, snatched her key from the *concierge*, and ran up the stairs. But when she reached the point on that top passage where their ways diverged, she stopped and looked back for him.

'Come and see my letter,' she said to him, hesitating.

He stood quite still, his arms hanging beside him, and drew a long breath that stabbed her.

'I think not.'

And he turned away to his own door.

But she ran back to him and laid her hand on his arm. Her eyes were full of tears.

'Please, Monsieur David. We were good friends this morning. Be now and always my good friend!'

He shook his head again, but he let himself be led by her. Still holding him—torn between her quick remorse and her eagerness for Taranne's letter, she unlocked her door. One dart for the table. Yes! there it lay. She took it up; then her face blanched suddenly, and she came piteously up to David, who was standing just inside the closed door.

'Wish me luck, Monsieur David, wish me luck, as you did before!'

But he was silent, and she tore open the letter. '*Dieu!—mon Dieu!*'

It was a sound of ecstasy. Then she flung down the letter, and running up to David, she caught his arm again with both hands.

'*Triomphe! Triomphe!* I have got my *mention*, and the picture they skied is to be brought down to the line, and Taranne says I have done better than any other pupil of his of the same standing—that I have an extraordinary gift—that I must succeed, all the world says so—and two other members of the jury send me their compliments. Ah! Monsieur David!—in a tone of reproach—'be kind—be nice—congratulate me.'

And she drew back an arm's-length that she might look at him, her own face overflowing with exultant colour and life. Then she approached again, her mood changing.

'It is too *detestable* of you to stand there like a statue! ah! that it is! For I never deceived you, no, never. I said to you the first night—there is nothing else for me in the world but art—nothing! Do you hear? This falling in love spoils everything—*everything!* Be friends with me. You will be going back to England soon. Perhaps—perhaps'—her voice faltered—'I will take a week's more holiday—Taranne says I ought. But then I must go to work—and we will part friends—always friends—and respect and understand each other all our lives, *n'est-ce pas?*'

'Oh! let me go!' cried David fiercely, his loud strained voice startling them both, and flinging her hand away from him, he made for the door. But impulsively she threw herself against it, dismayed to find herself so near crying, and shaken with emotion from head to foot.

They stood absorbed in each other; she with her hands behind her on the door, and her hat tumbling back from her masses of loosened hair. And as she gazed she was fascinated; for there was a grand look about him in his misery—a look which was strange to her, and which was in fact the emergence of his rugged and Puritan race. But whatever it was it seized her, as all aspects of his personal beauty had done from the beginning. She held out her little white hands to him appealing.

'No! no!' he said roughly, trying to put her away, '*never—never—*friends! You may kill me—you shan't make a child of me any more. Oh! my God!' It was a cry of agony. 'A man can't go about with a girl in this way, if—if she is like you, and not—' His voice broke—he lost the thread of what he was saying, and drew his hand across his eyes before he broke out again. 'What—you thought I was just a raw cub, to be played with. Oh, I am too dull, I suppose, to understand! But I have grown under your hands anyway. I don't know myself—I should do you or myself a mischief if this went on. Let me go—and go home to-night!'

And again he made a threatening step forward. But when he came close to her he broke down.

'I would have worked for you so,' he said thickly. 'For your sake I would have given up my country. I would have made myself French altogether. It should have been marriage or no marriage as you pleased. You should have been free to go or stay. Only I would have laid myself down for you to walk over. I have some money. I would have settled here. I would have protected you. It is not right for a woman to be alone—anyone so young and so pretty. I thought you understood—that you must understand—that your heart was melting to me. I should have done your work no harm—I should have been your slave—you know that. That *cursed, cursed art!*'

He spoke with a low intense emphasis; then turning away he buried his face in his hands.

'David!'

He looked up startled. She was stepping towards him, a smile of ineffable charm floating as it were upon her tears.

'I don't know what is the matter with me!' she said tremulously. 'There is trouble in it, I know! It is the broken glass coming true. *Mais, voyons! c'est plus fort que moi!* Do you care so much—would it break your heart—would you let me work—and never, *never* get in the way? Would you be content that art should come first and you second? I can promise you no more than that—not one little inch! *Would you be content? Say!*'

He ran to her with a cry. She let him put his arms round her, and a shiver of excitement ran through her.

'What does it mean?' she said breathlessly. 'One is so strong one moment—and the next—like this! Oh, why did you ever come?'

Then she burst into tears, hiding her eyes upon his breast.

'Oh! I have been so much alone! but I have got a heart somewhere all the same. If you will have it, you must take the consequences.'

Awed by the mingling of his silence with that painful throbbing beneath her cheek, she looked up. He stooped—and their young faces met.

CHAPTER VII

DURING the three weeks which had ended for David and Elise in this scene of passion, Louie had been deliberately going her own way, managing even in this unfamiliar *milieu* to extract from it almost all the excitement or amusement it was capable of yielding her. All the morning she dragged Madame Cervin about the Paris streets; in the afternoon she would sometimes pose for Montjoie, and sometimes not; he had to bring her bonbons and theatre tickets to bribe her, and learn new English wherewith to flatter her. Then in the evenings she made the Cervins take her

to theatres and various entertainments more or less reputable, for which of course David paid. It seemed to Madame Cervin, as she sat staring beside them, that her laughs never fell in with the laughs of other people. But whether she understood or no, it amused her, and go she would.

A looker-on might have found the relations between Madame Cervin and her boarder puzzling at first sight. In reality they represented a compromise between considerations of finance and considerations of morals—as the wife of the *ancien prix de Rome* understood these last. For the ex-modiste was by no means without her virtues or her scruples. She had ugly manners and ideas on many points, but she had lived a decent life at any rate since her marriage with a man for whom she had an incomprehensible affection, heavily as he burdened and exploited her; and though she took all company pretty much as it came, she had a much keener sense now than in her youth of the practical advantages of good behaviour to a woman, and of the general reasonableness of the *bourgeois* point of view with regard to marriage and the family. Her youth had been stormy; her middle age tended to a certain conservative philosophy of common sense, and to the development of a rough and ready conscience.

Especially was she conscious of the difficulties of virtue. When Elise Delaunay, for instance, was being scandalously handled by the talkers in her stuffy *salon*, Madame Cervin sat silent. Not only had she her own reasons for being grateful to the little artist, but with the memory of her own long-past adventures behind her she was capable by now of a secret admiration for an unprotected and struggling girl who had hitherto held her head high, worked hard, and avoided lovers.

So that when the artist's wife undertook the charge of the good-looking English girl she had done it honestly, up to her lights, and she had fulfilled it honestly. She had in fact hardly let Louie Grieve out of her sight since her boarder was handed over to her.

These facts, however, represent only one side of the situation. Madame Cervin was now respectable. She had relinquished years before the *chasse* for personal excitement; she had replaced it by 'the *chasse* of the five-franc piece.' She loved her money passionately; but at the same time she loved power, gossip, and small flatteries. They distracted her, these last, from the depressing spectacle of her husband's gradual and inevitable decay. So that her life represented a balance between these various instincts. For some time past she had gathered about her a train of small artists, whom she mothered and patronised, and whose wild talk and pecuniary straits diversified the monotony of her own childless middle age. Montjoie, whose undoubted talent imposed upon a woman governed during all her later life by the traditions and the admirations of the artist world, had some time before established a hold upon her, partly dependent