

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

asked for his sister and the Cervins. The Cervins were staying at Sèvres with relations, and were expected home again in a day or two; Mademoiselle Louie?—well, Mademoiselle Louie was not with them. Had she gone back to England? *Mais non!* A trunk of hers was still in the Cervins' vestibule. Did Madame Merichat know anything about her? the lad asked, forcing himself to it, his blanched face turned away. Then the woman shrugged her shoulders and spoke out.

If he really must know, she thought there was no doubt at all that where Monsieur Montjoie was, Mademoiselle Louie was too. Monsieur Montjoie had paid the arrears of his rent to the *propriétaire*, somehow or other, and had then made a midnight flitting of it so as to escape other creditors who were tired of waiting for his statue to be finished. He had got a furniture van there at night, and he and the driver and her husband between them had packed most of the things from the studio, and M. Montjoie had gone off in the van about one o'clock in the morning. But of course she did not know his address! she said so half-a-dozen times a day to the persons who called, and it was as true as gospel. Why, indeed, should M. Montjoie let her or anyone else know, that he could help? He had gone into hiding to keep honest people out of their money—that, was what it meant.

Well, and the same evening Mademoiselle Louie also disappeared. Madame Cervin had been in a great way, but she and mademoiselle had already quarrelled violently, and madame declared that she had no fault in the matter and that no one could be held responsible for the doings of such a minx. She believed that madame had written to monsieur. Monsieur had never received it? Ah, well, that was not surprising! No one could ever read madame's writing, though it made her temper very bad to tell her so.

Could he have Madame Cervin's address? Certainly. She wrote it out for him. As to his old room?—no, he could not go back to it.

Monsieur Dubois had lately come back, with some money apparently, for he had paid his *loyer* just as the landlord was going to turn him out. But he was not at home.

Then she looked her questioner up and down, with a cool, inhuman curiosity working in her small eyes. So M'selle Elise had thrown him over already? That was sharp work! As for the rest of her news, her pessimism was interested in observing his demeanour under it. Certainly he did not seem to take it gaily; but what else did he expect with his sister?—'*Je vous demande!*'

The young man dropped his head and went out, shrinking together into the darkness. She called her husband to the door, and the two peered after him into the lamp-lit street, dissecting him, his mistress, and his sister with knifelike tongues.

David went away and walked up and down the streets, the quays, the bridges, hour after hour, feeling no fatigue, till sud-

denly, just as the dawn was coming on, he sank heavily on to the seat in the Champs-Élysées. The slip with Madame Cervin's address on it dropped unheeded from his relaxing hand. His nervous strength was gone, and he had to sit and bear his anguish without the relief of frenzied motion.

Now, after his hour's sleep, he was somewhat revived, ready to start again—to search again; but where? whither? *Somewhere* in this vast, sun-wrapped Paris was Elise, waking, perhaps, at this moment and thinking of him with a smile and a tear. He *would* find her, come what would; he could not live without her!

Then into his wild passion of loss and desire there slipped again that cold, creeping thought of Louie—ruined, body and soul—ruined in this base and dangerous Paris, while he still carried in his breast that little scrap of scrawled paper! And why? Because he had flung her to the wolves without a thought, that he and Elise might travel to their goal unchecked. '*My God!*'

The sense of some one near him made him look up. He saw a girl stopping near the seat whom in his frenzy he for an instant took for Louie. There was the same bold, defiant carriage, the same black hair and eyes. He half rose, with a cry.

The girl gave a quick, coarse laugh. She had been hurrying across the Avenue towards the nearest bridge when she saw him; now she came up to him with a hideous jest. David saw her face full, caught the ghastly suggestions of it—its vice, its look of mortal illness wrecking and blurring the cheap prettiness it had once possessed, and beneath all else the fierceness of the hunted creature. His whole being rose in repulsion; he waved her away, and she went, still laughing. But his guilty mind went with her, making of her infamy the prophecy and foretaste of another's.

He hurried on again, and again had to rest for faintness' sake, while the furies returned upon him. It seemed as though every passer-by were there only to scourge and torture him; or, rather, out of the moving spectacle of human life which began to flow past him with constantly increasing fulness, that strange selective poet-sense of his chose out the figures and incidents which bore upon his own story and worked into his own drama, passing by the rest. A group of persons presently attracted him who had just come apparently from the Rive Gauche, and were making for the Rue Royale. They consisted of a man, a woman, and a child. The child was a tiny creature in a preposterous feathered hat as large as itself. It had just been put down to walk by its father, and was dragging contentedly at its mother's hand, sucking a crust. The man had a bag of tools on his shoulder and was clearly an artisan going to work. His wife's face was turned to him and they were talking fast, lingering a little in the sunshine like people who had a few minutes to spare and were enjoying them. The man had the blanched, unwholesome look of the city workman who lives a sedentary life in foul air, and was, moreover, undersized and nowadays attractive, save perhaps for the keen amused eyes with which he was listening to his wife's chatter.

The great bell of Notre-Dame chimed in the distance. The man straightened himself at once, adjusted his bag of tools, and hurried off, nodding to his wife.

She looked after him a minute, then turned and came slowly along the alley towards the bench where David sat, idly watching her. The heat was growing steadily, the child was heavy on her hand, and she was again clearly on the way to motherhood. The seat invited her, and she came up to it.

She sat down, panting, and eyed her neighbour askance, detecting at once how handsome he was, and how unshorn and haggard. Before he knew where he was, or how it had begun, they were talking. She had no shyness of any sort, and, as it seemed to him, a motherly, half-contemptuous indulgence for his sex, as such, which fitted oddly with her young looks. Very soon she was asking him the most direct questions, which he had to parry as best he could. She made out at once that he was a foreigner and in the book trade, and then she let him know by a passing expression or two that naturally she understood why he was lounging there in that plight at that hour in the morning. He had been keeping gay company, of course, and had but just emerged from some nocturnal orgie or other. And then she shrugged her strong shoulders with a light, pitiful air, as though marvelling once more for the thousandth time over the stupidity of men who would commit these idiocies, would waste their money and health in them, say what women would.

Presently he discovered that she was giving him advice of different kinds, counselling him above all to find a good wife who would work and save his wages for him. A decent marriage was in truth an economy, though young men would never believe it.

David could only stare at her in return for her counsels. The difference between his place at that moment in the human comedy and hers was too great to be explained; it called only for silence or a stammering commonplace or two. Yet for a few moments the neighbourhood of her and her child was pleasant to him. She had a good comely head, which was bare under the sun, a little shawl crossed upon her ample bust, and a market-basket on her arm. The child was playing in the fine gravel at her feet, pausing every now and then to study her mother's eye with a furtive gravity, while the hat fell back and made a still more fantastic combination than before with the pensive little face.

Presently, tired of her play, she came to stand by her mother's knee, laying her head against it.

'*Mon petit ange! que tu es gentille!*' said the mother in a low, rapid voice, pressing her hand on the child's cheek. Then, turning back to David, she chattered on about the profit and loss of married life. All that she said was steeped in prose—in the prose especially of sous and francs; she talked of rents, of the price of food, of the state of wages in her husband's trade. Yet every here and there came an exquisite word, a flash. It seemed that she had been very ill with her first child. She did not mince

matters much even with this young man, and David gathered that she had not only been near dying, but that her illness had made a moral epoch in her life. She was laid by for three months; work was slack for her husband; her own earnings, for she was a skilled embroideress working for a great linen-shop in the Rue Vivienne, were no longer forthcoming. Would her husband put up with it, with the worries of the baby, and the *ménage*, and the sick wife, and that sharp pinch of want into the bargain, from which during two years she had completely protected him?

'I cried one day,' she said simply; 'I said to him, "You're just sick of it, ain't you? Well, I'm going to die. Go and shift for yourself, and take the baby to the *Enfants Trouvés*. *Alors—*"'

She paused, her homely face gently lit up from within. 'He is not a man of words—Jules. He told me to be quiet, called me *petite sottie*. "Haven't you slaved for two years?" he said. "Well, then, lie still, can't you?—*faut bien que chacun prenne son tour!*"'

She broke off, smiling and shaking her head. Then glancing round upon her companion again, she resumed her motherly sermon. That was the good of being married; that there was some one to share the bad times with, as well as the good.

'But perhaps,' she inquired briskly, 'you don't believe in being married? You are for *l'union libre?*'

She spoke like one touching on a long familiar question—as much a question indeed of daily life and of her class as those other matters of wages and food she had been discussing.

A slow and painful red mounted into the Englishman's cheek.

'I don't know,' he said stupidly. 'And you?'

'No, no!' she said emphatically, twice, nodding her head. 'Oh, I was brought up that way. My father was a Red—an Anarchist—a great man among them; he died last year. He said that liberty was everything. It made him mad when any of his friends accepted *l'union légale*—for him it was a treason. He never married my mother, though he was faithful to her all his life. But for me—' she paused, shaking her head slowly.

'Well, I had an elder sister—that says everything. *Faut pas en parler*; it makes me melancholy, and one must keep up one's spirits when one is like this. It is three years since she died; she was my father's favourite. When they buried her—she died in the hospital—I sat down and thought a little. It was abominable what she had suffered, and I said to myself, "Why?"'

The child swayed backward against her knee, so absorbed was it in its thumb and the sky, and would have fallen but that she caught it with her housewife's hand, being throughout mindful of its slightest movement.

"Why?" I said. She was a good creature—a bit foolish perhaps, but she would have worked the shoes off her feet to please anybody. And they had treated her—but like a dog! It bursts one's heart to think of it, and I said to myself,—*le*

*mariage c'est la justice!* it is nothing but that. It is not what the priests say—oh! not at all. But it strikes me like that—*c'est la justice*; it is nothing but that!

And she looked at him with the bright fixed eyes of one whose thoughts are beyond their own expressing. He interrupted her, wondering at the harsh rapidity of his own voice. 'But if it is the woman who will be free?—who will have no bond?'

Her expression changed, became shrewd, inquisitive, personal. 'Well, then!' she said with a shrug, and paused. 'It is because one is ignorant, you see, or one is bad—*on peut toujours être une coquine!* And one forgets—one thinks one can be always young, and love is all pleasure—and it is not true! one gets old—and there is the child—and one may die of it.'

She spoke with the utmost simplicity, yet with a certain intensity. Evidently she had a natural pride in her philosophy of life, as though in a possession of one's own earning and elaborating. She had probably expressed it often before in much the same terms, and with the same verbal hitches and gaps.

The young fellow beside her rose hastily, and bade her good morning. She looked mildly surprised at such an abrupt departure, but she was not offended.

'Good day, citizen,' she said, nodding to him. 'I disturb you?'

He muttered something and strode away.

How much time had that wasted of this irrecoverable day that was to set him on Elise's track once more! The first post had been delivered by this time. Elise must either return to her studio or remove her possessions; anyhow, sooner or later the Merichats must have information. And if they were forbidden to speak, well, then they must be bribed.

That made him think of money, and in a sudden panic he turned aside into a small street and examined his pockets. Nearly four napoleons left, after allowing for his debt to Madame Pyat, which must be paid that day. Even in his sick, stunned state of the evening before, when he was at last staggering on again, after his fall, to the Fontainebleau station, he had remembered to stop a Barbizon man whom he came across and give him a pencilled message for the deserted madame. He had sent her the Rue Chantal address, there would be a letter from her this morning. And he must put her on the watch, too—Elise could not escape him long.

But he must have more money. He looked out for a stationer's shop, went in and wrote a letter to John, which he posted at the next post-office.

It was an incoherent scrawl, telling the lad to change the cheque he enclosed in Bank of England notes and send them to the Rue Chantal, care of Madame Merichat. He was not to expect him back just yet, and was to say to any friend who might inquire that he was still detained.

That letter, with the momentary contact it involved with his Manchester life, brought down upon him again the thought of Louie. But this time he flung it from him with a fierce impatience. His brain, indeed, was incapable of dealing with it. Remorse? rescue? there would be time enough for that by-and-by. Meanwhile—to find Elise!

And for a week he spent the energies of every thought and every moment on this mad pursuit. Of these days of nightmare he could afterwards remember but a few detached incidents here and there.

He recollected patrols up and down the Rue Chantal; talks with Madame Merichat; the gleam in her eyes as he slipped his profitless bribes into her hand; visits to Taranne's *atelier*, where the *concierge* at last grew suspicious and reported the matter within; and finally an interview with the artist himself, from which the English youth emerged no nearer to his end than before, and crushed under the humiliation of the great man's advice. He could vaguely recall the long pacings of the Louvre; the fixed scrutiny of face after face; vain chases; ignominious retreats; and all the wretched stages of that slow descent into a bottomless despair!

At last there was a letter—the long-expected letter to Madame Merichat, directing the removal of Mademoiselle Delaunay's possessions from the Rue Chantal. It was written by a certain M. Pimodan, who did not give his address, but who declared himself authorised by Mademoiselle Delaunay to remove her effects, and named a day when he would himself superintend the process and produce his credentials. David passed the time after the arrival of this letter in a state of excitement which left him hardly master of his actions. He had a room at the top of a wretched little hotel close to the Nord station, but he hardly ate or slept. The noises of Paris were agony to him night and day; he lived in a perpetual nausea of mind and body, hardly able at times to distinguish between the images of the brain and the impressions coming from without.

Before the day came, a note was brought to him from the Rue Chantal. It was from M. Pimodan, and requested an interview.

'I should be glad to see you on Mademoiselle Delaunay's behalf. Will you meet me in the Garden of the Luxembourg in front of the central pavilion, at three o'clock to-morrow?'

'GUSTAVE PIMODAN.'

Before the hour came David was already pacing up and down the blazing gravel in front of the Palace. When M. Pimodan came the Englishman in an instant recognised the cousin—the lanky fellow with the spectacles, who had injured his eyes by reading.

As soon as he had established this identification—and the two

men had hardly exchanged half-a-dozen sentences before the flashing inward argument was complete—a feeling of enmity arose in his mind, so intense that he could hardly keep himself still, could hardly bring his attention to bear on what he or his companion was saying. He had been brought so low that, with anyone else, he must have broken into appeals and entreaties. With this man—No!

As for M. Pimodan, the first sight of the young Englishman had apparently wrought in him also some degree of nervous shock; for the hand which held his cane fidgeted as he walked. He had the air of a person, too, who had lately gone through mental struggle; the red rims of the eyes under their large spectacles might be due either to chronic weakness or to recent sleeplessness.

But however these things might be, he took a perfectly mild tone, in which David's sick and irritable sense instantly detected the note of various offensive superiorities—the superiority of class and the superiority of age to begin with. He said in the first place that he was Mademoiselle Delaunay's relative, and that she had commissioned him to act for her in this very delicate matter. She was well aware—had been aware from the first day—that she was watched, and that M. Grieve was moving heaven and earth to discover her whereabouts. She did not, however, intend to be discovered; let him take that for granted. In her view all was over—their relation was irrevocably at an end. She wished now to devote herself wholly and entirely to her art, without disturbance or distraction from any other quarter whatever. Might he, under these circumstances, give M. Grieve the advice of a man of the world, and counsel him to regard the matter in the same light?

David walked blindly on, playing with his watch-chain. In the name of God whom and what was this fellow talking about? At the end of ten minutes' discourse on M. Pimodan's part, and of a few rare monosyllables on his own, he said, straightening his young figure with a nervous tremor:

'What you say is perfectly useless—I shall find her.'

Then a sudden angry light leapt into the cousin's eyes.

'You will *not* find her!' he said, drawing a sharp breath. 'It shows how little you know her, after all—compared with those who—No matter! Oh, you can persecute and annoy her! No one doubts that. You can stand between her and all that she now cares to live for—her art. But you can do nothing else; and you will not be allowed to do that long, for she is not alone, as you seem to think. She will be protected. There are resources, and we shall employ them!'

The cousin had gone beyond his commission. David guessed as much. He did not believe that Elise had set this man on to threaten him. What a fool! But he merely said with a sarcastic dryness, endeavouring the while to steady his parched lips and his eyelids swollen with weariness;

'*A la bonne heure!*—employ them. Well, sir, you know, I believe, where Mademoiselle Delaunay is. I wish to know. You will not inform me. I therefore pursue my own way, and it is useless for me to detain you any longer.'

'Know where she is!' cried the other, a triumphant flash passing across his sallow student's face; 'I have but just parted from her.'

But he stopped. As a physician, he was accustomed to notice the changes of physiognomy. Instinctively he put some feet of distance between himself and his companion. Was it agony or rage he saw?

But David recovered himself by a strong effort.

'Go and tell her, then, that I shall find her,' he said with a shaking voice. 'I have many things to say to her yet.'

'Absurd!' cried the other angrily. 'Very well, sir, we know what to expect. It only remains for us to take measures accordingly.'

And drawing himself up he walked quickly away, looking back every now and then to see whether he were followed or no.

'Supposing I did track him,' thought David vaguely, 'what would he do? Summon one of the various *gardiens* in sight?'

He had, however, no such intention. What could it have ended in but a street scuffle? Patience! and he would find Elise for himself in spite of that prater.

Meanwhile he descended the terrace, and threw himself, worn out, upon the first seat, to collect his thoughts again.

Oh, this summer beauty:—this festal moment of the great city! Palace and Garden lay under the full June sun. The clipped trees on the terraces, statues, alleys, and groves slept in the luminous dancing air. All the normal stir and movement of the Garden seemed to have passed to-day into the leaping and intermingling curves of the fountains; the few figures passing and repassing hardly disturbed the general impression of heat and solitude.

For hours David sat there, head down, his eyes on the gravel, his hands tightly clasped between his knees. When he rose at last it was to hurry down the Rue de Seine and take the nearest bridge and street northwards to the Quartier Montmartre. He had been dreaming too long! and yet so great by now was his confusion of mind that he was no nearer a fresh plan of operations than when the cousin left him.

When he arrived at Madame Merichat's *loge* it was to find that no new development had occurred. Elise's possessions were still untouched; neither she nor M. Pimodan had given any further sign. The *concierge*, however, gave him a letter which had just arrived for him. Seeing that it bore the Manchester postmark, he thrust it into his pocket unread.

When he entered the evil-smelling passage of his hotel, a *garçon* emerged from the restaurant, dived into the *salle de lecture*, and came out with an envelope, which he gave to the

Englishman. It had been left by a messenger five minutes before monsieur arrived. David took it, a singing in his ears; mounted to the first landing, where the gas burnt at midday, and read it.

'Gustave tells me you would not listen to him. Do you want to make me curse our meeting? Be a man and leave me to myself! While I know that you are on the watch I shall keep away from Paris—*voilà tout*. I shall eat my heart out,—I shall begin to hate you,—you will have chosen it so. Only understand this: I will *never* see you again, for both our sakes, if I can help it. Believe what I say—believe that what parts us is a fate stronger than either of us, and go! Oh! you men talk of love—and at bottom you are all selfish and cruel. Do you want to break me more than I am already broken? Set me free!—will you kill both my youth and my art together?'

He carefully refolded the letter and put it into its envelope. Then he turned and went downstairs again towards the street. But the same frowsy waiter who had given him his letter was on the watch for him. In the morning monsieur had commanded some dinner. Would he take it now?

The man's tone was sulky. David understood that he was not considered a profitable customer of the hotel—that, considering his queer ways, late hours, and small spendings, they would probably be glad to be rid of him. With a curious submission and shrinking he followed the man into the stifling restaurant and sat down at one of the tables.

Here some food was brought to him, which he tried to eat. But in the midst of it he was seized with so great a loathing, that he suddenly rose, so violently as to upset a plate of bread beside him, and make a waiter spring forward to save the table itself. He pushed his way to the glass-door into the street, totally unconscious of the stir his behaviour was causing among the stout women in bonnets and the red-faced men with napkins tucked under their chins who were dining near, fumbled at the handle, and tottered out.

'*Quel animal!*' said the enraged *dame du comptoir*, who had noticed the incident. 'Marie!—this to the sickly girl who sat near with the books in front of her, enter that plate, and charge it high. To-morrow I shall raise the price of his room. One must really finish with him. *C'est un fou!*'

Meanwhile David, revived somewhat by the air, was already in the Boulevard, making for the Opéra and the Rue Royale. It was not yet seven, the Salon would be still open. The distances seemed to him interminable—the length of the Rue Royale, the expanse of the Place de la Concorde, the gay and crowded ways of the Champs-Élysées. But at last he was mounting the stairs and battling through the rooms at the top. He looked first at the larger picture which had gained her the *mention honorable*. It was a study of factory girls at their work, unequal, impatient, but full of a warm inventive talent—full of *her*. He knew its

history—the small difficulties and triumphs of it, the adventures she had gone through on behalf of it—by heart. That fair-haired girl in the corner was studied from herself; the tint of the hair, the curve of the cheek were exact. He strained his eyes to look, searching for this detail and that. His heart said farewell—that was the last, the nearest he should ever come to her on this earth! Next year? Ah, he would give much to see her pictures of next year, with these new perceptions she had created in him.

He stood a minute before the other picture, the portrait—a study from one of her comrades in the *atelier*—and then he wound his way again through the thronged and suffocating rooms, and out into the evening.

The excessive heat of the last few days was about to end in storm. A wide tempestuous heaven lay beyond the Arc de Triomphe; the red light struck down the great avenue and into the faces of those stepping westwards. The deep shade under the full-leafed trees—how thinly green they were still against the sky that day when she vanished from him beside the arch and their love began!—was full of loungers and of playing children; the carriages passed and repassed in the light. So it had been, the enchanting never-ending drama, before this spectator entered—so it would be when he had departed.

He turned southwards and found himself presently on the Quai de la Conférence, hanging over the river in a quiet spot where few people passed.

His frenzy of will was gone, and his last hope with it. Elise had conquered. Her letter had brought him face to face with those realities which, during this week of madness, he had simply refused to see. He could pit himself against her no longer. When it came to the point he had not the nerve to enter upon a degrading and ignoble conflict, in which all that was to be won was her hatred or her fear. That, indeed, would be the last and worst ruin, for it would be the ruin, not of happiness or of hope, but of love itself, and memory.

He took out her letter and re-read it. Then he searched for some of the writing materials he had bought when he had written his last letter to Manchester, and, spreading a sheet on the parapet of the river wall, he wrote:

'Be content. I think now—I am sure—that we shall never meet again. From this moment you will be troubled with me no more. Only I tell you for the last time that you have done ill—irrevocably ill. For what you have slain in yourself and me is not love or happiness, but *life* itself—the life of life!'

Foolish, incoherent words, as they seemed to him, but he could find no better. Confusedly and darkly they expressed the cry, the inmost conviction of his being. He could come no nearer at any rate to that desolation at the heart of him.

But now what next? Manchester?—the resumption and expansion of his bookseller's life—the renewal of his old friendships—the pursuit of money and of knowledge?

No. That is all done. The paralysis of will is complete. He cannot drive himself home, back to the old paths. The disgust with life has sunk too deep—the physical and moral collapse of which he is conscious has gone too far.

*'Wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?'*

There, deep in the fibre of memory lie these words, and others like them—the typical words of a religion which is still in some sense the ineradicable warp of his nature, as it had been for generations of his forefathers. His individual resources of speech, as it were, have been overpassed; he falls back upon the inherited, the traditional resources of his race.

He looked up. A last gleam was on the Invalides—on the topmost roof of the Corps Législatif; otherwise the opposite bank was already grey, the river lay in shade. But the upper air was still aglow with the wide flame and splendour of the sunset; and beneath, on the bridges and the water and the buildings, how clear and gracious was the twilight!

*'Who shall deliver me?'* *'Deliver thyself!'* One instant, and the intolerable pressure on this shrinking point of consciousness can be lightened, this hunger for sleep appeased! Nothing else is possible—no future is even conceivable. His life in flowering has exhausted and undone itself, so spendthrift has been the process.

So he took his resolve. Then, already calmed, he hung over the river, thinking, reviewing the past.

Six weeks—six weeks only!—yet nothing in his life before matters or counts by comparison. For this mood of deadly fatigue the remembrance of all the intellectual joys and conquests of the last few years has no savour whatever. Strange that the development of one relation of life—the relation of passion—should have been able so to absorb and squander the power of living! His fighting, enduring capacity, compared with that of other men, must be small indeed. He thinks of himself as a coward and a weakling. But neither the facts of the present nor the face of the future are altered thereby.

*The relation of sex*—in its different phases—as he sees the world at this moment, there is no other reality. The vile and hideous phase of it has been present to him from the first moment of his arrival in these Paris streets. He thinks of the pictures and songs at the 'Trois Rats' from which in the first delicacy and flush of passion he had shrunk with so deep a loathing; of the photographs and engravings in the shops and the books on the stalls; of some of those pictures he had passed, a few minutes before, in the Salon; of that girl's face in the Tuileries Gardens. The animal, the beast in human nature, never has it been so present to him before; for he has understood and realised it while loathing it, has been admitted by his own passion to those regions of human feeling where all that is most foul and all that is most beautiful are generated alike from the elemental forces of

life. And because he had loved Elise so finely and yet so humanly, with a boy's freshness and a man's energy, this animalism of the great city had been to him a perpetual nightmare and horror. His whole heart had gone into Regnault's cry—into Regnault's protest. For his own enchanted island had seemed to him often in the days of his wooing to be but floating on the surface of a ghastly sea, whence emerged all conceivable shapes of ruin, mockery, terror, and disease. It was because of the tremulous adoration which filled him from the beginning that the vice of Paris had struck him in this tragical way. At another time it might have been indifferent to him, might even have engulfed him.

But he!—he had known the best of passion! He laid his head down on the wall, and lived Barbizon over again—day after day, night after night. Now for the first time there is a pause in the urging madness of his despair. All the pulses of his being slacken; he draws back as it were from his own fate, surveys it as a whole, separates himself from it. The various scenes of it succeed each other in memory, set always—incomparably set—in the spring green of the forest, or under a charmed moonlight, or amid the flowery detail of a closed garden. Her little figure flashes before him—he sees her gesture, her smile; he hears his own voice and hers; recalls the struggle to express, the poverty of words, the thrill of silence, and that perpetual and exquisite recurrence to the interpreting images of poetry and art. But no poet had imagined better, had divined more than they in those earliest hours had *lived!* So he had told her, so he insisted now with a desperate faith.

But, poor soul! even as he insists, the agony within rises, breaks up, overwhelms the picture. He lives again through the jars and frets of those few burning days, the growing mistrust of them, the sense of jealous terror and insecurity—and then through the anguish of desertion and loss. He writhes again under the wrenching apart of their half-fused lives—under this intolerable ache of his own wound.

*This* the best of passion! Why his whole soul is still athirst and abungered. Not a single craving of it has been satisfied. What is killing him is the sense of a thwarted gift, a baffled faculty—the faculty of self-spending, self-surrender. This, the best?

Then the mind fell into a whirlwind of half-articulate debate, from the darkness of which emerged two scenes—fragments—set clear in a passing light of memory.

That workman and his wife standing together before the day's toil—the woman's contented smile as her look clung to the mean departing figure.

And far, far back in his boyish life—Margaret sitting beside 'Lias in the damp autumn dawn, spending on his dying weakness that exquisite, ineffable passion of tenderness, of pity.

Ah! from the very beginning he had been in love with loving. He drew the labouring breath of one who has staked his all for some long-coveted gain, and lost.

Well!—Mr. Anerum may be right—the English Puritan may be right—'sin' and 'law' may have after all some of those mysterious meanings his young analysis had impetuously denied them—he and Elise may have been only dashing themselves against the hard facts of the world's order, while they seemed to be transcending the common lot and spurning the common ways. What matter now! A certain impatient defiance rises in his stricken soul. He has made shipwreck of this one poor opportunity of life—confessed! now let the God behind it punish, if God there be. '*The rest is silence.*' With Elise in his arms, he had grasped at immortality. Now a stubborn, everlasting 'Nay' possesses him. There is nothing beyond.

He gathered up his letter, folded it, and put it into the breast-pocket of his coat. But in doing so his fingers touched once more the ragged edges of a bit of frayed paper.

*Louie!*

Through all these half-sane days and nights he had never once thought of his sister. She had passed out of his life—she had played no part even in the nightmares of his dreams.

But now!—while that intense denial of any reality in the universe beyond and behind this masque of life and things was still vibrating through his deepest being, it was as though a hand gently drew aside a curtain, and there grew clear before him, slowly effacing from his eyes the whole grandiose spectacle of buildings, sky, and river, that scene of the past which had worked so potently both in his childish sense and in Reuben's maturer conscience—the bare room, the iron bed, the dying man, one child within his arm, the other a frightened baby beside him.

It was frightfully clear, clearer than it had ever been in any normal state of brain, and as his mind lingered on it, unconsciously shaping, deepening its own creation, the weird impression grew that the helpless figure amid the bedclothes rose on its elbow, opened its cavernous eyes, and looked at him face to face, at the son whose childish heart had beat against his father's to the last. The boy's tortured soul quailed afresh before the curse his own remorse called into those eyes.

He hung over the water pleading with the phantom—defending himself. Every now and then he found that he was speaking aloud; then he would look round with a quick, piteous terror to see whether he had been heard or no, the parched lips beginning to move again almost before his fear was soothed.

All his past returned upon him, with its obligations, its fetters of conscience and kinship, so slowly forged, so often resisted and forgotten, and yet so strong. The moment marked the first passing away of the philtre, but it brought no recovery with it.

*'My God! my God! I tried, father—I tried. But she is lost, lost—as I am!'*

Then a thought found entrance and developed. He walked up and down the quay, wrestling it out, returning slowly and

with enormous difficulty, because of his physical state, to some of the normal estimates and relations of life.

At last he dragged himself off towards his hotel. He must have some sleep, or how could these hours that yet remained be lived through—his scheme carried out?

On the way he went into a shop still open on the boulevard. When he came out he thrust his purchase into his pocket, buttoned his coat over it, and pursued his way northwards with a brisker step.

## CHAPTER XI

Two days afterwards David stood at the door of a house in the outskirts of the Auteuil district of Paris. The street had a half-finished, miscellaneous air; new buildings of the villa type were mixed up with old and dingy houses standing in gardens, which had been evidently overtaken by the advancing stream of Paris, having once enjoyed a considerable amount of country air and space.

It was at the garden gate of one of these older houses that David rang, looking about him the while at the mean irregular street and the ill-kept side-walks with their heaps of cinders and refuse.

A powerfully built woman appeared, scowling, in answer to the bell. At first she flatly refused the new-comer admission. But David was prepared. He set to work to convince her that he was not a Paris creditor, and, further, that he was well aware M. Montjoie was not at home, since he had passed him on the other side of the road, apparently hurrying to the railway station, only a few minutes before. He desired simply to see madame. At this the woman's expression changed somewhat. She showed, however, no immediate signs of letting him in, being clearly chosen and paid to be a watch-dog. Then David brusquely put his hand in his pocket. Somehow he must get this harridan out of the way at once! The same terror was upon him that had been upon him now for many days and nights—of losing command of himself, of being no more able to do what he had to do.

The creature studied him, put out a greedy palm, developed a smile still more repellent than her brutality, and let him in.

He found himself in a small, neglected garden; in front of him, to the right, a wretched, weather-stained house, bearing every mark of poverty and dilapidation, while to the left there stretched out from the house a long glass structure, also in miserable condition—a sculptor's studio, as he guessed.

His guide led him to the studio-door. Madame was there a few minutes ago. As they approached, David stopped.

'I will knock. You may go back to the house. I am madame's brother.'

She looked at him once more, reluctant. Then, in the clearer light of the garden, the likeness of the face to one she already