ADOLPHE

"ELLÉNORE," I CRIED, "COME BACK, COME BACK TO ME."

ADOLPHE

BY

BENJAMIN CONSTANT

Translated by

J. LEWIS MAY

AUTHOR OF "ANATOLE FRANCE: THE MAN AND HIS WORK," AND EDITOR OF THE AUTHORISED ENGLISH EDITION OF THE WORKS OF ANATOLE FRANCE.

LONDON: STANLEY PAUL & CO., LTD.
PHILADELPHIA: DAVID McKAY COMPANY

The International Library

A NEW SERIES OF TRANSLATIONS

Fcap. 8vo, Cloth, Designed Title Page, Frontispiece and Coloured Jacket

The Angel of the Chimes	Fortuné du Boisgobey
The Decameron	Boccaccio
The Convict Colonel	Fortuné du Boisgobey
The Prussian Terror *	Alexandre Dumas
The Neapolitan Lovers *	Alexandre Dumas
Paul and Virginia	Bernardin de St. Pierre
Love and Liberty *	Alexandre Dumas
Adolphe	Benjamin Constant
The Mysteries of Paris	Eugene Sue
The Betrothed	Alessandro Manzoni
Select Stories	Guy de Maupassant

* *The only edition in the English language*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

CONTENTS

The International Library

A NEW SERIES OF TRANSLATIONS

Fcap. 8vo, Cloth, Designed Title Page, Frontispiece and Coloured Jacket

The Angel of the Chimes	Fortuné du Boisgobey
The Decameron	Boccaccio
The Convict Colonel	Fortuné du Boisgobey
The Prussian Terror *	Alexandre Dumas
The Neapolitan Lovers *	Alexandre Dumas
Paul and Virginia	Bernardin de St. Pierre
Love and Liberty *	Alexandre Dumas
Adolphe	Benjamin Constant
The Mysteries of Paris	Eugene Sue
The Betrothed	Alessandro Manzoni
Select Stories	Guy de Maupassant

* *The only edition in the English language*

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

BENJAMIN CONSTANT, or, to give him his full name, Henri Benjamin Constant de Rebecque, the author of this story, was born at Lausanne on the 25th October, 1757, and died at Paris on the 10th December, 1830. His family, originally belonging to Artois, was of Huguenot descent, and had taken refuge in Switzerland during the religious persecutions. His mother, a gentle and delicate woman, had died in giving him birth. His father, with whom he was always on terms of constraint, he vividly depicts for us in the following pages. He lived at Lausanne under the paternal eye until he was thirteen, after which he pursued his studies at Oxford, Erlangen and Edinburgh successively. In England, where he was brought into contact with such men as Erskine and Mackintosh, he imbibed that love of moderation and constitutional government which was destined never to forsake him. He betook himself to Paris on the eve of the Revolution, and after several intervals, which he spent in travel, finally made

his home there in 1795. His dexterity and eloquence as a writer and debater soon won him a reputation, and he was summoned to the Tribunate after the events of the 18th Brumaire. His opposition to the first Consul, to which he gave utterance both in public and in private, brought about his expulsion from that body, and Constant, with his illustrious friend Madame de Staël, found it prudent to withdraw from France. He then sought refuge at Weimar, where he was warmly welcomed by the Grand Duchess. Here he made the acquaintance of Goethe and Schiller, and here it was that he translated *Wallenstein* and wrote the romance of *Adolphe*. On the overthrow of Napoleon in 1814 he returned to France and lent his support to the Bourbons, only to forsake their cause for that of the Emperor during the Hundred Days. When Napoleon's hopes suffered irremediable shipwreck at Waterloo, Constant again appeared on the scene as the upholder of constitutionalism. In 1819 he was elected to the Chamber of Deputies, where he never ceased to champion the principles of constitutional government. In 1830, during the Revolution of July, he was in the country and unable, on account of sickness, to come to Paris. Yielding, however, to the urgent entreaties of Lafayette, he returned to the Capital and helped, by every means in his power, to put Louis Philippe on the Throne.

Constant's health was now seriously impaired, yet his amazing industry never flagged. It was about this time that he sought to set the crown on his career by gaining a seat in the Academy. This ambition, however, he was not destined to realise, and the disappointment he experienced was so great that it sensibly hastened his progress to the grave.

Such, in the briefest outline, was the life of Benjamin Constant. In addition to *Adolphe* and his translation of *Wallenstein*, Constant was the author of a number of political essays and tractates which he himself collected under the title of *Cours de Politique Constitutionelle.* His most important philosophical work was *De la Religion considérée dans sa source, ses formes et ses développements ;* but the work by which he will be best remembered is the autobiographical romance *Adolphe*, in which, under assumed names and with many other devices to conceal the identity of the actors in the drama, he tells the story of his love affair with Madame de Staël.

It is a singular paradox that this little tale, of which the author did not think very highly, and which he threw off in a fortnight to " purge his system " of the thoughts of the woman whose tyrannical domination had become so intolerable to him, should be one of the greatest and most moving love stories of the world.

There is a restraint, a dispassionate coldness in the manner of the narrative that is more moving than eloquence. As a study in the psychology of love, of the perpetual action and reaction of desire and satiety, "Adolphe" is instinct with a truth that no one who is at all cognisant of the passions of the human heart can fail to recognise.

It is stated in the book itself, and most people accept the view, that Adolphe was not in love with Ellénore; that his passion for her had burnt itself out. It may be so, and since the author himself says it was so, we must perforce believe him. But whatever his attitude towards Ellénore in her lifetime, it is clear that when the consummation to which he had so long looked forward, was at length attained; when the gates of eternity, opening for the passage of her soul, had closed upon her for ever, when the *silence* for which he had craved so impatiently, at length descended upon him; when he knew that he was at last alone, then indeed his love revived, and he realised, when it was too late, that ambition has no prize, toil no reward, genius no guerdon to compare with the devotion of a woman's heart.

Adolphe, then, is a psychological autobiography, and the persons who figure in it, though tricked out in many disguises, are, as we have said, real persons. Adolphe is of course

Benjamin Constant himself. Ellénore has been usually taken to be Madame de Staël, but as Professor Rudler shows in the introduction to his admirable edition of the book, Ellénore is not one woman only, but four or five; she is in fact the sum total of Benjamin Constant's sentimental experience. Of these it is only necessary here to mention the two principal. The first of these is a certain Madame Lindsay, the daughter of an innkeeper named Jérémie O'Dwyer. This Madame Lindsay had served as *femme de chambre* in the household of the Duchesse de Fitzjames. In 1791 she became the mistress of Auguste de Lamoignon with whom she emigrated to London. She came back to Paris alone at the end of 1799 and paved the way for the return of her lover, whom she assisted to regain possession of his fortune. This incident is reproduced in *Adolphe*. Madame Lindsay was a beautiful and witty woman of Irish descent, whose salon in London was frequented by Chateaubriand. Her love affair with Constant had caused no little stir in its time. The second, and by far the most important factor in the composition of Ellénore is the celebrated Madame de Staël, the daughter of Jacques Necker the great French banker and Minister of Finance, and the author of *Corinne*, *Delphine* and *De l'Allemagne*. She professed enlightened and liberal political

opinions, and for this reason incurred the hostility of Napoleon. Many ruses were adopted by Constant to prevent people from identifying the original of Ellénore, and the principal of these has reference to the heroine's age. Ellénore is represented as being ten years older than Adolphe, whereas when Constant and Madame de Staël met for the first time at Lausanne, in 1794, the former was twenty-seven and the latter barely twenty-eight.

As for Adolphe, for Benjamin Constant himself, his character has been well summed up by the greatest French writer of our times. "If," says Anatole France, "we penetrate to the details of his actions, if we enter into his soul, we discover contradictions that astonish us, eternal struggles whose violence amazes us, and we say to ourselves: there were in this man several men who might have done great and kind things had they not been forced to prey upon one another by an intolerable and indissoluble union."

It is commonly said that Benjamin Constant was a great lover, and to judge by the number of beautiful and distinguished women whose affections he enjoyed, he may seem to merit the appellation. And yet it is to be doubted. "I have said," continues Anatole France, "that he loved women. It is almost true. He would have loved them if he could, and if he had not

been as incapable of love as of belief. At least he knew that it is they alone who give life whatever value it has, and that this world, which is merely bad, would, without them, be quite uninhabitable."

The human heart is indeed a strange and wayward thing. It longs for what is unattainable or of uncertain tenure, but when once possession is obtained, the tide of desire begins to recede, and swift or slow, to return whence it came.

Varying an ancient phrase we may say—and indeed I think it has been said—that to those whom the gods wish to chastise, they grant their requests. It was ever thus with Adolphe. He began his adventure in carelessness, he wished to plume himself on a successful love affair, to pose and strut before his friends as a shining example of the *homme à bonne fortune*. He succeeded beyond his wildest dreams. He fell in love with Ellénore, and he continued to love her so long as he deemed his hold on her was precarious. While he continued to love, his parents, his friends, his studies, his worldly prospects, faded as in a mist. And then the wings of his passion grew weary, and he chafed at the restraint. It is the way with passions. Love that endures for ever at white heat is an illusion of the female heart. Tcheckoff puts the duration of a love affair at

two years. Perhaps he errs on the side of generosity. The frailty of woman, the inconstancy of man, are the everlasting burden of poets and novelists. Yet, Horace, who was far from being a pattern of fidelity, had his Cynara, whom he set above all the rest, and that man is to be pitied who cannot number among the women he has loved one whom he places in the inmost sanctuary of his heart and to whose memory at least, he has been faithful. And surely Constant's Cynara was not Madame Lindsay, or Madame Trevor, or Madame Talma, not even Madame Récamier with "her face of an angel and a school girl," but Madame de Staël.

J. Lewis May.

TO THE READER

SEVERAL years ago, when I was making a journey through Italy, I was compelled on account of an overflowing of the Neto to come to a halt at an inn at Cerenza, a little village in Calabria. Staying at this inn was a stranger who had been obliged to put up there for the same reason. He was a very silent man, and appeared deeply dejected. He did not manifest any signs of impatience at the involuntary interruption of his journey. As he was the only person in the place with whom I could converse, I sometimes used to complain to him of the delay which our progress was suffering. "It is all the same to me," he replied, "whether I am here or elsewhere." Our landlord, who had had a conversation with a Neapolitan domestic that waited on the stranger, without, however, so much as knowing his name, told me that he was not travelling as a sightseer, since he visited neither ruins nor sites, nor buildings, nor people. He read a great deal, but never with a steady purpose. He used to

take walks in the evening, but always by himself, and he would often sit for whole days motionless in his chair, his head resting on his hands.

Just as communications were restored, and we were at liberty to proceed, the stranger was seized with a sudden and alarming illness. Humanity imposed it upon me as a duty to prolong my stay at his side in order to tend him. At Cerenza there was only the village surgeon available. I wanted to send to Cozenza for more skilled assistance, but the stranger would not hear of it. "It is not worth while," said he; "the man we have here is the very man for my requirements." He spoke, perhaps, truer than he intended; for the village doctor restored him to health. "I didn't think you were so clever," he said with a sort of grim humour, as he dismissed him. He then thanked me for my attentions, and departed.

Several months later, when I was at Naples, I received a letter from the landlord at Cerenza, together with a wallet which had been picked up on the road to Strongoli, along which the stranger and I had journeyed, though not together. The innkeeper, who sent it to me, felt sure that it belonged to one or other of us. It contained a number of very old letters, without addresses, or with the addresses and signatures effaced, a woman's portrait, and a

manuscript book containing the tale or biographical fragment which follows. The stranger, to whom these articles belonged, had not, in parting from me, left me any means of communicating with him. I kept them for ten years, doubtful of the use to which I ought to put them, when, happening by the merest chance to make mention of them to some people whom I met in a certain town in Germany, I was urgently requested by one of them to entrust him with the manuscript of which I was the depository. At the end of a week the manuscript was returned to me. It was accompanied by a letter which I have placed at the end of this story, because it would be unintelligible were it read before the narrative itself.

This letter decided me to undertake the present publication, since it gave me the assurance that no one could be offended or compromised thereby. I have not altered a word of the original. Even the suppression of the proper names does not originate with me. They were merely indicated, as they still are, by initials.

ADOLPHE

CHAPTER I

I WAS twenty-two years of age, and I had just completed my studies at the University of Göttingen. It was the intention of my father, a minister of the Elector of . . . that I should journey through the most notable countries in Europe. Afterwards, he intended to summon me to his side, to introduce me into the department of which he was the head, and to prepare me in due course to take his place. By dint of fairly hard work, pursued in the midst of much dissipation, I had achieved some successes which had marked me out from the general run of my fellow-students and had implanted in my father's mind what were probably very exaggerated hopes for my future.

These hopes had made him very indulgent concerning my numerous derelictions. He had never allowed me to suffer from the evil consequences of any of them, and had always granted, and sometimes anticipated, my requests for money.

Unfortunately, his conduct was magnanimous and liberal rather than affectionate. I was sensible of all his claims to my gratitude and my respect. But no confidence had ever existed between us. There was a touch of irony in his mentality which assorted ill with my disposition. My one desire, at that time, was to abandon myself to those romantic ideas which lift the soul out of the common round and inspire it with contempt for its ordinary environment. I found in my father, when I discussed matters with him, not a censor, but a cold and caustic observer who, at first, smiled with pity and soon impatiently put an end to our conversations. I do not remember, in the whole course of my first eighteen years, ever conversing with him for an hour on end. His letters were affectionate, full of sound advice and sensibility. But no sooner did we find ourselves in one another's presence, than there was noticeable in him an indefinable constraint which I could not account for and which reacted on me in a most painful manner. I did not know at the time that it was shyness, that inward malady which pursues us even in our riper years, imprisons our deepest feelings within our hearts, chills our speech, distorts, even as they issue from our lips, the words by which we endeavour to give utterance to our thoughts, and only suffers us to express our-

selves by means of vague terms or a more or less bitter irony, as if we were fain to avenge ourselves on our very thoughts for our own inability to clothe them in words. I did not know that, even with his own son, my father was shy, and that often after waiting a long while for me to give him some evidence of affection which his apparent coldness seemed nevertheless to discourage, he would leave me with tears in his eyes and complain to those around him that I had no love for him.

The constraint I experienced in his presence exerted a great influence on my temperament. No less shy than he, but more restless, because I was younger, I became accustomed to seal up all my experiences within myself, to form my own plans, to rely on myself alone for their execution, to consider the advice, interest, assistance and even the mere presence of others as a hindrance and an obstacle. I acquired the habit of never speaking about my affairs, of only taking part in conversation as a vexatious necessity, and of seasoning it with continual jests or jibes which served to render it less wearisome to me and helped me to conceal my real thoughts. Hence a certain absence of *abandon* with which my friends even now reproach me, and a disinclination for serious conversation which I always find it difficult to overcome. The result was at once an ardent

desire for independence, a keen impatience at the ties which hemmed me round, and an invincible horror of forming fresh ones. I was only perfectly at my ease when quite alone, and such is, even now, the effect of this attitude of mind that, when in circumstances of the most trifling importance, I am called on to choose between two lines of conduct, the sight of a human face always perturbs me, my natural impulse being to avoid society in order to think my own thoughts in peace and quiet. Nevertheless, I was by no means the egoist that such a temperament would seem to imply. Though I was interested in myself alone, that interest was not very potent. I bore in the depth of my heart a need for sympathy of which I was unaware; but which, finding nothing wherewith to satisfy it, sundered me, one after another, from all the objects which successively excited my curiosity. This indifference towards things in general was still further intensified by the thought of death, which had weighed upon me when very young, and which I have never understood how men can so easily learn to disregard. When I was seventeen, I witnessed with my own eyes the death of a woman of advanced age. Her mind, of a somewhat remarkable and eccentric turn, had been instrumental in the early development of my own. Like so many others, this woman had,

at the outset of her career, made her entry into society, of whose canons she was ignorant, with the confidence that she was gifted with notable qualities of intellect and character. Like so many others also, because she had not respected the artificial but necessary conventions, she had seen her hopes belied, her youth wear itself joylessly away till, at length, old age had come upon her without, however, subduing her spirit. She lived, a discontented recluse, in a château adjoining one of our estates, having no resource but her own intellect, in the light of which she held up everything to criticism and destructive analysis. For nearly a year, in the course of endless conversations, we had envisaged life in all its aspects, with death as its inevitable conclusion. And after having spoken with her so much of death, I beheld death itself strike her down before my very eyes.

This event had filled me with a sentiment of the uncertainty of destiny and with a vague dreaminess which never forsook me. In the poets, I liked best to read of all that recalled the brevity of human life. I considered that no object was worth striving for. It is somewhat singular that this impression should have grown steadily dimmer as the burden of my years increased. Is it because in hope there is an element of doubt, and that when hope is

withdrawn from a man's life, that life takes on a character, more severe indeed, but, at the same time, more positive ? Is it that life seems the more real when all its illusions have disappeared, just as the mountain tops are defined with greater distinctness against the horizon when the clouds are dispelled.

On quitting Göttingen, I went to the little city of D——. This city was the residence of a Prince, who, like most German potentates, ruled with mild sceptre over a country of limited extent, protected all enlightened folk who came to settle there, permitted absolute freedom of opinion, but who, restricted by ancient custom to the society of his courtiers, for that very reason only gathered around him men who for the most part were, intellectually speaking, insignificant or mediocre. I was received in this court with the curiosity which every stranger who comes to break the round of monotony and etiquette inevitably excites. For several months I saw nothing of a nature to absorb my interest. I was grateful for the attentions bestowed upon me. But sometimes my shyness prevented me from profiting by them, sometimes the fatigue of putting myself out for no particular object, caused me to prefer solitude to the insipid pleasures which I was invited to share. I hated no one, but few people inspired me with interest. Now, people do

not like to be treated with indifference. They ascribe it either to malevolence or conceit. They refuse to believe that one can be bored with them naturally. Sometimes I endeavoured to dissemble my *ennui* and took refuge in deep taciturnity. The taciturnity was construed as disdain. At other times, when wearying of my own silence, I indulged in a little vivacity of speech, my imagination, once set in motion, carried me beyond all limits. In a single day I would reveal all the ludicrous things I had observed during a whole month. The recipients of my sudden and involuntary outpourings were by no means beholden to me, and they were right, for it was the necessity of talking and not trustfulness, that made me confide in them. I had acquired, in my conversations with the woman who had been the first to develop my ideas, an insurmountable aversion for all common maxims and all dogmatic formulæ. When, therefore, I heard mediocrity expatiating complacently on platitudes of morality, conduct or religion, all of which it places on the same level, I felt myself impelled to contradict; not because I had adopted contrary opinions, but because I was exasperated that such convictions should be held by persons who were at once so dogmatic and so unintelligent. Moreover, some mysterious instinct warned me to mistrust general axioms so sweepingly and

confidently expressed, so innocent of every *nuance.* Fools make a compact and indivisible mass of their moral code so that it may mingle as little as possible with their daily conduct and leave them free in all their actions.

The line of conduct pursued by me, soon won me a great reputation for frivolity, persiflage and malice. My satirical speeches were looked upon as proofs of my ill nature, my jests as attacks upon all that was most worthy of respect. Those whom I had made the mistake of laughing at, found it suited their purpose to champion the principles which they accused me of calling in question. Because, without intending it, I had made them laugh at one another's expense, they all united in a coalition against me. They seemed to think that, by showing up their absurdities, I had betrayed a confidence they had reposed in me; that because they had revealed themselves to me as they really were, they had thereby laid me under an obligation of silence. I was not in the least conscious of having accepted such burdensome conditions. It had been their pleasure to act without restraint; it had been mine to observe and describe them; and what they called treachery, I considered a perfectly innocent and very legitimate compensation for having to put up with them.

I do not wish to justify myself here. I

have long since renounced the frivolous and facile use of inexperienced faculties. I merely wish to say, and that for others rather than myself who am now beyond the reach of society's condemnation, that it takes one some time to grow used to the human species as selfishness, affectation, vanity and fear have moulded it. The astonishment of early youth at the aspect of a society so factitious and so artificial is evidence of normal feelings rather than of an evil disposition. Besides, the social organism has nothing to fear. It weighs so heavily upon us, its latent influence is so powerful, that it quickly shapes us after the universal pattern. We are then only surprised at our previous surprise, and we are quite satisfied with ourselves in our new guise; just as we come at length to breathe freely in a crowded theatre, though at our first entry the atmosphere nearly stifles us.

The few who escape this general destiny, conceal within them their secret antipathies. In most follies they perceive the germ of evil. They therefore refrain from jesting, contempt takes the place of ridicule, and contempt is silent.

In the midst of those that formed the restricted society around me, there grew up a vague mistrust concerning my character. They were unable to cite any specifically reprehensible

actions. Nay, they could not deny me some which seemed to imply self-sacrifice; but they said that I was unprincipled and untrustworthy, two epithets conveniently invented to insinuate what we cannot prove, and to hint at what we do not know.

CHAPTER II

ABSENT-MINDED, inattentive, bored, I was unconscious of the impression that I was producing, and I divided my time between studies which I often interrupted, plans which I did not carry out, pleasures for which I had little interest, when a circumstance, in appearance very frivolous, produced an important revolution in my disposition.

A young man with whom I was on pretty friendly terms, had for some months been endeavouring to find favour with one of the least insipid of the women in whose society we lived. I was the wholly disinterested confidant of his enterprise. After long efforts, he succeeded in making himself loved, and as he had never concealed from me his reverses and his troubles, he considered himself bound to tell me of his successes. Nothing equalled his transports and the excess of his joy. The sight of his happiness made me regret that I had as yet made no such attempt myself. Hitherto I had had no affair with a woman,

of a nature calculated to flatter my *amour-propre.* A new future seemed to unveil itself before my eyes. A new need made itself felt in the depth of my heart. There was doubtless a great deal of vanity in this need, but it was not only vanity. There was, perhaps, even less than I thought myself. Man's sentiments are diverse and confused; they are made up of a number of various factors which elude description, and words, always too clumsy and too general, serve well enough to denote, but never to define them.

In my father's house I had adopted, where women were concerned, a somewhat lax attitude. My father, although a great stickler for external propriety, indulged pretty frequently in light talk concerning liaisons with women. He regarded them as instruments of amusement, if not allowable, at all events excusable, and looked only on marriage in a serious light. It was one of his principles that a young man ought carefully to avoid committing what is called a folly; to avoid, that is to say, contracting a permanent alliance with anyone beneath him in fortune, birth and outward advantages. But, for the rest, any woman, so long as it was not a question of marriage, might, in his view, be taken up and dropped at will, and I have often seen him smile, with a sort of approval, at this parody of a well-known

saying, "It causes them so little harm and us such a deal of pleasure."

We do not sufficiently realise how deep is the impression made by sayings like this on the very young, and the astonishment which children feel when, at an age when opinions are still doubtful and vacillating, they see the definite rules which they have been taught, openly flouted by jests applauded on every hand. After that they only look on these rules as commonplace shibboleths which their parents agree to inculcate for the easing of their consciences, while the jests and light sayings are regarded as holding the real secret of the art of life.

Tormented by vague emotions, I said to myself, "I want to be loved," and I looked about me. I saw no one calculated to inspire or to receive my affection. I interrogated my heart and my tastes, but I was conscious of no movement of preference. I was thus tossing the matter about within me, when I made the acquaintance of Count de P——, a man of forty, whose family was connected with my own. He suggested that I should come and see him. Unhappy visit! He had with him his mistress, a Pole, celebrated for her beauty, although she had passed her first youth. This woman, despite her equivocal position, had on several occasions, displayed great nobility of

character. Her family, one of considerable repute in Poland, had been ruined by the political troubles of the country. Her father had been outlawed, her mother had been driven to seek refuge in France, together with her daughter, who, by her death, was left in complete isolation. The Count de P—— had fallen in love with her. I have never been able to discover how this liaison began. When I saw Ellénore for the first time it was already long established, and as one may say, consecrated by time. Was it her tragic position, or her youthful inexperience that had launched her on a career of a nature equally at variance with her upbringing, her habits and her pride, which was so remarkable a factor in her character? What I do know, and what everyone else knew, is that, when the Count de P—— lost all his money and when his very life was in danger, Ellénore had given him such proofs of devotion, had rejected with such disdain the most brilliant offers, had shared his perils and his poverty with such zeal and even gladness, that the severest of critics could not but commend the purity of her motives and the unselfishness of her conduct. It was to her activity, her courage, her good sense, to the sacrifices of every kind which she had endured without complaint, that her lover owed the recovery of a portion of his property. They had taken up their quarters

at D—— in order to participate in an action at law which might result in the restoration to the Count de P—— of all his former wealth, and they calculated that they would stay on there about two years.

Ellénore's intellectual endowments were not above the ordinary; but her ideas were apt, and her conversation, though always simple, was sometimes conspicuous for the nobility and elevation of the sentiments to which it gave utterance. She had many prejudices, but all her prejudices ran directly counter to her interests. She attached the highest importance to regularity of conduct precisely because her own conduct was, according to accepted notions, the reverse of regular. She was very religious, because her own mode of life religion rigorously condemned. She severely disapproved in conversation of things which other women would merely have regarded as harmless pleasantries, because she was always afraid that, owing to her position, people might think themselves at liberty to transgress the limits of propriety. She would have preferred to receive at her house only men of the highest position and of irreproachable moral character, because the women with whom she dreaded to be compared usually surround themselves with mixed company, and resigning themselves to the loss of consideration, seek in their social relations nothing

but amusement. Ellénore, in a word, was constantly at war with her destiny. Everything she did, everything she said was, as it were, a protest against the class in which she found herself included, and since she found that reality was stronger than she was, and that all her efforts did not in the least avail to modify her situation, she was signally unhappy. She brought up the two children she had had by the Count de P—— with excessive austerity. It might sometimes have been said that a secret revolt was mingled with the attachment, passionate rather than tender, which she displayed towards them, and made them in some sort a burden to her. When, with the best intentions, someone would remark on the way her children were growing up, on the talents they seemed likely to develop, on what they were going to be, she grew perceptibly pale at the thought that one day she would have to tell them all the circumstances of their birth. But the least danger, an hour's absence, brought her back to them with an anxiety in which one could detect a kind of remorse and the desire to give them by her caresses the happiness which she did not possess herself. This opposition between her sentiments and the place she occupied in the world, had rendered her temperament very uneven. Often she was dreamy and taciturn. Sometimes she would talk with im-

petuous vivacity. As she was obsessed by one secret thought, she never remained perfectly calm, even amid the most general conversation. But from this very circumstance, her manner took on something eager and unexpected, which made her more piquante than she would have been in the ordinary course. The strangeness of her position served her instead of new ideas. People would gaze at her with interest and curiosity, as at a grand storm in nature.

Coming before my vision at a moment when my heart craved for love, my pride for success, Ellénore seemed to me a conquest worthy of my powers. She herself found pleasure in the society of a man different from those she had met hitherto. Her circle was made up of a few of her lover's friends and relations and their wives, who had been compelled, owing to the Count's influential position, to receive his mistress on equal terms. The men were equally barren in heart and mind; the women only differed from their husbands in that their mediocrity was more fidgety, more restless, because they lacked that calmness of mind which comes of having some definite and regular occupation. An airier wit, more varied conversational gifts, a peculiar blend of melancholy and gaiety, of discouragement and eagerness, of enthusiasm and irony, astonished and attracted

Ellénore. She spoke several languages, imperfectly it is true, but always with vivacity and sometimes with grace. Her ideas seemed to fight their way through the linguistic obstacles and to emerge from the struggle with a strange charm, artlessness and novelty; for a new idiom makes old ideas seem young and frees them from those well-worn turns of phrase which make them appear either commonplace or affected. We read the English poets, and we went for walks together. I often went to see her in the morning; and I would return again in the evening. I talked with her on an infinite number of subjects.

I intended to examine her characteristics of heart and mind from the standpoint of a cold and impartial observer, but every word she said seemed to me to be clothed with an inexplicable grace. The design of winning her affections, by putting a new interest into my life, animated my existence in an unusual manner. I ascribed to her charm this almost magical effect. I should have enjoyed it still more completely had it not been for the compact I had made with my own *amour-propre*. My *amour-propre* was, so to speak, an interloper between Ellénore and myself. I deemed that I was, in a manner, obliged to proceed as quickly as possible towards the attainment of the end I had proposed to myself. I did not therefore

abandon myself unreservedly to my impressions. I longed to speak and come to the point, for it seemed to me that I only had to declare myself in order to succeed. I did not at all think that I was in love with Ellénore ; but even at this stage, I could not have resigned myself to her indifference. The thoughts of her were always with me. I was for ever making plans, thinking out means of conquest, with the conceit which comes of inexperience and which deems itself sure of success because it has attempted nothing.

However, an invincible timidity held me back. All my speeches died upon my lips, or ended quite differently from what I had intended. There was a battle going on within me. I was indignant with myself.

At last I tried to discover a line of reasoning which should extricate me from this struggle, with honour to myself. I told myself that it would be wrong to precipitate matters, that Ellénore was not sufficiently prepared for the avowal I had in mind, and that it would be better to postpone my declaration a little longer. It is almost always the case that, in order to live at peace with ourselves, we dress up our impotenceor our weakness in the garb of schemes and systems, and thus satisfy that part of ourselves which is, so to speak, the spectator of the other.

This state of affairs continued. Every day I fixed on the morrow as the invariable occasion for a definite declaration, and each time the morrow passed by like its predecessor.

My shyness left me as soon as I quitted Ellénore, and I forthwith resumed my cunning plans, my deep-laid schemes. But no sooner was I at her side again than I found myself once more troubled and ill-at-ease. Whoever could have read in my heart, in her absence would have taken me for a cold and rather callous libertine. Whoever could have seen me in her company would have confidently pronounced me an inexperienced lover, bashful yet passionate. Both these views would have been equally wide of the mark. There is no complete unity in any man and no one is ever wholly sincere or wholly the reverse.

Convinced by these reiterated experiences that I should never have the courage to speak to Ellénore, I made up my mind to write to her. The Count de P—— was away from home. The conflict that I had long been waging with my own timidity, the impatience I felt at having been unable to overcome it, my uncertainty regarding the success of my latest move, imparted to my letter an air of agitation that bore a strong resemblance to love. Moreover, I was so warmed by my own style that I began to feel, as I came to the end of my letter, some

of the passion I had striven with all the force at my command to express.

Ellénore saw in my letter what it was natural for her to see in it, namely the passing transport of a man ten years her junior, whose heart was unfolding to feelings which were as yet new to it, and who deserved to be treated with pity rather than with anger. She sent me a kind answer, gave me some affectionate advice, offered to be my sincere friend, but told me clearly that until the Count de P——'s return she could not receive me.

This reply completely dumbfounded me. My imagination, chaffing at this obstacle, forthwith dominated my whole being. Love, which an hour before I had flattered myself that I was feigning, I now deemed that I was suddenly experiencing in its full fury. I rushed off to Ellénore's. They told me she was out. I wrote her a letter. I beseeched her to grant me one last interview. In agonised terms I told her of my despair, and the melancholy plans which her cruel determination had driven me to conceive. During a great part of the day I waited in vain for an answer. The only way I could calm my inexpressible suffering was by repeating that next day I would brave every difficulty in order to see Ellénore face to face and speak to her. In the evening, I received a few lines from her. They were gentle and

indulgent. I thought I noticed in them a tinge of sadness and regret. But she persisted in her resolution and said it was unshakeable. I called at her house again next day. She had gone away to the country: where, her servants could not tell me. They did not even know where to forward her letters.

For a long time I stood motionless at her door, unable to think of any means of discovering her. I was amazed at the anguish I was suffering. My memory brought back to mind the time when I had told myself that I only aimed at a successful adventure, and that it was all merely an experiment which I could quite easily give up. I could not understand the violent, ungovernable grief which now tore at my heart. Several days went by in this manner. I was equally incapable of study and distraction. I kept wandering to and fro outside Ellénore's house, and I walked about the town as if at every turning I expected to meet her. One morning, in the course of one of these aimless tramps which did, indeed, serve to replace my agitation by fatigue, I perceived the carriage of the Count de P—— who was returning home from his journey. He recognised me and alighted. After a few commonplace remarks I spoke to him, without letting him see how troubled I was, of Ellénore's sudden departure. "Yes," he said, "a friend of hers, who lives

a considerable distance from here, has had some trouble, and Ellénore thought that she might be able to comfort her. She went away without consulting me. She is one of those people who are entirely governed by their feelings, one of those people whose peace of mind depends on their being able to do something to help others. But her presence here is only too necessary to me. I am going to write to her. She will be sure to be home again in a few days."

This assurance calmed me. I felt my grief grow less acute. For the first time since Ellénore's departure, I was able to breathe freely. Her return did not take place so soon as the Count de P—— anticipated. But I had resumed my customary mode of life, and the mental torture I had experienced was beginning to disappear, when, at the end of a month, M. de P—— sent me word that Ellénore was expected that evening. As he set great store on maintaining for her the social position to which her character entitled her but from which her position seemed to exclude her, he had asked several ladies, friends or relations, who had consented to meet Ellénore, to take supper with them.

Then all the circumstances were brought back to my mind, vaguely at first and then more clearly. My *amour-propre*, too, was stirred

anew. I was embarrassed, humiliated at meeting a woman who had treated me like a child. I imagined that I saw her smiling, as I approached her, at the thought that a short absence had calmed the effervescence of my youthful mind, and I thought I detected in this smile of hers a sort of contempt of which I was the object. By degrees my old feelings were awakened again. When I got up that morning, I had not given a thought to Ellénore: an hour after receiving the news of her arrival, her image kept passing incessantly before my eyes and reigned supreme in my heart. I was in an agony of fear lest I should not see her.

I remained at home all day. I kept, so to speak, in hiding. I was on thorns lest the slightest move on my part should prevent our meeting. Nothing, however, was simpler or more certain than that we should meet. But so burning was my desire for her that it seemed impossible that I was really going to see her. Impatience gnawed at my very vitals. I looked at my watch every minute. I was obliged to fling open my window in order to breathe. My blood seemed on fire as it coursed through my veins.

At last I heard the clock strike the hour when I was due at the Count's. My impatience suddenly changed to timidity. I dressed slowly. I no longer felt in a hurry to get there.

I was in such terror lest my expectations should be disappointed; I had so keen a sense of the pain that might be in store for me, that I would have willingly postponed the whole matter.

It was already rather late when I got to the Count's. I perceived Ellénore at the far end of the room. I dared not go forward. It seemed to me as if the whole company had their eyes upon me. I went and hid in a corner of the salon behind a group of men who were chatting together. From there I contemplated Ellénore. She seemed slightly changed. She was paler than usual. The Count discovered me in the retreat where I had taken refuge. He came up to me, took me by the hand, and led me to where Ellénore was sitting. "I present to you," he said with a smile, "the man whom your unexpected departure most astonished." Ellénore was talking to a woman seated beside her. When she saw me her words died on her lips. She seemed quite overcome: I too was considerably moved.

But the people could hear what we were saying. I asked Ellénore a few ordinary questions. We both of us recovered an outward semblance of calm. Supper was announced. I offered Ellénore my arm, which she could not very well refuse. "Unless you promise to let me come to you at eleven o'clock to-morrow

morning," I said to her as she leant on my arm, "I leave my country, my family and my father. I sever all my connections; I abjure all my obligations, and I will go, no matter whither, to end as soon as possible a life which it is your pleasure to poison." "Adolphe," she began, and then she stopped. I made as though to leave her. I don't know what sort of expression was on my face; but I do know that I had never felt so violently distressed.

Ellénore looked at me. Terror mingled with affection was depicted on her features. "I will see you to-morrow," she said, "but I conjure you . . . " There were a number of people following us. She could not finish her sentence. I pressed her hand with my arm. We sat down to table.

I should have liked to sit next Ellénore, but the master of the house had ordained otherwise. I was placed nearly opposite her. At the beginning of supper she was dreamy. When anybody spoke to her she answered gently, but she soon relapsed into her absent condition. One of her friends, struck by her silence and her depression, asked her if she was ill. "I haven't been well the last few days," she said, "and even now I feel a good deal out of sorts." I tried to produce an agreeable impression on Ellénore's mind. I tried, by showing myself kind and witty, to dispose her in my favour, and to

prepare her for the interview she had granted me. I endeavoured, therefore, in every possible way to rivet her attention. I led the conversation on to topics in which I knew she was interested. Our neighbours joined in. Her presence inspired me. I got her to listen to me, and before long I saw her smile. I was so delighted, my regard was eloquent of so much gratitude, that she could not help being touched. Her sadness and her abstraction were dispelled. She no longer resisted the secret charm which filled her heart at the sight of the happiness I owed to her, and when we got up from the table, our hearts were united as if we had never been separated. "You see," I said, giving her my hand on our return to the drawing room, "You see that my whole existence depends on you: what have I done to you that you should take such pleasure in tormenting it?"

CHAPTER III

I PASSED a sleepless night. There was no longer any question in my mind of plans and projects. I felt in the truest sense of the word that I was really in love. The hope of carrying through a successful adventure was no longer the mainspring of my actions. The desire of seeing the woman I loved, of drinking in the delights of her presence, overmastered me wholly. The clock struck eleven. I betook myself to Ellénore's. She was expecting me. She wanted to talk, but I asked her to listen to me. I sat down at her side, for I could scarcely keep myself from falling, and I continued in these terms, not without being frequently compelled to interrupt what I was saying:

"I have not come to cry out against the sentence you have pronounced. I have not come to withdraw an avowal which may have given you offence. I could not do so if I wished. The love which you reject is indestructible. The very effort which I am now making to speak to you with a little calmness is a proof how

vehement is the passion at which you take umbrage. But it is not to talk of the love I bear you that I have implored you to hear me. It is, on the contrary, to beg you to forget it, to receive me as you were wont to do, to set aside the memory of a moment of madness, and not to punish me for what you know is a secret I ought to have kept immured in the depths of my heart. You know how I am placed; how people say that I am strange and unsociable; that I am cut off from any interest in this world's doings; lonely in the midst of my fellow men; yet suffering, withal, from the isolation to which I am condemned. Your friendship was my stay. Without that friendship I cannot live. I have become used to you, and that sweet usage you yourself suffered to come into being and to grow. What have I done to forfeit this solitary consolation of my sad and sombre existence! I am hideously unhappy. I have not the necessary courage left to go on enduring so protracted a misfortune. I hope for nothing, I ask for nothing, I only crave to see you, but see you I must, if I am to continue to live."

Ellénore maintained silence. "What do you fear?" I went on. "What is it I ask for? Only what you grant to all and sundry. Is it society's condemnation you fear? Society, all wrapped up in its solemn mummeries, would

never read the secret of a heart like mine. How should I fail in prudence? Isn't it a matter of life and death for me? Ellénore, listen to my entreaty. You will find therein something pleasant to think on. There will be a certain charm for you in being loved thus, in beholding me near you, thinking only of you, existing only for you, indebted to you for all the happiness I am still capable of feeling, rapt far away, by your presence, from suffering and despair."

I continued for a long time in this strain, disposing of every objection, stating over and over again all the arguments which told in my favour. I was so submissive, so resigned, I asked so little, I should have been so desolate if she had refused.

Ellénore was deeply moved. She imposed several conditions. She only consented to receive me at rare intervals, when other people were present, and with the stipulation that I should never speak to her of love. I promised to do as she wished. We were both of us glad, I to have recovered the advantage with whose loss I had been threatened, Ellénore to be playing a generous, sympathetic yet prudent part.

The very next day I availed myself of the permission I had obtained and on subsequent days I did the same. Ellénore no longer troubled about her stipulation that my visits

were to be less frequent. It soon got to seem perfectly natural that she should see me every day. Ten years of fidelity had inspired the Count with absolute confidence. He allowed Ellénore the completest freedom. As he had had to fight against public opinion, which aimed at excluding his mistress from those social circles in which he was called upon to move, it pleased him to see Ellénore's entourage growing in numbers. A house full of visitors was evidence, in his view, of his own triumph over popular prejudice.

When I came upon the scene, I used to notice that Ellénore's face lit up with pleasure. When she grew interested in the conversation, her eyes naturally turned towards me. No one ever imparted anything of note to her but she called me over to share the tidings. But she was never alone. Whole evenings went by without my being able to say anything to her in private save a few insignificant or disconnected words. I soon became impatient of such prolonged constraint. I grew sombre, taciturn, uncertain in temper and bitter of speech. I could scarcely contain myself when I saw someone else conversing with Ellénore alone, and I would brusquely interrupt these *tête-à-tête*. It mattered not to me whether my conduct gave offence, nor was I always deterred by the fear of compromising her. She complained to me

of this change. "What do you expect?" I said with impatience. "No doubt you think you have done a great deal for me. I am obliged to tell you that you are wrong. I cannot in the least understand your new mode of life. You used to live quite to yourself. You used to avoid the tedium of social intercourse. You used to shun those everlasting conversations which flow on without purpose and without end. Now your door is open to the whole world. One would think that in asking you to receive me, I obtained for the world at large the same privilege as I won for myself. I confess that when I think of how reticent you used to be I should hardly have expected this present outbreak of frivolity."

I noted on Ellénore's face a look of sadness and dismay. "Dear Ellénore," I said, with a sudden revulsion of feeling, "did I not deserve different treatment from the mob that crowd about you? Have not friends got secrets of their own? Does not friendship shrink and droop amid this blatant throng?"

Ellénore was afraid lest, by exhibiting too stern an inflexibility, she would bring about a renewal of those imprudences which alarmed her both for her sake and for mine. The idea of breaking off our friendship did not occur to her now. She consented to see me alone—sometimes.

Thereafter the severity of the rules she had imposed on me was rapidly relaxed. She suffered me to dwell upon my love for her. Gradually she grew patient of such discourse. And soon she confessed that she loved me.

I passed some hours at her feet, then proclaiming myself the happiest of men, heaping upon her countless promises of affection, devotion and undying respect. She told me what she had suffered in her attempt to cut herself off from me, how, time after time, she had hoped that I should discover her, despite her efforts at concealment, how the slightest sound that reached her ears seemed to herald my arrival. She described all the embarrassment, all the joy, all the fear she had felt, when she saw me again. She told me, too, how it was mistrust of herself and the desire to harmonise her longings with her prudence, that had led her to indulge in the distractions of society and to seek out people she had formerly avoided. I made her repeat the most trifling details of her story, and this record of the events and experiences of a few weeks seemed to us like the history of a lifetime. Love fills the place of far-off memories as by a species of magic. All other affections have need of the past. Love creates, as by enchantment, a past which girdles us about. Love somehow gives us the impression of having lived for whole years with

one who, till yesterday, was all but unknown to us. Love is but a point of light, yet it seems to take possession of time. A few days since love was not. A little while, and it will be no more. But so long as it exists, it sheds its radiance over the years which went before and over those which are to come.

This period of calm was not of long duration. The memory of her frailties set her the more on her guard against the promptings of her heart: and my imagination, my desires, a feeling of which I myself was unaware, of the uselessness of it all, rebelled against such a love. Always timid, often moody, I complained, I raged, I overwhelmed Ellénore with reproaches. More than once she thought seriously of severing a connection that only burdened her days with trouble and anxiety, and more than once I had to soften her heart with my supplications, my disavowals and my tears.

"Ellénore," I wrote to her one day "you do not know all that I am suffering. Whether I am with you or away from you I am equally unhappy. During the hours that separate us, I wander listlessly about, bowed down beneath the burden of an existence which I know not how to bear. People irritate me, solitude oppresses me. Ordinary acquaintances who observe me, who know nothing of what is in my mind, who look on me with detached

curiosity, and unsympathetic astonishment, and those who dare talk to me of anything but you, all inflict an agonising pain upon my heart. I shun them, and yet, when I am alone, I seek in vain for a breath of air to refresh my overladen bosom. I fling myself on the ground and long for it to open and swallow me up for ever. I lay my head on the cold stone to cool the burning fever by which I am consumed. I drag myself to the hill whence your house is visible. And there I linger, with my eyes fixed on that abode where, with you, I shall never dwell; and, had I but met you sooner, you might have been mine. I should have folded within my arms the only being whom nature created for my heart, that heart which has suffered so because it was seeking for you and found you only when it was too late. And when at length those hours of delirium are passed, and the moment comes when I am able to see you, it is with trembling limbs that I make my way to your house. I am terrified lest everyone who meets me should divine the feelings that I bear within me. I walk with lingering steps, I defer the moment of my happiness, that happiness which is menaced on every side, and which I fancy I am always on the point of losing, a happiness which is imperfect and troubled, which perhaps some sinister event, jealousy, some tyrannical caprice and your own

will, are in league every moment to destroy. When I reach the threshold of your door, when I begin to open it, a fresh terror takes hold of me. I go forward like a felon, asking pardon of all the things I see as if they were all my enemies, as if they all begrudged me the hour of bliss which I am about to enjoy. The slightest sound startles me ; the slightest movement fills me with terror. Even the sound of my own footsteps makes me pause and shrink back. And when I am quite close to you, I am still in dread lest some unforeseen obstacle should interpose itself between us. And then, at last I see you, I see you, I breathe again and I gaze at you like the fugitive who reaches the protecting soil that shall save him from death at the hands of his pursuers. But even then, when all the current of my being flows out towards you, when I should so love to be at rest after all my sorrows, to lay my head on your knees, to suffer my tears to flow unhindered, I am compelled to put a violent check upon myself, and even in your presence, to live a life of constraint. Not for a moment can I unburden my heart. Not one instant of self-abandonment can be mine. Your eyes are for ever observing me. You are embarrassed, almost offended at my distress. Some sort of constraint, I know not what, has succeeded to those delicious hours when you at least con-

fessed the love you bore me. The moments fleet away, new interests call you hence; you never disregard them, and never do you defer the moment which sends me from you. Strangers come, and I must not look on you any more. I feel that I must get away in order to escape the suspicions which encompass me. And so I leave you, more agitated, more torn, more distraught than ever. I leave you, and relapse once more into that dreadful isolation wherein I vainly struggle without finding a soul on whom I may lean and gain a single moment of repose."

Never had Ellénore been loved in this wise. The Count entertained a very real affection for her, a lively gratitude for her devotion and a high opinion of her character. But his manner had always betrayed a certain hint of superiority, the superiority a man might feel over a woman who had given herself to him publicly, without insisting on the marriage tie. He might, so people said, have contracted a more honourable alliance. He never told her so, perhaps he did not even tell himself so; but things we do not say may nevertheless be true, and what exists, people will divine. Ellénore had hitherto had no notion of such an intensity of passion, of an existence lost within her own, of which my very rage and my reproaches did but afford the more irrefragable proof. Her resistance had transposed all my feelings, all my thoughts to a

higher key. I abandoned the passionate outbursts which alarmed her, and wooed her submissively, tenderly and with idolatrous veneration. I looked upon her as a creature sent from heaven. My love for her resembled the worship of a devotee. It charmed her the more because she was for ever beset with the fear of being slighted and humiliated. At last she gave herself to me wholly.

Woe to that man who in the early moments of a liaison with a woman does not believe that that liaison will last for ever. Woe to him who, in the very arms of the mistress he has just won, is prescient of the end that may be, and foresees that the time may come when he will be able to leave her. A woman whose heart carries her away is, at such a moment, invested with something touching, something sacred. It is not pleasure, it is not nature, it is not the senses which corrupt; it is rather the schemes, the *arrière pensées* to which society accustoms us and the reflections to which experience gives rise. I loved, I respected Ellénore infinitely more after she had given herself to me. I walked with head erect among my fellow men; I glanced at them with an eye of command. The very air I breathed was a delight. I went forth to hail nature, to thank her for the unhoped for boon, the immense boon which she had deigned to bestow on me.

CHAPTER IV

O CHARM of Love, who shall portray you. The certainty that we have found the being destined for us by nature, the sudden illumination shed upon life which seems to unfold its mystery, the undreamt of value attached to the slightest circumstances, those fleeting hours whose very sweetness makes them glide from the memory, leaving behind them in our minds but one long tract of happiness, that wild glee which mingles sometimes for no reason with an habitual tenderness, such pleasure in the presence of the beloved one and, in her absence, such a wealth of hope, the freedom from all commonplace pre-occupations, the feeling of superiority over all about us, the confidence that henceforth the world cannot reach us where we live, the mutual understanding which divines our every thought and responds to our every emotion. O Charm of Love, who that has experienced you, could find words to describe you !

Urgent business compelled M. de P—— to

absent himself for six weeks. I spent the time with Ellénore, almost without interruption. Her attachment seemed to gather strength from the sacrifice she had made for me. She never suffered me to leave her without entreating me to stay. When I went out she asked me when I would return. Two hours of separation were unendurable to her. She fixed with anxious precision the time of my coming back. In all this I cheerfully acquiesced. I was grateful, I was happy in the sentiments she displayed towards me. Nevertheless the demands of social life will not invariably square with all our desires. It was sometimes inconvenient for me to have all my doings arranged in advance and all my minutes thus parcelled out. I was compelled to hurry through my business, and to sever nearly all my connections. I was at a loss what to tell people when they invited me to do something which in the ordinary course I should have had no grounds for refusing. I did not in the least miss these social engagements when I was with Ellénore, for they had never had much attraction for me. But I would rather she had allowed me to forego them of my own accord. It would have been pleasanter to go back to her of my own free will, without having to remind myself that the hour had come, that she was anxiously waiting for me. I should have been happier if the thought

of her pain had not mingled with that of the happiness I was going to experience on being with her again.

Ellénore doubtless added a keen pleasure to my existence; but she was no longer a prize to be striven for; she had become a tie. Besides, I was apprehensive of compromising her. My constant presence could not but astonish her servants and her children, who were quite old enough to notice things. I was much worried at the thought of disturbing the even tenour of her life. I felt that we could not be united for ever, and that it was a sacred duty for me not to mar the peace of her existence. I therefore counselled prudence, assuring her all the time that I loved her. At the same time I was terribly in dread of hurting her. No sooner did I notice a look of pain on her face than her will became mine. I only felt easy in my mind when she was pleased with me. When, having told her that I was really compelled to leave her for a little while, I managed to slip away, the thought of the pain I had caused her followed me wherever I went. I was seized with a fever of remorse which increased every minute and at length became overpowering. I flew back to her, longing with all my heart and soul to soothe and comfort her. But as soon as I got near her house a feeling of irritation and revolt against this strange domination

would mingle with my other ideas. Ellénore herself was violent. I think she felt towards me as she had felt towards no one else. In her previous affairs, she had suffered from a consciousness of her dependent position. But with me she was perfectly at her ease, because we were on a perfect equality. She had been exalted in her own esteem by a love untainted by any kind of calculation or self-interest. She knew that I was quite sure that she loved me for myself alone. But it resulted from her complete self-abandonment with me that she never dissembled her attitude, and when I re-entered her room, vexed at having been obliged to return sooner than I had wished, I found her either nervous or dejected. I had passed two painful hours away from her because I thought she was suffering away from me. And when I was with her, I passed two more painful hours endeavouring to soothe her. Nevertheless, I was not unhappy. I told myself it was good to have a mistress, even an exacting one. I felt that I was doing her good. Her happiness was necessary to me, and I knew that I was necessary to hers.

Furthermore, the confused idea I had that from the nature of things, our liaison could not endure, served to calm me in my moments of weariness or impatience. Ellénore's relations with the Count de P——, the disparity in our ages,

the difference in our positions, my departure, which various circumstances had postponed, but which was now near at hand, all these things prompted me to go on giving and receiving as much pleasure as was possible. I thought I was sure of the years, so I did not begrudge her the days.

The Count de P—— returned. He soon began to suspect the nature of my relationship with Ellénore. Every day he received me with a colder and gloomier air. I spoke urgently to Ellénore of the risks she was running. I beseeched her to give me leave to interrupt my visits for a few days. I spoke of her reputation, her fortune, and her children. She listened to me a long while in silence. She was as pale as death. "Whatever befalls," she said at last, "you will soon be going away. Do not let us anticipate that moment. Do not torture your mind about me. Let us not throw away the days, no, nor the hours. Days, hours, they are all I ask. I know not what it is, Adolphe, but some presentiment tells me I shall die in your arms."

And so we continued to live on as we had done hitherto, I always ill at ease, Ellénore always despondent, Count de P—— taciturn and careworn. At length the long-expected letter arrived. My father requested me to return home. I took the letter to Ellénore.

"Already?" she said, when she had read it. "I did not think the time was so near." Then, bursting into tears, she took my hand and said, "Adolphe, you see that I cannot live without you; I do not know what the future has in store for me, but I implore you not to go away, yet; think of some pretext for remaining. Ask your father to let you prolong your stay for another six months. Six months, is that so very long?" I tried to reason with her, but she wept so bitterly, her face bore the impress of such agonising grief, that I was unable to go on. I threw myself at her feet, I took her in my arms, I assured her of my love and I went away to write to my father. And write I did, under the impulse of the grief with which Ellénore had inspired me. I put forward all sorts of reasons for delay. I emphasised the advantages of pursuing at D—— certain courses of lectures I had been unable to attend at Göttingen, and when I sent my letter to the post, it was with a burning desire to obtain the permission for which I asked.

That evening I went back to Ellénore. I found her seated on a sofa. The Count was near the mantelpiece at a little distance from her. The two children were at the far end of the room. They were not playing, and wore on their countenances that look of curious astonishment children have when they see that something is

amiss, and don't know how to account for it. I made a sign to Ellénore to let her know that I had done what she wished. A gleam of joy lighted up her eyes, but it soon died away again. No one spoke. The silence grew embarrassing for all three. "I am informed, Monsieur," said the Count at last, "that you are on the point of departing." I replied that I was unaware of it. "It seems to me," he answered, "that at your age one should not delay entering on a career. However," he added, looking at Ellénore, "perhaps everybody here does not share my opinion."

I did not have long to wait for my father's reply. I trembled, as I opened his letter, at the thought of the pain which a refusal would inflict upon Ellénore. Nay, I felt that the blow would be equally heavy for me. But when I read the consent which he accorded me, all the drawbacks that would result from prolonging my stay, came vividly before me. "Six more months of discomfort and constraint," I exclaimed to myself, "six months during which I shall be injuring a man who has given me testimony of his friendship, exposing a woman who loves me, running the risk of depriving her of her only means of living in a position of comfort, and deceiving my own father into the bargain; and all for what? In order to put off the pain of a parting which, sooner or later,

is bound to come. And do we not suffer this pain every day, little by little, drop by drop. I am only doing Ellénore harm. What I am to her now is not enough to satisfy her. I sacrifice myself to her without adding anything to her happiness; and as for me, I live on here to no purpose, dependent on others, without a moment to call my own, and unable to breathe in peace for a single hour." I went back to Ellénore with my mind full of these reflections. I found her alone. "I am staying on another six months," I said. "You don't say it as if you were very pleased," she replied. "No," I answered; "for to tell you the truth I am very much afraid of what the consequences may be for both of us." "I don't think that you, at any rate, need have anything to fear."

"You know perfectly well, Ellénore, that I have never thought of myself where you were concerned."

"No; and you haven't thought much of other people's happiness, either."

The conversation had taken a stormy turn. Ellénore was upset at my complaining when she deemed that I ought to be sharing her joy. I was piqued at the way she had triumphed over my previous resolutions. We grew heated. We stormed and abused each other. Ellénore accused me of having deceived her, of only having had a passing fancy for her, of having

alienated the Count's affection from her, and of having thrust her back, in the eyes of the world, into the position from which she had been trying all her life to extricate herself. I flew into a rage at hearing her reproach me with the things I had done solely in deference to her wishes, and for fear of inflicting pain upon her. I complained of my cramped life, of my youth wearing itself out in inaction, of the tyranny she exercised over everything I did. As I was speaking thus, I saw her face suddenly begin to stream with tears. I stopped short; I went back on my traces, I unsaid it all, I tried to explain. We embraced and kissed each other; but the first blow had got home, the first barrier had been overleapt. We had both of us uttered words beyond recall. We might say no more, but we could not forget them. There are some things which we are a long time before we say, but which, once said, we never cease repeating.

Thus we lived for four months, on terms of constraint, sometimes pleasant, but never quite unforced, having, no doubt, our pleasurable interludes, but discovering charm no more. Ellénore, however, did not cast me off. After our bitterest quarrels, she was just as eager to see me again, she fixed the hour of our meetings, with as much solicitude as if our union had been of the most peaceful and affectionate character.

I have often thought that my conduct helped to maintain Ellénore in this frame of mind. If I had loved her as she loved me, she would have exhibited more calmness of mind; she would have reflected, on her side, on the dangers she was facing. But all prudence was hateful to her, because the prudence always came from me. She did not count her sacrifices, because her sole aim was to make me accept them. She had not the time to grow cool towards me, because all her time and all her energies were employed in retaining me. The hour a second time fixed for my departure was drawing near, and I was conscious, when I thought of it, of mingled pleasure and regret, such as a man feels when he knows that he may purchase certain health at the cost of a painful operation.

One morning Ellénore sent me word to come to her at once: "The Count," she told me, "forbids me to have you here. I do not intend to obey so tyrannical a command. I followed that man into exile, I preserved his fortune, I have done everything I could to help him. Now he can do without me. But I, I cannot do without you."

It may be well imagined how I endeavoured to dissuade her from a course which seemed to me unthinkable. I reminded her of what the world would say.

"The world," she said, "has never been fair

to me. For ten years I fulfilled my duties better than any wife, but the world has none the less denied me the status to which I was entitled."

Then I mentioned her children.

"My children are the children of M. de P——. He has acknowledged them, he will take charge of them. They will be but too happy to forget a mother who leaves them no legacy but her shame."

"Listen," she said. "If I break with the Count, will you refuse to see me? Will you refuse?" she said again, seizing my arm with a violence that made me tremble.

"No, assuredly not," I answered; "and the unhappier you are, the greater will be my devotion to you. But consider . . ."

"All is considered," she broke in. "He will be coming back; go now, and do not come here any more."

I spent the remainder of the day in a state of indescribable anxiety. Two days went by, without my hearing anything of Ellénore. I was distressed at not knowing what has befallen her, I was distressed, too, at not seeing her, and I was astonished at the pain which that deprivation made me feel. I was anxious, however, that she should relinquish the resolution which made me so apprehensive on her account, and I was beginning to flatter myself

that she had done so, when a woman brought me a letter in which Ellénore begged me to go and see her on the third floor of such and such a house in such and such a street. I hastened thither, hoping that the explanation was that, not being able to receive me at M. de P——'s, she was desirous of entertaining me for the last time elsewhere. I discovered her making all her arrangements to stay on permanently. She came to greet me with a manner that was both joyful and timid, essaying to read in my eyes what I thought of it all.

"It is all over," she said, "I am perfectly free. My own private income amounts to seventy-five louis a year, which is enough for me. You are staying here another six weeks. When you leave, I shall perhaps manage to get into touch with you. Perhaps you will come back to me;" and, as though she were fearful of my reply, she entered into a mass of details regarding her plans. She endeavoured in countless ways to convince me that she would be happy, that she had not given up anything for me, that the course she had taken was one she wanted to follow, quite apart from me. It was obvious that she was putting a great effort upon herself, and that she only half believed what she was saying. She be-deafened herself with her own words for fear lest she should have to hear mine; she prolonged what

she had to say as much as she could in order to put off the moment when my counter-arguments should thrust her back into despair. But I could not find it in my heart to protest. I accepted her sacrifice, I expressed my gratitude. I told her it made me happy, and I told her much more besides; I assured her that I had always hoped that something irrevocable would happen and make it my duty never to leave her. My hesitations I attributed to a sense of delicacy which forbade me to agree to a course that would destroy her position. My sole aim, in a word, was to drive far away from her mind, all fears, all regrets and all misgivings as to my love for her. While I was talking to her I had no other aim in view but that, and I was sincere in my professions.

CHAPTER V

THE separation of Ellénore and the Count de P—— influenced public opinion in a manner not difficult to foresee. Ellénore lost in an instant the fruits of ten years of devotion and constancy. She was confounded with all those women of her class who abandon themselves without scruple to innumerable successive inclinations. The desertion of her children caused her to be looked upon as an unnatural mother, and the women of irreproachable reputation repeated with satisfaction that neglect of the virtue most essential to their sex soon extended itself to all the others. At the same time people pitied her so as not to lose the pleasure of blaming me. My conduct was looked upon as that of a seducer, an ungrateful creature who had violated the rules of hospitality and destroyed, in order to gratify a passing whim, the peace and happiness of two people of whom one was entitled to his respect and the other to his forbearance. Certain of my father's friends rated me severely about the matter.

Others, not being on such terms of freedom with me, made me aware of their disapproval by indirect insinuations. The younger men, on the other hand, appeared delighted at the skill with which I had supplanted the Count, and with countless quips, which I vainly endeavoured to silence, congratulated me on my conquest and vowed to follow my example. It would be impossible for me to describe the sufferings I had to undergo from censure, on the one hand, and from these disgraceful eulogies, on the other. I am convinced that if I had had any love for Ellénore, I could have reinstated both her and myself in the good opinion of the world. So great is the power of genuine feeling that, when it speaks, false interpretations and artificial conventions are put to silence. But I was merely a weak-willed creature, grateful and subservient. I was not sustained by any impulse from the heart. I therefore expressed myself with embarrassment, tried to put an end to the conversation, and, if it continued, wound it up with a few curt words which made it clear to my interlocutors that I was in the mood to quarrel with them. And indeed I would much rather have fought than answered them.

Ellénore was not long in noticing the growing hostility of public opinion. Two female relatives of M. de P——, who had been constrained by his influential representations to associate with

her, made an immense parade of the rupture, took open delight at the opportunity at length offered them of giving vent, under the austere ægis of morality, to the spite which they had so long repressed. The men continued to see Ellénore, but their tone acquired a certain note of familiarity which made it clear that she could no longer count on the support of a powerful protector, nor rely on a union which had become almost hallowed. Some of them visited her because, as they put it, they had known her so long; others because she was still good looking, and because her recent lapse had revived ambitions which they were at no pains to disguise. Every one assigned a motive to his friendship with her; that is to say, every one thought that that friendship required an apology. Thus the hapless Ellénore beheld herself relegated for ever to a condition from which it had been her life-long aim to emancipate herself. All things continued to wound her feelings and ruffle her pride. She regarded the defection of some as evidence of their disdain, and the assiduity of others as a sign of insulting aspirations. Solitude afflicted her as much as society embarrassed her. Ah! doubtless I ought to have consoled her, I ought to have folded her in my arms and said: "Let us live for each other, let us forget the people who misjudge us; let us seek happiness solely in

our own mutual esteem, our own love for each other." And this indeed I tried to do. But what power has a resolve prompted merely by a sense of duty, to bring a dead love to life again ?

Ellénore and I indulged in mutual dissimulation. She dared not tell me her troubles, since they arose from a sacrifice which she well knew I had never asked of her. I had accepted that sacrifice, I dared not complain of a misfortune which I had foreseen, but had not been strong enough to avert. Concerning the one thing that was continuously in our thoughts we therefore held our peace. We were lavish in our caresses ; we talked about love ; but we talked of love lest we should talk of something very different.

As soon as a secret comes between two loving hearts, as soon as one of them has determined to hide a single thought from the other, the charm is broken, happiness is destroyed. Anger, injustice, carelessness even, are not irremediable. But deceit brings a foreign element into love which alters its nature and withers it before its very eyes.

It happens by a curious paradox, that while I repelled with the most forcible indignation the slightest insinuation against Ellénore, I myself contributed to disparage her in my conversation with others. I had submitted to

her will, but I had developed a horror of women's domination. I was for ever inveighing against their weakness, their exacting nature, the tyranny of their troubles. I made a great parade of the most rigid principles, and that same man who could not resist a tear, who yielded to a look of mute sadness, who was haunted, when alone, by the vision of the misery he had caused, displayed, when conversing with others, an attitude of uncompromising disdain. All my direct eulogies of Ellénore did not avail to destroy the impression created by such discourse. People hated me, and pitied her, but they did not esteem her. They were indignant with her for failing to instil into her love greater consideration for her sex and greater respect for ties of the heart.

A man who had been in the habit of visiting Ellénore regularly and who, since her rupture with Count de P—— had given evidence of the liveliest passion for her and had obliged her by his unwelcome attentions to forbid him her house, now indulged in the most insulting pleasantries at her expense. They seemed to me altogether impossible to bear with. We fought. I wounded him dangerously. I myself was hurt. I cannot describe the mingled expression of anguish, terror, gratitude and love depicted on Ellénore's face when she saw me

again after this event. She took up her quarters with me despite my expostulations. She never left me a moment, until I was convalescent. She read to me during the day ; she sat up with me during the greater part of the night ; she watched my slightest movements ; she forestalled my every wish ; her ingenious kindness multiplied her faculties and redoubled her strength. She assured me again and again that she would never have survived me. Her kindness went to my heart, I was torn by remorse. I was fain to find within me something to reward an attachment so constant and so tender. Memory, imagination, reason itself, my sense of duty, all these I summoned to my aid. But it was in vain. The difficulty of the situation, the certainty that the future was bound to separate us, perhaps some vague revolt against a bond which I could not sever, inwardly consumed me. I reproached myself with an ingratitude which I strove to conceal. I grieved when she appeared to doubt my love, which was so necessary to her. I grieved no less when she seemed to believe in it. I felt that she was better than I. I despised myself for being unworthy of her. It is a hideous calamity not to be loved when one loves ; but it is no less a calamity to be loved with passion, when one has ceased to love. My life, which I had just exposed for Ellénore, I would have sacrificed a

thousand times over that she might be happy without me.

The six months extension that my father had granted me had expired; I had to think about the parting. Ellénore offered no opposition to my going. She did not even attempt to delay it. But she made me promise that, two months later, I would return to her, or allow her to come to me. Solemnly I swore that it should be so. What covenant would I not have entered into as I saw her fighting against herself, and repressing her anguish. She might have pleaded with me not to leave her. I knew, in my inmost heart, that her tears would not have been disobeyed. I was grateful to her for not exercising her power. It seemed to me that I loved her the better for it. Nor, on my side, did I quit without poignant regret, a woman who was so signally devoted to me. In liaisons which endure a long time there is something so deep-rooted. They become, without our being aware of it, so intimate a part of our existence. We are calm enough when, some time beforehand, we say we will have done with them; we seem to be impatiently awaiting the time for giving effect to our resolution. But when that time arrives, it fills us with terror, and so strangely are we constituted that it costs us a terrible pang to leave those whose society no longer gives us pleasure.

During my absence, I wrote regularly to Ellénore. I was divided between the fear lest my letters should give her pain, and the desire to tell her only what I really felt. I should have wished her to divine my true feelings, if she could have done so without pain to herself. I was glad when I contrived to substitute such words as "affection," "friendship," "regard" for the word "love." And then all of a sudden I would picture to myself poor Ellénore, sad and lonely, with nought but my letters to comfort her, and after two pages marked by cold restraint, I hastily added a few passionate or loving phrases calculated to deceive her anew. The result was that without ever saying enough to satisfy her, I always said enough to mislead her. A strange sort of deception, the very success of which was inimical to myself, prolonged my mental agony, and was more than I could bear.

I counted with unquiet heart the days, the hours as they went by. I prayed that time would pass more slowly. I trembled as I saw the time draw near when I must fulfil my promise. I could think of no pretext for going away myself; I could find none for Ellénore's taking up her abode in the same town as myself. Perhaps, for I must be sincere, perhaps I was not anxious for her to do so. I compared my independent and tranquil life to the rush,

the worry, the torment of the existence to which her passion condemned me. I found it so good to be free to do as I liked, to go out and come in without anyone heeding what I did. I was recuperating, as it were, in the indifference of others, from the fatigue of her love. I dared not, however, let Ellénore suspect that I would have liked to forego our plans. She had understood from my letters that it would be difficult for me to get away from my father. She consequently wrote to me saying that she was about to make arrangements for her own departure. It was a long time before I offered any opposition to her purpose. I wrote her nothing definite on the subject. I told her vaguely that I should always be charmed to know that she was happy, adding, "and to make her so." Dismal equivocations, halting utterances! I lamented to see them so obscure, I dreaded to make them less so. At length I made up my mind to speak frankly to her. I told myself that it was my duty. I summoned my conscience to sustain my vacillation. Against the image of her sorrow, I fortified myself with the thought of her repose. I marched with long strides up and down my room, reciting aloud what I proposed to say to her. But I had scarcely written a few lines when my mood changed. I no longer looked on my words in the light of the meaning they were intended to

convey, but in that of the effect they were bound to produce, and, as though some supernatural power were guiding my hand despite myself, I merely urged her to delay a few months longer. I had not said what was in my thoughts, my letter entirely lacked the note of sincerity. The arguments I put forward were weak, because they were not the real ones.

Ellénore's reply was an impetuous one. She was indignant that I did not wish to see her. What was it she asked of me? To live in obscurity near me. What had I to be afraid of in her coming and settling down in some quiet place in the heart of a big town where no one knew her? For me she had given up everything, fortune, children, reputation. She asked no further reward for her sacrifices than to wait on me like a humble slave, to spend a few minutes with me every day, to enjoy such moments as I might be able to afford her. She had resigned herself to two months' absence, not because that absence seemed necessary, but because I appeared to desire it. And now when at length, having painfully piled up her heap of days, she had reached the limit which I myself had fixed, I asked her to begin the long torture all over again. She might have deceived herself. She might have given her life to one who was hard and unsympathetic; I was master of my own actions, it was true, but surely not to

the extent of forcing her to suffer, abandoned by the man for whose sake she had sacrificed all.

Ellénore soon followed in the wake of her letter. She sent me word of her arrival. I went to see her, firmly resolved to evince great delight. I was eager to soothe her heart, and to procure her, at all events temporarily, some degree of happiness and tranquility. But her feelings had been hurt. She looked at me mistrustfully. She soon realised the constraint I was putting upon myself. She ruffled my pride with her reproaches; she abused my character. She painted my weakness in such contemptible colours that she made me still more indignant with her than with myself. We both flew into an ungovernable fury. Restraint was entirely flung aside, delicacy wholly forgotten. One would have thought that the Furies were pitting us one against the other. Whatever the most implacable hatred had found to say against us, we mutually applied to one another, and so here were two hapless beings who knew themselves as no one else on earth knew them, who alone could read in each other's hearts, who alone could understand and comfort one another, fighting like two irreconcilable foes, desperately determined to rend each other asunder.

We parted after a scene that lasted for three hours; and for the first time in our lives we

parted without a word of explanation or amends. Scarcely was I out of Ellénore's sight, when a feeling of the deepest misery took the place of my wrath. I fell into a sort of stupor, completely dazed by what had happened. I was amazed when I thought of the things I had said. I could not imagine how I could have behaved in such a manner; I tried to think what could have so terribly misled me.

It was very late. I dared not go back to Ellénore. I made up my mind that I would see her early next day, and I went home to my father's. There were a lot of people there, and in such a numerous company it was quite easy for me to keep myself out of the way and conceal my trouble. When we were alone, he said to me, "I am informed that Count de P——'s former mistress is here in the town. I have always allowed you a large measure of freedom, and I have never tried to inquire into your love affairs. But it would never do for a young man like you openly to keep a mistress, and I wish you to know that I have taken the necessary steps to ensure her departure from here." With these words he left me. I followed him into his room. He motioned me to go out. "Father," said I, "I swear to God that I never asked Ellénore to come. I swear to God that I only want her to be happy, and, if that could be, I would consent never to see her again; but

take care what you are doing. In thinking you are keeping me from her, you may well be binding me to her for ever."

I immediately sent for a *valet de chambre* who had accompanied me on my travels, and who knew about my affair with Ellénore. I told him to find out at once, if he possibly could, what the measures were of which my father had spoken. He came back after about two hours. My father's secretary had told him, under pledge of secrecy, that an expulsion order was to be served on Ellénore next morning. "What!" I exclaimed, "Ellénore turned out of the place, Ellénore ignominiously expelled! She who only came here for my sake, whose heart I have rent asunder, whose tears I have beheld unmoved. Where then will she lay her head, poor hapless one, wandering alone in a world of whose esteem I have bereft her. To whom will she tell her sorrow!" My mind was soon made up. I made sure of the man who was acting as my servant. I lavished money and promises upon him. I gave orders for a post-chaise to be at the town gates at six in the morning. I thought out innumerable plans for spending the rest of my days with Ellénore. I loved her more than I had ever loved her. All my heart was hers once more. I was proud to be her protector. I was eager to hold her in my arms. Love had re-entered whole and

unblemished into my soul. There burned a fever in my head, my heart, in all my being, which made havoc of my existence. If at that moment Ellénore had essayed to sever herself from me, I would have died at her feet to keep her.

Day dawned. I hastened away to Ellénore. She was in bed, and had spent the night weeping. Her eyes were still wet with tears, and her hair was dishevelled. She was surprised to see me enter. "Come," I said, "we must go." She tried to answer. "Let us go," I repeated. "Have you in the whole world anyone to protect you and befriend you but me? Are not my arms your only refuge?" She began to argue. "I have reasons of importance," I added, "personal reasons. In heaven's name come with me." I dragged her away. All along the road I overwhelmed her with caresses. I pressed her to my heart, and all her questions I answered with an embrace. At length I told her that, having seen that my father was bent on separating us, I had realised that I could not be happy without her, that I wished to consecrate my life to her and to strengthen our union with every possible bond. Her gratitude was at first extreme; but she discovered several contradictions in my story. She insisted on my telling her the truth, and at last she dragged it from me. Her joy vanished. A dark cloud

overspread her features. "Adolphe," she said, "you are deceiving yourself. You are generous, and you are devoting yourself to me because I am persecuted. You think it is love that moves you, and it is really only pity." Oh, why did she pronounce these ill-fated words? Why did she reveal to me a secret I was fain to leave unexplored? I did my best to comfort her. I may perhaps have succeeded; but the truth had pierced my soul; my impulse was destroyed. I was resolute, but I was no longer happy in my sacrifice, and already I had within me a thought which once again I was condemned to hide.

CHAPTER VI

As soon as we reached the frontier, I wrote to my father. My letter was respectful, but with an undertone of bitterness. I felt anything but grateful to him for having tightened the bonds which he had thought to relax. I announced to him that I would not give up Ellénore until she was comfortably settled and had no further need of me. I begged him not to force me, by directing his wrath against her, to remain for ever at her side. I awaited his reply before coming to a decision regarding our establishment. "You are now twenty-four," he wrote, "and I shall not exercise against you an authority which, in any case, is approaching its term, and which I have never put into operation. I shall indeed do my best to mask your strange behaviour. I shall spread the report that you have gone away by my orders, and on my business. I will not stint you of money to meet your expenses. You yourself will soon realise that the life you are leading does not become you. Your birth, your talents,

your fortune destine you for something different in the world than to be the companion of a woman with no country or antecedents to call her own. Your letter already convinces me that you are not satisfied with yourself. Remember that there is nothing to be gained by prolonging a situation one is ashamed of. You are spending the best years of your manhood to no purpose and that is a loss you can never make good."

My father's letter pierced me like a dagger. Scores of times I had said the very same thing to myself. Scores of times I had felt ashamed of my life, a life that was drifting away in obscurity and inaction. I would rather he had reproached or threatened me. I should have plumed myself to some extent on resisting him, and I should have felt the need of marshalling my forces to defend Ellénore from the perils that would have beset her. But there were no perils. I was left perfectly free, and my freedom only served to increase the impatience with which I bore a yoke that I appeared to have chosen of my own free will. We settled down at Caden, a little town in Bohemia. I kept telling myself that since I had made myself responsible for Ellénore, I ought not to make her suffer. I succeeded in putting a check upon myself. I shut up within my bosom even the slightest signs of displeasure, and all the resources of

my mind were employed to create an artificial gaiety wherewith to hide my profound dejection. The task had an unlooked for effect upon me. We are creatures of so mobile a nature that the sentiments we feign, we end by feeling. The troubles which I concealed, I came in part to forget. My perpetual pleasantries put my own melancholy to flight, and the assurances of affection which I showered upon Ellénore filled my heart with a gentle emotion that almost resembled love.

From time to time unwelcome memories would come and besiege me. I gave way, when I was by myself, to fits of anxiety. I formed endless extraordinary plans with the object of getting clear of a position which was so irksome to me. But I repelled these ideas like evil dreams. Ellénore seemed content. How could I mar her happiness? And thus nearly five months went by.

One day I noticed that Ellénore was much disturbed, and that she was trying to hide something from me. After a deal of coaxing, she made me promise that I would not oppose a certain decision she had come to. She then confessed that Count de P—— had written to her. He had won his lawsuit. He recalled with gratitude all the services she had rendered him. He dwelt on the ten years they had lived together. He offered her half his fortune, not

indeed that he might come to her again, for that was impossible, but on condition that she would leave the ungrateful and treacherous man who had come between them. "I have answered him," she said, "and as you may well imagine, I have refused." I imagined it only too well. I was touched, but in despair, at this fresh sacrifice that Ellénore had made for my sake. Nevertheless I did not dare oppose her. My attempts in that direction had always been so miserably fruitless. I left her in order to think out what course I ought to take. It was clear that the bond must be broken. It was painful for me, and was becoming detrimental to her. I was the sole obstacle that prevented her from regaining a satisfactory position and that degree of consideration which, sooner or later, follows in the track of wealth. I was the sole barrier between her and her children. I had no further excuse to put before myself. To yield to the present crisis would not be generosity, but culpable weakness. I had promised my father to resume my freedom as soon as Ellénore had no further need of me. It was high time for me to enter upon a career, to begin an active life, to acquire some title to the world's esteem, to make a worthy use of my faculties. I went back to Ellénore deeming myself immovably resolved to compel her not to reject Count de P——'s offer, and to declare to her if it came to

the point, that I loved her no longer. "*Chère amie*," I said to her, "we strive for a time against our destiny; we invariably end by yielding to it. The laws of society are mightier than the will of men. The most imperious sentiments shatter themselves in vain against the ramparts of circumstance. Vain is our obstinate determination to consult nothing but our hearts; we are compelled sooner or later to listen to reason. I cannot let you continue any longer in a position equally unworthy of you and of me. I cannot do it, either for you or for myself." I spoke without looking at Ellénore, and the farther I got with my speech, the more hazy I felt my ideas becoming, the more feeble my resolution. I made an effort to pull myself together, and I went on in hurried tones. "I shall always be your friend. I shall always have the profoundest affection for you. The two years of our union will never fade from my memory. For me they will always be the most beautiful period of my life. But love, that transport of the senses, that involuntary intoxication, that obliviousness of every interest, every duty—this, Ellénore, I have no longer." I waited a long time for her reply before looking at her. When at length I raised my eyes, she was sitting motionless. She was looking at the various objects in the room as if she recognised none of them. I took her hand, it was cold.

have suffered too much. I am no longer young enough greatly to care what the world thinks about me. If there is anything harsh about my resolve, it is yourself, Adolphe, that you should blame. If only I could delude myself about you, I should perhaps agree to an absence whose bitterness might be somewhat modified by the eventual prospect of a happy and enduring reunion. But you would be only too glad to think I was miles and miles away from you, calm and contented in the bosom of my wealthy family. You would write me such sensible letters about it all ; I can see them now. They would rend my heart, and I do not want to take the risk. I have not the consolation of telling myself that by sacrificing my whole life I have succeeded in kindling in you the love I deserve. But, at all events, you have accepted the sacrifice. I already suffer enough from the unkindness of your manner and the barrenness of our intercourse. These sufferings you inflict on me ; I do not want to go out of my way to look for others."

There was in Ellénore's voice and manner a certain violence and bitterness which suggested a firm determination rather than a deep or touching emotion. For some time now she had been wont to grow angry beforehand, when she had some request to make, as though I had already refused it. She regulated my actions,

but she was unaware that my judgment belied them. She would have liked to penetrate the inmost recesses of my mind, so that she might crush the mute opposition which she felt was lurking there and which set her up in arms against me. I went into the question of my position with her; I told her of my father's ambitions for me, of my own aspirations, I begged and prayed, I flung restraint to the winds. Ellénore was immovable. I tried to appeal to her generosity, as though, of all passions, love was not the most selfish and consequently, when injured, the least magnanimous. I attempted, strangely enough, to excite her compassion for the misfortunes I incurred in remaining with her. I only succeeded in exasperating her. I assured her I would go and see her in Poland; but the only thing my perfunctory and stilted promises conveyed to her was that I was impatient to be gone.

Our first year at Caden had gone by without bringing about any change in our situation. When Ellénore found me sombre and dejected, she was first of all grieved, then annoyed, and finally dragged from me by her reproaches a confession of weariness of spirit, that I would much rather have kept to myself. On my side, when Ellénore appeared happy, it irritated me to see her finding enjoyment in a state of affairs that was costing me my happiness, and

I marred these fleeting moments of contentment for her by insinuations which enlightened her as to the real nature of my inner feelings. We thus attacked each other, alternately, by innuendoes, from which we fell back on protests of a general character, and vague justifications, finally relapsing into silence. For we knew so well, the one and the other of us, what we were going to say, that we held our peace in order not to hear the "oft told tale" again. Sometimes one of us would be on the point of yielding. But we would miss the favourable moment for a *rapprochement*, and wounded and mistrustful, we drifted apart to come together no more.

I often asked myself how it was I remained in so unhappy a situation, and I told myself that if I left Ellénore, she would follow me and that I should be the cause of her making one sacrifice the more. At last I said to myself that she must be satisfied one last time, and that she could ask no more of me when I had placed her again amid her own people. I was about to propose that I should go with her to Poland, when she received word that her father had died suddenly. He had made her his sole heiress, but his will had been revoked by subsequent letters which some distant relatives threatened to bring forward. Ellénore, notwithstanding that she had had so little to do with her father, was painfully affected by his death. She

reproached herself for having left him uncared for. Before long she laid her fault at my door. "You have been the cause," said she, "of my failing to perform a sacred duty. Now it is merely a question of my money. That I will sacrifice for you still more readily. But certainly I shall not go alone to a country where I shall encounter none but enemies."

"I did not wish," I answered, "to cause you to fail in any duty. I should have desired, I confess, that you would condescend to reflect that I too have found it painful to fail in mine. That piece of justice I have not succeeded in obtaining from you. But I give in, Ellénore. Your interests override every other consideration. We will start together whenever you wish."

And so we did indeed set out. The distractions of the journey, the novelty of the scenes, the efforts we put upon ourselves, restored to us from time to time some remnants of the old intimacy. The fact that we had so long been accustomed to one another, the many and varied crises we had passed through together, had attached to every word, almost to every gesture, memories which would suddenly bring the past before us and fill us with an involuntary emotion, as the lightning pierces the darkness without dispelling it. We lived, as it were, on a kind of memory of the heart,

sufficiently powerful to make the thought of separation a painful one, but too weak to make us happy in our union. I gave way to these emotions in order to find relief from my habitual constraint. I should have liked to give Ellénore such proofs of affection as would have satisfied her. I sometimes spoke to her, as of old, in the language of a lover; but these emotions and the expressions of them resembled those wan and discoloured leaves which, with a dying effort of vegetation, grow languidly on the branches of an uprooted tree.

CHAPTER VII

ELLÉNORE, as soon as she arrived, obtained permission to enjoy the usufruct of the property in dispute, on the understanding that she was not to part with any portion of it, till the case was settled. She took up her quarters in one of the houses belonging to her father. Mine, who in his letters to me never attacked any question directly, contented himself with insinuating objections against my journey. "You had sent me word," he said, "that you would not go. You had set forth at length the various reasons which prompted you not to go. I was therefore quite convinced that go you would. I can only lament that, notwithstanding your spirit of independence you are always doing what you do not want to do. Moreover, I refrain from offering an opinion regarding a situation on which I am but incompletely informed. Up to the present you have appeared to me in the light of Ellénore's protector, and, as such, there was a certain touch of magnanimity in your actions which imparted a note of elevation to

your character, whatever might be the object of your attachment. But now your relationship is no longer the same. You are no longer protecting her. It is she who is protecting you. You are living under her roof, you are a stranger whom she has introduced into her family. I am not setting myself up in judgment concerning the position you are taking up. But as it may have its drawbacks, I am anxious to mitigate them as far as in me lies. I am writing to the Baron de T——, our Minister in the country where you now are, recommending you to his attention. I am unaware whether it will be agreeable to you to make use of this introduction. Be that as it may, you must regard it as a token of my anxiety to help you, and in no wise as an infringement of the independence you have always so successfully maintained against your father."

I refused to allow myself to dwell on the thoughts to which this style of writing gave rise. The estate on which I was living with Ellénore was situated a short distance from Warsaw, whither I betook myself to call on the Baron de T——. He received me with kindness, inquired as to the object of my stay in Poland, and questioned me regarding my plans. I scarcely knew how to reply. After some minutes of rather embarrassed conversation, he said, "I am going to talk to you quite openly. I am

aware of the reasons which have brought you to this country ; your father has acquainted me with them. I will even confess that I understand them. There has never yet been a man who has not, once in his life, found himself torn between the desire to break off an undesirable liaison and the fear of inflicting pain on a woman he has once loved. The inexperience of youth greatly exaggerates the difficulties of such a situation. We are fain to take at their face value all those demonstrations of grief which serve a weak and excitable sex instead of the resources of strength and reason. If our heart suffers, our *amour-propre* is flattered, and any man who genuinely believes that he is sacrificing himself to soothe and solace the despair which he has caused in a feminine heart, is in reality sacrificing himself to the illusions engendered by his own vanity. Not one of those passionate women, whereof the world is full, who has not protested that she would die if abandoned by her lover. Not one who is not still living, in spite of all, not one who has failed to console herself." I endeavoured to interrupt him. " Pardon me, my young friend," he continued, " if I express myself somewhat over bluntly ; but the favourable report I have of you, the talents of which you seem to give evidence, the career which has been marked out for you, all alike make it my bounden duty to

speak my whole mind to you. I read in your heart in spite of you and better than you. You are no longer in love with the woman who dominates you and in whose train you drag yourself wearily along. If you still loved her, you would not have come to see me. You knew that your father had written to me ; it was easy for you to foresee what I had to say to you. It did not anger you to hear from my lips arguments which you are for ever repeating to yourself and always unavailingly. Ellénore's reputation is by no means without reproach "— " Enough," I broke in, " let us put an end to a useless conversation. The early years of Ellénore were influenced by unhappy circumstances. Misleading appearances may lead people to pass an unfavourable judgment upon her character ; but I have known her for three years, and there is not in the whole world a loftier soul, a nobler character, a purer or more generous heart than hers." " As you please," he answered, " but these are matters outside the general ken. The facts are plain, and they are public property. By forbidding me to recall them, do you suppose you will efface them ? Listen," he went on, " in this world we must make up our minds as to what we want to do. You will not marry Ellénore ? "

" No, doubtless," I exclaimed ; " she herself has never desired me to do so."

"What do you want to do, then? She is ten years older than you. You are twenty-six. You will take care of her for another ten years. She will then be an old woman. You will have reached the middle of your life without having begun anything or achieved anything of a nature to give you satisfaction. *Ennui* will take possession of you. Every day she will grow less attractive to you, every day you will grow more necessary to her; and all that will come of the illustrious birth, the brilliant fortune, the distinguished abilities of which you boast, will be that you will vegetate in some out of the way corner of Poland, forgotten by your friends, left behind in the race, and tormented by a woman who, do what you may, will never cease to find fault with you. One word more and we will have done with a subject that embarrasses you. All roads are open to you: literature, the army, the government services; you may aspire to the most brilliant of matrimonial alliances. All these things are within your grasp; but always bear in mind that between you and any kind of success, there is one insurmountable obstacle—Ellénore."

"I have thought it my duty, Monsieur," said I, "to hear you in silence, but I am bound to tell you that you have not shaken me in the least. No one save me, I say once more, is competent to pass judgment on Ellénore. No

one sufficiently appreciates the sincerity of her feelings, the depth of her affections. As long as she has need of me, so long will I remain by her side. No success would console me for leaving her unhappy, and, even if I had to limit my career to serving as her support, to helping her to bear her troubles, to sheltering her with my affection against the injustices inflicted on her by an ignorant world, I should still deem that my life had not been spent in vain."

I went out with these words on my lips, but who will explain to me the swift revulsion whereby the sentiment which dictated them died away, even before I had finished pronouncing them? I went home on foot, anxious to postpone the moment when I should see again the very woman whom I had just been defending. I strode swiftly across the city; I longed to be alone.

Reaching the open country, I moderated my pace. A thousand thoughts assailed me. Those fateful words, "between you and any kind of success there is one insurmountable obstacle—Ellénore," kept ringing in my ears. I thought long and sadly of the time that had slipped by without recall. I thought of the hopes of my youth, the confidence with which I once believed I could command the future, the praises bestowed on my early efforts, the dawning reputation which

I had seen grow bright and then fade away. I repeated the names of several of my fellow students whom I had treated with proud disdain and who, merely by dint of stubborn efforts and a well-ordered life, had left me far behind them in the pursuit of fortune, reputation and renown. I was weighed down by the thought of my inactive life. As misers behold in the wealth they amass all the good things that that wealth might purchase them, so I beheld in Ellénore the obstacle that kept me from the attainment of all those successes which I might rightfully regard as within my grasp. It was not only one career whose loss I regretted. As I had attempted none, I regretted them all. Never having employed my powers, I deemed them unlimited and I cursed them. I should have preferred that nature should have moulded me in weakness and mediocrity, since then, at any rate, I should have been spared the mortification of a voluntary degradation. Whatever praise or approval was bestowed on my faculties or my acquirements struck me as an intolerable reproach. I seemed as one listening to people admiring the muscles of an athlete laden with fetters in the depths of a dungeon. Did I attempt to pluck up my courage, to tell myself that there was yet time to be up and doing, the picture of Ellénore rose up before me like a phantom and thrust me back again into the

void. Sometimes I would be seized with fury at the thought of her, and yet, so strange was the medley of my ideas, my fury in no way lessened the terror I felt at the thought of paining her.

My mind, overwrought with these bitter feelings, suddenly veered round and sought relief in quite contrary sentiments. A word or two let fall, perhaps by chance, by the Baron de T—— regarding the possibility of settling down peacefully and happily as a married man, caused me to picture to myself in glowing colours the life of a country gentleman. I thought of the repose, the consideration, the independence which such a mode of life would offer. For the chains which I had been dragging about so long, made me a thousand times more dependent than a regular, recognised union could have done. I imagined how delighted my father would be. I experienced an impatient desire to resume the position to which I was entitled in my own country, in the society of my equals. I pictured myself opposing the convincing answer of austere and irreproachable conduct to whatever unfavourable verdict the frigidly or frivolously malignant had pronounced against me, and to all the reproaches which Ellénore laid at my door.

"She is always accusing me," I said, "of being hard, of being ungrateful, of being devoid of pity. Ah, if heaven had only granted me a

wife whom the conventions of society had allowed me to avow, whom my father need not have blushed to acknowledge as a daughter, I should have been a thousand times happy to render her happy. That sensitiveness of feeling with which people refuse to credit me because my mind is suffering and harassed, that sensitiveness whereof I am imperiously commanded to give tokens, which my heart refuses to those who threaten and denounce, how gladly would I lavish them on the beloved companion of a regular and reputable life! What have I not done for Ellénore? For her I have forsaken my country and my family; for her I have brought sorrow to the heart of my aged father, who ceases not to grieve for his absent son; for her I dwell on in these regions where my youth is fleeting ingloriously away, without honour or delight. Are not such sacrifices as these, dictated neither by duty nor by love, proof of the things that love and duty would enable me to perform. If I dread so greatly the grief of a woman who dominates me by her grief alone, how great would be the zeal with which I should fend off every affliction, every pain from one to whom I might openly devote myself without reserve. How different should I then appear from what I am to-day. And these sombre moods, with which people reproach me because they know not whence they spring,

how swiftly they would depart from me. How grateful I should be to heaven, and how kindly to my fellow-men.

Thus I spoke, and my eyes grew wet with tears. A thousand memories poured, as in a torrent, into my soul. My relations with Ellénore had rendered all these memories hateful to me. Everything that reminded me of my childhood, the places amid which my early years had been passed, the playfellows of old days, all those elderly kinsfolk who had showered so many marks of affection upon me—all this hurt me, and wrung my heart. It had come to this, that I had to repel, as though they were evil thoughts, every most natural image or desire. But the companion whom my imagination had thus suddenly called into being went hand in hand with all these mental visions, and sanctioned all these desires. That companion was associated with all my duties, all my pleasures and all my tastes. She was a link between my present life and that period of my youth when hope opened out so illimitable a future before me, a period from which Ellénore, as though by an abyss, had sundered me. The smallest details, the most trifling objects were clearly outlined in my memory. I saw again the ancient château where I dwelt with my father, the woods that surrounded it, the river that flowed by its walls, the mountains that

fringed the far horizon. All these things seemed so near at hand, so full of living reality, that they thrilled me with an almost unendurable emotion. And with them I saw, in imagination, a young and innocent being who imparted to them an added beauty, and imbued them with the breath of hope. I wandered on, plunged in this reverie, never telling myself that I must break with Ellénore, having none but a vague and confused idea of reality, like a man weighed down with sorrow, whom sleep has solaced with a dream, and who feels that the dream is about to come to an end. Suddenly I found myself close to Ellénore's château, which I had unwittingly approached. I came to a halt, I started off in another direction. I was glad to put off the moment when I should be obliged to hear the sound of her voice again.

The light grew dim, the sky was serene ; the country became wilder and more lonely. I came to a region where men had ceased their labours and had left nature to her own devices. My thoughts gradually assumed a grave and more imposing cast. The shades of night grew deeper every moment, the vast silence around me, which was only interrupted by intermittent and far off sounds, replaced my agitation by a calmer and more solemn frame of mind. I gazed around me, far and wide, over the grey expanse, whose limits had faded from my sight,

and which, for that very reason, awakened in me a sensation of immensity. It was a long time now since such thoughts had visited me. Ceaselessly absorbed in reflections of a personal nature, always contemplating myself and my affairs, I had grown completely unused to general trains of thought. For a long time I had thought of nothing save Ellénore and myself, of Ellénore, who only filled me with mingled pity and dejection, of myself, for whom I had no longer any esteem. I was plunged as it were, in a new kind of egoism, an egoism that was nerveless, discontented and humiliated. And so I was pleased at finding myself thus becoming alive to thoughts of another order, at finding, once more, that I could forget my own affairs and take an interest in reflections external to myself. It seemed as though my spirit was soaring aloft again after trailing long and lamentably in the mire.

In this manner nearly the whole night went by. I walked and walked I cared not whither; I traversed fields and woods and hamlets, where all was still and silent. Now and again I would see in some distant habitation a glimmer of light that pierced the darkness. "There perchance," I said to myself, "some unhappy being is writhing with pain, or grappling with death, death, that inexplicable mystery of whose reality, though they have daily experience of it, men

are ever unconvinced. Death, the certain end of all, which brings us no solace, no peace; death, whereon we look with habitual indifference diversified with transient terror." "I too," I said to myself, "I too am guilty of this unreasoning stupidity. I rebel against life as though life were to have no end. I spread unhappiness around me in order to win for myself a few paltry years which time will soon wrest from me. Ah, let me renounce these vain endeavours, and rejoice to see the time fleeting by, my days hastening away one after another. Why not be at rest, the indifferent spectator of a life that is already half spent? Let who will seize it, let them make havoc of it if they will, they cannot prolong its duration. Wherefore disquiet ourselves about it?"

The thought of death has always exercised a powerful dominion over me. Even in my moments of liveliest grief, it has always sufficed to calm me immediately. And now it produced its customary effect upon my spirit. My feelings towards Ellénore grew less bitter. All my irritation disappeared. All that lingered in my mind after this night of delirium was a feeling of gentleness, almost of tranquillity, to which the sensation of physical weariness that had come over me perhaps contributed not a little.

The dawn was at hand. I could already distinguish the different objects about me. I

perceived that I was some distance away from Ellénore's house. I pictured to myself her anxiety, and I was hastening to rejoin her as quickly as my weariness would allow, when I encountered a man on horseback whom she had sent out to search for me. He told me that, for the past twelve hours, she had been a prey to the liveliest apprehension, that after having been to Warsaw and scouring the neighbourhood, she had returned home in a state of indescribable anxiety, and that the inhabitants of the village had scattered themselves all over the country-side to look for me. This report at first affected me with a somewhat disagreeable sensation of impatience. It irritated me to find myself subjected by Ellénore to this importunate surveillance. Vainly I told myself that it was only her love for me that prompted it. Was not the same love also the cause of all my misfortunes? However, I succeeded in conquering these feelings, of which I was inclined to be ashamed. I knew that she was alarmed and ill. I mounted the horse and quickly covered the distance that separated us. She welcomed me with transports of delight. I was touched by her emotion. Our conversation was brief because she soon remembered that I must be in need of repose; and this time, at least, I left her without having said a word to wound her feelings.

CHAPTER VIII

On the morrow I arose, haunted by the same ideas that had disturbed me the previous day. My agitation increased as time went on. Ellénore endeavoured to discover the cause, but in vain. She plied me vehemently with questions to which I replied in embarrassed monosyllables. The more she insisted, the more reticent I became, knowing too well that a declaration on my part would be followed by tears on hers, and that her grief would involve me in fresh dissimulation.

Uneasy and perplexed, she had recourse to one of her friends in order to discover the secret which she accused me of hiding from her. Eager to deceive herself, she looked about for a fact where there was but a sentiment. This friend of hers came to me and spoke to me of the strangeness of my temper, of my anxiety to discourage all ideas of a lasting union, of my inexplicable desire for dissension and isolation. I listened to her a long time in silence. Until now, I had never told anyone that I loved

Ellénore no longer. My lips shrank from this avowal, for it seemed to me like an act of treason. Nevertheless I wanted to justify myself: I told my own story in tactful, measured language, bestowing much praise on Ellénore, conceding that my behaviour was unreasonable, ascribing it to the difficult position in which we were placed; all without openly saying anything which would imply that the real difficulty was, so far as I was concerned, my lack of love for Ellénore. My listener was moved at what I told her. She beheld generosity in what I termed weakness, misfortune in what I designated harshness. Those same explanations which sent Ellénore into a furious passion, carried conviction to the mind of her impartial friend. We are so just, when our interests are not involved. Whoever you may be, never entrust to another the secrets of your heart. Only the heart can plead the heart's cause. It alone can probe its sorrows. Every intermediary becomes a judge. He analyses, he sets off this against that; he admits that there is such a thing as indifference; he recognises it as possible, as inevitable; and for that very reason he excuses it, and thus indifference, to its great surprise, is rendered lawful in its own eyes. Ellénore's reproaches had persuaded me that I was guilty. I learned from the woman who supposed she was espousing her cause, that

I was merely to be pitied. I was led to make a complete avowal of my feelings. I agreed that I was devoted to Ellénore, that I had sympathy and pity for her ; but I added that love played no part in the duties I laid upon myself. Thus a truth which till then had remained locked up within my heart, though sometimes revealed to Ellénore in moments of perplexity or of anger, assumed more reality and strength in my eyes, from the simple fact that I had confided it to another. It is a great step, an irreparable step, when we suddenly unveil to the eyes of a third party, the hidden secrets of an intimate liaison. The light which penetrates the sanctuary confirms and completes the dilapidations which the darkness had enveloped with its shadows. It is thus that corpses, enclosed within the tomb, often retain their pristine form till the outer air reaches them and reduces them to powder.

Ellénore's friend took her departure. I know not what account she gave her of our conversation. But as I approached the salon I heard Ellénore talking in a very animated voice. The instant she saw me, she held her peace. Soon she began to discuss various general topics, which were in reality nothing but veiled personalities. " Nothing," she said, " is stranger than the zeal displayed by certain kinds of friends. There are people who manifest eagerness to act

in your interests only the more thoroughly to abandon your cause. They call it affection: I think a better name would be hatred." I readily understood that Ellenore's friend had taken my part against her, and that she had irritated her by not appearing to regard my conduct in a sufficiently heinous light. Thus I felt myself in league with some one else against Ellénore; which meant that there was yet another barrier set up between our hearts.

A few days later, Ellénore went still farther. She was incapable of any control over herself. No sooner did she believe that she had a grievance than she insisted on coming straight to the point, without putting any guard upon her tongue; preferring the risk of an immediate breach to the constraint of dissimulation. The two women parted, never again to meet as friends.

"Why drag strangers into our private discussions?" said I to Ellénore. "Is it necessary for us to have recourse to a third party in order to come to an understanding? And if we fail to agree any more, of what use can a third party possibly be to us?" "You are right," she answered, "but it is your fault. In the old days, I never had to appeal to anyone in order to find my way to your heart."

All at once, Ellénore gave out that she intended to alter her mode of life. As far as I could make out from what she said, I gathered

that she ascribed the discontent which consumed me to the loneliness of our existence. She was exhausting all the erroneous explanations, before resigning herself to the true one. We used to spend monotonous evenings alone together in alternate silence or ill-humour. The well-spring of our long talks together had run dry.

Ellénore now made up her mind to get all the principal families who lived in her neighbourhood or at Warsaw to visit her. I soon saw the drawbacks and dangers in which this attempt would involve her. The various members of her family who were contesting the title to her estates, had revealed the errors of her past, and had spread innumerable slanders about her. I trembled when I thought of the humiliations she was risking, and I endeavoured to dissuade her from the attempt. My words were thrown away. I hurt her pride by my apprehensions, though I expressed them with the utmost tact. She imagined that I was embarrassed by the irregularity of our union. This only made her the more anxious to reconquer an honourable position in society. Her efforts were rewarded with a certain measure of success. The fortune she had at her command, her beauty, which as yet time had but slightly diminished, even her past—everything about her excited curiosity. She soon became the centre of a numerous company.

But she was a prey to a secret feeling of embarrassment and anxiety. I was discontented with my own position. She imagined I was discontented with hers. She did her utmost to rectify it. The ardour with which she pursued her aims, robbed her of all power of calculation. The falsity of her position imparted an unevenness to her behaviour and a precipitation to her actions. She was clear-sighted, but without breadth of vision. Her clear-headedness was marred by her lack of restraint, and her want of breadth prevented her from perceiving the proper line to take and from giving due importance to the finer shades of conduct. For the first time she had a definite object in view, and since she rushed blindly at it, she failed to attain it.

What rebuffs she swallowed without telling me a word about them! How often I blushed for her, without having the courage to tell her why! So great is the power of reserve and restraint over men, that I had seen her more respected by the friends of Count de P—— as his mistress, than she was by her present neighbours as the rich heiress, surrounded by her vassals. Alternately defiant and meek, sometimes gracious, sometimes sensitive, there was a certain eager anxiety in all she did and said that robbed her of that respect which only comes from calmness of demeanour.

In thus pointing out Ellénore's faults, it is myself whom I arraign, myself whom I condemn. A word from me would have calmed her. How was it that I could not pronounce it ?

We were, however, now living more peaceably together. Distraction brought us relief from our customary thoughts. We were only alone at intervals, and as we confided in each other in everything save our inmost feelings, we put objective facts in the place of our own sensations, with the result that our intercourse recovered something of its charm. But before long, this new kind of life engendered fresh perplexities for me. A mere unit in the crowd that surrounded Ellénore, I perceived that I was the object of astonishment or censure. The day was drawing near for her case to come up for judgment. Her opponents alleged that she had alienated her father's affections by her innumerable derelictions, and my presence at her house was considered as confirming their assertions. Her friends reproached me with prejudicing her position. They excused her passion for me ; but they accused me of a lack of delicacy. They said that I was abusing a sentiment which it was my duty to moderate. No one but I knew that if I left her I should but excite her to follow me, and that to pursue me she would throw the thoughts, her fortune, and the counsels of prudence alike to the winds. This

was a secret I could not confide to the public ear. The result was that I appeared in Ellénore's establishment in the light of a man whose presence there was prejudicial to the success of the measures by which she was to win or lose her property, and, by a strange inversion of the truth, while it was I who was the victim of her unshakeable will, it was she who was pitied as the victim of my dominating influence.

And now a fresh circumstance arose still further to complicate this painful state of affairs.

A singular revolution suddenly took place in Ellénore's habits and behaviour. Up to this time, she had seemed to have no thoughts for anyone but me. But suddenly I perceived that she welcomed and encouraged the attentions of the men about her. She who had been so reserved, so cold, so moody, appeared suddenly to change her disposition. She encouraged the sentiments, and even the hopes, of a host of young men, some of whom were attracted by her good looks, and a few, despite the errors of her past, were honourable aspirants to her hand. She allowed them to have long and confidential talks with her. She behaved towards them in that equivocal, that alluring manner, which softly repels in order the more surely to retain, because it bespeaks indecision rather than indifference, and postponement rather than

refusal. I heard subsequently, and the facts themselves revealed it to me, that her actions in this matter were dictated by calculations as false as they were deplorable. She thought to rekindle my love by exciting my jealousy. But it was merely stirring dead ashes, to which nothing could restore their glow. And perhaps, though she herself was not aware of it, these calculations were not unmingled with a touch of feminine vanity. She was wounded by my coldness. She wished to prove to herself that she still possessed the power to please. Perchance too, in the loneliness of heart which she suffered at my hands, she derived a sort of solace at hearing again those expressions of love to which I had long since ceased to give utterance.

Be that as it may, I was for some time mistaken as to her motives. I seemed to see the dawn of my coming freedom, and I rejoiced thereat. Fearful of interrupting by some untoward action the advent of this great crisis which I deemed would bring me my deliverance, I grew more gentle, I appeared more contented. Ellénore mistook my gentleness for affection, my hopes of seeing her at last happy without me, for the desire to make her happy. She congratulated herself on the success of her manœuvre. Sometimes, however, she grew alarmed at my easy-going attitude. She reproached me for putting no obstacles in the

way of those liaisons which, to all appearance, threatened to rob me of her. I parried her accusations with jests. But I did not always succeed in setting her mind at rest. Her true temper penetrated the mask of dissimulation which she had chosen to adopt. The old scenes began again on fresh ground, but they were as stormy as ever. Ellénore blamed me for her own faults. She hinted that a single word would restore her to me, heart and soul. Then, piqued at my silence, she would fling herself into her flirtations again with a sort of frenzied excitement. And herein especially, I feel it, I shall be accused of weakness. I wanted my freedom, and I could have secured it with the approbation of everyone. I ought to have done so perhaps. Ellénore's conduct authorised me, nay, almost seemed to compel me, to take the step. But did I not know that her conduct was my doing ? Did I not know that, at the bottom of her heart, Ellénore had never ceased to love me ? Could I punish her for indiscretions which I led her to commit, and, like a cold-blooded hypocrite, make those indiscretions a pretext for pitilessly forsaking her ?

Assuredly I do not wish to palliate my conduct. I condemn myself with greater severity, perhaps, than another would employ in my place. But this point in my favour I can solemnly plead : none of my actions were

ever based on calculation, and everything I did was prompted by genuine and natural feeling. How was it that, notwithstanding those sentiments, I have for so long wrought nothing but ill for myself and for others ?

People, however, noted my attitude with surprise. My staying on at Ellénore's could only be construed as indicating an extreme devotion to her ; yet my indifference to the liaisons she always seemed ready to contract, belied that devotion. My inexplicable tolerance was ascribed to a shallowness of principle and a disregard for morality which were alleged to denote a profoundly egoistic nature that the world had corrupted. These conjectures, only the more readily acceptable in that they were adapted to the mentality of their inventors, were absorbed and repeated. Echoes of them reached my ears. I was full of indignation at so unexpected a discovery. The sole reward, then, of my long sacrifices was to be misunderstood and slandered. For a woman's sake I had cast aside all thoughts of my own advancement, and I had rejected all the pleasures of life, and it was I that the world condemned.

I had an angry scene with Ellénore. A single word dispersed the swarm of suitors whom she had only summoned to her side in order to make me afraid of losing her. She restricted her visitors to a few women and a

small group of elderly men. Everything now took on once more an appearance of regularity. But we were in reality more unhappy than ever. Ellénore deemed herself possessed of new prerogatives; I felt myself loaded with fresh chains. I can give no idea of the heart-burnings and quarrels which resulted from the complexities in which our intercourse was involved. Our life was one perpetual storm. Intimacy lost all its charm, love all its sweetness. Henceforth there was between us nothing but those transient revulsions which seem to lay a momentary balm on wounds in reality irremediable. The truth broke in upon us on all sides, and to make my meaning clear I made use of the harshest and most ruthless language. I only forbore when I beheld Ellénore in tears, and her very tears were but a burning lava which falling, drop by drop upon my heart, wrung from me cries of anguish, but never a disavowal of my previous words. It was on such occasions that, more than once, I saw her rise pale and prophetic:

"Adolphe," she cried, "you know not the evil you are doing. You will learn it one day. You will learn it through me, when you have hurried me into the grave."

CHAPTER IX

I HAD not called on the Baron de T—— again since my first visit. One morning I had a note from him which read as follows:—

"The advice I gave you need not have kept you so long away. Whatever course you adopt in regard to your own concerns, you are none the less the son of my dearest friend. I shall enjoy your society with no less pleasure, and it will afford me much gratification to introduce you to a circle which, I venture to promise you, will be greatly to your taste. Permit me to add that the more your mode of life, of which I do not wish to express disapproval, has anything singular about it, the more important it is for you to dispel any prejudices that may unjustifiably arise, by making an appearance in society."

I was grateful for the kindness thus shown me by an older man. I went to his house. No mention was made of Ellénore. The Baron kept me to dinner. That day the company

consisted only of a few rather witty and agreeable men. To begin with, I was somewhat embarrassed, but I spurred myself to the task. I put life into my manner; I threw myself with gusto into the conversation; I made the most of my wit and knowledge, and I found in this sort of success, that satisfaction of my *amour-propre* to which I had been so long a stranger. It was a satisfaction that increased the pleasure I took in the society of the Baron de T——.

I became a frequent visitor at his house. He entrusted me with some official work which he thought he might safely delegate to me. Ellénore was at first surprised at this sudden revolution in my life; but I told her of the Baron's friendship for my father and the pleasure it gave me to console the latter for my absence, by letting him think that I was making a profitable use of my time. Poor Ellénore—I feel a pang of remorse as I write it now—was glad that I appeared more easy in my mind, and resigned herself, without complaining overbitterly, to passing the greater part of her days without me. The Baron, as soon as a certain degree of confidence was established between us, spoke to me again about Ellénore. My positive intention was always to speak well of her, but unconsciously I found myself talking of her in a rather loose and off-hand manner. Sometimes I indicated in a general sort of way

that I recognised the necessity of detaching myself from her. Sometimes the comic spirit came to my relief. I spoke jocularly of women and of the difficulty of getting rid of them. Such talk as that was calculated to amuse an old man like the minister, whose passions had died away, and who recalled vaguely that in his young days he, too, had "suffered much extremity for love." And so, for the simple reason that my real feelings were hidden from view, I was, more or less, deceiving every one. I was deceiving Ellénore because I knew the Baron wished to get me away from her, and I said nothing to her about it. I was deceiving M. de T—— because I led him to think that I was genuinely prepared to sever the ties that bound me. Such duplicity was far removed from my real nature; but a man's character begins to deteriorate as soon as he harbours in his heart a single thought that he is constantly compelled to dissemble.

Till then the only people whose acquaintance I had made at the Baron de T——'s were men who were his personal friends. One day he suggested that I should stay for a big reception which he was holding in honour of his master's birthday. "You will meet," he said, "the most beautiful women in Poland. It is true you will not see the one you love. That, I regret. But there are some women whom we

only see in the privacy of their own homes." The phrase made me wince. I held my peace, but I inwardly reproached myself for not defending Ellénore, who, if anyone had attacked me in her presence, would have defended me with ardour.

The company was numerous. I was regarded with attentive curiosity. I heard people talking in undertones around me and whispering my father's name, Ellénore's and the Count de P——'s. They would stop talking as soon as I approached, and begin again when I went away. It was clear to me that they were recounting my story, and doubtless every one was giving his own particular version of it. My position was intolerable. The perspiration came out on my forehead. I grew red and pale by turns.

The Baron noticed my embarrassment. He came up to me. He redoubled his good offices, seized every opportunity to sing my praises, and the attention he bestowed on me soon compelled the rest to show me the same regard.

When every one had departed the Baron de T—— said to me, "I should like just once more to talk to you openly and without reserve. Why will you persist in remaining in a situation which causes you suffering? What good do you do to anyone? Do you think people are not aware of the sort of life you and Ellénore

lead together ? Every one knows perfectly well how bitter and uncomfortable are your mutual relations. You prejudice yourself by your weakness ; you prejudice yourself no less by your harshness : for, to crown the anomaly of your position, you bring no happiness to the woman who makes you so miserable."

I was still smarting from the pain that I had been suffering. The Baron showed me several letters from my father. They betrayed a far deeper grief than I had imagined. I was upset. The thought that I was prolonging Ellénore's agitation only added to my irresolution. At last, however, as if all things had united against her, she herself, by her own impatience, confirmed my wavering resolution. I had been away the whole day. The Baron had kept me with him ; the hour was growing late. A letter from Ellénore was brought in and handed to me in the presence of the Baron de T——. I read in the latter's eyes a sort of commiseration for my servitude. Ellénore's letter was full of rancour.

" What," said I, " can I not have a day to call my own ? Cannot I breathe in peace for a single hour ? She pursues me everywhere, as though I were a slave that must be brought to heel." And with a violence bred of conscious weakness, I exclaimed, " Yes, I will, I will break with Ellénore. I will do it within three days

from now. I will tell her so myself, to her face, and you may inform my father in advance."

So saying, I rushed from the Baron's presence. I was oppressed with the thought of what I had just said, and I only half intended to keep the promise I had made.

Ellénore was waiting for me with impatience. By a strange chance, during my absence someone had told her, for the first time, of the Baron's endeavours to separate us. She had heard rumours of the sort of things I had been saying, of the jests I had permitted myself. Her suspicions were aroused; she had bethought herself of several circumstances which seemed to confirm them. This sudden friendship struck up with a man whom I never used to see, the intimacy which existed between him and my father, appeared to her to be convincing proof that there was something going on. Her anxiety had made such progress in the course of a few hours, that I found her fully convinced of what she called my perfidy.

I had come to her resolved to tell her all. But—who will believe it?—being accused by her, my only aim was to evade and prevaricate. I denied, yes, I forswore the very things I had resolved to tell her on the morrow.

It was late. I left her. I hastened to go to bed to finish this interminable day, and when I was sure that it was finished I felt, for the

moment, as if an enormous weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

Next day, I did not get up till nearly noon, as though by delaying the beginning of our interview, I had put off the fatal moment.

As the result of her own reflections and of what I had said the previous evening, Ellénore had regained her calm during the night. She talked to me about her affairs, and in such a confidential way as showed only too clearly that she thought our lives were indissolubly united. How was I to find words to thrust her back into loneliness again ?

The time went by with terrifying rapidity. Every minute added to the necessity of coming to an understanding. I had given myself three days, and already the second was nearly over. M. de T—— would be expecting to see me at the latest, the next day but one. His letter to my father had been dispatched, and now I was going to fail in my promise without having made the slightest effort to fulfil it. I kept going out and coming in again ; I took Ellénore's hand ; I was continually beginning to say something and breaking off again. I noted the progress of the sun as it declined towards the horizon. The night came again, and again I put the thing off. One day remained.

That day went by like its predecessor. I wrote to M. de T—— to ask him for more time,

and, as weak natures generally do, I gave him innumerable reasons to justify my delay, to show that it made no difference to the course I had resolved to take and that, from that very moment, my relations with Ellénore might be regarded as for ever at an end.

CHAPTER X, AND LAST

I PASSED the next few days in a calmer frame of mind. The necessity for action I had relegated to a sort of indefinite limbo. I was no longer pursued by it as by a spectre. I thought I had plenty of time to prepare Ellénore's mind. I wanted to be more gentle, more tender, with her in order that I might at least preserve some pleasant memories of our union. My trouble was quite different from what I had hitherto known. I had implored Heaven to set up between Ellénore and myself some unforeseen obstacle that could not be overcome. The obstacle now appeared. I fixed my gaze on Ellénore as upon someone I was about to lose. Those importunities which I had used to find so unbearable, no longer had any terrors for me. I felt that I was already a free man. I felt impatient no more. On the contrary, I was secretly anxious to defer the fateful moment.

Ellénore noticed that my manner had grown more affectionate, more considerate. She herself became less bitter. I sought those meetings

which I had hitherto avoided. I found pleasure in her expressions of love which I used to think so tiresome, but which I now regarded as precious, inasmuch as each occasion might prove to be the last.

One night we had separated after a more friendly talk than usual. The secret that was shut up in my bosom made me heavy hearted; but there was no trace of anger in my sadness. The uncertainty as to the date of the separation I had wished for, sufficed to banish all thoughts of rancour. During the night I heard a strange noise in the château. It soon ceased, and I attached no importance to it. In the morning, however, I remembered about it. I thought I would find out what it was and began to make my way to Ellénore's room. Judge of my astonishment when I was informed that, ever since twelve o'clock that night, she had been in a raging fever, that a doctor, whom her attendants had sent for, declared that her life was in danger, and that she herself had given the strictest orders that I was not to be told, or allowed into her room.

I tried to insist. The doctor himself came out to impress on me the necessity of avoiding all excitement. He ascribed her injunctions concerning me to her desire not to cause me alarm. I anxiously questioned the servants as to what could have plunged her with such

suddenness into so dangerous a condition. The night before, after she had left me, a letter had been brought to her by a man who had ridden out from Warsaw. She opened it, read it and swooned away. When she came to, she threw herself on her bed without a word. One of her women, alarmed at the agitation she noticed in her, had remained in the room, unknown to her mistress. About midnight this woman had seen her taken with so violent a fit of trembling that it shook the bed on which she was lying. She wanted to call me, but Ellénore had forbidden them with a sort of terror of so acute a nature, that they had not dared to thwart her. They sent for a doctor. Ellénore had refused, and still refused, to answer his questions. All night long she had been muttering incoherent words which none could understand, often pressing her handkerchief to her mouth as though to prevent herself speaking.

While they were giving me these details another woman who had remained with Ellénore came running with a terrified look on her face. Ellénore seemed to have utterly lost the use of her senses. She recognised none of the things about her. Sometimes she would cry out, or repeat my name, then, in an agony of terror, she would make a sign with her hand as though bidding them keep from her something she could not bear to look upon.

I entered her room. At the foot of her bed I saw two letters. One was my own to the Baron de T——, the other was from the Baron to Ellénore. Then I saw only too well the key to this hideous enigma. All my efforts to gain time, which I wished to devote to augmenting the tenderness of our last farewells, had thus turned against the unhappy woman whose sorrow I was fain to mitigate. Ellénore had read, written by my own hand, the promises I had made to abandon her, promises only made that I might remain the longer by her side, and which the eagerness to stay had prompted me to repeat and elaborate in endless different ways. M. de T——'s cool eye had readily detected in my reiterated protestations the irresolution which I attempted to disguise, and the shifts of my own pusillanimity. But in his cruelty, he had but too accurately calculated that Ellénore would recognise in it all an irrevocable decision on my part. I drew near to her. She looked at me, but did not recognise me. I spoke to her. She shuddered. "What sound is that I hear?" she cried. "It is the voice that has wrought me all these ills." The doctor observed that my presence increased her ravings, and conjured me to depart. How can I describe what I endured those long hours? At last the doctor left. Ellénore had fallen into a profound torpor. He did not

despair of saving her if, when she awoke, the fever had subsided.

Ellénore slept long. They told me when she woke, and I wrote her a few words asking her to let me see her. She bade them tell me to enter. I was going to speak, when she interrupted me. "Let me not hear from you any cruel word," said she. "I complain no more; I make no further opposition; but let not the voice that I have loved so well, the voice that used to echo in the deeps of my heart, let it not enter there to rend it asunder. Adolphe, Adolphe, I have been violent; I may have angered you, but you do not know what I have suffered, and God grant you never may."

Her agitation became extreme. She placed her brow upon my hand. It was burning hot. A terrible contraction disfigured her features. "In God's name, hear me, dear Ellénore," I cried. "Yes, I am to blame: that letter—" She shuddered and shrank from me. I held her to me. "Weak, harassed as I was," I said, "I may have yielded momentarily to cruel importunities. But have you not yourself a thousand proofs that I cannot will anything that would entail our separation. I was discontented, unhappy, unjust. Perhaps, in struggling too violently against a rebellious imagination, you have given strength to some transient half-wishes which I now despise. But

can you doubt my profound affection ? Are not our souls linked one to the other by a thousand bonds that nothing can sever ? Is not the past common to us both ? Can we look back over the three years that have just ended without calling to mind emotions we have shared, pleasures that we have enjoyed, troubles we have borne together ? Ellénore, let us, this day, begin a new life ; let us recall the hours of happiness and love."

She looked at me for some time with an expression of doubt on her face. " But your father," she said at length, " your duties, your family, the things that are expected of you—— ? "

" Doubtless," I answered, " some time, some day, perhaps—— " She observed that I hesitated. " Oh God ! " she exclaimed, " why did he revive my hopes, only to dash them again immediately ! Adolphe, I thank you for your efforts. They have done me good, the more so since, as I hope, they will entail no sacrifice on you. But I beseech you, let us talk no more of the future. Whatever befalls, reproach yourself with nothing. You have been good to me. I longed for what I could not have. Love was all my life to me. With you it could not be so. Take care of me for yet a few days longer." The tears streamed from her eyes. Her breathing was less oppressed. She leant her head

upon my shoulder. "It is here," she said, "that I have always wished to die." I pressed her to my heart. Once more I abjured my plans, and retracted the angry, cruel things I had said. "No," she continued, "it is necessary that you should be free and contented." "Can I be so," said I, "if you are unhappy?" "I shall not be long unhappy," she replied; "you will not have to be sorry for me much longer." I shook off my fears, and tried to think they were unfounded. "No, no, dear Adolphe," she said; "when one has prayed for death a long time, heaven sends us, at last, some infallible premonition that tells us our prayer is answered." I vowed that I would never leave her. "I always hoped so," said she, "now I am sure of it."

It was one of those winter days when the sun casts a mournful gleam over the wan landscape as though it were looking pityingly on the earth which it had ceased to warm. Ellénore suggested that we should go out. "It is very cold," said I. "Never mind, I should like to go for a walk with you." She took my arm and we walked for a long time in silence. She moved with difficulty, leaning almost her whole weight upon me. "Let us rest a little," I said. "No," she answered, "I like to feel myself still supported by you." We relapsed again into silence. The sky was cloudless; but the trees

were bare ; the air was quite still, and there was no sound save the crackle of the frozen turf beneath our feet. " How calm it all is," said Ellénore. " How resigned is nature. Ought not our hearts to learn resignation also ? " She sat down on a stone. Suddenly she fell upon her knees and, bowing her head, covered her face with her hands. I heard her murmuring some words in a low voice. I saw that she was praying. At length she arose. " Let us go in," she said, " the cold has taken hold of me. I am afraid lest I should faint. Do not talk to me. I am not in a condition to listen."

From that day onwards Ellénore grew visibly weaker and more wasted. I sent everywhere for doctors to come and see her. Some pronounced her illness to be incurable. Others soothed me with vain hopes. But nature, sombre and silent, pursued with unseen hand her unrelenting task. Sometimes, for a few brief moments, Ellénore would seem to come back to life again. You would have said that the iron hand that weighed upon her had been withdrawn. Languidly she would lift her head. A livelier colour would steal into her cheeks ; her eyes would grow brighter. Then, by a cruel freak of some power beyond our ken, this deceptive improvement would disappear. And so I beheld her gradually going to her doom. Upon her features, so distinguished and so

expressive, I beheld the signs that heralded the approach of death. I saw—and it was a humiliating and deplorable thing to realise—how her vigorous and spirited intellect received from the physical suffering she had to endure, innumerable confused and incoherent impressions, as if, in those dread moments, the soul, fretted by the body's overthrow, were changing in every particle so as the less painfully to acquiesce in the ruin of the vital organs.

One sentiment never varied in Ellénore's heart, and that was her tenderness towards me. Her weakness seldom allowed her to speak; but she fixed her gaze on me in silence, and it then seemed to me that her eyes were beseeching me to give her that life which it was no longer in my power to bestow. I was afraid of causing her some violent emotion; I invented excuses for going out. I wandered at random among the various places to which I had been wont to go with her. I watered with my tears the rocks, the foot of the trees and every object which recalled her to my mind.

These were not the regrets for a love that was no more; but a feeling yet sadder and more sombre. Love is so closely identified with the beloved object that, in its very despair, there is a certain charm. It struggles against reality, against destiny; the ardour of its desires deceives its strength and exalts it in the very

midst of its sorrows. My grief was lone and mournful. I had no hopes of dying with Ellénore. I was going to live on without her in this desert of a world which I had so often longed to traverse in freedom and independence. I had crushed the woman who loved me; I had broken that woman's heart, the companion of my own, which had persisted in devoting itself to me with unwearying affection. Already loneliness was upon me. Ellénore still breathed, but already it was no longer possible to impart to her my thoughts. I was already alone upon the earth. I lived no longer in that atmosphere of love which she had been wont to shed around me. The air I breathed seemed harsher, the faces of the men whom I encountered, more callous. All nature seemed to be telling me that soon I should for ever cease to be loved.

Ellénore's danger suddenly became more imminent. Symptoms which none could fail to read, announced that her end was near. A priest of her Church informed her that she was dying. She asked me to fetch a casket which contained a number of papers. Several she caused to be burnt in her presence; but she seemed to be looking for one which she could not find, and her anxiety was extreme. I implored her to abandon a search which seemed to upset her and during which she had twice swooned away. "Very well, I consent," she

answered, " but dear Adolphe, do not refuse to grant me this one prayer. You will find among my papers, I know not where, a letter addressed to yourself. Burn it unread, I implore you, in the name of our love, in the name of these last moments you have made so sweet for me." I promised. She became more calm. " Suffer me now," she said, " to fulfil the duties of my religion. I have many faults to expiate. My love for you was perhaps a sin. I should not have believed it so, however, if that love could have made you happy."

I left her. I did not return save in the company of all her household to join in the last solemn rites. On my knees, in a corner of her room, I remained now lost in thought, now contemplating with involuntary curiosity all the men who assembled there, noting the terror of some, the distraction of others, and that singular effect of habit, which brings indifference into all prescribed practices and causes the most august and awful to be looked upon as matters of convention and pure formality. I heard these men mechanically repeating the funereal words as if they themselves would not one day be actors in a similar scene, as if they too would not one day have to die.

I was, however, far from disdaining the consolations of religion. Is there one of which man in his ignorance dares to proclaim the

uselessness ? They brought calm to Ellénore ; they helped her to pass beyond that terrible threshold towards which we are all advancing, without being able to foresee how it will fare with us at that dread hour. What surprises me is not that man should have neèd of a religion : my wonder is that he should ever think himself sufficiently strong, sufficiently immune from misfortune, to dare to reject a single one of them. He should, so it seems to me, be led, in his weakness, to invoke them all. In the heavy darkness which envelops us, is there a gleam that we can afford to disregard ? Amid the torrent which sweeps us along, is there a branch at which we should refuse to clutch ?

The impression wrought upon Ellénore by so mournful a solemnity, seemed to have made her weary. She sank into a deep and fairly peaceful sleep. When she awoke she seemed to be easier. I was the only one in the room. We spoke now and again, at long intervals. The doctor who had shown the most skill in his conjectures, had predicted that she would not last another twenty-four hours. I looked alternately at the clock which marked the passage of the hours, and at Ellénore's face, upon which I could perceive no further change. Every moment that went by revived my hopes, and I began to doubt the presage of a misleading art. All at

once Ellénore started wildly up. I caught her in my arms. She was trembling convulsively in every limb. She seemed to be gazing about for me; but in her eyes was depicted a vague terror as though she were imploring mercy from some menacing presence invisible to my sight. She sat up and then fell back again; it was plain she was trying to escape. It seemed as though she were battling with some unseen material power which, tired of waiting for the last tragic moment, had seized her and was holding her in its grip in order to dispatch her on this couch of death. At length she yielded to the fierce onslaught of implacable nature. Her limbs relaxed. She seemed to regain some degree of consciousness; she pressed my hands. She tried to weep, but she had no tears left; she tried to speak, but no sound would come. Then, as though abandoning the struggle, she let her head fall back on the arm which supported it. Her breathing grew slower. A few moments later she was no more.

For a long time I remained, quite still, beside Ellénore, now bereft of life. The reality of her death had not yet found its way into my heart. I gazed and gazed with a sort of wondering stupor at the lifeless body before me. One of her women who had come in had spread the sinister tidings throughout the house. The noise and stir about me aroused me from the

lethargy into which I had sunk. I rose up. Then it was that I knew the piercing anguish, the full horror of the irrevocable and everlasting farewell. All this movement, this activity of everyday life, all these mundane excursions and alarms in which she no longer played a part, chased away for ever the illusion which I was fain to prolong, the illusion by which I fancied that I was still existing with Ellénore. I felt the last bond snap, and hideous reality rear itself for ever between her and me. How it weighed upon my heart, that freedom for which I had craved so long. What a void was left in my breast by those vanished ties against which I had so long rebelled. A little while since, and all my actions had an object. I had the assurance that every one of them would avert a pain or cause a pleasure. I bewailed my fate then. It made me impatient that a friendly eye should note all my goings and comings; that another's happiness should be bound up with them. No one observed them now; they interested no one. No one sought to possess herself of my time, to monopolise my hours. I was free, indeed. I was beloved no more; I was a stranger to the world.

All Ellénore's papers, as she had ordered, were brought to me. In every line I encountered fresh proofs of her love; of fresh sacrifices she

had made on my behalf and hidden from me. At last I discovered the letter which I had promised to burn. I did not recognise it at first. It bore no superscription, and it was not sealed. Some words of it caught my eyes in spite of myself. I tried in vain to avert them. I could not resist the desire to read it through. I have not the strength to transcribe it all. Ellénore had written it after one of the violent scenes which preceded her illness.

"Adolphe," she said, "why are you always wreaking your anger upon me? What is my crime—is it that I love you and am not able to live without you? What strange sort of pity is it that keeps you from severing a bond which weighs upon you and yet makes you break the heart of the unhappy being by whose side your pity compels you to remain? Why do you refuse me the sad pleasure of believing you at least generous? Why show yourself at once violent and weak? The thought of my grief pursues you, yet the sight of my grief cannot make you relent. What is it you demand? That I should leave you? Can you not see that I have not the strength? Ah, it is for you, who love not, to find that strength, to find it in that heart that is tired of me, that heart which all my love cannot avail to soften. You will not give it me, you will make me languish in tears, you will make me die at your feet."

"Say but one word," she wrote in another place. "Is there a land whither I would not follow you; is there a retreat where I would not hide, so I might live near you without being a burden on your life! But no, you will not have it so. All the plans which I propose, timid and trembling—for you have frozen me with terror—you reject with impatience. The best that I can win from you is your silence. Such harshness is foreign to your character. You are kind; your deeds are noble and disinterested; but what deeds could efface the memory of your words? Your cruel words echo in my ears. I hear them in the night; they haunt me; they devour me; they lay a blight on everything you do. Must I then die, Adolphe? Well, then, you shall be content. She will die, the poor creature whom you have protected, but at whose heart you strike again and again. She will die, your importunate Ellénore, whom you cannot endure about you, whom you regard as a hindrance, because of whom you cannot find on all the earth a single place that does not weary you. She will die. And you will go on alone, amid the throng with whom you long so impatiently to mingle. You will know them, the men to whom to-day you are beholden for their indifference, and perhaps the day will come when, finding no comfort in their arid hearts, you will long for the heart

which once lay at your feet, to which your love was the breath of life, which would have braved a thousand perils in your defence, and to which you deign no more to grant the guerdon of a look."

EPILOGUE

Letter to the Editor

I am sending you back, Sir, the manuscript which you were so good as to lend me. I thank you for your kindness in this matter, though it revived memories which had grown dim with time. I knew most of the people who figure in this story, for it is but too veracious a record. I often met the strange and ill-starred Adolphe, who is at once its author and its hero. Ellénore was a charming woman, worthy of a gentler fate and a truer heart; and often, by my counsels, I endeavoured to rescue her from the sinister influence of the man who, no less wretched than herself, dominated her as by a kind of spell and rent her heart by his vacillation. The last time I saw her, I thought I had imbued her with some measure of strength; that I had armed her reason against her heart. After all too long an absence, I returned to the place where I had left her, and there I only found a grave.

You would do well, Sir, to give this story to the world. It could injure no one, and, in my opinion, it would serve a salutary purpose. The story of Ellénore's misfortune proves that the most passionate sentiment cannot prevail against the established order of things. The power of Society is too strong, and occurs in too many forms. Into the love from which it withholds its sanction, it distils bitterness and gall. It favours that proneness to inconstancy, that impatient fatigue, twin maladies of the soul, which sometimes take it unawares, in the very heart and centre of intimacy. The indifferent display a wonderful eagerness to sow discord in the name of morality, and to work ill in their zeal for virtue. One would imagine that the sight of love offended them as being themselves incapable of it; and whenever they can arm themselves with a pretext, they delight in attacking and destroying it. Woe, then, to the woman who bases her happiness on a sentiment which everything unites to poison, and against which Society, when not compelled to respect it as legitimate, arms itself with whatever is evil in the heart of man, to discourage whatever is good in it.

The example of Adolphe will not be less instructive if you add that, after having rejected the woman who loved him, he was no less ill at ease, no less restless, no less discontented than

before; that he made no use of the liberty he had regained at the cost of so much suffering and so many tears, and that he made himself equally an object of blame and of compassion.

If you would have proof thereof, read these letters, which will enlighten you as to Adolphe's subsequent career. You will there see him in divers situations and always the victim of that mixture of egoism and sensibility which wrought within him for the undoing alike of himself and others; realising the evil of an act before performing it, and recoiling in despair from its effects when it was accomplished; paying the penalty of his virtues even more than of his vices, because his virtues sprang from his emotions and not from his principles; alternately the kindest and the harshest of men, but always, after beginning with kindness, ending with harshness, and so leaving behind him nought save the trace of his wrong-doings.

The Reply

Yes, my dear Sir, I will publish the manuscript which you have returned to me (not because I share your view that it will serve any useful purpose, for every one learns by his own experience in the world, and every woman who reads it will imagine that she has found a better man

than Adolphe, or that she herself is a better woman than Ellénore), but I shall publish it as being a fairly true story of the sorrows of the human heart. If it does convey a useful lesson, it is to men that that lesson is addressed. It proves that the intellect, of which we are so proud, avails not to bring happiness to ourselves or to bestow it upon others. It proves that character, firmness, fidelity, kindness are qualities which we must ask of heaven. Nor do I give the name of kindness to that transient pity which cannot overcome impatience nor prevent it from reopening wounds which had been sealed by a momentary visitation of regret. The great question in life is the pain we cause, and metaphysics, however ingenious, do not justify the man who has trampled on the heart that loved him. Moreover, I hate the fatuity of a mind which thinks it excuses whatever it explains. I hate the egoism which thinks only of itself when recounting the evil it has wrought; which thinks to excite compassion by describing itself and which, soaring invulnerable above the ruin it has wrought, is occupied with self-analysis rather than with repentance. I hate that weakness which always blames others for its own impotence, and which does not see that the evil is not round about it but within it. I should have guessed that Adolphe was punished for his defects of character by that character itself;

that he never pursued any definite path, or fulfilled any useful career; that he employed his faculties only as his caprice dictated, with no other stimulus than that of irritation. I should, I say, have guessed all this, even if you had not given me those further details concerning his history, of which I do not know whether I shall make any use or not. Circumstances are of small account; character is everything. It is in vain that we break with everybody and everything about us; we cannot break with ourselves. We may go from this place to that, but everywhere we take with us the torments from which we hoped to escape, and, as we do not amend our faults by our wanderings, we find that all we have done is to add remorse to our regrets and errors to our sufferings.

THE END

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY WILLIAM CLOWES AND SONS, LIMITED,
LONDON AND BECCLES.