

In twenty-four hours more she had fretted herself ill. The picture was there in the corner, turned to the wall; he could only just prevent her from driving her palette-knife through it. And she was sitting on the edge of the sofa, silent, a book on her knee, her hands hanging beside her, and her feverish eyes wandering—wandering round the room, if only they might escape from David, might avoid seeing him—or so he believed. Horrible! It was borne in upon him that in this moment of despair he was little more to her than the witness, the occasion, of her discomfiture.

Oh! his heart was sore. But he could do nothing. Caresses, encouragements, reproaches, were alike useless. For some time she would make no further attempts at drawing; nor would she be wooed and comforted. She held him passively at arm's length, and he could make nothing of her. It was the middle of their third week; still almost the half left of this month she had promised him. And already it was clear to him that he and love had lost their first hold, and that she was consumed with the unspoken wish to go back to Paris, and the *atelier*. Ah, no!—no! With a fierce yet dumb tenacity he held her to her bargain. Those weeks were his; they represented his only hope for the future; she *should* not have them back.

But he, too, fell into melancholy and silence, and on the afternoon when this change in him first showed itself she was, for a time, touched, ashamed. A few pale smiles returned for him, and in the evening, as he was sitting by the open window, a newspaper on his knee, staring into vacancy, she came up to him, knelt beside him, and drew his half-reluctant arm about her. Neither said anything, but gradually her presence there, on his breast, thrilled through all his veins, filled his heart to bursting. The paper slid away; he put both arms about her, and bowed his head on hers. She put up her small hand, and felt the tears on his cheek. Then a still stronger repentance woke up in her.

'*Pauvre enfant!*' she said, pushing herself away from him, and tremulously drying his eyes. 'Poor Monsieur David—I make you very unhappy! But I warned you—oh, I warned you! What evil star made you fall in love with me?'

In answer he found such plaintive and passionate things to say to her that she was fairly melted, and in the end there was an effusion on both sides, which seemed to bring back their golden hours. But at bottom, David's sensitive instinct, do what he would to silence it, told him, in truth, that all was changed. He was no longer the happy and triumphant lover. He was the beggar, living upon her alms.

CHAPTER IX

NEXT morning David went across to the village shop to buy some daily necessities, and found a few newspapers lying on the counter. He bought a *Débats*, seeing that there was a long

critique of the Salon in it, and hurried home with it to Elise. She tore it open and rushed through the article, putting him aside that he might not look over her. Her face blanched as she read, and at the end she flung the paper from her, and tottering to a chair sat there motionless, staring straight before her. David, beside himself with alarm, and finding caresses of no avail, took up the paper from the floor.

'Let it alone!' she said to him with a sudden imperious gesture. 'There is a whole paragraph about Bréal—her fortune is made. *La voilà lancée—arrivée!* And of me, not a line, not a mention! Three or four pupils of Taranne—all beginners—but *my* name—nowhere! Ah, but no—it is too much!'

Her little foot beat the ground, a hurricane was rising within her.

David tried to laugh the matter off. 'The man who wrote the wretched thing had been hurried—was an idiot, clearly, and what did one man's opinion matter, even if it were paid for at so much a column?'

'*Mais, tais-toi, donc!*' she cried at last, turning upon him in a fury. 'Can't you see that everything for an artist—especially a woman—depends on the *protections* she gets at the beginning? How can a girl—helpless—without friends—make her way by herself? Some one must hold out a hand, and for me it seems there is no one—no one!'

The outburst seemed to his common sense to imply the most grotesque oblivion of her success in the Salon, of Taranne's kindness—the most grotesque sensitiveness to a few casual lines of print. But it wrung his heart to see her agitation, her pale face, the handkerchief she was twisting to shreds in her restless hands. He came to plead with her—his passion lending him eloquence. Let her but trust herself and her gift. She had the praise of those she revered to go upon. How should the carelessness of a single critic affect her? *Imbéciles!*—they would be all with her, at her feet, some day. Let her despise them then and now! But his extravagances only made her impatient.

'Nonsense!' she said, drawing her hand away from him; 'I am not made of such superfine stuff—I never pretended to be! Do you think I should be content to be an unknown genius? *Never!*—I must have my fame counted out to me in good current coin, that all the world may hear and see. It may be vulgar—I don't care! it is so. *Ah, mon Dieu!*' and she began to pace the room with wild steps, 'and it is my fault—my fault! If I were there on the spot, I should be remembered—they would have to reckon with me—I could keep my claim in sight. But I have thrown away everything—wasted everything—*everything!*'

He stood with his back to the window, motionless, his hand on the table, stooping a little forward, looking at her with a passion of reproach and misery; it only angered her; she lost all self-control, and in one mad moment she avenged on his poor heart all the wounds and vexations of her vanity. *Why* had he

ever persuaded her? *Why* had he brought her away and hung a fresh burden on her life which she could never bear? *Why* had he done her this irreparable injury—taken all simplicity and directness of aim from her—weakened her energies at their source? Her only *milieu* was art, and he had made her desert it; her only power was the painter's power, and it was crippled, the fresh spring of it was gone. It was because she felt on her the weight of a responsibility, and a claim she was not made for. She was not made for love—for love at least as he understood it. And he had her word, and would hold her to it. It was madness for both of them. It was stifling—killing her!

Then she sank on a chair, in a passion of desperate tears. Suddenly, as she sat there, she heard a movement, and looking up she saw David at the door. He turned upon her for an instant, with a dignity so tragic, so true, and yet so young, that she was perforce touched, arrested. She held out a trembling hand, made a little cry. But he closed the door softly, and was gone. She half raised herself, then fell back again.

'If he had beaten me,' she said to herself with a strange smile, 'I could have loved him. *Mais!*'

She was all day alone. When he came back it was already evening; the stars shone in the June sky, but the sunset light was still in the street and on the upper windows of the little house. As he opened the garden gate and shut it behind him, he saw the gleam of a lamp behind the acacia, and a light figure beside it. He stood a moment wrestling with himself, for he was wearied out, and felt as if he could bear no more. Then he moved slowly on.

Elise was sitting beside the lamp, her head bent over something dark upon her lap. She had not heard the gate open, and she did not hear his steps upon the grass. He came closer, and saw, to his amazement, that she was busy with a coat of his—an old coat, in the sleeve of which he had torn a great rent the day before, while he was dragging her and himself through some underwood in the forest. She—who loathed all womanly arts, who had often boasted to him that she hardly knew how to use a needle!

In moving nearer, he brushed against the shrubs, and she heard him. She turned her head, smiling. In the mingled light she looked like a little white ghost, she was so pale and her eyes so heavy. When she saw him, she raised her finger with a childish, aggrieved air, and put it to her lips, rubbing it softly against them.

'It does prick so!' she said plaintively.

He came to sit beside her, his chest heaving.

'Why do you do that—for me?'

She shrugged her shoulders and worked on without speaking. Presently she laid down her needle and surveyed him.

'Where have you been all day? Have you eaten nothing, poor friend?'

He tried to remember.

'I think not; I have been in the forest.'

A little quiver ran over her face; she pulled at her needle violently and broke the thread.

'Finished!' she said, throwing down the coat and springing up. 'Don't tell your tailor who did it! I am for perfection in all things—*à bas l'amateur!* Come in, it is supper-time past. I will go and hurry Madame Pyat. *Tu dois avoir une faim de loup.*'

He shook his head, smiling sadly.

'I tell you, you *are* hungry, you *shall* be hungry!' she cried, suddenly flinging her arm round his neck, and nestling her fair head against his shoulder. Her voice was half a sob.

'Oh, so I am!—so I am!' he said, with a wild emphasis, and would have caught her to him. But she slipped away and ran before him to the house, turning at the window with the sweetest, frankest gesture to bid him follow.

They passed the evening close together, she on a stool leaning against his knee, he reading aloud Alfred de Musset's *Nuit de Mai*. At one moment she was all absorbed in the verse, carried away by it; great battle-cry that it is! calling the artist from the miseries of his own petty fate to the lordship of life and nature as a whole; the next she had snatched the book out of his hands and was correcting his accent, bidding him speak after her, put his lips so. Never had she been so charming. It was the coaxing charm of the softened child that cannot show its penitence enough. Every now and then she fell to pouting because she could not move him to gaiety. But in reality his sad and passive gentleness, the mask of feelings which would otherwise have been altogether beyond his control, served him with her better than any gaiety could have done.

Gaiety! it seemed to him his heart was broken.

At night, after a troubled sleep, he suddenly woke, and sprang up in an agony. *Gone!* was she gone already? For that was what her sweet ways meant. Ah, he had known it all along!

Where was she? His wild eyes for a second or two saw nothing but the landscape of his desolate dream. Then gradually the familiar forms of the room emerged from the gloom, and there—against the further wall—she lay, so still, so white, so gracious! Her childish arm, bare to the elbow, was thrown round her head, her soft waves of hair made a confusion on the pillow. After her long day of emotion she was sleeping profoundly. Whatever cruel secret her heart might hold, she was there still, his yet, for a few hours and days. He was persuaded in his own mind that her penitence had been the mere fruit of a compromise with herself, their month had still eight days to run, then—*adieu!* Art and liberty should reclaim their own. Meanwhile why torment the poor boy, who must any way take it hardly?

He lay there for long, raised upon his arm, his haggard look fixed on the sleeping form which by-and-by the dawn illuminated. His life was concentrated in that form, that light breath. He thought with repulsion and loathing of all that had befallen him before he saw her—with anguish and terror of those days and nights to come when he should have lost her. For in the deep stillness of the rising day there fell on him the strangest certainty of this loss. That gift of tragic prescience which was in his blood had stirred in him—he knew his fate. Perhaps the gift itself was but the fruit of a rare power of self-vision, self-appraisal. He saw and cursed his own timid and ignorant youth. How could he ever have hoped to hold a creature of such complex needs and passions? In the pale dawn he sounded the very depths of self-contempt.

But when the day was up and Elise was chattering and flitting about the house as usual without a word of discord or parting, how was it possible to avoid reaction, the re-birth of hope? She talked of painting again, and that alone, after these long days of sullen alienation from her art, was enough to bring the brightness back to their little *ménage* and to dull that strange second sight of David's. He helped her to set her palette, to choose a new canvas; he packed her charcoals, he beguiled some cold meat and bread out of Madame, and then before the heat they set out together for the Bas Bréau.

Just as they started he searched his pockets for a knife of hers which was missing, and thrusting his hand into a breast pocket which he seldom used, he brought out some papers at which he stared in bewilderment.

Then a shock went through him; for there was Mr. Gurney's letter, the letter in which the cheque for 600*l.* had been enclosed, and there was also that faded scrap of Sandy's writing which contained the father's last injunction to his son. As he held the papers he remembered—what he had forgotten for weeks—that on the morning of his leaving Manchester he had put them carefully into this breast pocket, not liking to leave things so interesting to him behind him, out of his reach. Never had he given a thought to them since! He looked down at them, half ashamed, and his eye caught the words:—*'I lay it on him now I'm dying to look after her. She's not like other children; she'll want it. Let him see her married to a decent man, and give her what's honestly hers. I trust it to him. That little lad—'* and then came the fold of the sheet.

'I have found the knife,' cried Elise from the gate. 'Be quick!'

He pushed the papers back and joined her. The day was already hot, and they hurried along the burning street into the shade of the forest. Once in the Bas Bréau Elise was not long in finding a subject, fell upon a promising one indeed almost at once, and was soon at work. This time there were to be no figures,

unless indeed it might be a dim pair of woodcutters in the middle distance, and the whole picture was to be an impressionist dream of early summer, finished entirely out of doors, as rapidly and cleanly as possible. David lay on the ground under the blasted oak and watched her, as she sat on her camp-stool, bending forward, looking now up, now down, using her charcoal in bold energetic strokes, her lip compressed, her brow knit over some point of composition. The little figure in its pink cotton was so daintily pretty, so full of interest and wilful charm, it might well have filled a lover's eye and chained his thoughts. But David was restless and at times absent.

'Tell me what you know of that man Montjoie?' he asked her at last, abruptly. 'I know you disliked him.'

She paused, astonished.

'Why do you ask? Dislike—I *detest and despise* him. I told you so.'

'But what do you know of him?' he persisted.

'No good!' she said quickly, going back to her work. Then a light broke upon her, and she turned on her stool, her two hands on her knees.

'*Tiens!*—you are thinking of your sister. You have had news of her?'

A conscious half-remorseful look rose into her face.

'No, I have had no news. I ought to have had a letter. I wrote, you remember, that first day here. Perhaps Louie has gone home already,' he said, with constraint. 'Tell me anyway what you know.'

'Oh, he!—well, there is only one word for him—he is a *brute!*' said Elise, drawing vigorously, her colour rising. 'Any woman will tell you that. Oh, he has plenty of talent,—he might be anything. Carpeaux took him up at one time, got him commissions. Five or six years ago there was quite a noise about him for two or three Salons. Then people began to drop him. I believe he was the most mean, ungrateful animal towards those who had been kind to him. He drinks besides—he is over head and ears in debt, always wanting money, borrowing here and there, then locking his door for weeks, making believe to be out of town—only going out at night. As for his ways with women'—she shrugged her shoulders—'Was your sister still sitting to him when we left, or was it at an end? Hasn't your sister been sitting to him for his statue?'

She paused again and studied him with her shrewd, bright eyes.

He coloured angrily.

'I believe so—I tried to stop it—it was no use.'

She laughed out.

'No—I imagine she does what she wants to do. Well, we all do, *mon ami!* After all'—and she shrugged her shoulders again—'I suppose she can do what I did?'

'What you did!'

She went on drawing in sharp deliberate strokes; her breath came fast.

'He met me on the stairs one night—it was just after I had taken the *atelier*. I knew no one in the house—I was quite defenceless there. He insulted me—I had a little walking-stick in my hand, my cousin had given me—I struck him with it across the face twice, three times—if you look close you will see the mark. You may imagine he tells fine stories of me when he gets the chance. *Oh! je m'en fiche!*'

The scorn of the last gesture was unmeasured.

'*Canaille!*' said David, between his teeth. 'If you had told me this!'

Her expression changed and softened.

'You asked me no questions after that quarrel we had in the Louvre,' she said, excusing herself. 'You will understand it is not a reminiscence one is exactly proud of; I did speak to Madame Cervin once—'

David said nothing, but sat staring before him into the far vistas of the wood. It seemed strange that so great a smart and fear as had possessed him since yesterday, should allow of any lesser smart within or near it. Yet that scrap of tremulous writing weighed heavy. *Where* was Louie; why had she not written? So far he had turned impatiently away from the thought of her, reiterating that he had done his best, that she had chosen her own path. Now in this fragrant quiet of the forest the quick vision of some irretrievable wreck presented itself to him; he thought of Mr. Ancrum—of John—and a cold shudder ran through him. In it spoke the conscience of a lifetime.

Elise meanwhile laid aside her charcoal, began to dash in some paint, drew back presently to look at it from a distance, and then, glancing aside, suddenly threw down her brushes, and ran up to David.

She sat down beside him, and with a coaxing, childish gesture, drew his arm about her.

'*Tu me fais pitié, mon ami!*' she said, looking up into his face. 'Is it your sister? Go and find her—I will wait for you.'

He turned upon her, his black eyes all passion, his lips struggling with speech.

'My place is here,' he said. 'My life is here!'

Then, as she was silent, not knowing in her agitation what to say, he broke out:

'What was in your mind yesterday, Elise? what is there to-day? There is something—something I *will* know.'

She was frightened by his look. Never did fear and grief speak more plainly from a human face. The great deep within had broken up.

'I was sorry,' she said, trembling, 'sorry to have hurt you. I wanted to make up.'

He flung her hand away from him with an impatient gesture.

'There was more than that!' he said violently; 'will you be like all the rest—betray me without a sign?'

'David!'

She bit her lip proudly. Then the tears welled up into her grey eyes, and she looked round at him—hesitated—began and stopped again—then broke into irrevocable confession.

'David!—Monsieur David!—how can it go on? *Voyons*—I said to myself yesterday—I am torturing him and myself—I *cannot* make him happy—it is not in me—not in my destiny. It must end—it *must*,—it *must*, for both our sakes. But then first,—first—'

'Be quiet!' he said, laying an iron hand on her arm. 'I knew it all.'

And he turned away from her, covering his face.

This time she made no attempt to caress him. She clasped her hands round her knees and remained quite still, gazing—yet seeing nothing—into the green depths which five minutes before had been to her a torturing ecstasy of colour and light. The tears which had been gathering fell, the delicate lip quivered.

Struck by her silence at last, he looked up—watched her a moment—then he dragged himself up to her and knelt beside her.

'Have I made you so miserable?' he said, under his breath.

'It is—it is—the irreparableness of it all,' she answered, half sobbing. 'No undoing it ever, and how a woman glides into it, how lightly, knowing so little!—thinking herself so wise! And if she has deceived herself, if she is not made for love, if she has given herself for so little—for an illusion—for a dream that breaks and must break—how dare the *man* reproach her, after all?'

She raised her burning eyes to him. The resentment in them seemed to be more than individual, it was the resentment of the woman, of her sex.

She stabbed him to the heart by what she said—by what she left unsaid. He took her little cold hand, put it to his lips—tried to speak.

'Don't,' she said, drawing it away and hiding her face on her knees. 'Don't say anything. It is not you, it is God and Nature that I accuse.'

Strange, bitter word!—word of revolt! He lay on his face beside her for many minutes afterwards, tasting the bitterness of it, revolving those other words she had said—'*an illusion—a dream that breaks—must break.*' Then he made a last effort. He came close to her, laid his arm timidly round her shoulders, bent his cheek to hers.

'Elise, listen to me a little. You say the debt is on my side—that is true—true—a thousand times true! I only ask you, *implore* you, to let me pay it. Let it be as you please—on what terms you please—servant or lover. All I pray for is to pay that debt, with my life, my heart.'

She shook her head softly, her face still hidden.

'When I am with you,' she said, as though the words were wrung out of her, 'I must be a woman. You agitate me, you divide my mind, and my force goes. There are both capacities in me, and one destroys the other. And I want—I want my art!'

She threw back her head with a superb gesture. But he did not flinch.

'You shall have it,' he said passionately, 'have it abundantly. Do you think I want to keep you for ever loitering here? Do you think I don't know what ambition and will mean? that I am only fit for kissing?'

He stopped almost with a smile, thinking of that harsh struggle to know and to have, in which his youth had been so far consumed night and day. Then words rushed upon him again, and he went on with a growing power and freedom.

'I never looked at a woman till I saw you!—never had a whim, a caprice. I have eaten my heart out with the struggle first for bread, then for knowledge. But when you came across me, then the world was all made new, and I became a new creature, your creature.'

He touched her face with a quick, tender hand, laid it against his breast, and spoke so, bending piteously down to her, within reach of her quivering mouth, her moist eyes:—

'Tell me this, Elise—answer me this! How can there be great art, great knowledge, only from the brain,—without passion, without experience? You and I have been *living* what Musset, what Hugo, what Shakespeare wrote,' and he struck the little volume of Musset beside him. 'Is not that worth a summer month? not worth the artist's while? But it is nearly gone. You can't wonder that I count the moments of it like a miser! I have had a *hard* life, and this has transfigured it. Whatever happens now in time or eternity, this month is to the good—for me and for you, Elise!—yes, for you, too! But when it is over,—see if I hold you back! We will work together—climb—wrestle, together. And on what terms you please,—mind that,—only dictate them. I deny your "illusion," your "dream that breaks." You *have* been happy! I dare to tell you so. But part now,—shirk our common destiny,—and you will indeed have given all for nothing, while I—'

His voice sank. She shook her head again, but as she drew herself gently away she was stabbed by the haggardness of the countenance, the pleading pathos of the eyes. His gust of speech had shaken her too—revealed new points in him. She bent forward quickly and laid her soft lips to his, for one light swift moment.

'Poor boy!' she murmured, 'poor poet!'

'Ah, that was enough!' he said, the colour flooding his cheeks. 'That healed—that made all good. Will you hide nothing from me, Elise—will you promise?'

'Anything,' she said with a curious accent, 'anything—if you will but let me paint.'

He sprang up, and put her things in order for her. They stood looking at the sketch, neither seeing much of it.

'I must have some more cobalt,' she said wearily. 'Look, my tube is nearly done.'

Yes, that was certain. He must get some more for her. Where could it be got? No nearer than Fontainebleau, alas! where there was a shop which provided all the artists of the neighbourhood. He was eagerly ready to go—it would take him no time.

'It will take you between two and three hours, sir, in this heat. But oh, I am so tired, I will just creep into the fern there while you are away, and go to sleep. Give me that book and that shawl.'

He made a place for her between the spurs of a great oak-root, tearing the brambles away. She nestled into it, with a sigh of satisfaction. 'Divine! Take your food—I want nothing but the air and sleep. *Adieu, adieu!*'

He stood gazing down upon her, his face all tender lingering and remorse. How white she was, how fragile, how shaken by this storm of feeling he had forced upon her! How could he leave her?

But she waved him away impatiently, and he went at last, going first back to the village to fetch his purse which was not in his pocket.

As he came out of their little garden gate, turning again towards the forest which he must cross in order to get to Fontainebleau, he became aware of a group of men standing in front of the inn. Two of them were the landscape artists already slightly known to him, who saluted him as he came near. The other was a tall fine-looking man, with longish grizzled hair, a dark commanding eye, the rosette of the Legion of Honour at his buttonhole, and a general look of irritable power. He wore a wide straw hat and holland overcoat, and beside him on the bench lay some artist's paraphernalia.

All three eyed David as he passed, and he was no sooner a few yards away than they were looking after him and talking, the new-comer asking questions, the others replying.

'Oh, it is she!' said the stranger impatiently, throwing away his cigar. 'Auguste's description leaves me no doubt of it, and the woman at the house in the Rue Chantal where I had the caprice to inquire one day, when she had been three weeks away, told me they were here. It is annoying. Something might have been made of her. Now it is finished. A handsome lad all the same!—of a rare type. *Non!—je me suis trompé—en devenant femme, elle n'a pas cessé d'être artiste!*'

The others laughed. Then they all took up their various equipments, and strolled off smoking to the forest. The man from Paris was engaged upon a large historical canvas represent-

ing an incident in the life of Diane de Poitiers. The incident had Diane's forest for a setting, but his trees did not satisfy him, he had come down to make a few fresh studies on the spot.

David walked his four miles to Fontainebleau, bought his cobalt, and set his face homewards about three o'clock. When he was halfway home, he turned aside into a tangle of young beechwood, parted the branches, and found a shady corner where he could rest and think. The sun was very hot, the high road was scorched by it. But it was not heat or fatigue that had made him pause.

So far he had walked in a tumult of conflicting ideas, emotions, terrors, torn now by this memory, now by that—his mind traversed by one project after another. But now that he was so near to meeting her again, though he pined for her, he suddenly and pitifully felt the need for some greater firmness of mind and will. Let him pause and think! Where *was* he with her?—what were his real, tangible hopes and fears? Life and death depended for him on these days—these few vanishing days. And he was like one of the last year's leaves before him, whirled helpless and will-less in the dust-storm of the road!

He had sat there an unnoticed time when the sound of some heavy carriage approaching roused him. From his green covert he could see all that passed, and instinctively he looked up. It was the Barbizon *diligence* going in to meet the five o'clock train at Fontainebleau, a train which in these lengthening days very often brought guests to the inn. The *correspondance* had been only begun during the last week, and to the dwellers at Barbizon the afternoon *diligence* had still the interest of novelty. With the perception of habit David noticed that there was no one outside; but though the rough blinds were most of them drawn down he thought he perceived some one inside—a lady. Strange that anyone should prefer the stifling *intérieur* who could mount beside the driver with a parasol!

The omnibus clattered past, and with the renewal of the woodland silence his mind plunged heavily once more into the agonised balancing of hope and fear. But in the end he sprang up with a renewed alertness of eye and step.

Despair? Impossible!—so long as one had one's love still in one's arms—could still plead one's cause, hand to hand, lip to lip. He strode homewards—running sometimes—the phrases of a new and richer eloquence crowding to his lips.

About a mile from Barbizon, the path to the Bas Bréau diverges to the right. He sped along it, leaping the brambles in his path. Soon he was on the edge of the great avenue itself, looking across it for that spot of colour among the green made by her light dress.

But there was no dress, and as he came up to the tree where he had left her, he saw to his stupefaction that there was no one there—nothing, no sign of her but the bracken and brambles he had beaten down for her some three hours before, and the trodden

grass where her easel had been. Something showed on the ground. He stooped and noticed the empty cobalt-tube of the morning.

Of course she had grown tired of waiting and had gone home. But a great terror seized him. He turned and ran along the path they had traversed in the morning making for the road; past the inn which seemed to have been struck to sleep by the sun, past Millet's studio on the left, to the little overgrown door in the brick wall.

No one in the garden, no one in the little *salon*, no one upstairs; Madame Pyat was away for the day, nursing a daughter-in-law. In all the house and garden there was not a sound or sign of life but the cat asleep on the stone step of the kitchen, and the bees humming in the acacias.

'Elise!' he called, inside and out, knowing already, poor fellow, in his wild despair that there could be no answer—that all was over.

But there was an answer. Elise was no untaught heroine. She played her part through. There was her letter, propped up against the gilt clock on the sham marble *cheminée*.

He found it and tore it open.

'You will curse me, but after a time you will forgive. I *could* not go on. Taranne found me in the forest, just half an hour after you left me. I looked up and saw him coming across the grass. He did not see me at first, he was looking about for a subject. I would have escaped, but there was no way. Then at last he saw me. He did not attack me, he did not persuade me, he only took for granted it was all over,—my Art! I must know best, of course; but he was sorry, for I had a gift. Had I seen the notice of my portrait in the "Temps," or the little mention in the "Figaro"? Oh, yes, Bréal had been very successful, and deserved to be. It was a brave soul, devoted to art, and art had rewarded her.

'Then I showed him my sketch, trembling—to stop his talk—every word he said stabbed me. And he shrugged his shoulders quickly; then, as though recollecting himself, he put on a civil face all in a moment, and paid me compliments. To an amateur he is always civil. I was all white and shaking by this time. He turned to go away, and then I broke down. I burst into tears—I said I was coming back to the *atelier*—what did he mean by taking such a cruel, such an insolent tone with me? He would not be moved from his polite manner. He said he was glad to hear it; mademoiselle would be welcome; but just as though we were complete strangers. *He* who has befriended me, and taught me, and scolded me since I was fourteen! I could not bear it. I caught him by the arm. I told him he *should* tell me all he thought. Had I really talent?—a future?

'Then he broke out in a torrent—he made me afraid of him—yet I adored him! He said I had more talent than any other pupil he had ever had; that I had been his hope and interest for

six years; that he had taught me for nothing—befriended me—worked for me, behind the scenes, at the Salon; and all because he knew that I must rise, must win myself a name, that when I had got the necessary technique I should make one of the poetical impressionist painters, who are in the movement, who sway the public taste. But I must give *all* myself—my days and nights—my thoughts, and brain, and nerves. Other people might have adventures and paint the better. Not I,—I was too highly strung—for me it was ruin. “*C'est un maître sévère—l'Art,*” he said, looking like a god. “*Avec celui-là on ne transige pas. Ah! Dieu, je le connais, moi!*” I don't know what he meant; but there has been a tragedy in his life; all the world knows that.

“Then suddenly he took another tone, called me *pauvre enfant*, and apologised. Why should I be disturbed? I had chosen for my own happiness, no doubt. What was fame or the high steeps of art compared even with an *amour de jeunesse*? He had seen you, he said,—*une tête superbe—des épaules de lion!* I was a woman; a young handsome lover was worth more to me, naturally, than the drudgeries of art. A few years hence, when the pulse was calmer, it might have been all very well. Well! I must forgive him; he was my old friend. Then he wrung my hand, and left me.

“Oh, David, David, I must go! I *must*. My life is imprisoned here with you—it beats its bars. Why did I ever let you persuade me—move me? And I should let you do it again. When you are there I am weak. I am no cruel adventuress, I can't look at you and torture you. But what I feel for you is not love—no, no, it is not, poor boy! Who was it said “A love which can be tamed is no love”? But in three days—a week—mine had grown tame—it had no fears left. I am older than you, not in years, *mais dans l'âme*—there is what parts us.

“Oh! I must go—and you must not try to find me. I shall be quite safe, but with people you know nothing about. I shall write to Madame Pyat for my things. You need have no trouble.

“Very likely I shall pass you on the way, for if I hurry I can catch the *diligence*. But you will not see me. Oh, David, I put my arms round you! I press my face against you. I ask you to forgive me, to forget me, to work out your own life as I work out mine. It will soon be a dream—this little house—these summer days! I have kissed the chair you sat in last night, the book you read to me. *C'est déjà fini! Adieu! adieu!*”

He sat for long in a sort of stupor. Then that maddening thought seized him, stung him into life, that she had actually passed him, that he had seen her, not knowing. That little indistinct figure in the *intérieur*, that was she.

He sprang up, in a blind anguish. Pursuit! the *diligence* was slow, the trains doubtful, he might overtake her yet. He dashed into the street, and into the Fontainebleau road. After he had run nearly a mile, he plunged into a path which he believed was

a short cut. It led through a young and dense oak wood. He rushed on, seeing nothing, bruising himself and stumbling. At last a projecting branch struck him violently on the temple. He staggered, put up a feeble hand, sank on the grass against a trunk, and fainted.

CHAPTER X

It was between five and six o'clock in the morning. In the Tuileries Gardens flowers, grass, and trees were drenched in dew, the great shadow of the Palace spread grey and cool over terraces and slopes, while beyond the young sun had already shaken off all cumbering mists, and was pouring from a cloudless sky over the river with its barges and swimming-baths, over the bridges and the quays, and the vast courts and façades of the Louvre. Yet among the trees the air was still exquisitely fresh, the sun still a friend to be welcomed. The light morning wind swept the open, deserted spaces of the Gardens, playing merrily with the dust, the leaves, the fountains. Meanwhile on all sides the stir of the city was beginning, mounting slowly and steadily like a swelling tone.

On a bench under one of the trees in the Champs-Élysées sat a young man asleep. He had thrown himself against the back of the bench, his cheek resting on the iron, one hand on his knee. It was David Grieve; the lad's look showed that his misery was still with him, even in sleep.

He was dreaming, letting fall here and there a troubled and disconnected word. In his dream he was far from Paris—walking after his sheep among the heathery slopes of the Scout, climbing towards the grey smithy among the old mill-stones, watching the Red Brook slide by over its long, shallow steps of orange grit, and the Downfall oozing and trickling among its tumbled blocks. Who was that hanging so high above the ravine on that treacherous stone that rocked with the least touch? Louie—mad girl!—come back. Ah! too late—the stone rocks, falls; he leaps from block to block, only to see the light dress disappear into the stony gulf below. He cries—struggles—wakes.

He sat up, wrestling with himself, trying to clear his torpid brain. Where was he? His dream-self was still roaming the Scout; his outer eye was bewildered by these alleys, these orange-trees, these statues—that distant arch.

Then the hideous, undefined cloud that was on him took shape. Elise had left him. And Louie, too, was gone—he knew not where, save that it was to ruin. When he had arrived the night before at the house in the Rue Chantal, Madame Merichat could tell him nothing of Mademoiselle Delaunay, who had not been heard of. Then he asked, his voice dying in his throat before the woman's hard and cynical stare—the stare of one who found the chief savour of life in the misfortunes of her kind—he