Eug®nie Grandet

Honor® de Balzac

Translation by Katharine Prescott Wormeley (1830-1908)

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To Maria.

May your name, that of one whose portrait is the noblest ornament of this work, lie on its opening pages like a branch of sacred box, taken from an unknown tree, but sanctified by religion, and kept ever fresh and green by pious hands to bless the house.

De Balzac.

I

There are houses in certain provincial towns whose aspect inspires melancholy, akin to that called forth by sombre cloisters, dreary moorlands, or the desolation of ruins. Within these houses there is, perhaps, the silence of the cloister, the barrenness of moors, the skeleton of ruins; life and movement are so stagnant there that a stranger might think them uninhabited, were it not that he encounters suddenly the pale, cold glance of a motionless person, whose half–monastic face peers beyond the window–casing at the sound of an unaccustomed step.

Such elements of sadness formed the physiognomy, as it were, of a dwelling–house in Saumur which stands at the end of the steep street leading to the chateau in the upper part of the town. This street—now little frequented, hot in summer, cold in winter, dark in certain sections—is remarkable for the resonance of its little pebbly pavement, always clean and dry, for the narrowness of its tortuous road–way, for the peaceful stillness of its houses, which belong to the Old town and are over–topped by the ramparts. Houses three centuries old are still solid, though built of wood, and their divers aspects add to the originality which commends this portion of Saumur to the attention of artists and antiquaries.

It is difficult to pass these houses without admiring the enormous oaken beams, their ends carved into fantastic figures, which crown with a black bas–relief the lower floor of most of them. In one place these transverse timbers are covered with slate and mark a bluish line along the frail wall of a dwelling covered by a roof *en colombage* which bends beneath the weight of years, and whose rotting shingles are twisted by the alternate action of sun and rain. In another place blackened, worn–out window–sills, with delicate sculptures now scarcely discernible, seem too weak to bear the brown clay pots from which springs the heart’s–ease or the rose–bush of some poor working–woman. Farther on are doors studded with enormous nails, where the genius of our forefathers has traced domestic hieroglyphics, of which the meaning is now lost forever. Here a Protestant attested his belief; there a Leaguer cursed Henry IV.; elsewhere some bourgeois has carved the insignia of his *noblesse de cloches*, symbols of his long–forgotten magisterial glory. The whole history of France is there.

Next to a tottering house with roughly plastered walls, where an artisan enshrines his tools, rises the mansion of a country gentleman, on the stone arch of which above the door vestiges of armorial bearings may still be seen, battered by the many revolutions that have shaken France since 1789. In this hilly street the ground–floors of the merchants are neither shops nor warehouses; lovers of the Middle Ages will here find the *ouvrouere* of our forefathers in all its naive simplicity. These low rooms, which have no shop–frontage, no show–windows, in fact no glass at all, are deep and dark and without interior or exterior decoration. Their doors open in two parts, each roughly iron–bound; the upper half is fastened back within the room, the lower half, fitted with a spring–bell, swings continually to and fro. Air and light reach the damp den within, either through the upper half of the door, or through an open space between the ceiling and a low front wall,

breast–high, which is closed by solid shutters that are taken down every morning, put up every evening, and held in place by heavy iron bars.

This wall serves as a counter for the merchandise. No delusive display is there; only samples of the business, whatever it may chance to be,—such, for instance, as three or four tubs full of codfish and salt, a few bundles of sail–cloth, cordage, copper wire hanging from the joists above, iron hoops for casks ranged along the wall, or a few pieces of cloth upon the shelves. Enter. A neat girl, glowing with youth, wearing a white kerchief, her arms red and bare, drops her knitting and calls her father or her mother, one of whom comes forward and sells you what you want, phlegmatically, civilly, or arrogantly, according to his or her individual character, whether it be a matter of two sous' or twenty thousand francs' worth of merchandise. You may see a cooper, for instance, sitting in his doorway and twirling his thumbs as he talks with a neighbor. To all appearance he owns nothing more than a few miserable boat–ribs and two or three bundles of laths; but below in the port his teeming wood–yard supplies all the cooperage trade of Anjou. He knows to a plank how many casks are needed if the vintage is good. A hot season makes him rich, a rainy season ruins him; in a single morning puncheons worth eleven francs have been known to drop to six. In this country, as in Touraine, atmospheric vicissitudes control commercial life. Wine–growers, proprietors, wood–merchants, coopers, inn–keepers, mariners, all keep watch of the sun. They tremble when they go to bed lest they should hear in the morning of a frost in the night; they dread rain, wind, drought, and want water, heat, and clouds to suit their fancy. A perpetual duel goes on between the heavens and their terrestrial interests. The barometer smooths, saddens, or makes merry their countenances, turn and turn about. From end to end of this street, formerly the Grand'Rue de Saumur, the words: "Here's golden weather," are passed from door to door; or each man calls to his neighbor: "It rains louis," knowing well what a sunbeam or the opportune rainfall is bringing him.

On Saturdays after midday, in the fine season, not one sou's worth of merchandise can be bought from these worthy traders. Each has his vineyard, his enclosure of fields, and all spend two days in the country. This being foreseen, and purchases, sales, and profits provided for, the merchants have ten or twelve hours to spend in parties of pleasure, in making observations, in criticisms, and in continual spying. A housewife cannot buy a partridge without the neighbors asking the husband if it were cooked to a turn. A young girl never puts her head near a window that she is not seen by idling groups in the street. Consciences are held in the light; and the houses, dark, silent, impenetrable as they seem, hide no mysteries. Life is almost wholly in the open air; every household sits at its own threshold, breakfasts, dines, and quarrels there. No one can pass along the street without being examined; in fact formerly, when a stranger entered a provincial town he was bantered and made game of from door to door. From this came many good stories, and the nickname *copieux*, which was applied to the inhabitants of Angers, who excelled in such urban sarcasms.

The ancient mansions of the old town of Saumur are at the top of this hilly street, and were formerly occupied by the nobility of the neighborhood. The melancholy dwelling where the events of the following history took place is one of these mansions,—venerable relics of a century in which men and things bore the characteristics of simplicity which French manners and customs are losing day by day. Follow the windings of the picturesque

thoroughfare, whose irregularities awaken recollections that plunge the mind mechanically into reverie, and you will see a somewhat dark recess, in the centre of which is hidden the door of the house of Monsieur Grandet. It is impossible to understand the force of this provincial expression—the house of Monsieur Grandet—without giving the biography of Monsieur Grandet himself.

Monsieur Grandet enjoyed a reputation in Saumur whose causes and effects can never be fully understood by those who have not, at one time or another, lived in the provinces. In 1789 Monsieur Grandet—still called by certain persons le Pere Grandet, though the number of such old persons has perceptibly diminished—was a master–cooper, able to read, write, and cipher. At the period when the French Republic offered for sale the church property in the arrondissement of Saumur, the cooper, then forty years of age, had just married the daughter of a rich wood–merchant. Supplied with the ready money of his own fortune and his wife's *dot*, in all about two thousand louis–d'or, Grandet went to the newly established "district," where, with the help of two hundred double louis given by his father–in–law to the surly republican who presided over the sales of the national domain, he obtained for a song, legally if not legitimately, one of the finest vineyards in the arrondissement, an old abbey, and several farms. The inhabitants of Saumur were so little revolutionary that they thought Pere Grandet a bold man, a republican, and a patriot with a mind open to all the new ideas; though in point of fact it was open only to vineyards. He was appointed a member of the administration of Saumur, and his pacific influence made itself felt politically and commercially. Politically, he protected the ci–devant nobles, and prevented, to the extent of his power, the sale of the lands and property of the *emigres*; commercially, he furnished the Republican armies with two or three thousand puncheons of white wine, and took his pay in splendid fields belonging to a community of women whose lands had been reserved for the last lot.

Under the Consulate Grandet became mayor, governed wisely, and harvested still better pickings. Under the Empire he was called Monsieur Grandet. Napoleon, however, did not like republicans, and superseded Monsieur Grandet (who was supposed to have worn the Phrygian cap) by a man of his own surroundings, a future baron of the Empire. Monsieur Grandet quitted office without regret. He had constructed in the interests of the town certain fine roads which led to his own property; his house and lands, very advantageously assessed, paid moderate taxes; and since the registration of his various estates, the vineyards, thanks to his constant care, had become the "head of the country,"—a local term used to denote those that produced the finest quality of wine. He might have asked for the cross of the Legion of honor.

This event occurred in 1806. Monsieur Grandet was then fifty–seven years of age, his wife thirty–six, and an only daughter, the fruit of their legitimate love, was ten years old. Monsieur Grandet, whom Providence no doubt desired to compensate for the loss of his municipal honors, inherited three fortunes in the course of this year,—that of Madame de la Gaudiniere, born de la Bertelliere, the mother of Madame Grandet; that of old Monsieur de la Bertelliere, her grandfather; and, lastly, that of Madame Gentillet, her grandmother on the mother's side: three inheritances, whose amount was not known to any one. The avarice of the deceased persons was so keen that for a long time they had hoarded their money for the pleasure of secretly looking at it. Old Monsieur de la Bertelliere called an investment an extravagance, and thought he got better interest from the sight of his gold

than from the profits of usury. The inhabitants of Saumur consequently estimated his savings according to “the revenues of the sun’s wealth,” as they said.

Monsieur Grandet thus obtained that modern title of nobility which our mania for equality can never rub out. He became the most imposing personage in the arrondissement. He worked a hundred acres of vineyard, which in fruitful years yielded seven or eight hundred hogsheads of wine. He owned thirteen farms, an old abbey, whose windows and arches he had walled up for the sake of economy,—a measure which preserved them,—also a hundred and twenty–seven acres of meadow–land, where three thousand poplars, planted in 1793, grew and flourished; and finally, the house in which he lived. Such was his visible estate; as to his other property, only two persons could give even a vague guess at its value: one was Monsieur Cruchot, a notary employed in the usurious investments of Monsieur Grandet; the other was Monsieur des Grassins, the richest banker in Saumur, in whose profits Grandet had a certain covenanted and secret share.

Although old Cruchot and Monsieur des Grassins were both gifted with the deep discretion which wealth and trust beget in the provinces, they publicly testified so much respect to Monsieur Grandet that observers estimated the amount of his property by the obsequious attention which they bestowed upon him. In all Saumur there was no one not persuaded that Monsieur Grandet had a private treasure, some hiding–place full of louis, where he nightly took ineffable delight in gazing upon great masses of gold. Avaricious people gathered proof of this when they looked at the eyes of the good man, to which the yellow metal seemed to have conveyed its tints. The glance of a man accustomed to draw enormous interest from his capital acquires, like that of the libertine, the gambler, or the sycophant, certain indefinable habits,—furtive, eager, mysterious movements, which never escape the notice of his co–religionists. This secret language is in a certain way the freemasonry of the passions. Monsieur Grandet inspired the respectful esteem due to one who owed no man anything, who, skilful cooper and experienced wine–grower that he was, guessed with the precision of an astronomer whether he ought to manufacture a thousand puncheons for his vintage, or only five hundred, who never failed in any speculation, and always had casks for sale when casks were worth more than the commodity that filled them, who could store his whole vintage in his cellars and bide his time to put the puncheons on the market at two hundred francs, when the little proprietors had been forced to sell theirs for five louis. His famous vintage of 1811, judiciously stored and slowly disposed of, brought him in more than two hundred and forty thousand francs.

Financially speaking, Monsieur Grandet was something between a tiger and a boa–constrictor. He could crouch and lie low, watch his prey a long while, spring upon it, open his jaws, swallow a mass of louis, and then rest tranquilly like a snake in process of digestion, impassible, methodical, and cold. No one saw him pass without a feeling of admiration mingled with respect and fear; had not every man in Saumur felt the rending of those polished steel claws? For this one, Maitre Cruchot had procured the money required for the purchase of a domain, but at eleven per cent. For that one, Monsieur des Grassins discounted bills of exchange, but at a frightful deduction of interest. Few days ever passed that Monsieur Grandet’s name was not mentioned either in the markets or in social conversations at the evening gatherings. To some the fortune of the old wine–grower was an object of patriotic pride. More than one merchant, more than one innkeeper, said to strangers with a certain complacency: “Monsieur, we have two or three millionaire

establishments; but as for Monsieur Grandet, he does not himself know how much he is worth."

In 1816 the best reckoners in Saumur estimated the landed property of the worthy man at nearly four millions; but as, on an average, he had made yearly, from 1793 to 1817, a hundred thousand francs out of that property, it was fair to presume that he possessed in actual money a sum nearly equal to the value of his estate. So that when, after a game of boston or an evening discussion on the matter of vines, the talk fell upon Monsieur Grandet, knowing people said: "Le Pere Grandet? le Pere Grandet must have at least five or six millions."

"You are cleverer than I am; I have never been able to find out the amount," answered Monsieur Cruchot or Monsieur des Grassins, when either chanced to overhear the remark.

If some Parisian mentioned Rothschild or Monsieur Lafitte, the people of Saumur asked if he were as rich as Monsieur Grandet. When the Parisian, with a smile, tossed them a disdainful affirmative, they looked at each other and shook their heads with an incredulous air. So large a fortune covered with a golden mantle all the actions of this man. If in early days some peculiarities of his life gave occasion for laughter or ridicule, laughter and ridicule had long since died away. His least important actions had the authority of results repeatedly shown. His speech, his clothing, his gestures, the blinking of his eyes, were law to the country–side, where every one, after studying him as a naturalist studies the result of instinct in the lower animals, had come to understand the deep mute wisdom of his slightest actions.

"It will be a hard winter," said one; "Pere Grandet has put on his fur gloves."

"Pere Grandet is buying quantities of staves; there will be plenty of wine this year."

Monsieur Grandet never bought either bread or meat. His farmers supplied him weekly with a sufficiency of capons, chickens, eggs, butter, and his tithe of wheat. He owned a mill; and the tenant was bound, over and above his rent, to take a certain quantity of grain and return him the flour and bran. La Grande Nanon, his only servant, though she was no longer young, baked the bread of the household herself every Saturday. Monsieur Grandet arranged with kitchen–gardeners who were his tenants to supply him with vegetables. As to fruits, he gathered such quantities that he sold the greater part in the market. His fire–wood was cut from his own hedgerows or taken from the half–rotten old sheds which he built at the corners of his fields, and whose planks the farmers carted into town for him, all cut up, and obligingly stacked in his wood–house, receiving in return his thanks. His only known expenditures were for the consecrated bread, the clothing of his wife and daughter, the hire of their chairs in church, the wages of la Grand Nanon, the tinning of the saucepans, lights, taxes, repairs on his buildings, and the costs of his various industries. He had six hundred acres of woodland, lately purchased, which he induced a neighbor's keeper to watch, under the promise of an indemnity. After the acquisition of this property he ate game for the first time.

Monsieur Grandet's manners were very simple. He spoke little. He usually expressed his meaning by short sententious phrases uttered in a soft voice. After the Revolution, the epoch at which he first came into notice, the good man stuttered in a wearisome way as soon as he was required to speak at length or to maintain an argument. This stammering,

the incoherence of his language, the flux of words in which he drowned his thought, his apparent lack of logic, attributed to defects of education, were in reality assumed, and will be sufficiently explained by certain events in the following history. Four sentences, precise as algebraic formulas, sufficed him usually to grasp and solve all difficulties of life and commerce: “I don’t know; I cannot; I will not; I will see about it.” He never said yes, or no, and never committed himself to writing. If people talked to him he listened coldly, holding his chin in his right hand and resting his right elbow in the back of his left hand, forming in his own mind opinions on all matters, from which he never receded. He reflected long before making any business agreement. When his opponent, after careful conversation, avowed the secret of his own purposes, confident that he had secured his listener’s assent, Grandet answered: “I can decide nothing without consulting my wife.” His wife, whom he had reduced to a state of helpless slavery, was a useful screen to him in business. He went nowhere among friends; he neither gave nor accepted dinners; he made no stir or noise, seeming to economize in everything, even movement. He never disturbed or disarranged the things of other people, out of respect for the rights of property. Nevertheless, in spite of his soft voice, in spite of his circumspect bearing, the language and habits of a coarse nature came to the surface, especially in his own home, where he controlled himself less than elsewhere.

Physically, Grandet was a man five feet high, thick–set, square–built, with calves twelve inches in circumference, knotted knee–joints, and broad shoulders; his face was round, tanned, and pitted by the small–pox; his chin was straight, his lips had no curves, his teeth were white; his eyes had that calm, devouring expression which people attribute to the basilisk; his forehead, full of transverse wrinkles, was not without certain significant protuberances; his yellow–grayish hair was said to be silver and gold by certain young people who did not realize the impropriety of making a jest about Monsieur Grandet. His nose, thick at the end, bore a veined wen, which the common people said, not without reason, was full of malice. The whole countenance showed a dangerous cunning, an integrity without warmth, the egotism of a man long used to concentrate every feeling upon the enjoyments of avarice and upon the only human being who was anything whatever to him,—his daughter and sole heiress, Eugenie. Attitude, manners, bearing, everything about him, in short, testified to that belief in himself which the habit of succeeding in all enterprises never fails to give to a man.

Thus, though his manners were unctuous and soft outwardly, Monsieur Grandet’s nature was of iron. His dress never varied; and those who saw him to–day saw him such as he had been since 1791. His stout shoes were tied with leathern thongs; he wore, in all weathers, thick woollen stockings, short breeches of coarse maroon cloth with silver buckles, a velvet waistcoat, in alternate stripes of yellow and puce, buttoned squarely, a large maroon coat with wide flaps, a black cravat, and a quaker’s hat. His gloves, thick as those of a gendarme, lasted him twenty months; to preserve them, he always laid them methodically on the brim of his hat in one particular spot. Saumur knew nothing further about this personage.

Only six individuals had a right of entrance to Monsieur Grandet’s house. The most important of the first three was a nephew of Monsieur Cruchot. Since his appointment as president of the Civil courts of Saumur this young man had added the name of Bonfons to that of Cruchot. He now signed himself C. de Bonfons. Any litigant so ill–advised as to

call him Monsieur Cruchot would soon be made to feel his folly in court. The magistrate protected those who called him Monsieur le president, but he favored with gracious smiles those who addressed him as Monsieur de Bonfons. Monsieur le president was thirty–three years old, and possessed the estate of Bonfons (Boni Fontis), worth seven thousand francs a year; he expected to inherit the property of his uncle the notary and that of another uncle, the Abbe Cruchot, a dignitary of the chapter of Saint–Martin de Tours, both of whom were thought to be very rich. These three Cruchots, backed by a goodly number of cousins, and allied to twenty families in the town, formed a party, like the Medici in Florence; like the Medici, the Cruchots had their Pazzi.

Madame des Grassins, mother of a son twenty–three years of age, came assiduously to play cards with Madame Grandet, hoping to marry her dear Adolphe to Mademoiselle Eugenie. Monsieur des Grassins, the banker, vigorously promoted the schemes of his wife by means of secret services constantly rendered to the old miser, and always arrived in time upon the field of battle. The three des Grassins likewise had their adherents, their cousins, their faithful allies. On the Cruchot side the abbe, the Talleyrand of the family, well backed–up by his brother the notary, sharply contested every inch of ground with his female adversary, and tried to obtain the rich heiress for his nephew the president.

This secret warfare between the Cruchots and des Grassins, the prize thereof being the hand in marriage of Eugenie Grandet, kept the various social circles of Saumur in violent agitation. Would Mademoiselle Grandet marry Monsieur le president or Monsieur Adolphe des Grassins? To this problem some replied that Monsieur Grandet would never give his daughter to the one or to the other. The old cooper, eaten up with ambition, was looking, they said, for a peer of France, to whom an income of three hundred thousand francs would make all the past, present, and future casks of the Grandets acceptable. Others replied that Monsieur and Madame des Grassins were nobles, and exceedingly rich; that Adolphe was a personable young fellow; and that unless the old man had a nephew of the pope at his beck and call, such a suitable alliance ought to satisfy a man who came from nothing,—a man whom Saumur remembered with an adze in his hand, and who had, moreover, worn the *bonnet rouge*. Certain wise heads called attention to the fact that Monsieur Cruchot de Bonfons had the right of entry to the house at all times, whereas his rival was received only on Sundays. Others, however, maintained that Madame des Grassins was more intimate with the women of the house of Grandet than the Cruchots were, and could put into their minds certain ideas which would lead, sooner or later, to success. To this the former retorted that the Abbe Cruchot was the most insinuating man in the world: pit a woman against a monk, and the struggle was even. “It is diamond cut diamond,” said a Saumur wit.

The oldest inhabitants, wiser than their fellows, declared that the Grandets knew better than to let the property go out of the family, and that Mademoiselle Eugenie Grandet of Saumur would be married to the son of Monsieur Grandet of Paris, a wealthy wholesale wine–merchant. To this the Cruchotines and the Grassinists replied: “In the first place, the two brothers have seen each other only twice in thirty years; and next, Monsieur Grandet of Paris has ambitious designs for his son. He is mayor of an arrondissement, a deputy, colonel of the National Guard, judge in the commercial courts; he disowns the Grandets of Saumur, and means to ally himself with some ducal family,—ducal under favor of Napoleon.” In short, was there anything not said of an heiress who was talked of through a

circumference of fifty miles, and even in the public conveyances from Angers to Blois, inclusively!

At the beginning of 1811, the Cruchotines won a signal advantage over the Grassinists. The estate of Froidfond, remarkable for its park, its mansion, its farms, streams, ponds, forests, and worth about three millions, was put up for sale by the young Marquis de Froidfond, who was obliged to liquidate his possessions. Maitre Cruchot, the president, and the abbe, aided by their adherents, were able to prevent the sale of the estate in little lots. The notary concluded a bargain with the young man for the whole property, payable in gold, persuading him that suits without number would have to be brought against the purchasers of small lots before he could get the money for them; it was better, therefore, to sell the whole to Monsieur Grandet, who was solvent and able to pay for the estate in ready money. The fine marquisate of Froidfond was accordingly conveyed down the gullet of Monsieur Grandet, who, to the great astonishment of Saumur, paid for it, under proper discount, with the usual formalities.

This affair echoed from Nantes to Orleans. Monsieur Grandet took advantage of a cart returning by way of Froidfond to go and see his chateau. Having cast a master’s eye over the whole property, he returned to Saumur, satisfied that he had invested his money at five per cent, and seized by the stupendous thought of extending and increasing the marquisate of Froidfond by concentrating all his property there. Then, to fill up his coffers, now nearly empty, he resolved to thin out his woods and his forests, and to sell off the poplars in the meadows.

II

It is now easy to understand the full meaning of the term, “the house of Monsieur Grandet,”—that cold, silent, pallid dwelling, standing above the town and sheltered by the ruins of the ramparts. The two pillars and the arch, which made the porte–cochere on which the door opened, were built, like the house itself, of tufa,—a white stone peculiar to the shores of the Loire, and so soft that it lasts hardly more than two centuries. Numberless irregular holes, capriciously bored or eaten out by the inclemency of the weather, gave an appearance of the vermiculated stonework of French architecture to the arch and the side walls of this entrance, which bore some resemblance to the gateway of a jail. Above the arch was a long bas–relief, in hard stone, representing the four seasons, the faces already crumbling away and blackened. This bas–relief was surmounted by a projecting plinth, upon which a variety of chance growths had sprung up,—yellow pellitory, bindweed, convolvuli, nettles, plantain, and even a little cherry–tree, already grown to some height.

The door of the archway was made of solid oak, brown, shrunken, and split in many places; though frail in appearance, it was firmly held in place by a system of iron bolts arranged in symmetrical patterns. A small square grating, with close bars red with rust, filled up the middle panel and made, as it were, a motive for the knocker, fastened to it by a ring, which struck upon the grinning head of a huge nail. This knocker, of the oblong shape and kind which our ancestors called *jaquemart*, looked like a huge note of exclamation; an antiquary who examined it attentively might have found indications of the figure, essentially burlesque, which it once represented, and which long usage had now effaced. Through this little grating—intended in olden times for the recognition of friends in times of civil war—inquisitive persons could perceive, at the farther end of the dark and slimy vault, a few broken steps which led to a garden, picturesquely shut in by walls that were thick and damp, and through which oozed a moisture that nourished tufts of sickly herbage. These walls were the ruins of the ramparts, under which ranged the gardens of several neighboring houses.

The most important room on the ground–floor of the house was a large hall, entered directly from beneath the vault of the porte–cochere. Few people know the importance of a hall in the little towns of Anjou, Touraine, and Berry. The hall is at one and the same time antechamber, salon, office, boudoir, and dining–room; it is the theatre of domestic life, the common living–room. There the barber of the neighborhood came, twice a year, to cut Monsieur Grandet’s hair; there the farmers, the cure, the under–prefect, and the miller’s boy came on business. This room, with two windows looking on the street, was entirely of wood. Gray panels with ancient mouldings covered the walls from top to bottom; the ceiling showed all its beams, which were likewise painted gray, while the space between them had been washed over in white, now yellow with age. An old brass clock, inlaid with arabesques, adorned the mantel of the ill–cut white stone chimney–piece, above which was a greenish mirror, whose edges, bevelled to show the thickness of the glass, reflected a thread of light the whole length of a gothic frame in damascened steel–work. The two copper–gilt candelabra which decorated the corners of the chimney–

piece served a double purpose: by taking off the side–branches, each of which held a socket, the main stem—which was fastened to a pedestal of bluish marble tipped with copper—made a candlestick for one candle, which was sufficient for ordinary occasions. The chairs, antique in shape, were covered with tapestry representing the fables of La Fontaine; it was necessary, however, to know that writer well to guess at the subjects, for the faded colors and the figures, blurred by much darning, were difficult to distinguish.

At the four corners of the hall were closets, or rather buffets, surmounted by dirty shelves. An old card–table in marquetry, of which the upper part was a chess–board, stood in the space between the two windows. Above this table was an oval barometer with a black border enlivened with gilt bands, on which the flies had so licentiously disported themselves that the gilding had become problematical. On the panel opposite to the chimney–piece were two portraits in pastel, supposed to represent the grandfather of Madame Grandet, old Monsieur de la Bertelliere, as a lieutenant in the French guard, and the deceased Madame Gentillet in the guise of a shepherdess. The windows were draped with curtains of red *gros de Tours* held back by silken cords with ecclesiastical tassels. This luxurious decoration, little in keeping with the habits of Monsieur Grandet, had been, together with the steel pier–glass, the tapestries, and the buffets, which were of rose–wood, included in the purchase of the house.

By the window nearest to the door stood a straw chair, whose legs were raised on castors to lift its occupant, Madame Grandet, to a height from which she could see the passers–by. A work–table of stained cherry–wood filled up the embrasure, and the little armchair of Eugenie Grandet stood beside it. In this spot the lives had flowed peacefully onward for fifteen years, in a round of constant work from the month of April to the month of November. On the first day of the latter month they took their winter station by the chimney. Not until that day did Grandet permit a fire to be lighted; and on the thirty–first of March it was extinguished, without regard either to the chills of the early spring or to those of a wintry autumn. A foot–warmer, filled with embers from the kitchen fire, which la Grande Nanon contrived to save for them, enabled Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet to bear the chilly mornings and evenings of April and October. Mother and daughter took charge of the family linen, and spent their days so conscientiously upon a labor properly that of working–women, that if Eugenie wished to embroider a collar for her mother she was forced to take the time from sleep, and deceive her father to obtain the necessary light. For a long time the miser had given out the tallow candle to his daughter and la Grande Nanon just as he gave out every morning the bread and other necessaries for the daily consumption.

La Grande Nanon was perhaps the only human being capable of accepting willingly the despotism of her master. The whole town envied Monsieur and Madame Grandet the possession of her. La Grande Nanon, so called on account of her height, which was five feet eight inches, had lived with Monsieur Grandet for thirty–five years. Though she received only sixty francs a year in wages, she was supposed to be one of the richest serving–women in Saumur. Those sixty francs, accumulating through thirty–five years, had recently enabled her to invest four thousand francs in an annuity with Maitre Cruchot. This result of her long and persistent economy seemed gigantic. Every servant in the town, seeing that the poor sexagenarian was sure of bread for her old age, was jealous of her, and never thought of the hard slavery through which it had been won.

At twenty–two years of age the poor girl had been unable to find a situation, so repulsive was her face to almost every one. Yet the feeling was certainly unjust: the face would have been much admired on the shoulders of a grenadier of the guard; but all things, so they say, should be in keeping. Forced to leave a farm where she kept the cows, because the dwelling–house was burned down, she came to Saumur to find a place, full of the robust courage that shrinks from no labor. Le Pere Grandet was at that time thinking of marriage and about to set up his household. He espied the girl, rejected as she was from door to door. A good judge of corporeal strength in his trade as a cooper, he guessed the work that might be got out of a female creature shaped like a Hercules, as firm on her feet as an oak sixty years old on its roots, strong in the hips, square in the back, with the hands of a cartman and an honesty as sound as her unblemished virtue. Neither the warts which adorned her martial visage, nor the red–brick tints of her skin, nor the sinewy arms, nor the ragged garments of la Grande Nanon, dismayed the cooper, who was at that time still of an age when the heart shudders. He fed, shod, and clothed the poor girl, gave her wages, and put her to work without treating her too roughly. Seeing herself thus welcomed, la Grande Nanon wept secretly tears of joy, and attached herself in all sincerity to her master, who from that day ruled her and worked her with feudal authority. Nanon did everything. She cooked, she made the lye, she washed the linen in the Loire and brought it home on her shoulders; she got up early, she went to bed late; she prepared the food of the vine–dressers during the harvest, kept watch upon the market–people, protected the property of her master like a faithful dog, and even, full of blind confidence, obeyed without a murmur his most absurd exactions.

In the famous year of 1811, when the grapes were gathered with unheard–of difficulty, Grandet resolved to give Nanon his old watch,—the first present he had made her during twenty years of service. Though he turned over to her his old shoes (which fitted her), it is impossible to consider that quarterly benefit as a gift, for the shoes were always thoroughly worn–out. Necessity had made the poor girl so niggardly that Grandet had grown to love her as we love a dog, and Nanon had let him fasten a spiked collar round her throat, whose spikes no longer pricked her. If Grandet cut the bread with rather too much parsimony, she made no complaint; she gaily shared the hygienic benefits derived from the severe regime of the household, in which no one was ever ill. Nanon was, in fact, one of the family; she laughed when Grandet laughed, felt gloomy or chilly, warmed herself, and toiled as he did. What pleasant compensations there were in such equality! Never did the master have occasion to find fault with the servant for pilfering the grapes, nor for the plums and nectarines eaten under the trees. “Come, fall–to, Nanon!” he would say in years when the branches bent under the fruit and the farmers were obliged to give it to the pigs.

To the poor peasant who in her youth had earned nothing but harsh treatment, to the pauper girl picked up by charity, Grandet’s ambiguous laugh was like a sunbeam. Moreover, Nanon’s simple heart and narrow head could hold only one feeling and one idea. For thirty–five years she had never ceased to see herself standing before the wood–yard of Monsieur Grandet, ragged and barefooted, and to hear him say: “What do you want, young one?” Her gratitude was ever new. Sometimes Grandet, reflecting that the poor creature had never heard a flattering word, that she was ignorant of all the tender sentiments inspired by women, that she might some day appear before the throne of God

even more chaste than the Virgin Mary herself,—Grandet, struck with pity, would say as he looked at her, “Poor Nanon!” The exclamation was always followed by an undefinable look cast upon him in return by the old servant. The words, uttered from time to time, formed a chain of friendship that nothing ever parted, and to which each exclamation added a link. Such compassion arising in the heart of the miser, and accepted gratefully by the old spinster, had something inconceivably horrible about it. This cruel pity, recalling, as it did, a thousand pleasures to the heart of the old cooper, was for Nanon the sum total of happiness. Who does not likewise say, “Poor Nanon!” God will recognize his angels by the inflexions of their voices and by their secret sighs.

There were very many households in Saumur where the servants were better treated, but where the masters received far less satisfaction in return. Thus it was often said: “What have the Grandets ever done to make their Grande Nanon so attached to them? She would go through fire and water for their sake!” Her kitchen, whose barred windows looked into the court, was always clean, neat, cold,—a true miser’s kitchen, where nothing went to waste. When Nanon had washed her dishes, locked up the remains of the dinner, and put out her fire, she left the kitchen, which was separated by a passage from the living–room, and went to spin hemp beside her masters. One tallow candle sufficed the family for the evening. The servant slept at the end of the passage in a species of closet lighted only by a fan–light. Her robust health enabled her to live in this hole with impunity; there she could hear the slightest noise through the deep silence which reigned night and day in that dreary house. Like a watch–dog, she slept with one ear open, and took her rest with a mind alert.

A description of the other parts of the dwelling will be found connected with the events of this history, though the foregoing sketch of the hall, where the whole luxury of the household appears, may enable the reader to surmise the nakedness of the upper floors.

In 1819, at the beginning of an evening in the middle of November, la Grande Nanon lighted the fire for the first time. The autumn had been very fine. This particular day was a fete–day well known to the Cruchotines and the Grassinists. The six antagonists, armed at all points, were making ready to meet at the Grandets and surpass each other in testimonials of friendship. That morning all Saumur had seen Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet, accompanied by Nanon, on their way to hear Mass at the parish church, and every one remembered that the day was the anniversary of Mademoiselle Eugenie’s birth. Calculating the hour at which the family dinner would be over, Maitre Cruchot, the Abbe Cruchot, and Monsieur C. de Bonfons hastened to arrive before the des Grassins, and be the first to pay their compliments to Mademoiselle Eugenie. All three brought enormous bouquets, gathered in their little green–houses. The stalks of the flowers which the president intended to present were ingeniously wound round with a white satin ribbon adorned with gold fringe. In the morning Monsieur Grandet, following his usual custom on the days that commemorated the birth and the fete of Eugenie, went to her bedside and solemnly presented her with his paternal gift,—which for the last thirteen years had consisted regularly of a curious gold–piece. Madame Grandet gave her daughter a winter dress or a summer dress, as the case might be. These two dresses and the gold–pieces, of which she received two others on New Year’s day and on her father’s fete–day, gave Eugenie a little revenue of a hundred crowns or thereabouts, which Grandet loved to see her amass. Was it not putting his money from one strong–box to another, and, as it were, training the parsimony of his heiress? from whom he sometimes demanded an account of

her treasure (formerly increased by the gifts of the Bertellieres), saying: “It is to be your marriage dozen.”

The “marriage dozen” is an old custom sacredly preserved and still in force in many parts of central France. In Berry and in Anjou, when a young girl marries, her family, or that of the husband, must give her a purse, in which they place, according to their means, twelve pieces, or twelve dozen pieces, or twelve hundred pieces of gold. The poorest shepherd–girl never marries without her dozen, be it only a dozen coppers. They still tell in Issoudun of a certain “dozen” presented to a rich heiress, which contained a hundred and forty–four *portugaises d’or*. Pope Clement VII., uncle of Catherine de’ Medici, gave her when he married her to Henri II. a dozen antique gold medals of priceless value.

During dinner the father, delighted to see his Eugenie looking well in a new gown, exclaimed: “As it is Eugenie’s birthday let us have a fire; it will be a good omen.”

“Mademoiselle will be married this year, that’s certain,” said la Grande Nanon, carrying away the remains of the goose,—the pheasant of tradesmen.

“I don’t see any one suitable for her in Saumur,” said Madame Grandet, glancing at her husband with a timid look which, considering her years, revealed the conjugal slavery under which the poor woman languished.

Grandet looked at his daughter and exclaimed gaily,—

“She is twenty–three years old to–day, the child; we must soon begin to think of it.”

Eugenie and her mother silently exchanged a glance of intelligence.

Madame Grandet was a dry, thin woman, as yellow as a quince, awkward, slow, one of those women who are born to be down–trodden. She had big bones, a big nose, a big forehead, big eyes, and presented at first sight a vague resemblance to those mealy fruits that have neither savor nor succulence. Her teeth were black and few in number, her mouth was wrinkled, her chin long and pointed. She was an excellent woman, a true la Bertelliere. L’abbe Cruchot found occasional opportunity to tell her that she had not done ill; and she believed him. Angelic sweetness, the resignation of an insect tortured by children, a rare piety, a good heart, an unalterable equanimity of soul, made her universally pitied and respected. Her husband never gave her more than six francs at a time for her personal expenses. Ridiculous as it may seem, this woman, who by her own fortune and her various inheritances brought Pere Grandet more than three hundred thousand francs, had always felt so profoundly humiliated by her dependence and the slavery in which she lived, against which the gentleness of her spirit prevented her from revolting, that she had never asked for one penny or made a single remark on the deeds which Maitre Cruchot brought for her signature. This foolish secret pride, this nobility of soul perpetually misunderstood and wounded by Grandet, ruled the whole conduct of the wife.

Madame Grandet was attired habitually in a gown of greenish levantine silk, endeavoring to make it last nearly a year; with it she wore a large kerchief of white cotton cloth, a bonnet made of plaited straws sewn together, and almost always a black–silk apron. As she seldom left the house she wore out very few shoes. She never asked anything for herself. Grandet, seized with occasional remorse when he remembered how long a time

had elapsed since he gave her the last six francs, always stipulated for the “wife’s pin–money” when he sold his yearly vintage. The four or five louis presented by the Belgian or the Dutchman who purchased the wine were the chief visible signs of Madame Grandet’s annual revenues. But after she had received the five louis, her husband would often say to her, as though their purse were held in common: “Can you lend me a few sous?” and the poor woman, glad to be able to do something for a man whom her confessor held up to her as her lord and master, returned him in the course of the winter several crowns out of the “pin–money.” When Grandet drew from his pocket the five–franc piece which he allowed monthly for the minor expenses,—thread, needles, and toilet,—of his daughter, he never failed to say as he buttoned his breeches’ pocket: “And you, mother, do you want anything?”

“My friend,” Madame Grandet would answer, moved by a sense of maternal dignity, “we will see about that later.”

Wasted dignity! Grandet thought himself very generous to his wife. Philosophers who meet the like of Nanon, of Madame Grandet, of Eugenie, have surely a right to say that irony is at the bottom of the ways of Providence.

After the dinner at which for the first time allusion had been made to Eugenie’s marriage, Nanon went to fetch a bottle of black–currant ratafia from Monsieur Grandet’s bed–chamber, and nearly fell as she came down the stairs.

“You great stupid!” said her master; “are you going to tumble about like other people, hey?”

“Monsieur, it was that step on your staircase which has given way.”

“She is right,” said Madame Grandet; “it ought to have been mended long ago. Yesterday Eugenie nearly twisted her ankle.”

“Here,” said Grandet to Nanon, seeing that she looked quite pale, “as it is Eugenie’s birthday, and you came near falling, take a little glass of ratafia to set you right.”

“Faith! I’ve earned it,” said Nanon; “most people would have broken the bottle; but I’d sooner have broken my elbow holding it up high.”

“Poor Nanon!” said Grandet, filling a glass.

“Did you hurt yourself?” asked Eugenie, looking kindly at her.

“No, I didn’t fall; I threw myself back on my haunches.”

“Well! as it is Eugenie’s birthday,” said Grandet, “I’ll have the step mended. You people don’t know how to set your foot in the corner where the wood is still firm.”

Grandet took the candle, leaving his wife, daughter, and servant without any other light than that from the hearth, where the flames were lively, and went into the bakehouse to fetch planks, nails, and tools.

“Can I help you?” cried Nanon, hearing him hammer on the stairs.

“No, no! I’m an old hand at it,” answered the former cooper.

At the moment when Grandet was mending his worm–eaten staircase and whistling with

all his might, in remembrance of the days of his youth, the three Cruchots knocked at the door.

“Is it you, Monsieur Cruchot?” asked Nanon, peeping through the little grating.

“Yes,” answered the president.

Nanon opened the door, and the light from the hearth, reflected on the ceiling, enabled the three Cruchots to find their way into the room.

“Ha! you’ve come a–greeting,” said Nanon, smelling the flowers.

“Excuse me, messieurs,” cried Grandet, recognizing their voices; “I’ll be with you in a moment. I’m not proud; I am patching up a step on my staircase.”

“Go on, go on, Monsieur Grandet; a man’s house is his castle,” said the president sententiously.

Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet rose. The president, profiting by the darkness, said to Eugenie:

“Will you permit me, mademoiselle, to wish you, on this the day of your birth, a series of happy years and the continuance of the health which you now enjoy?”

He offered her a huge bouquet of choice flowers which were rare in Saumur; then, taking the heiress by the elbows, he kissed her on each side of her neck with a complacency that made her blush. The president, who looked like a rusty iron nail, felt that his courtship was progressing.

“Don’t stand on ceremony,” said Grandet, entering. “How well you do things on fete–days, Monsieur le president!”

“When it concerns mademoiselle,” said the abbe, armed with his own bouquet, “every day is a fete–day for my nephew.”

The abbe kissed Eugenie’s hand. As for Maitre Cruchot, he boldly kissed her on both cheeks, remarking: “How we sprout up, to be sure! Every year is twelve months.”

As he replaced the candlestick beside the clock, Grandet, who never forgot his own jokes, and repeated them to satiety when he thought them funny, said,—

“As this is Eugenie’s birthday let us illuminate.”

He carefully took off the branches of the candelabra, put a socket on each pedestal, took from Nanon a new tallow candle with paper twisted round the end of it, put it into the hollow, made it firm, lit it, and then sat down beside his wife, looking alternately at his friends, his daughter, and the two candles. The Abbe Cruchot, a plump, puffy little man, with a red wig plastered down and a face like an old female gambler, said as he stretched out his feet, well shod in stout shoes with silver buckles: “The des Grassins have not come?”

“Not yet,” said Grandet.

“But are they coming?” asked the old notary, twisting his face, which had as many holes as a collander, into a queer grimace.

“I think so,” answered Madame Grandet.

“Are your vintages all finished?” said Monsieur de Bonfons to Grandet.

“Yes, all of them,” said the old man, rising to walk up and down the room, his chest swelling with pride as he said the words, “all of them.” Through the door of the passage which led to the kitchen he saw la Grande Nanon sitting beside her fire with a candle and preparing to spin there, so as not to intrude among the guests.

“Nanon,” he said, going into the passage, “put out that fire and that candle, and come and sit with us. Pardieu! the hall is big enough for all.”

“But monsieur, you are to have the great people.”

“Are not you as good as they? They are descended from Adam, and so are you.”

Grandet came back to the president and said,—

“Have you sold your vintage?”

“No, not I; I shall keep it. If the wine is good this year, it will be better two years hence. The proprietors, you know, have made an agreement to keep up the price; and this year the Belgians won’t get the better of us. Suppose they are sent off empty–handed for once, faith! they’ll come back.”

“Yes, but let us mind what we are about,” said Grandet in a tone which made the president tremble.

“Is he driving some bargain?” thought Cruchot.

At this moment the knocker announced the des Grassins family, and their arrival interrupted a conversation which had begun between Madame Grandet and the abbe.

Madame des Grassins was one of those lively, plump little women, with pink–and–white skins, who, thanks to the claustral calm of the provinces and the habits of a virtuous life, keep their youth until they are past forty. She was like the last rose of autumn,—pleasant to the eye, though the petals have a certain frostiness, and their perfume is slight. She dressed well, got her fashions from Paris, set the tone to Saumur, and gave parties. Her husband, formerly a quartermaster in the Imperial guard, who had been desperately wounded at Austerlitz, and had since retired, still retained, in spite of his respect for Grandet, the seeming frankness of an old soldier.

“Good evening, Grandet,” he said, holding out his hand and affecting a sort of superiority, with which he always crushed the Cruchots. “Mademoiselle,” he added, turning to Eugenie, after bowing to Madame Grandet, “you are always beautiful and good, and truly I do not know what to wish you.” So saying, he offered her a little box which his servant had brought and which contained a Cape heather,—a flower lately imported into Europe and very rare.

Madame des Grassins kissed Eugenie very affectionately, pressed her hand, and said: “Adolphe wishes to make you my little offering.”

A tall, blond young man, pale and slight, with tolerable manners and seemingly rather shy, although he had just spent eight or ten thousand francs over his allowance in Paris, where he had been sent to study law, now came forward and kissed Eugenie on both cheeks,

offering her a workbox with utensils in silver–gilt,—mere show–case trumpery, in spite of the monogram E.G. in gothic letters rather well engraved, which belonged properly to something in better taste. As she opened it, Eugenie experienced one of those unexpected and perfect delights which make a young girl blush and quiver and tremble with pleasure. She turned her eyes to her father as if to ask permission to accept it, and Monsieur Grandet replied: “Take it, my daughter,” in a tone which would have made an actor illustrious.

The three Cruchots felt crushed as they saw the joyous, animated look cast upon Adolphe des Grassins by the heiress, to whom such riches were unheard–of. Monsieur des Grassins offered Grandet a pinch of snuff, took one himself, shook off the grains as they fell on the ribbon of the Legion of honor which was attached to the button–hole of his blue surtout; then he looked at the Cruchots with an air that seemed to say, “Parry that thrust if you can!” Madame des Grassins cast her eyes on the blue vases which held the Cruchot bouquets, looking at the enemy’s gifts with the pretended interest of a satirical woman. At this delicate juncture the Abbe Cruchot left the company seated in a circle round the fire and joined Grandet at the lower end of the hall. As the two men reached the embrasure of the farthest window the priest said in the miser’s ear: “Those people throw money out of the windows.”

“What does that matter if it gets into my cellar?” retorted the old wine–grower.

“If you want to give gilt scissors to your daughter, you have the means,” said the abbe.

“I give her something better than scissors,” answered Grandet.

“My nephew is a blockhead,” thought the abbe as he looked at the president, whose rumpled hair added to the ill grace of his brown countenance. “Couldn’t he have found some little trifle which cost money?”

“We will join you at cards, Madame Grandet,” said Madame des Grassins.

“We might have two tables, as we are all here.”

“As it is Eugenie’s birthday you had better play loto all together,” said Pere Grandet: “the two young ones can join”; and the old cooper, who never played any game, motioned to his daughter and Adolphe. “Come, Nanon, set the tables.”

“We will help you, Mademoiselle Nanon,” said Madame des Grassins gaily, quite joyous at the joy she had given Eugenie.

“I have never in my life been so pleased,” the heiress said to her; “I have never seen anything so pretty.”

“Adolphe brought it from Paris, and he chose it,” Madame des Grassins whispered in her ear.

“Go on! go on! damned intriguing thing!” thought the president. “If you ever have a suit in court, you or your husband, it shall go hard with you.”

The notary, sitting in his corner, looked calmly at the abbe, saying to himself: “The des Grassins may do what they like; my property and my brother’s and that of my nephew amount in all to eleven hundred thousand francs. The des Grassins, at the most, have not half that; besides, they have a daughter. They may give what presents they like; heiress

and presents too will be ours one of these days."

At half–past eight in the evening the two card–tables were set out. Madame des Grassins succeeded in putting her son beside Eugenie. The actors in this scene, so full of interest, commonplace as it seems, were provided with bits of pasteboard striped in many colors and numbered, and with counters of blue glass, and they appeared to be listening to the jokes of the notary, who never drew a number without making a remark, while in fact they were all thinking of Monsieur Grandet's millions. The old cooper, with inward self–conceit, was contemplating the pink feathers and the fresh toilet of Madame des Grassins, the martial head of the banker, the faces of Adolphe, the president, the abbe, and the notary, saying to himself:—

"They are all after my money. Hey! neither the one nor the other shall have my daughter; but they are useful—useful as harpoons to fish with."

This family gaiety in the old gray room dimly lighted by two tallow candles; this laughter, accompanied by the whirr of Nanon's spinning–wheel, sincere only upon the lips of Eugenie or her mother; this triviality mingled with important interests; this young girl, who, like certain birds made victims of the price put upon them, was now lured and trapped by proofs of friendship of which she was the dupe,—all these things contributed to make the scene a melancholy comedy. Is it not, moreover, a drama of all times and all places, though here brought down to its simplest expression? The figure of Grandet, playing his own game with the false friendship of the two families and getting enormous profits from it, dominates the scene and throws light upon it. The modern god,—the only god in whom faith is preserved,—money, is here, in all its power, manifested in a single countenance. The tender sentiments of life hold here but a secondary place; only the three pure, simple hearts of Nanon, of Eugenie, and of her mother were inspired by them. And how much of ignorance there was in the simplicity of these poor women! Eugenie and her mother knew nothing of Grandet's wealth; they could only estimate the things of life by the glimmer of their pale ideas, and they neither valued nor despised money, because they were accustomed to do without it. Their feelings, bruised, though they did not know it, but ever–living, were the secret spring of their existence, and made them curious exceptions in the midst of these other people whose lives were purely material. Frightful condition of the human race! there is no one of its joys that does not come from some species of ignorance.

At the moment when Madame Grandet had won a loto of sixteen sous,—the largest ever pooled in that house,—and while la Grande Nanon was laughing with delight as she watched madame pocketing her riches, the knocker resounded on the house–door with such a noise that the women all jumped in their chairs.

"There is no man in Saumur who would knock like that," said the notary.

"How can they bang in that way!" exclaimed Nanon; "do they want to break in the door?"

"Who the devil is it?" cried Grandet.

III

Nanon took one of the candles and went to open the door, followed by her master.

“Grandet! Grandet!” cried his wife, moved by a sudden impulse of fear, and running to the door of the room.

All the players looked at each other.

“Suppose we all go?” said Monsieur des Grassins; “that knock strikes me as evil–intentioned.”

Hardly was Monsieur des Grassins allowed to see the figure of a young man, accompanied by a porter from the coach–office carrying two large trunks and dragging a carpet–bag after him, than Monsieur Grandet turned roughly on his wife and said,—

“Madame Grandet, go back to your loto; leave me to speak with monsieur.”

Then he pulled the door quickly to, and the excited players returned to their seats, but did not continue the game.

“Is it any one belonging to Saumur, Monsieur des Grassins?” asked his wife.

“No, it is a traveller.”

“He must have come from Paris.”

“Just so,” said the notary, pulling out his watch, which was two inches thick and looked like a Dutch man–of–war; “it’s nine o’clock; the diligence of the Grand Bureau is never late.”

“Is the gentleman young?” inquired the Abbe Cruchot.

“Yes,” answered Monsieur des Grassins, “and he has brought luggage which must weigh nearly three tons.”

“Nanon does not come back,” said Eugenie.

“It must be one of your relations,” remarked the president.

“Let us go on with our game,” said Madame Grandet gently. “I know from Monsieur Grandet’s tone of voice that he is annoyed; perhaps he would not like to find us talking of his affairs.”

“Mademoiselle,” said Adolphe to his neighbor, “it is no doubt your cousin Grandet,—a very good–looking young man; I met him at the ball of Monsieur de Nucingen.” Adolphe did not go on, for his mother trod on his toes; and then, asking him aloud for two sous to put on her stake, she whispered: “Will you hold your tongue, you great goose!”

At this moment Grandet returned, without la Grande Nanon, whose steps, together with those of the porter, echoed up the staircase; and he was followed by the traveller who had excited such curiosity and so filled the lively imaginations of those present that his arrival at this dwelling, and his sudden fall into the midst of this assembly, can only be likened to

that of a snail into a beehive, or the introduction of a peacock into some village poultry–yard.

“Sit down near the fire,” said Grandet.

Before seating himself, the young stranger saluted the assembled company very gracefully. The men rose to answer by a courteous inclination, and the women made a ceremonious bow.

“You are cold, no doubt, monsieur,” said Madame Grandet; “you have, perhaps, travelled from—”

“Just like all women!” said the old wine–grower, looking up from a letter he was reading. “Do let monsieur rest himself!”

“But, father, perhaps monsieur would like to take something,” said Eugenie.

“He has got a tongue,” said the old man sternly.

The stranger was the only person surprised by this scene; all the others were well–used to the despotic ways of the master. However, after the two questions and the two replies had been exchanged, the newcomer rose, turned his back towards the fire, lifted one foot so as to warm the sole of its boot, and said to Eugenie,—

“Thank you, my cousin, but I dined at Tours. And,” he added, looking at Grandet, “I need nothing; I am not even tired.”

“Monsieur has come from the capital?” asked Madame des Grassins.

Monsieur Charles,—such was the name of the son of Monsieur Grandet of Paris,—hearing himself addressed, took a little eye–glass, suspended by a chain from his neck, applied it to his right eye to examine what was on the table, and also the persons sitting round it. He ogled Madame des Grassins with much impertinence, and said to her, after he had observed all he wished,—

“Yes, madame. You are playing at loto, aunt,” he added. “Do not let me interrupt you, I beg; go on with your game: it is too amusing to leave.”

“I was certain it was the cousin,” thought Madame des Grassins, casting repeated glances at him.

“Forty–seven!” cried the old abbe. “Mark it down, Madame des Grassins. Isn’t that your number?”

Monsieur des Grassins put a counter on his wife’s card, who sat watching first the cousin from Paris and then Eugenie, without thinking of her loto, a prey to mournful presentiments. From time to time the young the heiress glanced furtively at her cousin, and the banker’s wife easily detected a *crescendo* of surprise and curiosity in her mind.

Monsieur Charles Grandet, a handsome young man of twenty–two, presented at this moment a singular contrast to the worthy provincials, who, considerably disgusted by his aristocratic manners, were all studying him with sarcastic intent. This needs an explanation. At twenty–two, young people are still so near childhood that they often conduct themselves childishly. In all probability, out of every hundred of them fully ninety–nine would have behaved precisely as Monsieur Charles Grandet was now

behaving.

Some days earlier than this his father had told him to go and spend several months with his uncle at Saumur. Perhaps Monsieur Grandet was thinking of Eugenie. Charles, sent for the first time in his life into the provinces, took a fancy to make his appearance with the superiority of a man of fashion, to reduce the whole arrondissement to despair by his luxury, and to make his visit an epoch, importing into those country regions all the refinements of Parisian life. In short, to explain it in one word, he mean to pass more time at Saumur in brushing his nails than he ever thought of doing in Paris, and to assume the extra nicety and elegance of dress which a young man of fashion often lays aside for a certain negligence which in itself is not devoid of grace. Charles therefore brought with him a complete hunting–costume, the finest gun, the best hunting–knife in the prettiest sheath to be found in all Paris. He brought his whole collection of waistcoats. They were of all kinds,—gray, black, white, scarabaeus–colored: some were shot with gold, some spangled, some *chined*; some were double–breasted and crossed like a shawl, others were straight in the collar; some had turned–over collars, some buttoned up to the top with gilt buttons. He brought every variety of collar and cravat in fashion at that epoch. He brought two of Buisson's coats and all his finest linen He brought his pretty gold toilet–set,—a present from his mother. He brought all his dandy knick–knacks, not forgetting a ravishing little desk presented to him by the most amiable of women,—amiable for him, at least,—a fine lady whom he called Annette and who at this moment was travelling, matrimonially and wearily, in Scotland, a victim to certain suspicions which required a passing sacrifice of happiness; in the desk was much pretty note–paper on which to write to her once a fortnight.

In short, it was as complete a cargo of Parisian frivolities as it was possible for him to get together,—a collection of all the implements of husbandry with which the youth of leisure tills his life, from the little whip which helps to begin a duel, to the handsomely chased pistols which end it. His father having told him to travel alone and modestly, he had taken the coupe of the diligence all to himself, rather pleased at not having to damage a delightful travelling–carriage ordered for a journey on which he was to meet his Annette, the great lady who, etc.,—whom he intended to rejoin at Baden in the following June. Charles expected to meet scores of people at his uncle's house, to hunt in his uncle's forests,—to live, in short, the usual chateau life; he did not know that his uncle was in Saumur, and had only inquired about him incidentally when asking the way to Froidfond. Hearing that he was in town, he supposed that he should find him in a suitable mansion.

In order that he might make a becoming first appearance before his uncle either at Saumur or at Froidfond, he had put on his most elegant travelling attire, simple yet exquisite, —"adorable," to use the word which in those days summed up the special perfections of a man or a thing. At Tours a hairdresser had re–curled his beautiful chestnut locks; there he changed his linen and put on a black satin cravat, which, combined with a round shirt–collar, framed his fair and smiling countenance agreeably. A travelling great–coat, only half buttoned up, nipped in his waist and disclosed a cashmere waistcoat crossed in front, beneath which was another waistcoat of white material. His watch, negligently slipped into a pocket, was fastened by a short gold chain to a buttonhole. His gray trousers, buttoned up at the sides, were set off at the seams with patterns of black silk embroidery. He gracefully twirled a cane, whose chased gold knob did not mar the freshness of his

gray gloves. And to complete all, his cap was in excellent taste. None but a Parisian, and a Parisian of the upper spheres, could thus array himself without appearing ridiculous; none other could give the harmony of self–conceit to all these fopperies, which were carried off, however, with a dashing air,—the air of a young man who has fine pistols, a sure aim, and Annette.

Now if you wish to understand the mutual amazement of the provincial party and the young Parisian; if you would clearly see the brilliance which the traveller's elegance cast among the gray shadows of the room and upon the faces of this family group,—endeavor to picture to your minds the Cruchots. All three took snuff, and had long ceased to repress the habit of snivelling or to remove the brown blotches which strewed the frills of their dingy shirts and the yellowing creases of their crumpled collars. Their flabby cravats were twisted into ropes as soon as they wound them about their throats. The enormous quantity of linen which allowed these people to have their clothing washed only once in six months, and to keep it during that time in the depths of their closets, also enabled time to lay its grimy and decaying stains upon it. There was perfect unison of ill–grace and senility about them; their faces, as faded as their threadbare coats, as creased as their trousers, were worn–out, shrivelled–up, and puckered. As for the others, the general negligence of their dress, which was incomplete and wanting in freshness,—like the toilet of all country places, where insensibly people cease to dress for others and come to think seriously of the price of a pair of gloves,—was in keeping with the negligence of the Cruchots. A horror of fashion was the only point on which the Grassinists and the Cruchotines agreed.

When the Parisian took up his eye–glass to examine the strange accessories of this dwelling,—the joists of the ceiling, the color of the woodwork, and the specks which the flies had left there in sufficient number to punctuate the "Moniteur" and the "Encyclopaedia of Sciences,"—the loto–players lifted their noses and looked at him with as much curiosity as they might have felt about a giraffe. Monsieur des Grassins and his son, to whom the appearance of a man of fashion was not wholly unknown, were nevertheless as much astonished as their neighbors, whether it was that they fell under the indefinable influence of the general feeling, or that they really shared it as with satirical glances they seemed to say to their compatriots,—

"That is what you see in Paris!"

They were able to examine Charles at their leisure without fearing to displease the master of the house. Grandet was absorbed in the long letter which he held in his hand; and to read it he had taken the only candle upon the card–table, paying no heed to his guests or their pleasure. Eugenie, to whom such a type of perfection, whether of dress or of person, was absolutely unknown, thought she beheld in her cousin a being descended from seraphic spheres. She inhaled with delight the fragrance wafted from the graceful curls of that brilliant head. She would have liked to touch the soft kid of the delicate gloves. She envied Charles his small hands, his complexion, the freshness and refinement of his features. In short,—if it is possible to sum up the effect this elegant being produced upon an ignorant young girl perpetually employed in darning stockings or in mending her father's clothes, and whose life flowed on beneath these unclean rafters, seeing none but occasional passers along the silent street,—this vision of her cousin roused in her soul an

emotion of delicate desire like that inspired in a young man by the fanciful pictures of women drawn by Westall for the English “Keepsakes,” and that engraved by the Findens with so clever a tool that we fear, as we breathe upon the paper, that the celestial apparitions may be wafted away. Charles drew from his pocket a handkerchief embroidered by the great lady now travelling in Scotland. As Eugenie saw this pretty piece of work, done in the vacant hours which were lost to love, she looked at her cousin to see if it were possible that he meant to make use of it. The manners of the young man, his gestures, the way in which he took up his eye–glass, his affected superciliousness, his contemptuous glance at the coffer which had just given so much pleasure to the rich heiress, and which he evidently regarded as without value, or even as ridiculous,—all these things, which shocked the Cruchots and the des Grassins, pleased Eugenie so deeply that before she slept she dreamed long dreams of her phoenix cousin.

The loto–numbers were drawn very slowly, and presently the game came suddenly to an end. La Grand Nanon entered and said aloud: “Madame, I want the sheets for monsieur’s bed.”

Madame Grandet followed her out. Madame des Grassins said in a low voice: “Let us keep our sous and stop playing.” Each took his or her two sous from the chipped saucer in which they had been put; then the party moved in a body toward the fire.

“Have you finished your game?” said Grandet, without looking up from his letter.

“Yes, yes!” replied Madame des Grassins, taking a seat near Charles.

Eugenie, prompted by a thought often born in the heart of a young girl when sentiment enters it for the first time, left the room to go and help her mother and Nanon. Had an able confessor then questioned her she would, no doubt, have avowed to him that she thought neither of her mother nor of Nanon, but was pricked by a poignant desire to look after her cousin’s room and concern herself with her cousin; to supply what might be needed, to remedy any forgetfulness, to see that all was done to make it, as far as possible, suitable and elegant; and, in fact, she arrived in time to prove to her mother and Nanon that everything still remained to be done. She put into Nanon’s head the notion of passing a warming–pan between the sheets. She herself covered the old table with a cloth and requested Nanon to change it every morning; she convinced her mother that it was necessary to light a good fire, and persuaded Nanon to bring up a great pile of wood into the corridor without saying anything to her father. She ran to get, from one of the corner–shelves of the hall, a tray of old lacquer which was part of the inheritance of the late Monsieur de la Bertelliere, catching up at the same time a six–sided crystal goblet, a little tarnished gilt spoon, an antique flask engraved with cupids, all of which she put triumphantly on the corner of her cousin’s chimney–piece. More ideas surged through her head in one quarter of an hour than she had ever had since she came into the world.

“Mamma,” she said, “my cousin will never bear the smell of a tallow candle; suppose we buy a wax one?” And she darted, swift as a bird, to get the five–franc piece which she had just received for her monthly expenses. “Here, Nanon,” she cried, “quick!”

“What will your father say?” This terrible remonstrance was uttered by Madame Grandet as she beheld her daughter armed with an old Sevres sugar–basin which Grandet had brought home from the chateau of Froidfond. “And where will you get the sugar? Are you

crazy?”

“Mamma, Nanon can buy some sugar as well as the candle.”

“But your father?”

“Surely his nephew ought not to go without a glass of *eau sucree*? Besides, he will not notice it.”

“Your father sees everything,” said Madame Grandet, shaking her head.

Nanon hesitated; she knew her master.

“Come, Nanon, go,—because it is my birthday.”

Nanon gave a loud laugh as she heard the first little jest her young mistress had ever made, and then obeyed her.

While Eugenie and her mother were trying to embellish the bedroom assigned by Monsieur Grandet for his nephew, Charles himself was the object of Madame des Grassins’ attentions; to all appearances she was setting her cap at him.

“You are very courageous, monsieur,” she said to the young dandy, “to leave the pleasures of the capital at this season and take up your abode in Saumur. But if we do not frighten you away, you will find there are some amusements even here.”

She threw him the ogling glance of the provinces, where women put so much prudence and reserve into their eyes that they impart to them the prudish concupiscence peculiar to certain ecclesiastics to whom all pleasure is either a theft or an error. Charles was so completely out of his element in this abode, and so far from the vast chateau and the sumptuous life with which his fancy had endowed his uncle, that as he looked at Madame des Grassins he perceived a dim likeness to Parisian faces. He gracefully responded to the species of invitation addressed to him, and began very naturally a conversation, in which Madame des Grassins gradually lowered her voice so as to bring it into harmony with the nature of the confidences she was making. With her, as with Charles, there was the need of conference; so after a few moments spent in coquettish phrases and a little serious jesting, the clever provincial said, thinking herself unheard by the others, who were discussing the sale of wines which at that season filled the heads of every one in Saumur,—

“Monsieur if you will do us the honor to come and see us, you will give as much pleasure to my husband as to myself. Our salon is the only one in Saumur where you will find the higher business circles mingling with the nobility. We belong to both societies, who meet at our house simply because they find it amusing. My husband—I say it with pride—is as much valued by the one class as by the other. We will try to relieve the monotony of your visit here. If you stay all the time with Monsieur Grandet, good heavens! what will become of you? Your uncle is a sordid miser who thinks of nothing but his vines; your aunt is a pious soul who can’t put two ideas together; and your cousin is a little fool, without education, perfectly common, no fortune, who will spend her life in darning towels.”

“She is really very nice, this woman,” thought Charles Grandet as he duly responded to Madame des Grassins’ coquetries.

“It seems to me, wife, that you are taking possession of monsieur,” said the stout banker, laughing.

On this remark the notary and the president said a few words that were more or less significant; but the abbe, looking at them slyly, brought their thoughts to a focus by taking a pinch of snuff and saying as he handed round his snuff–box: “Who can do the honors of Saumur for monsieur so well as madame?”

“Ah! what do you mean by that, monsieur l’abbe?” demanded Monsieur des Grassins.

“I mean it in the best possible sense for you, for madame, for the town of Saumur, and for monsieur,” said the wily old man, turning to Charles.

The Abbe Cruchot had guessed the conversation between Charles and Madame des Grassins without seeming to pay attention to it.

“Monsieur,” said Adolphe to Charles with an air which he tried to make free and easy, “I don’t know whether you remember me, but I had the honor of dancing as your *vis–a–vis* at a ball given by the Baron de Nucingen, and—”

“Perfectly; I remember perfectly, monsieur,” answered Charles, pleased to find himself the object of general attention.

“Monsieur is your son?” he said to Madame des Grassins.

The abbe looked at her maliciously.

“Yes, monsieur,” she answered.

“Then you were very young when you were in Paris?” said Charles, addressing Adolphe.

“You must know, monsieur,” said the abbe, “that we send them to Babylon as soon as they are weaned.”

Madame des Grassins examined the abbe with a glance of extreme penetration.

“It is only in the provinces,” he continued, “that you will find women of thirty and more years as fresh as madame, here, with a son about to take his degree. I almost fancy myself back in the days when the young men stood on chairs in the ball–room to see you dance, madame,” said the abbe, turning to his female adversary. “To me, your triumphs are but of yesterday—”

“The old rogue!” thought Madame Grassins; “can he have guessed my intentions?”

“It seems that I shall have a good deal of success in Saumur,” thought Charles as he unbuttoned his great–coat, put a hand into his waistcoat, and cast a glance into the far distance, to imitate the attitude which Chantrey has given to Lord Byron.

The inattention of Pere Grandet, or, to speak more truly, the preoccupation of mind into which the reading of the letter had plunged him, did not escape the vigilance of the notary and the president, who tried to guess the contents of the letter by the almost imperceptible motions of the miser’s face, which was then under the full light of the candle. He maintained the habitual calm of his features with evident difficulty; we may, in fact, picture to ourselves the countenance such a man endeavored to preserve as he read the fatal letter which here follows:—

My Brother,—It is almost twenty–three years since we have seen each other. My marriage was the occasion of our last interview, after which we parted, and both of us were happy. Assuredly I could not then foresee that you would one day be the prop of the family whose prosperity you then predicted.

When you hold this letter within your hands I shall be no longer living. In the position I now hold I cannot survive the disgrace of bankruptcy. I have waited on the edge of the gulf until the last moment, hoping to save myself. The end has come, I must sink into it. The double bankruptcies of my broker and of Roguin, my notary, have carried off my last resources and left me nothing. I have the bitterness of owing nearly four millions, with assets not more than twenty–five per cent in value to pay them. The wines in my warehouses suffer from the fall in prices caused by the abundance and quality of your vintage. In three days Paris will cry out: “Monsieur Grandet was a knave!” and I, an honest man, shall be lying in my winding–sheet of infamy. I deprive my son of a good name, which I have stained, and the fortune of his mother, which I have lost. He knows nothing of all this,—my unfortunate child whom I idolize! We parted tenderly. He was ignorant, happily, that the last beatings of my heart were spent in that farewell. Will he not some day curse me? My brother, my brother! the curses of our children are horrible; they can appeal against ours, but theirs are irrevocable. Grandet, you are my elder brother, you owe me your protection; act for me so that Charles may cast no bitter words upon my grave! My brother, if I were writing with my blood, with my tears, no greater anguish could I put into this letter,—nor as great, for then I should weep, I should bleed, I should die, I should suffer no more, but now I suffer and look at death with dry eyes.

From henceforth you are my son’s father; he has no relations, as you well know, on his mother’s side. Why did I not consider social prejudices? Why did I yield to love? Why did I marry the natural daughter of a great lord? Charles has no family. Oh, my unhappy son! my son! Listen, Grandet! I implore nothing for myself, —besides, your property may not be large enough to carry a mortgage of three millions,—but for my son! Brother, my suppliant hands are clasped as I think of you; behold them! Grandet, I confide my son to you in dying, and I look at the means of death with less pain as I think that you will be to him a father. He loved me well, my Charles; I was good to him, I never thwarted him; he will not curse me. Ah, you see! he is gentle, he is like his mother, he will cause you no grief. Poor boy! accustomed to all the enjoyments of luxury, he knows nothing of the privations to which you and I were condemned by the poverty of our youth. And I leave him ruined! alone! Yes, all my friends will avoid him, and it is I who have brought this humiliation upon him! Would that I had the force to send him with one thrust into the heavens to his mother’s side! Madness! I come back to my disaster—to his. I send him to you that you may tell him in some fitting way of my death, of his future fate. Be a father to him, but a good father. Do not tear him all at once from his idle life, it would kill him. I beg him on my knees to renounce all rights that, as his mother’s heir, he may have on my estate. But the prayer is superfluous; he is honorable, and he will feel that he must not appear among my creditors. Bring him to see this at the right time; reveal to him the hard conditions of the life I have made for him: and if he still has tender thoughts of me, tell him in

my name that all is not lost for him. Yes, work, labor, which saved us both, may give him back the fortune of which I have deprived him; and if he listens to his father's voice as it reaches him from the grave, he will go the Indies. My brother, Charles is an upright and courageous young man; give him the wherewithal to make his venture; he will die sooner than not repay you the funds which you may lend him. Grandet! if you will not do this, you will lay up for yourself remorse. Ah, should my child find neither tenderness nor succor in you, I would call down the vengeance of God upon your cruelty!

If I had been able to save something from the wreck, I might have had the right to leave him at least a portion of his mother's property; but my last monthly payments have absorbed everything. I did not wish to die uncertain of my child's fate; I hoped to feel a sacred promise in a clasp of your hand which might have warmed my heart: but time fails me. While Charles is journeying to you I shall be preparing my assignment. I shall endeavor to show by the order and good faith of my accounts that my disaster comes neither from a faulty life nor from dishonesty. It is for my son's sake that I strive to do this.

Farewell, my brother! May the blessing of God be yours for the generous guardianship I lay upon you, and which, I doubt not, you will accept. A voice will henceforth and forever pray for you in that world where we must all go, and where I am now as you read these lines.

Victor–Ange–Guillaume Grandet.

"So you are talking?" said Pere Grandet as he carefully folded the letter in its original creases and put it into his waistcoat–pocket. He looked at his nephew with a humble, timid air, beneath which he hid his feelings and his calculations. "Have you warmed yourself?" he said to him.

"Thoroughly, my dear uncle."

"Well, where are the women?" said his uncle, already forgetting that his nephew was to sleep at the house. At this moment Eugenie and Madame Grandet returned.

"Is the room all ready?" said Grandet, recovering his composure.

"Yes, father."

"Well then, my nephew, if you are tired, Nanon shall show you your room. It isn't a dandy's room; but you will excuse a poor wine–grower who never has a penny to spare. Taxes swallow up everything."

"We do not wish to intrude, Grandet," said the banker; "you may want to talk to your nephew, and therefore we will bid you good–night."

At these words the assembly rose, and each made a parting bow in keeping with his or her own character. The old notary went to the door to fetch his lantern and came back to light it, offering to accompany the des Grassins on their way. Madame des Grassins had not foreseen the incident which brought the evening prematurely to an end, her servant therefore had not arrived.

“Will you do me the honor to take my arm, madame?” said the abbe.

“Thank you, monsieur l’abbe, but I have my son,” she answered dryly.

“Ladies cannot compromise themselves with me,” said the abbe.

“Take Monsieur Cruchot’s arm,” said her husband.

The abbe walked off with the pretty lady so quickly that they were soon some distance in advance of the caravan.

“That is a good–looking young man, madame,” he said, pressing her arm. “Good–by to the grapes, the vintage is done. It is all over with us. We may as well say adieu to Mademoiselle Grandet. Eugenie will belong to the dandy. Unless this cousin is enamoured of some Parisian woman, your son Adolphe will find another rival in—”

“Not at all, monsieur l’abbe. This young man cannot fail to see that Eugenie is a little fool, —a girl without the least freshness. Did you notice her to–night? She was as yellow as a quince.”

“Perhaps you made the cousin notice it?”

“I did not take the trouble—”

“Place yourself always beside Eugenie, madame, and you need never take the trouble to say anything to the young man against his cousin; he will make his own comparisons, which—”

“Well, he has promised to dine with me the day after to–morrow.”

“Ah! if you only *would*, madame—” said the abbe.

“What is it that you wish me to do, monsieur l’abbe? Do you mean to offer me bad advice? I have not reached the age of thirty–nine, without a stain upon my reputation, thank God! to compromise myself now, even for the empire of the Great Mogul. You and I are of an age when we both know the meaning of words. For an ecclesiastic, you certainly have ideas that are very incongruous. Fie! it is worthy of Faublas!”

“You have read Faublas?”

“No, monsieur l’abbe; I meant to say the *Liaisons dangereuses*.”

“Ah! that book is infinitely more moral,” said the abbe, laughing. “But you make me out as wicked as a young man of the present day; I only meant—”

“Do you dare to tell me you were not thinking of putting wicked things into my head? Isn’t it perfectly clear? If this young man—who I admit is very good–looking—were to make love to me, he would not think of his cousin. In Paris, I know, good mothers do devote themselves in this way to the happiness and welfare of their children; but we live in the provinces, monsieur l’abbe.”

“Yes, madame.”

“And,” she continued, “I do not want, and Adolphe himself would not want, a hundred millions brought at such a price.”

“Madame, I said nothing about a hundred millions; that temptation might be too great for

either of us to withstand. Only, I do think that an honest woman may permit herself, in all honor, certain harmless little coquetries, which are, in fact, part of her social duty and which—”

“Do you think so?”

“Are we not bound, madame, to make ourselves agreeable to each other?—Permit me to blow my nose.—I assure you, madame,” he resumed, “that the young gentleman ogled you through his glass in a more flattering manner than he put on when he looked at me; but I forgive him for doing homage to beauty in preference to old age—”

“It is quite apparent,” said the president in his loud voice, “that Monsieur Grandet of Paris has sent his son to Saumur with extremely matrimonial intentions.”

“But in that case the cousin wouldn’t have fallen among us like a cannon–ball,” answered the notary.

“That doesn’t prove anything,” said Monsieur des Grassins; “the old miser is always making mysteries.”

“Des Grassins, my friend, I have invited the young man to dinner. You must go and ask Monsieur and Madame de Larsonniere and the du Hautoys, with the beautiful demoiselle du Hautoy, of course. I hope she will be properly dressed; that jealous mother of hers does make such a fright of her! Gentlemen, I trust that you will all do us the honor to come,” she added, stopping the procession to address the two Cruchots.

“Here you are at home, madame,” said the notary.

After bowing to the three des Grassins, the three Cruchots returned home, applying their provincial genius for analysis to studying, under all its aspects, the great event of the evening, which undoubtedly changed the respective positions of Grassinists and Cruchotines. The admirable common–sense which guided all the actions of these great machinators made each side feel the necessity of a momentary alliance against a common enemy. Must they not mutually hinder Eugenie from loving her cousin, and the cousin from thinking of Eugenie? Could the Parisian resist the influence of treacherous insinuations, soft–spoken calumnies, slanders full of faint praise and artless denials, which should be made to circle incessantly about him and deceive him?

IV

When the four relations were left alone, Monsieur Grandet said to his nephew,—

“We must go to bed. It is too late to talk about the matters which have brought you here; to–morrow we will take a suitable moment. We breakfast at eight o’clock; at midday we eat a little fruit or a bit of bread, and drink a glass of white wine; and we dine, like the Parisians, at five o’clock. That’s the order of the day. If you like to go and see the town and the environs you are free to do so. You will excuse me if my occupations do not permit me to accompany you. You may perhaps hear people say that I am rich,—Monsieur Grandet this, Monsieur Grandet that. I let them talk; their gossip does not hurt my credit. But I have not a penny; I work in my old age like an apprentice whose worldly goods are a bad plane and two good arms. Perhaps you’ll soon know yourself what a franc costs when you have got to sweat for it. Nanon, where are the candles?”

“I trust, my nephew, that you will find all you want,” said Madame Grandet; “but if you should need anything else, you can call Nanon.”

“My dear aunt, I shall need nothing; I have, I believe, brought everything with me. Permit me to bid you good–night, and my young cousin also.”

Charles took a lighted wax candle from Nanon’s hand,—an Anjou candle, very yellow in color, and so shopworn that it looked like tallow and deceived Monsieur Grandet, who, incapable of suspecting its presence under his roof, did not perceive this magnificence.

“I will show you the way,” he said.

Instead of leaving the hall by the door which opened under the archway, Grandet ceremoniously went through the passage which divided the hall from the kitchen. A swing–door, furnished with a large oval pane of glass, shut this passage from the staircase, so as to fend off the cold air which rushed through it. But the north wind whistled none the less keenly in winter, and, in spite of the sand–bags at the bottom of the doors of the living–room, the temperature within could scarcely be kept at a proper height. Nanon went to bolt the outer door; then she closed the hall and let loose a wolf–dog, whose bark was so strangled that he seemed to have laryngitis. This animal, noted for his ferocity, recognized no one but Nanon; the two untutored children of the fields understood each other.

When Charles saw the yellow, smoke–stained walls of the well of the staircase, where each worm–eaten step shook under the heavy foot–fall of his uncle, his expectations began to sober more and more. He fancied himself in a hen–roost. His aunt and cousin, to whom he turned an inquiring look, were so used to the staircase that they did not guess the cause of his amazement, and took the glance for an expression of friendliness, which they answered by a smile that made him desperate.

“Why the devil did my father send me to such a place?” he said to himself.

When they reached the first landing he saw three doors painted in Etruscan red and without casings,—doors sunk in the dusty walls and provided with iron bars, which in fact

were bolts, each ending with the pattern of a flame, as did both ends of the long sheath of the lock. The first door at the top of the staircase, which opened into a room directly above the kitchen, was evidently walled up. In fact, the only entrance to that room was through Grandet's bedchamber; the room itself was his office. The single window which lighted it, on the side of the court, was protected by a lattice of strong iron bars. No one, not even Madame Grandet, had permission to enter it. The old man chose to be alone, like an alchemist in his laboratory. There, no doubt, some hiding–place had been ingeniously constructed; there the title–deeds of property were stored; there hung the scales on which to weigh the louis; there were devised, by night and secretly, the estimates, the profits, the receipts, so that business men, finding Grandet prepared at all points, imagined that he got his cue from fairies or demons; there, no doubt, while Nanon's loud snoring shook the rafters, while the wolf–dog watched and yawned in the courtyard, while Madame and Mademoiselle Grandet were quietly sleeping, came the old cooper to cuddle, to con over, to caress and clutch and clasp his gold. The walls were thick, the screens sure. He alone had the key of this laboratory, where—so people declared—he studied the maps on which his fruit–trees were marked, and calculated his profits to a vine, and almost to a twig.

The door of Eugenie's chamber was opposite to the walled–up entrance to this room. At the other end of the landing were the appartements of the married pair, which occupied the whole front of the house. Madame Grandet had a room next to that of Eugenie, which was entered through a glass door. The master's chamber was separated from that of his wife by a partition, and from the mysterious strong–room by a thick wall. Pere Grandet lodged his nephew on the second floor, in the high mansarde attic which was above his own bedroom, so that he might hear him if the young man took it into his head to go and come. When Eugenie and her mother reached the middle of the landing they kissed each other for good–night; then with a few words of adieu to Charles, cold upon the lips, but certainly very warm in the heart of the young girl, they withdrew into their own chambers.

"Here you are in your room, my nephew," said Pere Grandet as he opened the door. "If you need to go out, call Nanon; without her, beware! the dog would eat you up without a word. Sleep well. Good–night. Ha! why, they have made you a fire!" he cried.

At this moment Nanon appeared with the warming pan.

"Here's something more!" said Monsieur Grandet. "Do you take my nephew for a lying–in woman? Carry off your brazier, Nanon!"

"But, monsieur, the sheets are damp, and this gentleman is as delicate as a woman."

"Well, go on, as you've taken it into your head," said Grandet, pushing her by the shoulders; "but don't set things on fire." So saying, the miser went down–stairs, grumbling indistinct sentences.

Charles stood aghast in the midst of his trunks. After casting his eyes on the attic–walls covered with that yellow paper sprinkled with bouquets so well known in dance–houses, on the fireplace of ribbed stone whose very look was chilling, on the chairs of yellow wood with varnished cane seats that seemed to have more than the usual four angles, on the open night–table capacious enough to hold a small sergeant–at–arms, on the meagre bit of rag–carpet beside the bed, on the tester whose cloth valance shook as if, devoured by moths, it was about to fall, he turned gravely to la Grande Nanon and said,—

“Look here! my dear woman, just tell me, am I in the house of Monsieur Grandet, formerly mayor of Saumur, and brother to Monsieur Grandet of Paris?”

“Yes, monsieur; and a very good, a very kind, a very perfect gentleman. Shall I help you to unpack your trunks?”

“Faith! yes, if you will, my old trooper. Didn’t you serve in the marines of the Imperial Guard?”

“Ho, ho, ho!” laughed Nanon. “What’s that,—the marines of the guard? Is it salt? Does it go in the water?”

“Here, get me my dressing–gown out of that valise; there’s the key.”

Nanon was wonder–struck by the sight of a dressing–gown made of green silk, brocaded with gold flowers of an antique design.

“Are you going to put that on to go to bed with?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Holy Virgin! what a beautiful altar–cloth it would make for the parish church! My dear darling monsieur, give it to the church, and you’ll save your soul; if you don’t, you’ll lose it. Oh, how nice you look in it! I must call mademoiselle to see you.”

“Come, Nanon, if Nanon you are, hold your tongue; let me go to bed. I’ll arrange my things to–morrow. If my dressing–gown pleases you so much, you shall save your soul. I’m too good a Christian not to give it to you when I go away, and you can do what you like with it.”

Nanon stood rooted to the ground, gazing at Charles and unable to put faith into his words.

“Good night, Nanon.”

“What in the world have I come here for?” thought Charles as he went to sleep. “My father is not a fool; my journey must have some object. Pshaw! put off serious thought till the morrow, as some Greek idiot said.”

“Blessed Virgin! how charming he is, my cousin!” Eugenie was saying, interrupting her prayers, which that night at least were never finished.

Madame Grandet had no thoughts at all as she went to bed. She heard the miser walking up and down his room through the door of communication which was in the middle of the partition. Like all timid women, she had studied the character of her lord. Just as the petrel foresees the storm, she knew by imperceptible signs when an inward tempest shook her husband; and at such times, to use an expression of her own, she “feigned dead.”

Grandet gazed at the door lined with sheet–iron which he lately put to his sanctum, and said to himself,—

“What a crazy idea of my brother to bequeath his son to me! A fine legacy! I have not fifty francs to give him. What are fifty francs to a dandy who looked at my barometer as if he meant to make firewood of it!”

In thinking over the consequences of that legacy of anguish Grandet was perhaps more agitated than his brother had been at the moment of writing it.

“I shall have that golden robe,” thought Nanon, who went to sleep tricked out in her altar–cloth, dreaming for the first time in her life of flowers, embroidery, and damask, just as Eugenie was dreaming of love.

* * * * *

In the pure and monotonous life of young girls there comes a delicious hour when the sun sheds its rays into their soul, when the flowers express their thoughts, when the throbbings of the heart send upward to the brain their fertilizing warmth and melt all thoughts into a vague desire,—day of innocent melancholy and of dulcet joys! When babes begin to see, they smile; when a young girl first perceives the sentiment of nature, she smiles as she smiled when an infant. If light is the first love of life, is not love a light to the heart? The moment to see within the veil of earthly things had come for Eugenie.

An early riser, like all provincial girls, she was up betimes and said her prayers, and then began the business of dressing,—a business which henceforth was to have a meaning. First she brushed and smoothed her chestnut hair and twisted its heavy masses to the top of her head with the utmost care, preventing the loose tresses from straying, and giving to her head a symmetry which heightened the timid candor of her face; for the simplicity of these accessories accorded well with the innocent sincerity of its lines. As she washed her hands again and again in the cold water which hardened and reddened the skin, she looked at her handsome round arms and asked herself what her cousin did to make his hands so softly white, his nails so delicately curved. She put on new stockings and her prettiest shoes. She laced her corset straight, without skipping a single eyelet. And then, wishing for the first time in her life to appear to advantage, she felt the joy of having a new gown, well made, which rendered her attractive.

As she finished her toilet the clock of the parish church struck the hour; to her astonishment, it was only seven. The desire of having plenty of time for dressing carefully had led her to get up too early. Ignorant of the art of retouching every curl and studying every effect, Eugenie simply crossed her arms, sat down by the window, and looked at the court–yard, the narrow garden, and the high terraced walls that over–topped it: a dismal, hedged–in prospect, yet not wholly devoid of those mysterious beauties which belong to solitary or uncultivated nature. Near the kitchen was a well surrounded by a curb, with a pulley fastened to a bent iron rod clasped by a vine whose leaves were withered, reddened, and shrivelled by the season. From thence the tortuous shoots straggled to the wall, clutched it, and ran the whole length of the house, ending near the wood–pile, where the logs were ranged with as much precision as the books in a library. The pavement of the court–yard showed the black stains produced in time by lichens, herbage, and the absence of all movement or friction. The thick walls wore a coating of green moss streaked with waving brown lines, and the eight stone steps at the bottom of the court–yard which led up to the gate of the garden were disjointed and hidden beneath tall plants, like the tomb of a knight buried by his widow in the days of the Crusades. Above a foundation of moss–grown, crumbling stones was a trellis of rotten wood, half fallen from decay; over them clambered and intertwined at will a mass of clustering creepers. On each side of the latticed gate stretched the crooked arms of two stunted apple–trees. Three parallel walks, gravelled and separated from each other by square beds, where the earth was held in by box–borders, made the garden, which terminated, beneath a terrace of the old walls, in a

group of lindens. At the farther end were raspberry–bushes; at the other, near the house, an immense walnut–tree drooped its branches almost into the window of the miser’s sanctum.

A clear day and the beautiful autumnal sun common to the banks of the Loire was beginning to melt the hoar–frost which the night had laid on these picturesque objects, on the walls, and on the plants which swathed the court–yard. Eugenie found a novel charm in the aspect of things lately so insignificant to her. A thousand confused thoughts came to birth in her mind and grew there, as the sunbeams grew without along the wall. She felt that impulse of delight, vague, inexplicable, which wraps the moral being as a cloud wraps the physical body. Her thoughts were all in keeping with the details of this strange landscape, and the harmonies of her heart blended with the harmonies of nature. When the sun reached an angle of the wall where the “Venus–hair” of southern climes drooped its thick leaves, lit with the changing colors of a pigeon’s breast, celestial rays of hope illumined the future to her eyes, and thenceforth she loved to gaze upon that piece of wall, on its pale flowers, its blue harebells, its wilting herbage, with which she mingled memories as tender as those of childhood. The noise made by each leaf as it fell from its twig in the void of that echoing court gave answer to the secret questionings of the young girl, who could have stayed there the livelong day without perceiving the flight of time. Then came tumultuous heavings of the soul. She rose often, went to her glass, and looked at herself, as an author in good faith looks at his work to criticise it and blame it in his own mind.

“I am not beautiful enough for him!” Such was Eugenie’s thought,—a humble thought, fertile in suffering. The poor girl did not do herself justice; but modesty, or rather fear, is among the first of love’s virtues. Eugenie belonged to the type of children with sturdy constitutions, such as we see among the lesser bourgeoisie, whose beauties always seem a little vulgar; and yet, though she resembled the Venus of Milo, the lines of her figure were ennobled by the softer Christian sentiment which purifies womanhood and gives it a distinction unknown to the sculptors of antiquity. She had an enormous head, with the masculine yet delicate forehead of the Jupiter of Phidias, and gray eyes, to which her chaste life, penetrating fully into them, carried a flood of light. The features of her round face, formerly fresh and rosy, were at one time swollen by the small–pox, which destroyed the velvet texture of the skin, though it kindly left no other traces, and her cheek was still so soft and delicate that her mother’s kiss made a momentary red mark upon it. Her nose was somewhat too thick, but it harmonized well with the vermilion mouth, whose lips, creased in many lines, were full of love and kindness. The throat was exquisitely round. The bust, well curved and carefully covered, attracted the eye and inspired reverie. It lacked, no doubt, the grace which a fitting dress can bestow; but to a connoisseur the non–flexibility of her figure had its own charm. Eugenie, tall and strongly made, had none of the prettiness which pleases the masses; but she was beautiful with a beauty which the spirit recognizes, and none but artists truly love. A painter seeking here below for a type of Mary’s celestial purity, searching womankind for those proud modest eyes which Raphael divined, for those virgin lines, often due to chances of conception, which the modesty of Christian life alone can bestow or keep unchanged,—such a painter, in love with his ideal, would have found in the face of Eugenie the innate nobleness that is ignorant of itself; he would have seen beneath the calmness of that brow a world of love; he would have felt, in the shape of the eyes, in the fall of the eyelids, the presence of the nameless something

that we call divine. Her features, the contour of her head, which no expression of pleasure had ever altered or wearied, were like the lines of the horizon softly traced in the far distance across the tranquil lakes. That calm and rosy countenance, margined with light like a lovely full–blown flower, rested the mind, held the eye, and imparted the charm of the conscience that was there reflected. Eugenie was standing on the shore of life where young illusions flower, where daisies are gathered with delights ere long to be unknown; and thus she said, looking at her image in the glass, unconscious as yet of love: “I am too ugly; he will not notice me.”

Then she opened the door of her chamber which led to the staircase, and stretched out her neck to listen for the household noises. “He is not up,” she thought, hearing Nanon’s morning cough as the good soul went and came, sweeping out the halls, lighting her fire, chaining the dog, and speaking to the beasts in the stable. Eugenie at once went down and ran to Nanon, who was milking the cow.

“Nanon, my good Nanon, make a little cream for my cousin’s breakfast.”

“Why, mademoiselle, you should have thought of that yesterday,” said Nanon, bursting into a loud peal of laughter. “I can’t make cream. Your cousin is a darling, a darling! oh, that he is! You should have seen him in his dressing–gown, all silk and gold! I saw him, I did! He wears linen as fine as the surplice of monsieur le cure.”

“Nanon, please make us a *galette*.”

“And who’ll give me wood for the oven, and flour and butter for the cakes?” said Nanon, who in her function of prime–minister to Grandet assumed at times enormous importance in the eyes of Eugenie and her mother. “Mustn’t rob the master to feast the cousin. You ask him for butter and flour and wood: he’s your father, perhaps he’ll give you some. See! there he is now, coming to give out the provisions.”

Eugenie escaped into the garden, quite frightened as she heard the staircase shaking under her father’s step. Already she felt the effects of that virgin modesty and that special consciousness of happiness which lead us to fancy, not perhaps without reason, that our thoughts are graven on our foreheads and are open to the eyes of all. Perceiving for the first time the cold nakedness of her father’s house, the poor girl felt a sort of rage that she could not put it in harmony with her cousin’s elegance. She felt the need of doing something for him,—what, she did not know. Ingenuous and truthful, she followed her angelic nature without mistrusting her impressions or her feelings. The mere sight of her cousin had wakened within her the natural yearnings of a woman,—yearnings that were the more likely to develop ardently because, having reached her twenty–third year, she was in the plenitude of her intelligence and her desires. For the first time in her life her heart was full of terror at the sight of her father; in him she saw the master of the fate, and she fancied herself guilty of wrong–doing in hiding from his knowledge certain thoughts. She walked with hasty steps, surprised to breathe a purer air, to feel the sun’s rays quickening her pulses, to absorb from their heat a moral warmth and a new life. As she turned over in her mind some stratagem by which to get the cake, a quarrel—an event as rare as the sight of swallows in winter—broke out between la Grande Nanon and Grandet. Armed with his keys, the master had come to dole out provisions for the day’s consumption.

“Is there any bread left from yesterday?” he said to Nanon.

“Not a crumb, monsieur.”

Grandet took a large round loaf, well floured and moulded in one of the flat baskets which they use for baking in Anjou, and was about to cut it, when Nanon said to him,—

“We are five, to–day, monsieur.”

“That’s true,” said Grandet, “but your loaves weigh six pounds; there’ll be some left. Besides, these young fellows from Paris don’t eat bread, you’ll see.”

“Then they must eat *frippe*?” said Nanon.

Frippe is a word of the local lexicon of Anjou, and means any accompaniment of bread, from butter which is spread upon it, the commonest kind of *frippe*, to peach preserve, the most distinguished of all the *frippes*; those who in their childhood have licked the *frippe* and left the bread, will comprehend the meaning of Nanon’s speech.

“No,” answered Grandet, “they eat neither bread nor *frippe*; they are something like marriageable girls.”

After ordering the meals for the day with his usual parsimony, the goodman, having locked the closets containing the supplies, was about to go towards the fruit–garden, when Nanon stopped him to say,—

“Monsieur, give me a little flour and some butter, and I’ll make a *galette* for the young ones.”

“Are you going to pillage the house on account of my nephew?”

“I wasn’t thinking any more of your nephew than I was of your dog,—not more than you think yourself; for, look here, you’ve only forked out six bits of sugar. I want eight.”

“What’s all this, Nanon? I have never seen you like this before. What have you got in your head? Are you the mistress here? You sha’n’t have more than six pieces of sugar.”

“Well, then, how is your nephew to sweeten his coffee?”

“With two pieces; I’ll go without myself.”

“Go without sugar at your age! I’d rather buy you some out of my own pocket.”

“Mind your own business.”

In spite of the recent fall in prices, sugar was still in Grandet’s eyes the most valuable of all the colonial products; to him it was always six francs a pound. The necessity of economizing it, acquired under the Empire, had grown to be the most inveterate of his habits. All women, even the greatest ninnies, know how to dodge and dodge to get their ends; Nanon abandoned the sugar for the sake of getting the *galette*.

“Mademoiselle!” she called through the window, “do you want some *galette*?”

“No, no,” answered Eugenie.

“Come, Nanon,” said Grandet, hearing his daughter’s voice. “See here.” He opened the cupboard where the flour was kept, gave her a cupful, and added a few ounces of butter to

the piece he had already cut off.

“I shall want wood for the oven,” said the implacable Nanon.

“Well, take what you want,” he answered sadly; “but in that case you must make us a fruit–tart, and you’ll cook the whole dinner in the oven. In that way you won’t need two fires.”

“Goodness!” cried Nanon, “you needn’t tell me that.”

Grandet cast a look that was well–nigh paternal upon his faithful deputy.

“Mademoiselle,” she cried, when his back was turned, “we shall have the *galette*.”

Pere Grandet returned from the garden with the fruit and arranged a plateful on the kitchen–table.

“Just see, monsieur,” said Nanon, “what pretty boots your nephew has. What leather! why it smells good! What does he clean it with, I wonder? Am I to put your egg–polish on it?”

“Nanon, I think eggs would injure that kind of leather. Tell him you don’t know how to black morocco; yes, that’s morocco. He will get you something himself in Saumur to polish those boots with. I have heard that they put sugar into the blacking to make it shine.”

“They look good to eat,” said the cook, putting the boots to her nose. “Bless me! if they don’t smell like madame’s eau–de–cologne. Ah! how funny!”

“Funny!” said her master. “Do you call it funny to put more money into boots than the man who stands in them is worth?”

“Monsieur,” she said, when Grandet returned the second time, after locking the fruit–garden, “won’t you have the *pot–au–feu* put on once or twice a week on account of your nephew?”

“Yes.”

“Am I to go to the butcher’s?”

“Certainly not. We will make the broth of fowls; the farmers will bring them. I shall tell Cornoiller to shoot some crows; they make the best soup in the world.”

“Isn’t it true, monsieur, that crows eat the dead?”

“You are a fool, Nanon. They eat what they can get, like the rest of the world. Don’t we all live on the dead? What are legacies?”

Monsieur Grandet, having no further orders to give, drew out his watch, and seeing that he had half an hour to dispose of before breakfast, he took his hat, went and kissed his daughter, and said to her:

“Do you want to come for a walk in the fields, down by the Loire? I have something to do there.”

Eugenie fetched her straw bonnet, lined with pink taffeta; then the father and daughter went down the winding street to the shore.

“Where are you going at this early hour?” said Cruchot, the notary, meeting them.

“To see something,” answered Grandet, not duped by the matutinal appearance of his friend.

When Pere Grandet went to “see something,” the notary knew by experience there was something to be got by going with him; so he went.

“Come, Cruchot,” said Grandet, “you are one of my friends. I’ll show you what folly it is to plant poplar–trees on good ground.”

“Do you call the sixty thousand francs that you pocketed for those that were in your fields down by the Loire, folly?” said Maitre Cruchot, opening his eyes with amazement. “What luck you have had! To cut down your trees at the very time they ran short of white–wood at Nantes, and to sell them at thirty francs!”

Eugenie listened, without knowing that she approached the most solemn moment of her whole life, and that the notary was about to bring down upon her head a paternal and supreme sentence. Grandet had now reached the magnificent fields which he owned on the banks of the Loire, where thirty workmen were employed in clearing away, filling up, and levelling the spots formerly occupied by the poplars.

“Maitre Cruchot, see how much ground this tree once took up! Jean,” he cried to a laborer, “m–m–measure with your r–r–rule, b–both ways.”

“Four times eight feet,” said the man.

“Thirty–two feet lost,” said Grandet to Cruchot. “I had three hundred poplars in this one line, isn’t that so? Well, then, three h–h–hundred times thir–thirty–two lost m–m–me five hundred in h–h–hay; add twice as much for the side rows,—fifteen hundred; the middle rows as much more. So we may c–c–call it a th–thousand b–b–bales of h–h–hay—”

“Very good,” said Cruchot, to help out his friend; “a thousand bales are worth about six hundred francs.”

“Say t–t–twelve hundred, be–c–cause there’s three or four hundred francs on the second crop. Well, then, c–c–calculate that t–twelve thousand francs a year for f–f–forty years with interest c–c–comes to—”

“Say sixty thousand francs,” said the notary.

“I am willing; c–c–comes t–t–to sixty th–th–thousand. Very good,” continued Grandet, without stuttering: “two thousand poplars forty years old will only yield me fifty thousand francs. There’s a loss. I have found that myself,” said Grandet, getting on his high horse. “Jean, fill up all the holes except those at the bank of the river; there you are to plant the poplars I have bought. Plant ‘em there, and they’ll get nourishment from the government,” he said, turning to Cruchot, and giving a slight motion to the wen on his nose, which expressed more than the most ironical of smiles.

“True enough; poplars should only be planted on poor soil,” said Cruchot, amazed at Grandet’s calculations.

“Y–y–yes, monsieur,” answered the old man satirically.

Eugenie, who was gazing at the sublime scenery of the Loire, and paying no attention to

her father’s reckonings, presently turned an ear to the remarks of Cruchot when she heard him say,—

“So you have brought a son–in–law from Paris. All Saumur is talking about your nephew. I shall soon have the marriage–contract to draw up, hey! Pere Grandet?”

“You g–g–got up very early to t–t–tell me that,” said Grandet, accompanying the remark with a motion of his wen. “Well, old c–c–comrade, I’ll be frank, and t–t–tell you what you want t–t–to know. I would rather, do you see, f–f–fling my daughter into the Loire than g–g–give her to her c–c–cousin. You may t–t–tell that everywhere,—no, never mind; let the world t–t–talk.”

This answer dazzled and blinded the young girl with sudden light. The distant hopes upspringing in her heart bloomed suddenly, became real, tangible, like a cluster of flowers, and she saw them cut down and wilting on the earth. Since the previous evening she had attached herself to Charles by those links of happiness which bind soul to soul; from henceforth suffering was to rivet them. Is it not the noble destiny of women to be more moved by the dark solemnities of grief than by the splendors of fortune? How was it that fatherly feeling had died out of her father’s heart? Of what crime had Charles been guilty? Mysterious questions! Already her dawning love, a mystery so profound, was wrapping itself in mystery. She walked back trembling in all her limbs; and when she reached the gloomy street, lately so joyous to her, she felt its sadness, she breathed the melancholy which time and events had printed there. None of love’s lessons lacked. A few steps from their own door she went on before her father and waited at the threshold. But Grandet, who saw a newspaper in the notary’s hand, stopped short and asked,—

“How are the Funds?”

“You never listen to my advice, Grandet,” answered Cruchot. “Buy soon; you will still make twenty per cent in two years, besides getting an excellent rate of interest,—five thousand a year for eighty thousand francs fifty centimes.”

“We’ll see about that,” answered Grandet, rubbing his chin.

“Good God!” exclaimed the notary.

“Well, what?” cried Grandet; and at the same moment Cruchot put the newspaper under his eyes and said:

“Read that!”

> “Monsieur Grandet, one of the most respected merchants in Paris, blew his brains out yesterday, after making his usual appearance at the Bourse. He had sent his resignation to the president of the Chamber of Deputies, and had also resigned his functions as a judge of the commercial courts. The failures of Monsieur Roguin and Monsieur Souchet, his broker and his notary, had ruined him. The esteem felt for Monsieur Grandet and the credit he enjoyed were nevertheless such that he might have obtained the necessary assistance from other business houses. It is much to be regretted that so honorable a man should have yielded to momentary despair,” etc.

“I knew it,” said the old wine–grower to the notary.

The words sent a chill of horror through Maitre Cruchot, who, notwithstanding his impassibility as a notary, felt the cold running down his spine as he thought that Grandet of Paris had possibly implored in vain the millions of Grandet of Saumur.

“And his son, so joyous yesterday—”

“He knows nothing as yet,” answered Grandet, with the same composure.

“Adieu! Monsieur Grandet,” said Cruchot, who now understood the state of the case, and went off to reassure Monsieur de Bonfons.

On entering, Grandet found breakfast ready. Madame Grandet, round whose neck Eugenie had flung her arms, kissing her with the quick effusion of feeling often caused by secret grief, was already seated in her chair on castors, knitting sleeves for the coming winter.

“You can begin to eat,” said Nanon, coming downstairs four steps at a time; “the young one is sleeping like a cherub. Isn’t he a darling with his eyes shut? I went in and I called him: no answer.”

“Let him sleep,” said Grandet; “he’ll wake soon enough to hear ill–tidings.”

“What is it?” asked Eugenie, putting into her coffee the two little bits of sugar weighing less than half an ounce which the old miser amused himself by cutting up in his leisure hours. Madame Grandet, who did not dare to put the question, gazed at her husband.

“His father has blown his brains out.”

“My uncle?” said Eugenie.

“Poor young man!” exclaimed Madame Grandet.

“Poor indeed!” said Grandet; “he isn’t worth a sou!”

“Eh! poor boy, and he’s sleeping like the king of the world!” said Nanon in a gentle voice.

Eugenie stopped eating. Her heart was wrung, as the young heart is wrung when pity for the suffering of one she loves overflows, for the first time, the whole being of a woman. The poor girl wept.

“What are you crying about? You didn’t know your uncle,” said her father, giving her one of those hungry tigerish looks he doubtless threw upon his piles of gold.

“But, monsieur,” said Nanon, “who wouldn’t feel pity for the poor young man, sleeping there like a wooden shoe, without knowing what’s coming?”

“I didn’t speak to you, Nanon. Hold your tongue!”

Eugenie learned at that moment that the woman who loves must be able to hide her feelings. She did not answer.

“You will say nothing to him about it, Ma’ame Grandet, till I return,” said the old man. “I have to go and straighten the line of my hedge along the high–road. I shall be back at noon, in time for the second breakfast, and then I will talk with my nephew about his affairs. As for you, Mademoiselle Eugenie, if it is for that dandy you are crying, that’s enough, child. He’s going off like a shot to the Indies. You will never see him again.”

The father took his gloves from the brim of his hat, put them on with his usual composure,

pushed them in place by shoving the fingers of both hands together, and went out.

“Mamma, I am suffocating!” cried Eugenie when she was alone with her mother; “I have never suffered like this.”

Madame Grandet, seeing that she turned pale, opened the window and let her breathe fresh air.

“I feel better!” said Eugenie after a moment.

This nervous excitement in a nature hitherto, to all appearance, calm and cold, reacted on Madame Grandet; she looked at her daughter with the sympathetic intuition with which mothers are gifted for the objects of their tenderness, and guessed all. In truth the life of the Hungarian sisters, bound together by a freak of nature, could scarcely have been more intimate than that of Eugenie and her mother,—always together in the embrasure of that window, and sleeping together in the same atmosphere.

“My poor child!” said Madame Grandet, taking Eugenie’s head and laying it upon her bosom.

At these words the young girl raised her head, questioned her mother by a look, and seemed to search out her inmost thought.

“Why send him to the Indies?” she said. “If he is unhappy, ought he not to stay with us? Is he not our nearest relation?”

“Yes, my child, it seems natural; but your father has his reasons: we must respect them.”

The mother and daughter sat down in silence, the former upon her raised seat, the latter in her little armchair, and both took up their work. Swelling with gratitude for the full heart–understanding her mother had given her, Eugenie kissed the dear hand, saying,—

“How good you are, my kind mamma!”

The words sent a glow of light into the motherly face, worn and blighted as it was by many sorrows.

“You like him?” asked Eugenie.

Madame Grandet only smiled in reply. Then, after a moment’s silence, she said in a low voice: “Do you love him already? That is wrong.”

“Wrong?” said Eugenie. “Why is it wrong? You are pleased with him, Nanon is pleased with him; why should he not please me? Come, mamma, let us set the table for his breakfast.”

She threw down her work, and her mother did the same, saying, “Foolish child!” But she sanctioned the child’s folly by sharing it. Eugenie called Nanon.

“What do you want now, mademoiselle?”

“Nanon, can we have cream by midday?”

“Ah! midday, to be sure you can,” answered the old servant.

“Well, let him have his coffee very strong; I heard Monsieur des Grassins say that they make the coffee very strong in Paris. Put in a great deal.”

“Where am I to get it?”

“Buy some.”

“Suppose monsieur meets me?”

“He has gone to his fields.”

“I’ll run, then. But Monsieur Fessard asked me yesterday if the Magi had come to stay with us when I bought the wax candle. All the town will know our goings–on.”

“If your father finds it out,” said Madame Grandet, “he is capable of beating us.”

“Well, let him beat us; we will take his blows on our knees.”

Madame Grandet for all answer raised her eyes to heaven. Nanon put on her hood and went off. Eugenie got out some clean table–linen, and went to fetch a few bunches of grapes which she had amused herself by hanging on a string across the attic; she walked softly along the corridor, so as not to waken her cousin, and she could not help listening at the door to his quiet breathing.

“Sorrow is watching while he sleeps,” she thought.

She took the freshest vine–leaves and arranged her dish of grapes as coquettishly as a practised house–keeper might have done, and placed it triumphantly on the table. She laid hands on the pears counted out by her father, and piled them in a pyramid mixed with leaves. She went and came, and skipped and ran. She would have liked to lay under contribution everything in her father’s house; but the keys were in his pocket. Nanon came back with two fresh eggs. At sight of them Eugenie almost hugged her round the neck.

“The farmer from Lande had them in his basket. I asked him for them, and he gave them to me, the darling, for nothing, as an attention!”

V

After two hours' thought and care, during which Eugenie jumped up twenty times from her work to see if the coffee were boiling, or to go and listen to the noise her cousin made in dressing, she succeeded in preparing a simple little breakfast, very inexpensive, but which, nevertheless, departed alarmingly from the inveterate customs of the house. The midday breakfast was always taken standing. Each took a slice of bread, a little fruit or some butter, and a glass of wine. As Eugenie looked at the table drawn up near the fire with an arm–chair placed before her cousin's plate, at the two dishes of fruit, the egg–cup, the bottle of white wine, the bread, and the sugar heaped up in a saucer, she trembled in all her limbs at the mere thought of the look her father would give her if he should come in at that moment. She glanced often at the clock to see if her cousin could breakfast before the master's return.

"Don't be troubled, Eugenie; if your father comes in, I will take it all upon myself," said Madame Grandet.

Eugenie could not repress a tear.

"Oh, my good mother!" she cried, "I have never loved you enough."

Charles, who had been tramping about his room for some time, singing to himself, now came down. Happily, it was only eleven o'clock. The true Parisian! he had put as much dandyism into his dress as if he were in the chateau of the noble lady then travelling in Scotland. He came into the room with the smiling, courteous manner so becoming to youth, which made Eugenie's heart beat with mournful joy. He had taken the destruction of his castles in Anjou as a joke, and came up to his aunt gaily.

"Have you slept well, dear aunt? and you, too, my cousin?"

"Very well, monsieur; did you?" said Madame Grandet.

"I? perfectly."

"You must be hungry, cousin," said Eugenie; "will you take your seat?"

"I never breakfast before midday; I never get up till then. However, I fared so badly on the journey that I am glad to eat something at once. Besides—" here he pulled out the prettiest watch Breguet ever made. "Dear me! I am early, it is only eleven o'clock!"

"Early?" said Madame Grandet.

"Yes; but I wanted to put my things in order. Well, I shall be glad to have anything to eat, —anything, it doesn't matter what, a chicken, a partridge."

"Holy Virgin!" exclaimed Nanon, overhearing the words.

"A partridge!" whispered Eugenie to herself; she would gladly have given the whole of her little hoard for a partridge.

"Come and sit down," said his aunt.

The young dandy let himself drop into an easy–chair, just as a pretty woman falls gracefully upon a sofa. Eugenie and her mother took ordinary chairs and sat beside him, near the fire.

“Do you always live here?” said Charles, thinking the room uglier by daylight than it had seemed the night before.

“Always,” answered Eugenie, looking at him, “except during the vintage. Then we go and help Nanon, and live at the Abbaye des Noyers.”

“Don’t you ever take walks?”

“Sometimes on Sunday after vespers, when the weather is fine,” said Madame Grandet, “we walk on the bridge, or we go and watch the haymakers.”

“Have you a theatre?”

“Go to the theatre!” exclaimed Madame Grandet, “see a play! Why, monsieur, don’t you know it is a mortal sin?”

“See here, monsieur,” said Nanon, bringing in the eggs, “here are your chickens,—in the shell.”

“Oh! fresh eggs,” said Charles, who, like all people accustomed to luxury, had already forgotten about his partridge, “that is delicious: now, if you will give me the butter, my good girl.”

“Butter! then you can’t have the *galette*.”

“Nanon, bring the butter,” cried Eugenie.

The young girl watched her cousin as he cut his sippets, with as much pleasure as a grisette takes in a melodrama where innocence and virtue triumph. Charles, brought up by a charming mother, improved, and trained by a woman of fashion, had the elegant, dainty, foppish movements of a coxcomb. The compassionate sympathy and tenderness of a young girl possess a power that is actually magnetic; so that Charles, finding himself the object of the attentions of his aunt and cousin, could not escape the influence of feelings which flowed towards him, as it were, and inundated him. He gave Eugenie a bright, caressing look full of kindness,—a look which seemed itself a smile. He perceived, as his eyes lingered upon her, the exquisite harmony of features in the pure face, the grace of her innocent attitude, the magic clearness of the eyes, where young love sparkled and desire shone unconsciously.

“Ah! my dear cousin, if you were in full dress at the Opera, I assure you my aunt’s words would come true,—you would make the men commit the mortal sin of envy, and the women the sin of jealousy.”

The compliment went to Eugenie’s heart and set it beating, though she did not understand its meaning.

“Oh! cousin,” she said, “you are laughing at a poor little country girl.”

“If you knew me, my cousin, you would know that I abhor ridicule; it withers the heart and jars upon all my feelings.” Here he swallowed his buttered sippet very gracefully. “No, I really have not enough mind to make fun of others; and doubtless it is a great

defect. In Paris, when they want to disparage a man, they say: ‘He has a good heart.’ The phrase means: ‘The poor fellow is as stupid as a rhinoceros.’ But as I am rich, and known to hit the bull’s–eye at thirty paces with any kind of pistol, and even in the open fields, ridicule respects me.”

“My dear nephew, that bespeaks a good heart.”

“You have a very pretty ring,” said Eugenie; “is there any harm in asking to see it?”

Charles held out his hand after loosening the ring, and Eugenie blushed as she touched the pink nails of her cousin with the tips of her fingers.

“See, mamma, what beautiful workmanship.”

“My! there’s a lot of gold!” said Nanon, bringing in the coffee.

“What is that?” exclaimed Charles, laughing, as he pointed to an oblong pot of brown earthenware, glazed on the inside, and edged with a fringe of ashes, from the bottom of which the coffee–grounds were bubbling up and falling in the boiling liquid.

“It is boiled coffee,” said Nanon.

“Ah! my dear aunt, I shall at least leave one beneficent trace of my visit here. You are indeed behind the age! I must teach you to make good coffee in a Chaptal coffee–pot.”

He tried to explain the process of a Chaptal coffee–pot.

“Gracious! if there are so many things as all that to do,” said Nanon, “we may as well give up our lives to it. I shall never make coffee that way; I know that! Pray, who is to get the fodder for the cow while I make the coffee?”

“I will make it,” said Eugenie.

“Child!” said Madame Grandet, looking at her daughter.

The word recalled to their minds the sorrow that was about to fall upon the unfortunate young man; the three women were silent, and looked at him with an air of commiseration that caught his attention.

“Is anything the matter, my cousin?” he said.

“Hush!” said Madame Grandet to Eugenie, who was about to answer; “you know, my daughter, that your father charged us not to speak to monsieur—”

“Say Charles,” said young Grandet.

“Ah! you are called Charles? What a beautiful name!” cried Eugenie.

Presentiments of evil are almost always justified. At this moment Nanon, Madame Grandet, and Eugenie, who had all three been thinking with a shudder of the old man’s return, heard the knock whose echoes they knew but too well.

“There’s papa!” said Eugenie.

She removed the saucer filled with sugar, leaving a few pieces on the table–cloth; Nanon carried off the egg–cup; Madame Grandet sat up like a frightened hare. It was evidently a panic, which amazed Charles, who was wholly unable to understand it.

“Why! what is the matter?” he asked.

“My father has come,” answered Eugenie.

“Well, what of that?”

Monsieur Grandet entered the room, threw his keen eye upon the table, upon Charles, and saw the whole thing.

“Ha! ha! so you have been making a feast for your nephew; very good, very good, very good indeed!” he said, without stuttering. “When the cat’s away, the mice will play.”

“Feast!” thought Charles, incapable of suspecting or imagining the rules and customs of the household.

“Give me my glass, Nanon,” said the master

Eugenie brought the glass. Grandet drew a horn–handled knife with a big blade from his breeches’ pocket, cut a slice of bread, took a small bit of butter, spread it carefully on the bread, and ate it standing. At this moment Charlie was sweetening his coffee. Pere Grandet saw the bits of sugar, looked at his wife, who turned pale, and made three steps forward; he leaned down to the poor woman’s ear and said,—

“Where did you get all that sugar?”

“Nanon fetched it from Fessard’s; there was none.”

It is impossible to picture the profound interest the three women took in this mute scene. Nanon had left her kitchen and stood looking into the room to see what would happen. Charles, having tasted his coffee, found it bitter and glanced about for the sugar, which Grandet had already put away.

“What do you want?” said his uncle.

“The sugar.”

“Put in more milk,” answered the master of the house; “your coffee will taste sweeter.”

Eugenie took the saucer which Grandet had put away and placed it on the table, looking calmly at her father as she did so. Most assuredly, the Parisian woman who held a silken ladder with her feeble arms to facilitate the flight of her lover, showed no greater courage than Eugenie displayed when she replaced the sugar upon the table. The lover rewarded his mistress when she proudly showed him her beautiful bruised arm, and bathed every swollen vein with tears and kisses till it was cured with happiness. Charles, on the other hand, never so much as knew the secret of the cruel agitation that shook and bruised the heart of his cousin, crushed as it was by the look of the old miser.

“You are not eating your breakfast, wife.”

The poor helot came forward with a piteous look, cut herself a piece of bread, and took a pear. Eugenie boldly offered her father some grapes, saying,—

“Taste my preserves, papa. My cousin, you will eat some, will you not? I went to get these pretty grapes expressly for you.”

“If no one stops them, they will pillage Saumur for you, nephew. When you have finished,

we will go into the garden; I have something to tell you which can't be sweetened."

Eugenie and her mother cast a look on Charles whose meaning the young man could not mistake.

"What is it you mean, uncle? Since the death of my poor mother"—at these words his voice softened—"no other sorrow can touch me."

"My nephew, who knows by what afflictions God is pleased to try us?" said his aunt.

"Ta, ta, ta, ta," said Grandet, "there's your nonsense beginning. I am sorry to see those white hands of yours, nephew"; and he showed the shoulder–of–mutton fists which Nature had put at the end of his own arms. "There's a pair of hands made to pick up silver pieces. You've been brought up to put your feet in the kid out of which we make the purses we keep our money in. A bad look–out! Very bad!"

"What do you mean, uncle? I'll be hanged if I understand a single word of what you are saying."

"Come!" said Grandet.

The miser closed the blade of his knife with a snap, drank the last of his wine, and opened the door.

"My cousin, take courage!"

The tone of the young girl struck terror to Charles's heart, and he followed his terrible uncle, a prey to disquieting thoughts. Eugenie, her mother, and Nanon went into the kitchen, moved by irresistible curiosity to watch the two actors in the scene which was about to take place in the garden, where at first the uncle walked silently ahead of the nephew. Grandet was not at all troubled at having to tell Charles of the death of his father; but he did feel a sort of compassion in knowing him to be without a penny, and he sought for some phrase or formula by which to soften the communication of that cruel truth. "You have lost your father," seemed to him a mere nothing to say; fathers die before their children. But "you are absolutely without means,"—all the misfortunes of life were summed up in those words! Grandet walked round the garden three times, the gravel crunching under his heavy step.

In the crucial moments of life our minds fasten upon the locality where joys or sorrows overwhelm us. Charles noticed with minute attention the box–borders of the little garden, the yellow leaves as they fluttered down, the dilapidated walls, the gnarled fruit–trees,—picturesque details which were destined to remain forever in his memory, blending eternally, by the mnemonics that belong exclusively to the passions, with the recollections of this solemn hour.

"It is very fine weather, very warm," said Grandet, drawing a long breath.

"Yes, uncle; but why—"

"Well, my lad," answered his uncle, "I have some bad news to give you. Your father is ill —"

"Then why am I here?" said Charles. "Nanon," he cried, "order post–horses! I can get a carriage somewhere?" he added, turning to his uncle, who stood motionless.

“Horses and carriages are useless,” answered Grandet, looking at Charles, who remained silent, his eyes growing fixed. “Yes, my poor boy, you guess the truth,—he is dead. But that’s nothing; there is something worse: he blew out his brains.”

“My father!”

“Yes, but that’s not the worst; the newspapers are all talking about it. Here, read that.”

Grandet, who had borrowed the fatal article from Cruchot, thrust the paper under his nephew’s eyes. The poor young man, still a child, still at an age when feelings wear no mask, burst into tears.

“That’s good!” thought Grandet; “his eyes frightened me. He’ll be all right if he weeps,—That is not the worst, my poor nephew,” he said aloud, not noticing whether Charles heard him, “that is nothing; you will get over it: but—”

“Never, never! My father! Oh, my father!”

“He has ruined you, you haven’t a penny.”

“What does that matter? My father! Where is my father?”

His sobs resounded horribly against those dreary walls and reverberated in the echoes. The three women, filled with pity, wept also; for tears are often as contagious as laughter. Charles, without listening further to his uncle, ran through the court and up the staircase to his chamber, where he threw himself across the bed and hid his face in the sheets, to weep in peace for his lost parents.

“The first burst must have its way,” said Grandet, entering the living–room, where Eugenie and her mother had hastily resumed their seats and were sewing with trembling hands, after wiping their eyes. “But that young man is good for nothing; his head is more taken up with the dead than with his money.”

Eugenie shuddered as she heard her father’s comment on the most sacred of all griefs. From that moment she began to judge him. Charles’s sobs, though muffled, still sounded through the sepulchral house; and his deep groans, which seemed to come from the earth beneath, only ceased towards evening, after growing gradually feebler.

“Poor young man!” said Madame Grandet.

Fatal exclamation! Pere Grandet looked at his wife, at Eugenie, and at the sugar–bowl. He recollected the extraordinary breakfast prepared for the unfortunate youth, and he took a position in the middle of the room.

“Listen to me,” he said, with his usual composure. “I hope that you will not continue this extravagance, Madame Grandet. I don’t give you MY money to stuff that young fellow with sugar.”

“My mother had nothing to do with it,” said Eugenie; “it was I who—”

“Is it because you are of age,” said Grandet, interrupting his daughter, “that you choose to contradict me? Remember, Eugenie—”

“Father, the son of your brother ought to receive from us—”

“Ta, ta, ta, ta!” exclaimed the cooper on four chromatic tones; “the son of my brother this,

my nephew that! Charles is nothing at all to us; he hasn't a farthing, his father has failed; and when this dandy has cried his fill, off he goes from here. I won't have him revolutionize my household."

"What is 'failing,' father?" asked Eugenie.

"To fail," answered her father, "is to commit the most dishonorable action that can disgrace a man."

"It must be a great sin," said Madame Grandet, "and our brother may be damned."

"There, there, don't begin with your litanies!" said Grandet, shrugging his shoulders. "To fail, Eugenie," he resumed, "is to commit a theft which the law, unfortunately, takes under its protection. People have given their property to Guillaume Grandet trusting to his reputation for honor and integrity; he has made away with it all, and left them nothing but their eyes to weep with. A highway robber is better than a bankrupt: the one attacks you and you can defend yourself, he risks his own life; but the other—in short, Charles is dishonored."

The words rang in the poor girl's heart and weighed it down with their heavy meaning. Upright and delicate as a flower born in the depths of a forest, she knew nothing of the world's maxims, of its deceitful arguments and specious sophisms; she therefore believed the atrocious explanation which her father gave her designedly, concealing the distinction which exists between an involuntary failure and an intentional one.

"Father, could you not have prevented such a misfortune?"

"My brother did not consult me. Besides, he owes four millions."

"What is a 'million,' father?" she asked, with the simplicity of a child which thinks it can find out at once all that it wants to know.

"A million?" said Grandet, "why, it is a million pieces of twenty sous each, and it takes five twenty sous pieces to make five francs."

"Dear me!" cried Eugenie, "how could my uncle possibly have had four millions? Is there any one else in France who ever had so many millions?" Pere Grandet stroked his chin, smiled, and his wen seemed to dilate. "But what will become of my cousin Charles?"

"He is going off to the West Indies by his father's request, and he will try to make his fortune there."

"Has he got the money to go with?"

"I shall pay for his journey as far as—yes, as far as Nantes."

Eugenie sprang into his arms.

"Oh, father, how good you are!"

She kissed him with a warmth that almost made Grandet ashamed of himself, for his conscience galled him a little.

"Will it take much time to amass a million?" she asked.

"Look here!" said the old miser, "you know what a napoleon is? Well, it takes fifty

thousand napoleons to make a million."

"Mamma, we must say a great many *neuvaines* for him."

"I was thinking so," said Madame Grandet.

"That's the way, always spending my money!" cried the father. "Do you think there are francs on every bush?"

At this moment a muffled cry, more distressing than all the others, echoed through the garrets and struck a chill to the hearts of Eugenie and her mother.

"Nanon, go upstairs and see that he does not kill himself," said Grandet. "Now, then," he added, looking at his wife and daughter, who had turned pale at his words, "no nonsense, you two! I must leave you; I have got to see about the Dutchmen who are going away to–day. And then I must find Cruchot, and talk with him about all this."

He departed. As soon as he had shut the door Eugenie and her mother breathed more freely. Until this morning the young girl had never felt constrained in the presence of her father; but for the last few hours every moment wrought a change in her feelings and ideas.

"Mamma, how many louis are there in a cask of wine?"

"Your father sells his from a hundred to a hundred and fifty francs, sometimes two hundred,—at least, so I've heard say."

"Then papa must be rich?"

"Perhaps he is. But Monsieur Cruchot told me he bought Froidfond two years ago; that may have pinched him."

Eugenie, not being able to understand the question of her father's fortune, stopped short in her calculations.

"He didn't even see me, the darling!" said Nanon, coming back from her errand. "He's stretched out like a calf on his bed and crying like the Madeleine, and that's a blessing! What's the matter with the poor dear young man!"

"Let us go and console him, mamma; if any one knocks, we can come down."

Madame Grandet was helpless against the sweet persuasive tones of her daughter's voice. Eugenie was sublime: she had become a woman. The two, with beating hearts, went up to Charles's room. The door was open. The young man heard and saw nothing; plunged in grief, he only uttered inarticulate cries.

"How he loves his father!" said Eugenie in a low voice.

In the utterance of those words it was impossible to mistake the hopes of a heart that, unknown to itself, had suddenly become passionate. Madame Grandet cast a mother's look upon her daughter, and then whispered in her ear,—

"Take care, you will love him!"

"Love him!" answered Eugenie. "Ah! if you did but know what my father said to Monsieur Cruchot."

Charles turned over, and saw his aunt and cousin.

“I have lost my father, my poor father! If he had told me his secret troubles we might have worked together to repair them. My God! my poor father! I was so sure I should see him again that I think I kissed him quite coldly—”

Sobs cut short the words.

“We will pray for him,” said Madame Grandet. “Resign yourself to the will of God.”

“Cousin,” said Eugenie, “take courage! Your loss is irreparable; therefore think only of saving your honor.”

With the delicate instinct of a woman who intuitively puts her mind into all things, even at the moment when she offers consolation, Eugenie sought to cheat her cousin’s grief by turning his thoughts inward upon himself.

“My honor?” exclaimed the young man, tossing aside his hair with an impatient gesture as he sat up on his bed and crossed his arms. “Ah! that is true. My uncle said my father had failed.” He uttered a heart–rending cry, and hid his face in his hands. “Leave me, leave me, cousin! My God! my God! forgive my father, for he must have suffered sorely!”

There was something terribly attractive in the sight of this young sorrow, sincere without reasoning or afterthought. It was a virgin grief which the simple hearts of Eugenie and her mother were fitted to comprehend, and they obeyed the sign Charles made them to leave him to himself. They went downstairs in silence and took their accustomed places by the window and sewed for nearly an hour without exchanging a word. Eugenie had seen in the furtive glance that she cast about the young man’s room—that girlish glance which sees all in the twinkling of an eye—the pretty trifles of his dressing–case, his scissors, his razors embossed with gold. This gleam of luxury across her cousin’s grief only made him the more interesting to her, possibly by way of contrast. Never before had so serious an event, so dramatic a sight, touched the imaginations of these two passive beings, hitherto sunk in the stillness and calm of solitude.

“Mamma,” said Eugenie, “we must wear mourning for my uncle.”

“Your father will decide that,” answered Madame Grandet.

They relapsed into silence. Eugenie drew her stitches with a uniform motion which revealed to an observer the teeming thoughts of her meditation. The first desire of the girl’s heart was to share her cousin’s mourning.

VI

About four o’clock an abrupt knock at the door struck sharply on the heart of Madame Grandet.

“What can have happened to your father?” she said to her daughter.

Grandet entered joyously. After taking off his gloves, he rubbed his hands hard enough to take off their skin as well, if his epidermis had not been tanned and cured like Russia leather,—saving, of course, the perfume of larch–trees and incense. Presently his secret escaped him.

“Wife,” he said, without stuttering, “I’ve trapped them all! Our wine is sold! The Dutch and the Belgians have gone. I walked about the market–place in front of their inn, pretending to be doing nothing. That Belgian fellow—you know who I mean—came up to me. The owners of all the good vineyards have kept back their vintages, intending to wait; well, I didn’t hinder them. The Belgian was in despair; I saw that. In a minute the bargain was made. He takes my vintage at two hundred francs the puncheon, half down. He paid me in gold; the notes are drawn. Here are six louis for you. In three months wines will have fallen.”

These words, uttered in a quiet tone of voice, were nevertheless so bitterly sarcastic that the inhabitants of Saumur, grouped at this moment in the market–place and overwhelmed by the news of the sale Grandet had just effected, would have shuddered had they heard them. Their panic would have brought the price of wines down fifty per cent at once.

“Did you have a thousand puncheons this year, father?”

“Yes, little one.”

That term applied to his daughter was the superlative expression of the old miser’s joy.

“Then that makes two hundred thousand pieces of twenty sous each?”

“Yes, Mademoiselle Grandet.”

“Then, father, you can easily help Charles.”

The amazement, the anger, the stupefaction of Belshazzar when he saw the *Mene–Tekel–Upharsin* before his eyes is not to be compared with the cold rage of Grandet, who, having forgotten his nephew, now found him enshrined in the heart and calculations of his daughter.

“What’s this? Ever since that dandy put foot in *my* house everything goes wrong! You behave as if you had the right to buy sugar–plums and make feasts and weddings. I won’t have that sort of thing. I hope I know my duty at my time of life! I certainly sha’n’t take lessons from my daughter, or from anybody else. I shall do for my nephew what it is proper to do, and you have no need to poke your nose into it. As for you, Eugenie,” he added, facing her, “don’t speak of this again, or I’ll send you to the Abbaye des Noyers with Nanon, see if I don’t; and no later than to–morrow either, if you disobey me! Where

is that fellow, has he come down yet?”

“No, my friend,” answered Madame Grandet.

“What is he doing then?”

“He is weeping for his father,” said Eugenie.

Grandet looked at his daughter without finding a word to say; after all, he was a father. He made a couple of turns up and down the room, and then went hurriedly to his secret den to think over an investment he was meditating in the public Funds. The thinning out of his two thousand acres of forest land had yielded him six hundred thousand francs: putting this sum to that derived from the sale of his poplars and to his other gains for the last year and for the current year, he had amassed a total of nine hundred thousand francs, without counting the two hundred thousand he had got by the sale just concluded. The twenty per cent which Cruchot assured him would gain in a short time from the Funds, then quoted at seventy, tempted him. He figured out his calculation on the margin of the newspaper which gave the account of his brother’s death, all the while hearing the moans of his nephew, but without listening to them. Nanon came and knocked on the wall to summon him to dinner. On the last step of the staircase he was saying to himself as he came down, —

“I’ll do it; I shall get eight per cent interest. In two years I shall have fifteen hundred thousand francs, which I will then draw out in good gold,—Well, where’s my nephew?”

“He says he doesn’t want anything to eat,” answered Nanon; “that’s not good for him.”

“So much saved,” retorted her master.

“That’s so,” she said.

“Bah! he won’t cry long. Hunger drives the wolves out of the woods.”

The dinner was eaten in silence.

“My good friend,” said Madame Grandet, when the cloth was removed, “we must put on mourning.”

“Upon my word, Madame Grandet! what will you invent next to spend money on? Mourning is in the heart, and not in the clothes.”

“But mourning for a brother is indispensable; and the Church commands us to—”

“Buy your mourning out of your six louis. Give me a hat–band; that’s enough for me.”

Eugenie raised her eyes to heaven without uttering a word. Her generous instincts, slumbering and long repressed but now suddenly and for the first time awakened, were galled at every turn. The evening passed to all appearance like a thousand other evenings of their monotonous life, yet it was certainly the most horrible. Eugenie sewed without raising her head, and did not use the workbox which Charles had despised the night before. Madame Grandet knitted her sleeves. Grandet twirled his thumbs for four hours, absorbed in calculations whose results were on the morrow to astonish Saumur. No one came to visit the family that day. The whole town was ringing with the news of the business trick just played by Grandet, the failure of his brother, and the arrival of his nephew. Obeying the desire to gossip over their mutual interests, all the upper and

middle–class wine–growers in Saumur met at Monsieur des Grassins, where terrible imprecations were being fulminated against the ex–mayor. Nanon was spinning, and the whirr of her wheel was the only sound heard beneath the gray rafters of that silent hall.

“We don’t waste our tongues,” she said, showing her teeth, as large and white as peeled almonds.

“Nothing should be wasted,” answered Grandet, rousing himself from his reverie. He saw a perspective of eight millions in three years, and he was sailing along that sheet of gold. “Let us go to bed. I will bid my nephew good–night for the rest of you, and see if he will take anything.”

Madame Grandet remained on the landing of the first storey to hear the conversation that was about to take place between the goodman and his nephew. Eugenie, bolder than her mother, went up two stairs.

“Well, nephew, you are in trouble. Yes, weep, that’s natural. A father is a father; but we must bear our troubles patiently. I am a good uncle to you, remember that. Come, take courage! Will you have a little glass of wine?” (Wine costs nothing in Saumur, and they offer it as tea is offered in China.) “Why!” added Grandet, “you have got no light! That’s bad, very bad; you ought to see what you are about,” and he walked to the chimney–piece. “What’s this?” he cried. “A wax candle! How the devil did they filch a wax candle? The spendthrifts would tear down the ceilings of my house to boil the fellow’s eggs.”

Hearing these words, mother and daughter slipped back into their rooms and burrowed in their beds, with the celerity of frightened mice getting back to their holes.

“Madame Grandet, have you found a mine?” said the man, coming into the chamber of his wife.

“My friend, wait; I am saying my prayers,” said the poor mother in a trembling voice.

“The devil take your good God!” growled Grandet in reply.

Misers have no belief in a future life; the present is their all in all. This thought casts a terrible light upon our present epoch, in which, far more than at any former period, money sways the laws and politics and morals. Institutions, books, men, and dogmas, all conspire to undermine belief in a future life,—a belief upon which the social edifice has rested for eighteen hundred years. The grave, as a means of transition, is little feared in our day. The future, which once opened to us beyond the requiems, has now been imported into the present. To obtain *per fas et nefas* a terrestrial paradise of luxury and earthly enjoyment, to harden the heart and macerate the body for the sake of fleeting possessions, as the martyrs once suffered all things to reach eternal joys, this is now the universal thought—a thought written everywhere, even in the very laws which ask of the legislator, “What do you pay?” instead of asking him, “What do you think?” When this doctrine has passed down from the bourgeoisie to the populace, where will this country be?

“Madame Grandet, have you done?” asked the old man.

“My friend, I am praying for you.”

“Very good! Good–night; to–morrow morning we will have a talk.”

The poor woman went to sleep like a schoolboy who, not having learned his lessons, knows he will see his master's angry face on the morrow. At the moment when, filled with fear, she was drawing the sheet above her head that she might stifle hearing, Eugenie, in her night–gown and with naked feet, ran to her side and kissed her brow.

"Oh! my good mother," she said, "to–morrow I will tell him it was I."

"No; he would send you to Noyers. Leave me to manage it; he cannot eat me."

"Do you hear, mamma?"

"What?"

"*He* is weeping still."

"Go to bed, my daughter; you will take cold in your feet: the floor is damp."

* * * * *

Thus passed the solemn day which was destined to weight upon the whole life of the rich and poor heiress, whose sleep was never again to be so calm, nor yet so pure, as it had been up to this moment. It often happens that certain actions of human life seem, literally speaking, improbable, though actual. Is not this because we constantly omit to turn the stream of psychological light upon our impulsive determinations, and fail to explain the subtile reasons, mysteriously conceived in our minds, which impelled them? Perhaps Eugenie's deep passion should be analyzed in its most delicate fibres; for it became, scoffers might say, a malady which influenced her whole existence. Many people prefer to deny results rather than estimate the force of ties and links and bonds, which secretly join one fact to another in the moral order. Here, therefore, Eugenie's past life will offer to observers of human nature an explanation of her naive want of reflection and the suddenness of the emotions which overflowed her soul. The more tranquil her life had been, the more vivid was her womanly pity, the more simple–minded were the sentiments now developed in her soul.

Made restless by the events of the day, she woke at intervals to listen to her cousin, thinking she heard the sighs which still echoed in her heart. Sometimes she saw him dying of his trouble, sometimes she dreamed that he fainted from hunger. Towards morning she was certain that she heard a startling cry. She dressed at once and ran, in the dawning light, with a swift foot to her cousin's chamber, the door of which he had left open. The candle had burned down to the socket. Charles, overcome by nature, was sleeping, dressed and sitting in an armchair beside the bed, on which his head rested; he dreamed as men dream on an empty stomach. Eugenie might weep at her ease; she might admire the young and handsome face blotted with grief, the eyes swollen with weeping, that seemed, sleeping as they were, to well forth tears. Charles felt sympathetically the young girl's presence; he opened his eyes and saw her pitying him.

"Pardon me, my cousin," he said, evidently not knowing the hour nor the place in which he found himself.

"There are hearts who hear you, cousin, and *we* thought you might need something. You should go to bed; you tire yourself by sitting thus."

"That is true."

“Well, then, adieu!”

She escaped, ashamed and happy at having gone there. Innocence alone can dare to be so bold. Once enlightened, virtue makes her calculations as well as vice. Eugenie, who had not trembled beside her cousin, could scarcely stand upon her legs when she regained her chamber. Her ignorant life had suddenly come to an end; she reasoned, she rebuked herself with many reproaches.

“What will he think of me? He will think that I love him!”

That was what she most wished him to think. An honest love has its own prescience, and knows that love begets love. What an event for this poor solitary girl thus to have entered the chamber of a young man! Are there not thoughts and actions in the life of love which to certain souls bear the full meaning of the holiest espousals? An hour later she went to her mother and dressed her as usual. Then they both came down and sat in their places before the window waiting for Grandet, with that cruel anxiety which, according to the individual character, freezes the heart or warms it, shrivels or dilates it, when a scene is feared, a punishment expected,—a feeling so natural that even domestic animals possess it, and whine at the slightest pain of punishment, though they make no outcry when they inadvertently hurt themselves. The goodman came down; but he spoke to his wife with an absent manner, kissed Eugenie, and sat down to table without appearing to remember his threats of the night before.

“What has become of my nephew? The lad gives no trouble.”

“Monsieur, he is asleep,” answered Nanon.

“So much the better; he won’t want a wax candle,” said Grandet in a jeering tone.

This unusual clemency, this bitter gaiety, struck Madame Grandet with amazement, and she looked at her husband attentively. The goodman—here it may be well to explain that in Touraine, Anjou, Pitou, and Bretagne the word “goodman,” already used to designate Grandet, is bestowed as often upon harsh and cruel men as upon those of kindly temperament, when either have reached a certain age; the title means nothing on the score of individual gentleness—the goodman took his hat and gloves, saying as he went out,—

“I am going to loiter about the market–place and find Cruchot.”

“Eugenie, your father certainly has something on his mind.”

Grandet, who was a poor sleeper, employed half his nights in the preliminary calculations which gave such astonishing accuracy to his views and observations and schemes, and secured to them the unfailing success at sight of which his townsmen stood amazed. All human power is a compound of time and patience. Powerful beings will and wait. The life of a miser is the constant exercise of human power put to the service of self. It rests on two sentiments only,—self–love and self–interest; but self–interest being to a certain extent compact and intelligent self–love, the visible sign of real superiority, it follows that self–love and self–interest are two parts of the same whole,—egotism. From this arises, perhaps, the excessive curiosity shown in the habits of a miser’s life whenever they are put before the world. Every nature holds by a thread to those beings who challenge all human sentiments by concentrating all in one passion. Where is the man without desire? and what social desire can be satisfied without money?

Grandet unquestionably “had something on his mind,” to use his wife’s expression. There was in him, as in all misers, a persistent craving to play a commercial game with other men and win their money legally. To impose upon other people was to him a sign of power, a perpetual proof that he had won the right to despise those feeble beings who suffer themselves to be preyed upon in this world. Oh! who has ever truly understood the lamb lying peacefully at the feet of God?—touching emblem of all terrestrial victims, myth of their future, suffering and weakness glorified! This lamb it is which the miser fattens, puts in his fold, slaughters, cooks, eats, and then despises. The pasture of misers is compounded of money and disdain. During the night Grandet’s ideas had taken another course, which was the reason of his sudden clemency. He had hatched a plot by which to trick the Parisians, to decoy and dupe and snare them, to drive them into a trap, and make them go and come and sweat and hope and turn pale,—a plot by which to amuse himself, the old provincial cooper, sitting there beneath his gloomy rafters, or passing up and down the rotten staircase of his house in Saumur. His nephew filled his mind. He wished to save the honor of his dead brother without the cost of a penny to the son or to himself. His own funds he was about to invest for three years; he had therefore nothing further to do than to manage his property in Saumur. He needed some nutriment for his malicious activity, and he found it suddenly in his brother’s failure. Feeling nothing to squeeze between his own paws, he resolved to crush the Parisians in behalf of Charles, and to play the part of a good brother on the cheapest terms. The honor of the family counted for so little in this scheme that his good intentions might be likened to the interest a gambler takes in seeing a game well played in which he has no stake. The Cruchots were a necessary part of his plan; but he would not seek them,—he resolved to make them come to him, and to lead up that very evening to a comedy whose plot he had just conceived, which should make him on the morrow an object of admiration to the whole town without its costing him a single penny.

In her father’s absence Eugenie had the happiness of busying herself openly with her much–loved cousin, of spending upon him fearlessly the treasures of her pity,—woman’s sublime superiority, the sole she desires to have recognized, the sole she pardons man for letting her assume. Three or four times the young girl went to listen to her cousin’s breathing, to know if he were sleeping or awake; then, when he had risen, she turned her thoughts to the cream, the eggs, the fruits, the plates, the glasses,—all that was a part of his breakfast became the object of some special care. At length she ran lightly up the old staircase to listen to the noise her cousin made. Was he dressing? Did he still weep? She reached the door.

“My cousin!”

“Yes, cousin.”

“Will you breakfast downstairs, or in your room?”

“Where you like.”

“How do you feel?”

“Dear cousin, I am ashamed of being hungry.”

This conversation, held through the closed door, was like an episode in a poem to Eugenie.

“Well, then, we will bring your breakfast to your own room, so as not to annoy my father.”

She ran to the kitchen with the swiftness and lightness of a bird.

“Nanon, go and do his room!”

That staircase, so often traversed, which echoed to the slightest noise, now lost its decaying aspect in the eyes of Eugenie. It grew luminous; it had a voice and spoke to her; it was young like herself,—young like the love it was now serving. Her mother, her kind, indulgent mother, lent herself to the caprices of the child’s love, and after the room was put in order, both went to sit with the unhappy youth and keep him company. Does not Christian charity make consolation a duty? The two women drew a goodly number of little sophistries from their religion wherewith to justify their conduct. Charles was made the object of the tenderest and most loving care. His saddened heart felt the sweetness of the gentle friendship, the exquisite sympathy which these two souls, crushed under perpetual restraint, knew so well how to display when, for an instant, they were left unfettered in the regions of suffering, their natural sphere.

Claiming the right of relationship, Eugenie began to fold the linen and put in order the toilet articles which Charles had brought; thus she could marvel at her ease over each luxurious bauble and the various knick–knacks of silver or chased gold, which she held long in her hand under a pretext of examining them. Charles could not see without emotion the generous interest his aunt and cousin felt in him; he knew society in Paris well enough to feel assured that, placed as he now was, he would find all hearts indifferent or cold. Eugenie thus appeared to him in the splendor of a special beauty, and from thenceforth he admired the innocence of life and manners which the previous evening he had been inclined to ridicule. So when Eugenie took from Nanon the bowl of coffee and cream, and began to pour it out for her cousin with the simplicity of real feeling, giving him a kindly glance, the eyes of the Parisian filled with tears; he took her hand and kissed it.

“What troubles you?” she said.

“Oh! these are tears of gratitude,” he answered.

Eugenie turned abruptly to the chimney–piece to take the candlesticks.

“Here, Nanon, carry them away!” she said.

When she looked again towards her cousin she was still blushing, but her looks could at least deceive, and did not betray the excess of joy which innundated her heart; yet the eyes of both expressed the same sentiment as their souls flowed together in one thought,—the future was theirs. This soft emotion was all the more precious to Charles in the midst of his heavy grief because it was wholly unexpected. The sound of the knocker recalled the women to their usual station. Happily they were able to run downstairs with sufficient rapidity to be seated at their work when Grandet entered; had he met them under the archway it would have been enough to rouse his suspicions. After breakfast, which the goodman took standing, the keeper from Froidfond, to whom the promised indemnity had never yet been paid, made his appearance, bearing a hare and some partridges shot in the park, with eels and two pike sent as tribute by the millers.

“Ha, ha! poor Cornoiller; here he comes, like fish in Lent. Is all that fit to eat?”

“Yes, my dear, generous master; it has been killed two days.”

“Come, Nanon, bestir yourself,” said Grandet; “take these things, they’ll do for dinner. I have invited the two Cruchots.”

Nanon opened her eyes, stupid with amazement, and looked at everybody in the room.

“Well!” she said, “and how am I to get the lard and the spices?”

“Wife,” said Grandet, “give Nanon six francs, and remind me to get some of the good wine out of the cellar.”

“Well, then, Monsieur Grandet,” said the keeper, who had come prepared with an harangue for the purpose of settling the question of the indemnity, “Monsieur Grandet—”

“Ta, ta, ta, ta!” said Grandet; “I know what you want to say. You are a good fellow; we will see about it to–morrow, I’m too busy to–day. Wife, give him five francs,” he added to Madame Grandet as he decamped.

The poor woman was only too happy to buy peace at the cost of eleven francs. She knew that Grandet would let her alone for a fortnight after he had thus taken back, franc by franc, the money he had given her.

“Here, Cornoiller,” she said, slipping ten francs into the man’s hand, “some day we will reward your services.”

Cornoiller could say nothing, so he went away.

“Madame,” said Nanon, who had put on her black coif and taken her basket, “I want only three francs. You keep the rest; it’ll go fast enough somehow.”

“Have a good dinner, Nanon; my cousin will come down,” said Eugenie.

“Something very extraordinary is going on, I am certain of it,” said Madame Grandet. “This is only the third time since our marriage that your father has given a dinner.”

* * * * *

About four o’clock, just as Eugenie and her mother had finished setting the table for six persons, and after the master of the house had brought up a few bottles of the exquisite wine which provincials cherish with true affection, Charles came down into the hall. The young fellow was pale; his gestures, the expression of his face, his glance, and the tones of his voice, all had a sadness which was full of grace. He was not pretending grief, he truly suffered; and the veil of pain cast over his features gave him an interesting air dear to the heart of women. Eugenie loved him the more for it. Perhaps she felt that sorrow drew him nearer to her. Charles was no longer the rich and distinguished young man placed in a sphere far above her, but a relation plunged into frightful misery. Misery begets equality. Women have this in common with the angels,—suffering humanity belongs to them. Charles and Eugenie understood each other and spoke only with their eyes; for the poor fallen dandy, orphaned and impoverished, sat apart in a corner of the room, and was proudly calm and silent. Yet, from time to time, the gentle and caressing glance of the young girl shone upon him and constrained him away from his sad thoughts, drawing him with her into the fields of hope and of futurity, where she loved to hold him at her side.

VII

At this moment the town of Saumur was more excited about the dinner given by Grandet to the Cruchots than it had been the night before at the sale of his vintage, though that constituted a crime of high–treason against the whole wine–growing community. If the politic old miser had given his dinner from the same idea that cost the dog of Alcibiades his tail, he might perhaps have been called a great man; but the fact is, considering himself superior to a community which he could trick on all occasions, he paid very little heed to what Saumur might say.

The des Grassins soon learned the facts of the failure and the violent death of Guillaume Grandet, and they determined to go to their client's house that very evening to commiserate his misfortune and show him some marks of friendship, with a view of ascertaining the motives which had led him to invite the Cruchots to dinner. At precisely five o'clock Monsieur C. de Bonfons and his uncle the notary arrived in their Sunday clothes. The party sat down to table and began to dine with good appetites. Grandet was grave, Charles silent, Eugenie dumb, and Madame Grandet did not say more than usual; so that the dinner was, very properly, a repast of condolence. When they rose from table Charles said to his aunt and uncle,—

"Will you permit me to retire? I am obliged to undertake a long and painful correspondence."

"Certainly, nephew."

As soon as the goodman was certain that Charles could hear nothing and was probably deep in his letter–writing, he said, with a dissimulating glance at his wife,—

"Madame Grandet, what we have to talk about will be Latin to you; it is half–past seven; you can go and attend to your household accounts. Good–night, my daughter."

He kissed Eugenie, and the two women departed. A scene now took place in which Pere Grandet brought to bear, more than at any other moment of his life, the shrewd dexterity he had acquired in his intercourse with men, and which had won him from those whose flesh he sometimes bit too sharply the nickname of "the old dog." If the mayor of Saumur had carried his ambition higher still, if fortunate circumstances, drawing him towards the higher social spheres, had sent him into congresses where the affairs of nations were discussed, and had he there employed the genius with which his personal interests had endowed him, he would undoubtedly have proved nobly useful to his native land. Yet it is perhaps equally certain that outside of Saumur the goodman would have cut a very sorry figure. Possibly there are minds like certain animals which cease to breed when transplanted from the climates in which they are born.

"M–m–mon–sieur le p–p–president, you said t–t–that b–b–bankruptcy—"

The stutter which for years the old miser had assumed when it suited him, and which, together with the deafness of which he sometimes complained in rainy weather, was thought in Saumur to be a natural defect, became at this crisis so wearisome to the two

Cruchots that while they listened they unconsciously made faces and moved their lips, as if pronouncing the words over which he was hesitating and stuttering at will. Here it may be well to give the history of this impediment of the speech and hearing of Monsieur Grandet. No one in Anjou heard better, or could pronounce more crisply the French language (with an Angevin accent) than the wily old cooper. Some years earlier, in spite of his shrewdness, he had been taken in by an Israelite, who in the course of the discussion held his hand behind his ear to catch sounds, and mangled his meaning so thoroughly in trying to utter his words that Grandet fell a victim to his humanity and was compelled to prompt the wily Jew with the words and ideas he seemed to seek, to complete himself the arguments of the said Jew, to say what that cursed Jew ought to have said for himself; in short, to be the Jew instead of being Grandet. When the cooper came out of this curious encounter he had concluded the only bargain of which in the course of a long commercial life he ever had occasion to complain. But if he lost at the time pecuniarily, he gained morally a valuable lesson; later, he gathered its fruits. Indeed, the goodman ended by blessing that Jew for having taught him the art of irritating his commercial antagonist and leading him to forget his own thoughts in his impatience to suggest those over which his tormentor was stuttering. No affair had ever needed the assistance of deafness, impediments of speech, and all the incomprehensible circumlocutions with which Grandet enveloped his ideas, as much as the affair now in hand. In the first place, he did not mean to shoulder the responsibility of his own scheme; in the next, he was determined to remain master of the conversation and to leave his real intentions in doubt.

“M–m–monsieur de B–B–Bonfons,”—for the second time in three years Grandet called the Cruchot nephew Monsieur de Bonfons; the president felt he might consider himself the artful old fellow’s son–in–law,—“you–ou said th–th–that b–b–bankruptcy c–c–could, in some c–c–cases, b–b–be p–p–prevented b–b–by—”

“By the courts of commerce themselves. It is done constantly,” said Monsieur C. de Bonfons, bestriding Grandet’s meaning, or thinking he guessed it, and kindly wishing to help him out with it. “Listen.”

“Y–yes,” said Grandet humbly, with the mischievous expression of a boy who is inwardly laughing at his teacher while he pays him the greatest attention.

“When a man so respected and important as, for example, your late brother—”

“M–my b–b–brother, yes.”

“—is threatened with insolvency—”

“They c–c–call it in–ins–s–solvency?”

“Yes; when his failure is imminent, the court of commerce, to which he is amenable (please follow me attentively), has the power, by a decree, to appoint a receiver. Liquidation, you understand, is not the same as failure. When a man fails, he is dishonored; but when he merely liquidates, he remains an honest man.”

“T–t–that’s very d–d–different, if it d–d–doesn’t c–c–cost m–m–more,” said Grandet.

“But a liquidation can be managed without having recourse to the courts at all. For,” said the president, sniffing a pinch of snuff, “don’t you know how failures are declared?”

“N–n–no, I n–n–never t–t–thought,” answered Grandet.

“In the first place,” resumed the magistrate, “by filing the schedule in the record office of the court, which the merchant may do himself, or his representative for him with a power of attorney duly certified. In the second place, the failure may be declared under compulsion from the creditors. Now if the merchant does not file his schedule, and if no creditor appears before the courts to obtain a decree of insolvency against the merchant, what happens?”

“W–w–what h–h–happens?”

“Why, the family of the deceased, his representatives, his heirs, or the merchant himself, if he is not dead, or his friends if he is only hiding, liquidate his business. Perhaps you would like to liquidate your brother’s affairs?”

“Ah! Grandet,” said the notary, “that would be the right thing to do. There is honor down here in the provinces. If you save your name—for it is your name—you will be a man—”

“A noble man!” cried the president, interrupting his uncle.

“Certainly,” answered the old man, “my b–b–brother’s name was G–G–Grandet, like m–m–mine. Th–that’s c–c–certain; I d–d–don’t d–d–deny it. And th–th–this l–l–liquidation might be, in m–m–many ways, v–v–very advan–t–t–tageous t–t–to the interests of m–m–my n–n–nephew, whom I l–l–love. But I must consider. I don’t k–k–know the t–t–tricks of P–P–Paris. I b–b–belong to Sau–m–mur, d–d–don’t you see? M–m–my vines, my d–d–drains—in short, I’ve my own b–b–business. I never g–g–give n–n–notes. What are n–n–notes? I t–t–take a good m–m–many, but I have never s–s–signed one. I d–d–don’t understand such things. I have h–h–heard say that n–n–notes c–c–can be b–b–bought up.”

“Of course,” said the president. “Notes can be bought in the market, less so much per cent. Don’t you understand?”

Grandet made an ear–trumpet of his hand, and the president repeated his words.

“Well, then,” replied the man, “there’s s–s–something to be g–g–got out of it? I k–know n–nothing at my age about such th–th–things. I l–l–live here and l–l–look after the v–v–vines. The vines g–g–grow, and it’s the w–w–wine that p–p–pays. L–l–look after the v–v–vintage, t–t–that’s my r–r–rule. My c–c–chief interests are at Froidfond. I c–c–can’t l–l–leave my h–h–house to m–m–muddle myself with a d–d–devilish b–b–business I kn–know n–n–nothing about. You say I ought to l–l–liquidate my b–b–brother’s af–f–fairs, to p–p–prevent the f–f–failure. I c–c–can’t be in two p–p–places at once, unless I were a little b–b–bird, and—”

“I understand,” cried the notary. “Well, my old friend, you have friends, old friends, capable of devoting themselves to your interests.”

“All right!” thought Grandet, “make haste and come to the point!”

“Suppose one of them went to Paris and saw your brother Guillaume’s chief creditor and said to him—”

“One m–m–moment,” interrupted the goodman, “said wh–wh–what? Something l–l–like this. Monsieur Gr–Grandet of Saumur this, Monsieur Grandet of Saumur that. He l–loves

his b–b–brother, he loves his n–nephew. Grandet is a g–g–good uncle; he m–m–means well. He has sold his v–v–vintage. D–d–don't declare a f–f–failure; c–c–call a meeting; l–l–liquidate; and then Gr–Gr–Grandet will see what he c–c–can do. B–b–better liquidate than l–let the l–l–law st–st–stick its n–n–nose in. Hein? isn't it so?"

"Exactly so," said the president.

"B–because, don't you see, Monsieur de B–Bonfons, a man must l–l–look b–b–before he l–leaps. If you c–c–can't, you c–c–can't. M–m–must know all about the m–m–matter, all the resources and the debts, if you d–d–don't want to be r–r–ruined. Hein? isn't it so?"

"Certainly," said the president. "I'm of opinion that in a few months the debts might be bought up for a certain sum, and then paid in full by an agreement. Ha! ha! you can coax a dog a long way if you show him a bit of lard. If there has been no declaration of failure, and you hold a lien on the debts, you come out of the business as white as the driven snow."

"Sn–n–now," said Grandet, putting his hand to his ear, "wh–wh–what about s–now?"

"But," cried the president, "do pray attend to what I am saying."

"I am at–t–tending."

"A note is merchandise,—an article of barter which rises and falls in prices. That is a deduction from Jeremy Bentham's theory about usury. That writer has proved that the prejudice which condemned usurers to reprobation was mere folly."

"Whew!" ejaculated the goodman.

"Allowing that money, according to Bentham, is an article of merchandise, and that whatever represents money is equally merchandise," resumed the president; "allowing also that it is notorious that the commercial note, bearing this or that signature, is liable to the fluctuation of all commercial values, rises or falls in the market, is dear at one moment, and is worth nothing at another, the courts decide—ah! how stupid I am, I beg your pardon—I am inclined to think you could buy up your brother's debts for twenty–five per cent."

"D–d–did you c–c–call him Je–Je–Jeremy B–Ben?"

"Bentham, an Englishman.'

"That's a Jeremy who might save us a lot of lamentations in business," said the notary, laughing.

"Those Englishmen s–sometimes t–t–talk sense," said Grandet. "So, ac–c–cording to Ben–Bentham, if my b–b–brother's n–notes are worth n–n–nothing; if Je–Je—I'm c–c–correct, am I not? That seems c–c–clear to my m–m–mind—the c–c–creditors would be—No, would not be; I understand."

"Let me explain it all," said the president. "Legally, if you acquire a title to all the debts of the Maison Grandet, your brother or his heirs will owe nothing to any one. Very good."

"Very g–good," repeated Grandet.

"In equity, if your brother's notes are negotiated—negotiated, do you clearly understand

the term?—negotiated in the market at a reduction of so much per cent in value, and if one of your friends happening to be present should buy them in, the creditors having sold them of their own free–will without constraint, the estate of the late Grandet is honorably released."

"That's t–true; b–b–business is b–business," said the cooper. "B–b–but, st–still, you know, it is d–d–difficult. I h–have n–no m–m–money and n–no t–t–time."

"Yes, but you need not undertake it. I am quite ready to go to Paris (you may pay my expenses, they will only be a trifle). I will see the creditors and talk with them and get an extension of time, and everything can be arranged if you will add something to the assets so as to buy up all title to the debts."

"We–we'll see about th–that. I c–c–can't and I w–w–won't bind myself without—He who c–c–can't, can't; don't you see?"

"That's very true."

"I'm all p–p–put ab–b–bout by what you've t–t–told me. This is the f–first t–t–time in my life I have b–been obliged to th–th–think—"

"Yes, you are not a lawyer."

"I'm only a p–p–poor wine–g–grower, and know n–nothing about wh–what you have just t–told me; I m–m–must th–think about it."

"Very good," said the president, preparing to resume his argument.

"Nephew!" said the notary, interrupting him in a warning tone.

"Well, what, uncle?" answered the president.

"Let Monsieur Grandet explain his own intentions. The matter in question is of the first importance. Our good friend ought to define his meaning clearly, and—"

A loud knock, which announced the arrival of the des Grassins family, succeeded by their entrance and salutations, hindered Cruchot from concluding his sentence. The notary was glad of the interruption, for Grandet was beginning to look suspiciously at him, and the wen gave signs of a brewing storm. In the first place, the notary did not think it becoming in a president of the Civil courts to go to Paris and manipulate creditors and lend himself to an underhand job which clashed with the laws of strict integrity; moreover, never having known old Grandet to express the slightest desire to pay anything, no matter what, he instinctively feared to see his nephew taking part in the affair. He therefore profited by the entrance of the des Grassins to take the nephew by the arm and lead him into the embrasure of the window,—

"You have said enough, nephew; you've shown enough devotion. Your desire to win the girl blinds you. The devil! you mustn't go at it tooth and nail. Let me sail the ship now; you can haul on the braces. Do you think it right to compromise your dignity as a magistrate in such a—"

He stopped, for he heard Monsieur des Grassins saying to the old cooper as they shook hands,—

"Grandet, we have heard of the frightful misfortunes which have just befallen your family,

—the failure of the house of Guillaume Grandet and the death of your brother. We have come to express our grief at these sad events."

"There is but one sad event," said the notary, interrupting the banker,—"the death of Monsieur Grandet, junior; and he would never have killed himself had he thought in time of applying to his brother for help. Our old friend, who is honorable to his finger–nails, intends to liquidate the debts of the Maison Grandet of Paris. To save him the worry of legal proceedings, my nephew, the president, has just offered to go to Paris and negotiate with the creditors for a satisfactory settlement."

These words, corroborated by Grandet's attitude as he stood silently nursing his chin, astonished the three des Grassins, who had been leisurely discussing the old man's avarice as they came along, very nearly accusing him of fratricide.

"Ah! I was sure of it," cried the banker, looking at his wife. "What did I tell you just now, Madame des Grassins? Grandet is honorable to the backbone, and would never allow his name to remain under the slightest cloud! Money without honor is a disease. There is honor in the provinces! Right, very right, Grandet. I'm an old soldier, and I can't disguise my thoughts; I speak roughly. Thunder! it is sublime!"

"Th–then s–s–sublime th–things c–c–cost d–dear," answered the goodman, as the banker warmly wrung his hand.

"But this, my dear Grandet,—if the president will excuse me,—is a purely commercial matter, and needs a consummate business man. Your agent must be some one fully acquainted with the markets,—with disbursements, rebates, interest calculations, and so forth. I am going to Paris on business of my own, and I can take charge of—"

"We'll see about t–t–trying to m–m–manage it b–b–between us, under the p–p–peculiar c–c–circumstances, b–b–but without b–b–binding m–m–myself to anything th–that I c–c–could not do," said Grandet, stuttering; "because, you see, monsieur le president naturally expects me to pay the expenses of his journey."

The goodman did not stammer over the last words.

"Eh!" cried Madame des Grassins, "why it is a pleasure to go to Paris. I would willingly pay to go myself."

She made a sign to her husband, as if to encourage him in cutting the enemy out of the commission, *coute que coute*; then she glanced ironically at the two Cruchots, who looked chap–fallen. Grandet seized the banker by a button and drew him into a corner of the room.

"I have a great deal more confidence in you than in the president," he said; "besides, I've other fish to fry," he added, wriggling his wen. "I want to buy a few thousand francs in the Funds while they are at eighty. They fall, I'm told, at the end of each month. You know all about these things, don't you?"

"Bless me! then, am I to invest enough to give you a few thousand francs a year?"

"That's not much to begin with. Hush! I don't want any one to know I am going to play that game. You can make the investment by the end of the month. Say nothing to the Cruchots; that'll annoy them. If you are really going to Paris, we will see if there is

anything to be done for my poor nephew."

"Well, it's all settled. I'll start to–morrow by the mail–post," said des Grassins aloud, "and I will come and take your last directions at—what hour will suit you?"

"Five o'clock, just before dinner," said Grandet, rubbing his hands.

The two parties stayed on for a short time. Des Grassins said, after a pause, striking Grandet on the shoulder,—

"It is a good thing to have a relation like him."

"Yes, yes; without making a show," said Grandet, "I am a g–good relation. I loved my brother, and I will prove it, unless it c–c–costs—"

"We must leave you, Grandet," said the banker, interrupting him fortunately before he got to the end of his sentence. "If I hurry my departure, I must attend to some matters at once."

"Very good, very good! I myself—in c–consequence of what I t–told you—I must retire to my own room and 'd–d–deliberate,' as President Cruchot says."

"Plague take him! I am no longer Monsieur de Bonfons," thought the magistrate ruefully, his face assuming the expression of a judge bored by an argument.

The heads of the two factions walked off together. Neither gave any further thought to the treachery Grandet had been guilty of in the morning against the whole wine–growing community; each tried to fathom what the other was thinking about the real intentions of the wily old man in this new affair, but in vain.

"Will you go with us to Madame Dorsonval's?" said des Grassins to the notary.

"We will go there later," answered the president. "I have promised to say good–evening to Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt, and we will go there first, if my uncle is willing."

"Farewell for the present!" said Madame des Grassins.

When the Cruchots were a few steps off, Adolphe remarked to his father,—

"Are not they fuming, hein?"

"Hold your tongue, my son!" said his mother; "they might hear you. Besides, what you say is not in good taste,—law–school language."

"Well, uncle," cried the president when he saw the des Grassins disappearing, "I began by being de Bonfons, and I have ended as nothing but Cruchot."

"I saw that that annoyed you; but the wind has set fair for the des Grassins. What a fool you are, with all your cleverness! Let them sail off on Grandet's 'We'll see about it,' and keep yourself quiet, young man. Eugenie will none the less be your wife."

In a few moments the news of Grandet's magnanimous resolve was disseminated in three houses at the same moment, and the whole town began to talk of his fraternal devotion. Every one forgave Grandet for the sale made in defiance of the good faith pledged to the community; they admired his sense of honor, and began to laud a generosity of which they had never thought him capable. It is part of the French nature to grow enthusiastic, or

angry, or fervent about some meteor of the moment. Can it be that collective beings, nationalities, peoples, are devoid of memory?

When Pere Grandet had shut the door he called Nanon.

“Don’t let the dog loose, and don’t go to bed; we have work to do together. At eleven o’clock Cornoiller will be at the door with the chariot from Froidfond. Listen for him and prevent his knocking; tell him to come in softly. Police regulations don’t allow nocturnal racket. Besides, the whole neighborhood need not know that I am starting on a journey.”

So saying, Grandet returned to his private room, where Nanon heard him moving about, rummaging, and walking to and fro, though with much precaution, for he evidently did not wish to wake his wife and daughter, and above all not to rouse the attention of his nephew, whom he had begun to anathematize when he saw a thread of light under his door. About the middle of the night Eugenie, intent on her cousin, fancied she heard a cry like that of a dying person. It must be Charles, she thought; he was so pale, so full of despair when she had seen him last,—could he have killed himself? She wrapped herself quickly in a loose garment,—a sort of pelisse with a hood,—and was about to leave the room when a bright light coming through the chinks of her door made her think of fire. But she recovered herself as she heard Nanon’s heavy steps and gruff voice mingling with the snorting of several horses.

“Can my father be carrying off my cousin?” she said to herself, opening her door with great precaution lest it should creak, and yet enough to let her see into the corridor.

Suddenly her eye encountered that of her father; and his glance, vague and unnoticing as it was, terrified her. The goodman and Nanon were yoked together by a stout stick, each end of which rested on their shoulders; a stout rope was passed over it, on which was slung a small barrel or keg like those Pere Grandet still made in his bakehouse as an amusement for his leisure hours.

“Holy Virgin, how heavy it is!” said the voice of Nanon.

“What a pity that it is only copper sous!” answered Grandet. “Take care you don’t knock over the candlestick.”

The scene was lighted by a single candle placed between two rails of the staircase.

“Cornoiller,” said Grandet to his keeper *in partibus*, “have you brought your pistols?”

“No, monsieur. Mercy! what’s there to fear for your copper sous?”

“Oh! nothing,” said Pere Grandet.

“Besides, we shall go fast,” added the man; “your farmers have picked out their best horses.”

“Very good. You did not tell them where I was going?”

“I didn’t know where.”

“Very good. Is the carriage strong?”

“Strong? hear to that, now! Why, it can carry three thousand weight. How much does that old keg weigh?”

“Goodness!” exclaimed Nanon. “I ought to know! There’s pretty nigh eighteen hundred __”

“Will you hold your tongue, Nanon! You are to tell my wife I have gone into the country. I shall be back to dinner. Drive fast, Cornoiller; I must get to Angers before nine o’clock.”

The carriage drove off. Nanon bolted the great door, let loose the dog, and went off to bed with a bruised shoulder, no one in the neighborhood suspecting either the departure of Grandet or the object of his journey. The precautions of the old miser and his reticence were never relaxed. No one had ever seen a penny in that house, filled as it was with gold. Hearing in the morning, through the gossip of the port, that exchange on gold had doubled in price in consequence of certain military preparations undertaken at Nantes, and that speculators had arrived at Angers to buy coin, the old wine–grower, by the simple process of borrowing horses from his farmers, seized the chance of selling his gold and of bringing back in the form of treasury notes the sum he intended to put into the Funds, having swelled it considerably by the exchange.

VIII

“My father has gone,” thought Eugenie, who heard all that took place from the head of the stairs. Silence was restored in the house, and the distant rumbling of the carriage, ceasing by degrees, no longer echoed through the sleeping town. At this moment Eugenie heard in her heart, before the sound caught her ears, a cry which pierced the partitions and came from her cousin’s chamber. A line of light, thin as the blade of a sabre, shone through a chink in the door and fell horizontally on the balusters of the rotten staircase.

“He suffers!” she said, springing up the stairs. A second moan brought her to the landing near his room. The door was ajar, she pushed it open. Charles was sleeping; his head hung over the side of the old armchair, and his hand, from which the pen had fallen, nearly touched the floor. The oppressed breathing caused by the strained posture suddenly frightened Eugenie, who entered the room hastily.

“He must be very tired,” she said to herself, glancing at a dozen letters lying sealed upon the table. She read their addresses: “To Messrs. Farry, Breilmann, & Co., carriage–makers”; “To Monsieur Buisson, tailor,” etc.

“He has been settling all his affairs, so as to leave France at once,” she thought. Her eyes fell upon two open letters. The words, “My dear Annette,” at the head of one of them, blinded her for a moment. Her heart beat fast, her feet were nailed to the floor.

“His dear Annette! He loves! he is loved! No hope! What does he say to her?”

These thoughts rushed through her head and heart. She saw the words everywhere, even on the bricks of the floor, in letters of fire.

“Resign him already? No, no! I will not read the letter. I ought to go away—What if I do read it?”

She looked at Charles, then she gently took his head and placed it against the back of the chair; he let her do so, like a child which, though asleep, knows its mother’s touch and receives, without awaking, her kisses and watchful care. Like a mother Eugenie raised the drooping hand, and like a mother she gently kissed the chestnut hair—“Dear Annette!” a demon shrieked the words in her ear.

“I am doing wrong; but I must read it, that letter,” she said. She turned away her head, for her noble sense of honor reproached her. For the first time in her life good and evil struggled together in her heart. Up to that moment she had never had to blush for any action. Passion and curiosity triumphed. As she read each sentence her heart swelled more and more, and the keen glow which filled her being as she did so, only made the joys of first love still more precious.

> My dear Annette,—Nothing could ever have separated us but the great misfortune which has now overwhelmed me, and which no human foresight could have prevented. My father has killed himself; his fortune and mine are irretrievably lost. I am orphaned at an age when, through the nature of my education, I am still a child;

and yet I must lift myself as a man out of the abyss into which I am plunged. I have just spent half the night in facing my position. If I wish to leave France an honest man,—and there is no doubt of that,—I have not a hundred francs of my own with which to try my fate in the Indies or in America. Yes, my poor Anna, I must seek my fortune in those deadly climates. Under those skies, they tell me, I am sure to make it. As for remaining in Paris, I cannot do so. Neither my nature nor my face are made to bear the affronts, the neglect, the disdain shown to a ruined man, the son of a bankrupt! Good God! think of owing two millions! I should be killed in a duel the first week; therefore I shall not return there. Your love—the most tender and devoted love which ever ennobled the heart of man—cannot draw me back. Alas! my beloved, I have no money with which to go to you, to give and receive a last kiss from which I might derive some strength for my forlorn enterprise.

"Poor Charles! I did well to read the letter. I have gold; I will give it to him," thought Eugenie.

She wiped her eyes, and went on reading.

I have never thought of the miseries of poverty. If I have the hundred louis required for the mere costs of the journey, I have not a sou for an outfit. But no, I have not the hundred louis, not even one louis. I don't know that anything will be left after I have paid my debts in Paris. If I have nothing, I shall go quietly to Nantes and ship as a common sailor; and I will begin in the new world like other men who have started young without a sou and brought back the wealth of the Indies. During this long day I have faced my future coolly. It seems more horrible for me than for another, because I have been so petted by a mother who adored me, so indulged by the kindest of fathers, so blessed by meeting, on my entrance into life, with the love of an Anna! The flowers of life are all I have ever known. Such happiness could not last. Nevertheless, my dear Annette, I feel more courage than a careless young man is supposed to feel,—above all a young man used to the caressing ways of the dearest woman in all Paris, cradled in family joys, on whom all things smiled in his home, whose wishes were a law to his father—oh, my father! Annette, he is dead!

Well, I have thought over my position, and yours as well. I have grown old in twenty–four hours. Dear Anna, if in order to keep me with you in Paris you were to sacrifice your luxury, your dress, your opera–box, we should even then not have enough for the expenses of my extravagant ways of living. Besides, I would never accept such sacrifices. No, we must part now and forever—

"He gives her up! Blessed Virgin! What happiness!"

Eugenie quivered with joy. Charles made a movement, and a chill of terror ran through her. Fortunately, he did not wake, and she resumed her reading.

When shall I return? I do not know. The climate of the West Indies ages a European, so they say; especially a European who works hard. Let us think what may happen ten years hence. In ten years your daughter will be eighteen; she will be your companion, your spy. To you society will be cruel, and your daughter perhaps more

cruel still. We have seen cases of the harsh social judgment and ingratitude of daughters; let us take warning by them. Keep in the depths of your soul, as I shall in mine, the memory of four years of happiness, and be faithful, if you can, to the memory of your poor friend. I cannot exact such faithfulness, because, do you see, dear Annette, I must conform to the exigencies of my new life; I must take a commonplace view of them and do the best I can. Therefore I must think of marriage, which becomes one of the necessities of my future existence; and I will admit to you that I have found, here in Saumur, in my uncle's house, a cousin whose face, manners, mind, and heart would please you, and who, besides, seems to me—

"He must have been very weary to have ceased writing to her," thought Eugenie, as she gazed at the letter which stopped abruptly in the middle of the last sentence.

Already she defended him. How was it possible that an innocent girl should perceive the cold–heartedness evinced by this letter? To young girls religiously brought up, whose minds are ignorant and pure, all is love from the moment they set their feet within the enchanted regions of that passion. They walk there bathed in a celestial light shed from their own souls, which reflects its rays upon their lover; they color all with the flame of their own emotion and attribute to him their highest thoughts. A woman's errors come almost always from her belief in good or her confidence in truth. In Eugenie's simple heart the words, "My dear Annette, my loved one," echoed like the sweetest language of love; they caressed her soul as, in childhood, the divine notes of the *Venite adoremus*, repeated by the organ, caressed her ear. Moreover, the tears which still lingered on the young man's lashes gave signs of that nobility of heart by which young girls are rightly won. How could she know that Charles, though he loved his father and mourned him truly, was moved far more by paternal goodness than by the goodness of his own heart? Monsieur and Madame Guillaume Grandet, by gratifying every fancy of their son, and lavishing upon him the pleasures of a large fortune, had kept him from making the horrible calculations of which so many sons in Paris become more or less guilty when, face to face with the enjoyments of the world, they form desires and conceive schemes which they see with bitterness must be put off or laid aside during the lifetime of their parents. The liberality of the father in this instance had shed into the heart of the son a real love, in which there was no afterthought of self–interest.

Nevertheless, Charles was a true child of Paris, taught by the customs of society and by Annette herself to calculate everything; already an old man under the mask of youth. He had gone through the frightful education of social life, of that world where in one evening more crimes are committed in thought and speech than justice ever punishes at the assizes; where jests and clever sayings assassinate the noblest ideas; where no one is counted strong unless his mind sees clear: and to see clear in that world is to believe in nothing, neither in feelings, nor in men, nor even in events,—for events are falsified. There, to "see clear" we must weigh a friend's purse daily, learn how to keep ourselves adroitly on the top of the wave, cautiously admire nothing, neither works of art nor glorious actions, and remember that self–interest is the mainspring of all things here below. After committing many follies, the great lady—the beautiful Annette—compelled Charles to think seriously; with her perfumed hand among his curls, she talked to him of his future position; as she rearranged his locks, she taught him lessons of worldly prudence; she made him

effeminate and materialized him,—a double corruption, but a delicate and elegant corruption, in the best taste.

“You are very foolish, Charles,” she would say to him. “I shall have a great deal of trouble in teaching you to understand the world. You behaved extremely ill to Monsieur des Lupeaulx. I know very well he is not an honorable man; but wait till he is no longer in power, then you may despise him as much as you like. Do you know what Madame Campan used to tell us?—‘My dears, as long as a man is a minister, adore him; when he falls, help to drag him in the gutter. Powerful, he is a sort of god; fallen, he is lower than Marat in the sewer, because he is living, and Marat is dead. Life is a series of combinations, and you must study them and understand them if you want to keep yourselves always in good position.’”

Charles was too much a man of the world, his parents had made him too happy, he had received too much adulation in society, to be possessed of noble sentiments. The grain of gold dropped by his mother into his heart was beaten thin in the smithy of Parisian society; he had spread it superficially, and it was worn away by the friction of life. Charles was only twenty–one years old. At that age the freshness of youth seems inseparable from candor and sincerity of soul. The voice, the glance, the face itself, seem in harmony with the feelings; and thus it happens that the sternest judge, the most sceptical lawyer, the least complying of usurers, always hesitate to admit decrepitude of heart or the corruption of worldly calculation while the eyes are still bathed in purity and no wrinkles seam the brow. Charles, so far, had had no occasion to apply the maxims of Parisian morality; up to this time he was still endowed with the beauty of inexperience. And yet, unknown to himself, he had been inoculated with selfishness. The germs of Parisian political economy, latent in his heart, would assuredly burst forth, sooner or later, whenever the careless spectator became an actor in the drama of real life.

Nearly all young girls succumb to the tender promises such an outward appearance seems to offer: even if Eugenie had been as prudent and observing as provincial girls are often found to be, she was not likely to distrust her cousin when his manners, words, and actions were still in unison with the aspirations of a youthful heart. A mere chance—a fatal chance—threw in her way the last effusions of real feeling which stirred the young man’s soul; she heard as it were the last breathings of his conscience. She laid down the letter—to her so full of love—and began smilingly to watch her sleeping cousin; the fresh illusions of life were still, for her at least, upon his face; she vowed to herself to love him always. Then she cast her eyes on the other letter, without attaching much importance to this second indiscretion; and though she read it, it was only to obtain new proofs of the noble qualities which, like all women, she attributed to the man her heart had chosen.

> My dear Alphonse,—When you receive this letter I shall be without friends; but let me assure you that while I doubt the friendship of the world, I have never doubted yours. I beg you therefore to settle all my affairs, and I trust to you to get as much as you can out of my possessions. By this time you know my situation. I have nothing left, and I intend to go at once to the Indies. I have just written to all the people to whom I think I owe money, and you will find enclosed a list of their names, as correct as I can make it from memory. My books, my furniture, my pictures, my horses, etc., ought, I think, to pay my debts. I do not wish to keep anything, except,

> perhaps, a few baubles which might serve as the beginning of an outfit for my enterprise. My dear Alphonse, I will send you a proper power of attorney under which you can make these sales. Send me all my weapons. Keep Briton for yourself; nobody would pay the value of that noble beast, and I would rather give him to you—like a mourning–ring bequeathed by a dying man to his executor. Farry, Breilmann, & Co. built me a very comfortable travelling–carriage, which they have not yet delivered; persuade them to keep it and not ask for any payment on it. If they refuse, do what you can in the matter, and avoid everything that might seem dishonorable in me under my present circumstances. I owe the British Islander six louis, which I lost at cards; don't fail to pay him—

"Dear cousin!" whispered Eugenie, throwing down the letter and running softly back to her room, carrying one of the lighted candles. A thrill of pleasure passed over her as she opened the drawer of an old oak cabinet, a fine specimen of the period called the Renaissance, on which could still be seen, partly effaced, the famous royal salamander. She took from the drawer a large purse of red velvet with gold tassels, edged with a tarnished fringe of gold wire,—a relic inherited from her grandmother. She weighed it proudly in her hand, and began with delight to count over the forgotten items of her little hoard. First she took out twenty *portugaises*, still new, struck in the reign of John V., 1725, worth by exchange, as her father told her, five *lisbonnines*, or a hundred and sixty–eight francs, sixty–four centimes each; their conventional value, however, was a hundred and eighty francs apiece, on account of the rarity and beauty of the coins, which shone like little suns. Item, five *genovines*, or five hundred–franc pieces of Genoa; another very rare coin worth eighty–seven francs on exchange, but a hundred francs to collectors. These had formerly belonged to old Monsieur de la Bertelliere. Item, three gold *quadruples*, Spanish, of Philip V., struck in 1729, given to her one by one by Madame Gentillet, who never failed to say, using the same words, when she made the gift, "This dear little canary, this little yellow–boy, is worth ninety–eight francs! Keep it, my pretty one, it will be the flower of your treasure." Item (that which her father valued most of all, the gold of these coins being twenty–three carats and a fraction), a hundred Dutch ducats, made in the year 1756, and worth thirteen francs apiece. Item, a great curiosity, a species of medal precious to the soul of misers,—three rupees with the sign of the Scales, and five rupees with the sign of the Virgin, all in pure gold of twenty–four carats; the magnificent money of the Great Mogul, each of which was worth by mere weight thirty–seven francs, forty centimes, but at least fifty francs to those connoisseurs who love to handle gold. Item, the napoleon of forty francs received the day before, which she had forgotten to put away in the velvet purse. This treasure was all in virgin coins, true works of art, which Grandet from time to time inquired after and asked to see, pointing out to his daughter their intrinsic merits,—such as the beauty of the milled edge, the clearness of the flat surface, the richness of the lettering, whose angles were not yet rubbed off.

Eugenie gave no thought to these rarities, nor to her father's mania for them, nor to the danger she incurred in depriving herself of a treasure so dear to him; no, she thought only of her cousin, and soon made out, after a few mistakes of calculation, that she possessed about five thousand eight hundred francs in actual value, which might be sold for their additional value to collectors for nearly six thousand. She looked at her wealth and clapped her hands like a happy child forced to spend its overflowing joy in artless

movements of the body. Father and daughter had each counted up their fortune this night,—he, to sell his gold; Eugenie to fling hers into the ocean of affection. She put the pieces back into the old purse, took it in her hand, and ran upstairs without hesitation. The secret misery of her cousin made her forget the hour and conventional propriety; she was strong in her conscience, in her devotion, in her happiness.

As she stood upon the threshold of the door, holding the candle in one hand and the purse in the other, Charles woke, caught sight of her, and remained speechless with surprise. Eugenie came forward, put the candle on the table, and said in a quivering voice:

“My cousin, I must beg pardon for a wrong I have done you; but God will pardon me—if you—will help me to wipe it out.”

“What is it?” asked Charles, rubbing his eyes.

“I have read those letters.”

Charles colored.

“How did it happen?” she continued; “how came I here? Truly, I do not know. I am tempted not to regret too much that I have read them; they have made me know your heart, your soul, and—”

“And what?” asked Charles.

“Your plans, your need of a sum—”

“My dear cousin—”

“Hush, hush! my cousin, not so loud; we must not wake others. See,” she said, opening her purse, “here are the savings of a poor girl who wants nothing. Charles, accept them! This morning I was ignorant of the value of money; you have taught it to me. It is but a means, after all. A cousin is almost a brother; you can surely borrow the purse of your sister.”

Eugenie, as much a woman as a young girl, never dreamed of refusal; but her cousin remained silent.

“Oh! you will not refuse?” cried Eugenie, the beatings of whose heart could be heard in the deep silence.

Her cousin’s hesitation mortified her; but the sore need of his position came clearer still to her mind, and she knelt down.

“I will never rise till you have taken that gold!” she said. “My cousin, I implore you, answer me! let me know if you respect me, if you are generous, if—”

As he heard this cry of noble distress the young man’s tears fell upon his cousin’s hands, which he had caught in his own to keep her from kneeling. As the warm tears touched her, Eugenie sprang to the purse and poured its contents upon the table.

“Ah! yes, yes, you consent?” she said, weeping with joy. “Fear nothing, my cousin, you will be rich. This gold will bring you happiness; some day you shall bring it back to me,—are we not partners? I will obey all conditions. But you should not attach such value to the gift.”

Charles was at last able to express his feelings.

“Yes, Eugenie; my soul would be small indeed if I did not accept. And yet,—gift for gift, confidence for confidence.”

“What do you mean?” she said, frightened.

“Listen, dear cousin; I have here—” He interrupted himself to point out a square box covered with an outer case of leather which was on the drawers. “There,” he continued, “is something as precious to me as life itself. This box was a present from my mother. All day I have been thinking that if she could rise from her grave, she would herself sell the gold which her love for me lavished on this dressing–case; but were I to do so, the act would seem to me a sacrilege.” Eugenie pressed his hand as she heard these last words. “No,” he added, after a slight pause, during which a liquid glance of tenderness passed between them, “no, I will neither sell it nor risk its safety on my journey. Dear Eugenie, you shall be its guardian. Never did friend commit anything more sacred to another. Let me show it to you.”

He went to the box, took it from its outer coverings, opened it, and showed his delighted cousin a dressing–case where the rich workmanship gave to the gold ornaments a value far above their weight.

“What you admire there is nothing,” he said, pushing a secret spring which opened a hidden drawer. “Here is something which to me is worth the whole world.” He drew out two portraits, masterpieces of Madame Mirbel, richly set with pearls.

“Oh, how beautiful! Is it the lady to whom you wrote that—”

“No,” he said, smiling; “this is my mother, and here is my father, your aunt and uncle. Eugenie, I beg you on my knees, keep my treasure safely. If I die and your little fortune is lost, this gold and these pearls will repay you. To you alone could I leave these portraits; you are worthy to keep them. But destroy them at last, so that they may pass into no other hands.” Eugenie was silent. “Ah, yes, say yes! You consent?” he added with winning grace.

Hearing the very words she had just used to her cousin now addressed to herself, she turned upon him a look of love, her first look of loving womanhood,—a glance in which there is nearly as much of coquetry as of inmost depth. He took her hand and kissed it.

“Angel of purity! between us two money is nothing, never can be anything. Feeling, sentiment, must be all henceforth.”

“You are like your mother,—was her voice as soft as yours?”

“Oh! much softer—”

“Yes, for you,” she said, dropping her eyelids. “Come, Charles, go to bed; I wish it; you must be tired. Good–night.” She gently disengaged her hand from those of her cousin, who followed her to her room, lighting the way. When they were both upon the threshold, —

“Ah!” he said, “why am I ruined?”

“What matter?—my father is rich; I think so,” she answered.

“Poor child!” said Charles, making a step into her room and leaning his back against the wall, “if that were so, he would never have let my father die; he would not let you live in this poor way; he would live otherwise himself.”

“But he owns Froidfond.”

“What is Froidfond worth?”

“I don’t know; but he has Noyers.”

“Nothing but a poor farm!”

“He has vineyards and fields.”

“Mere nothing,” said Charles disdainfully. “If your father had only twenty–four thousand francs a year do you suppose you would live in this cold, barren room?” he added, making a step in advance. “Ah! there you will keep my treasures,” he said, glancing at the old cabinet, as if to hide his thoughts.

“Go and sleep,” she said, hindering his entrance into the disordered room.

Charles stepped back, and they bid each other good–night with a mutual smile.

Both fell asleep in the same dream; and from that moment the youth began to wear roses with his mourning. The next day, before breakfast, Madame Grandet found her daughter in the garden in company with Charles. The young man was still sad, as became a poor fellow who, plunged in misfortune, measures the depths of the abyss into which he has fallen, and sees the terrible burden of his whole future life.

“My father will not be home till dinner–time,” said Eugenie, perceiving the anxious look on her mother’s face.

It was easy to trace in the face and manners of the young girl and in the singular sweetness of her voice a unison of thought between her and her cousin. Their souls had espoused each other, perhaps before they even felt the force of the feelings which bound them together. Charles spent the morning in the hall, and his sadness was respected. Each of the three women had occupations of her own. Grandet had left all his affairs unattended to, and a number of persons came on business,—the plumber, the mason, the slater, the carpenter, the diggers, the dressers, the farmers; some to drive a bargain about repairs, others to pay their rent or to be paid themselves for services. Madame Grandet and Eugenie were obliged to go and come and listen to the interminable talk of all these workmen and country folk. Nanon put away in her kitchen the produce which they brought as tribute. She always waited for her master’s orders before she knew what portion was to be used in the house and what was to be sold in the market. It was the goodman’s custom, like that of a great many country gentlemen, to drink his bad wine and eat his spoiled fruit.

Towards five in the afternoon Grandet returned from Angers, having made fourteen thousand francs by the exchange on his gold, bringing home in his wallet good treasury–notes which bore interest until the day he should invest them in the Funds. He had left Cornoiller at Angers to look after the horses, which were well–nigh foundered, with orders to bring them home slowly after they were rested.

“I have got back from Angers, wife,” he said; “I am hungry.”

Nanon called out to him from the kitchen: “Haven’t you eaten anything since yesterday?”

“Nothing,” answered the old man.

Nanon brought in the soup. Des Grassins came to take his client’s orders just as the family sat down to dinner. Grandet had not even observed his nephew.

“Go on eating, Grandet,” said the banker; “we can talk. Do you know what gold is worth in Angers? They have come from Nantes after it? I shall send some of ours.”

“Don’t send any,” said Grandet; “they have got enough. We are such old friends, I ought to save you from such a loss of time.”

“But gold is worth thirteen francs fifty centimes.”

“Say *was* worth—”

“Where the devil have they got any?”

“I went to Angers last night,” answered Grandet in a low voice.

The banker shook with surprise. Then a whispered conversation began between the two, during which Grandet and des Grassins frequently looked at Charles. Presently des Grassins gave a start of astonishment; probably Grandet was then instructing him to invest the sum which was to give him a hundred thousand francs a year in the Funds.

“Monsieur Grandet,” said the banker to Charles, “I am starting for Paris; if you have any commissions—”

“None, monsieur, I thank you,” answered Charles.

“Thank him better than that, nephew. Monsieur is going to settle the affairs of the house of Guillaume Grandet.”

“Is there any hope?” said Charles eagerly.

“What!” exclaimed his uncle, with well–acted pride, “are you not my nephew? Your honor is ours. Is not your name Grandet?”

Charles rose, seized Pere Grandet, kissed him, turned pale, and left the room. Eugenie looked at her father with admiration.

“Well, good–by, des Grassins; it is all in your hands. Decoy those people as best you can; lead ‘em by the nose.”

The two diplomatists shook hands. The old cooper accompanied the banker to the front door. Then, after closing it, he came back and plunged into his armchair, saying to Nanon, —

“Get me some black–currant ratafia.”

Too excited, however, to remain long in one place, he got up, looked at the portrait of Monsieur de la Bertelliere, and began to sing, doing what Nanon called his dancing steps, —

“Dans les gardes francaises

J’avais un bon papa.”

Nanon, Madame Grandet, and Eugenie looked at each other in silence. The hilarity of the master always frightened them when it reached its climax. The evening was soon over. Pere Grandet chose to go to bed early, and when he went to bed, everybody else was expected to go too; like as when Augustus drank, Poland was drunk. On this occasion Nanon, Charles, and Eugenie were not less tired than the master. As for Madame Grandet, she slept, ate, drank, and walked according to the will of her husband. However, during the two hours consecrated to digestion, the cooper, more facetious than he had ever been in his life, uttered a number of his own particular apothegms,—a single one of which will give the measure of his mind. When he had drunk his ratafia, he looked at his glass and said,—

“You have no sooner put your lips to a glass than it is empty! Such is life. You can’t have and hold. Gold won’t circulate and stay in your purse. If it were not for that, life would be too fine.”

He was jovial and benevolent. When Nanon came with her spinning–wheel, “You must be tired,” he said; “put away your hemp.”

“Ah, bah! then I shall get sleepy,” she answered.

“Poor Nanon! Will you have some ratafia?”

“I won’t refuse a good offer; madame makes it a deal better than the apothecaries. What they sell is all drugs.”

“They put too much sugar,” said the master; “you can’t taste anything else.”

IX

The following day the family, meeting at eight o'clock for the early breakfast, made a picture of genuine domestic intimacy. Grief had drawn Madame Grandet, Eugenie, and Charles *en rapport*; even Nanon sympathized, without knowing why. The four now made one family. As to the old man, his satisfied avarice and the certainty of soon getting rid of the dandy without having to pay more than his journey to Nantes, made him nearly indifferent to his presence in the house. He left the two children, as he called Charles and Eugenie, free to conduct themselves as they pleased, under the eye of Madame Grandet, in whom he had implicit confidence as to all that concerned public and religious morality. He busied himself in straightening the boundaries of his fields and ditches along the high–road, in his poplar–plantations beside the Loire, in the winter work of his vineyards, and at Froidfond. All these things occupied his whole time.

For Eugenie the springtime of love had come. Since the scene at night when she gave her little treasure to her cousin, her heart had followed the treasure. Confederates in the same secret, they looked at each other with a mutual intelligence which sank to the depth of their consciousness, giving a closer communion, a more intimate relation to their feelings, and putting them, so to speak, beyond the pale of ordinary life. Did not their near relationship warrant the gentleness in their tones, the tenderness in their glances? Eugenie took delight in lulling her cousin's pain with the pretty childish joys of a new–born love. Are there no sweet similitudes between the birth of love and the birth of life? Do we not rock the babe with gentle songs and softest glances? Do we not tell it marvellous tales of the golden future? Hope herself, does she not spread her radiant wings above its head? Does it not shed, with infant fickleness, its tears of sorrow and its tears of joy? Does it not fret for trifles, cry for the pretty pebbles with which to build its shifting palaces, for the flowers forgotten as soon as plucked? Is it not eager to grasp the coming time, to spring forward into life? Love is our second transformation. Childhood and love were one and the same thing to Eugenie and to Charles; it was a first passion, with all its child–like play, —the more caressing to their hearts because they now were wrapped in sadness. Struggling at birth against the gloom of mourning, their love was only the more in harmony with the provincial plainness of that gray and ruined house. As they exchanged a few words beside the well in the silent court, or lingered in the garden for the sunset hour, sitting on a mossy seat saying to each other the infinite nothings of love, or mused in the silent calm which reigned between the house and the ramparts like that beneath the arches of a church, Charles comprehended the sanctity of love; for his great lady, his dear Annette, had taught him only its stormy troubles. At this moment he left the worldly passion, coquettish, vain, and showy as it was, and turned to the true, pure love. He loved even the house, whose customs no longer seemed to him ridiculous. He got up early in the mornings that he might talk with Eugenie for a moment before her father came to dole out the provisions; when the steps of the old man sounded on the staircase he escaped into the garden. The small criminality of this morning *tete–a–tete* which Nanon pretended not to see, gave to their innocent love the lively charm of a forbidden joy.

After breakfast, when Grandet had gone to his fields and his other occupations, Charles

remained with the mother and daughter, finding an unknown pleasure in holding their skeins, in watching them at work, in listening to their quiet prattle. The simplicity of this half–monastic life, which revealed to him the beauty of these souls, unknown and unknowing of the world, touched him keenly. He had believed such morals impossible in France, and admitted their existence nowhere but in Germany; even so, they seemed to him fabulous, only real in the novels of Auguste Lafontaine. Soon Eugenie became to him the Margaret of Goethe—before her fall. Day by day his words, his looks enraptured the poor girl, who yielded herself up with delicious non–resistance to the current of love; she caught her happiness as a swimmer seizes the overhanging branch of a willow to draw himself from the river and lie at rest upon its shore. Did no dread of a coming absence sadden the happy hours of those fleeting days? Daily some little circumstance reminded them of the parting that was at hand.

Three days after the departure of des Grassins, Grandet took his nephew to the Civil courts, with the solemnity which country people attach to all legal acts, that he might sign a deed surrendering his rights in his father’s estate. Terrible renunciation! species of domestic apostasy! Charles also went before Maitre Cruchot to make two powers of attorney,—one for des Grassins, the other for the friend whom he had charged with the sale of his belongings. After that he attended to all the formalities necessary to obtain a passport for foreign countries; and finally, when he received his simple mourning clothes from Paris, he sent for the tailor of Saumur and sold to him his useless wardrobe. This last act pleased Grandet exceedingly.

“Ah! now you look like a man prepared to embark and make your fortune,” he said, when Charles appeared in a surtout of plain black cloth. “Good! very good!”

“I hope you will believe, monsieur,” answered his nephew, “that I shall always try to conform to my situation.”

“What’s that?” said his uncle, his eyes lighting up at a handful of gold which Charles was carrying.

“Monsieur, I have collected all my buttons and rings and other superfluities which may have some value; but not knowing any one in Saumur, I wanted to ask you to—”

“To buy them?” said Grandet, interrupting him.

“No, uncle; only to tell me of an honest man who—”

“Give me those things, I will go upstairs and estimate their value; I will come back and tell you what it is to a fraction. Jeweller’s gold,” examining a long chain, “eighteen or nineteen carats.”

The goodman held out his huge hand and received the mass of gold, which he carried away.

“Cousin,” said Grandet, “may I offer you these two buttons? They can fasten ribbons round your wrists; that sort of bracelet is much the fashion just now.”

“I accept without hesitation,” she answered, giving him an understanding look.

“Aunt, here is my mother’s thimble; I have always kept it carefully in my dressing–case,” said Charles, presenting a pretty gold thimble to Madame Grandet, who for many years

had longed for one.

“I cannot thank you; no words are possible, my nephew,” said the poor mother, whose eyes filled with tears. “Night and morning in my prayers I shall add one for you, the most earnest of all—for those who travel. If I die, Eugenie will keep this treasure for you.”

“They are worth nine hundred and eighty–nine francs, seventy–five centimes,” said Grandet, opening the door. “To save you the pain of selling them, I will advance the money—in *livres*.”

The word *livres* on the littoral of the Loire signifies that crown prices of six *livres* are to be accepted as six francs without deduction.

“I dared not propose it to you,” answered Charles; “but it was most repugnant to me to sell my jewels to some second–hand dealer in your own town. People should wash their dirty linen at home, as Napoleon said. I thank you for your kindness.”

Grandet scratched his ear, and there was a moment’s silence.

“My dear uncle,” resumed Charles, looking at him with an uneasy air, as if he feared to wound his feelings, “my aunt and cousin have been kind enough to accept a trifling remembrance of me. Will you allow me to give you these sleeve–buttons, which are useless to me now? They will remind you of a poor fellow who, far away, will always think of those who are henceforth all his family.”

“My lad, my lad, you mustn’t rob yourself this way! Let me see, wife, what have you got?” he added, turning eagerly to her. “Ah! a gold thimble. And you, little girl? What! diamond buttons? Yes, I’ll accept your present, nephew,” he answered, shaking Charles by the hand. “But—you must let me—pay—your—yes, your passage to the Indies. Yes, I wish to pay your passage because—d’ye see, my boy?—in valuing your jewels I estimated only the weight of the gold; very likely the workmanship is worth something. So let us settle it that I am to give you fifteen hundred francs—in *livres*; Cruchot will lend them to me. I haven’t got a copper farthing here,—unless Perrotet, who is behindhand with his rent, should pay up. By the bye, I’ll go and see him.”

He took his hat, put on his gloves, and went out.

“Then you are really going?” said Eugenie to her cousin, with a sad look, mingled with admiration.

“I must,” he said, bowing his head.

For some days past, Charles’s whole bearing, manners, and speech had become those of a man who, in spite of his profound affliction, feels the weight of immense obligations and has the strength to gather courage from misfortune. He no longer repined, he became a man. Eugenie never augured better of her cousin’s character than when she saw him come down in the plain black clothes which suited well with his pale face and sombre countenance. On that day the two women put on their own mourning, and all three assisted at a Requiem celebrated in the parish church for the soul of the late Guillaume Grandet.

At the second breakfast Charles received letters from Paris and began to read them.

“Well, cousin, are you satisfied with the management of your affairs?” said Eugenie in a

low voice.

“Never ask such questions, my daughter,” said Grandet. “What the devil! do I tell you my affairs? Why do you poke your nose into your cousin’s? Let the lad alone!”

“Oh! I haven’t any secrets,” said Charles.

“Ta, ta, ta, ta, nephew; you’ll soon find out that you must hold your tongue in business.”

When the two lovers were alone in the garden, Charles said to Eugenie, drawing her down on the old bench beneath the walnut–tree,—

“I did right to trust Alphonse; he has done famously. He has managed my affairs with prudence and good faith. I now owe nothing in Paris. All my things have been sold; and he tells me that he has taken the advice of an old sea–captain and spent three thousand francs on a commercial outfit of European curiosities which will be sure to be in demand in the Indies. He has sent my trunks to Nantes, where a ship is loading for San Domingo. In five days, Eugenie, we must bid each other farewell—perhaps forever, at least for years. My outfit and ten thousand francs, which two of my friends send me, are a very small beginning. I cannot look to return for many years. My dear cousin, do not weight your life in the scales with mine; I may perish; some good marriage may be offered to you—”

“Do you love me?” she said.

“Oh, yes! indeed, yes!” he answered, with a depth of tone that revealed an equal depth of feeling.

“I shall wait, Charles—Good heavens! there is my father at his window,” she said, repulsing her cousin, who leaned forward to kiss her.

She ran quickly under the archway. Charles followed her. When she saw him, she retreated to the foot of the staircase and opened the swing–door; then, scarcely knowing where she was going, Eugenie reached the corner near Nanon’s den, in the darkest end of the passage. There Charles caught her hand and drew her to his heart. Passing his arm about her waist, he made her lean gently upon him. Eugenie no longer resisted; she received and gave the purest, the sweetest, and yet, withal, the most unreserved of kisses.

“Dear Eugenie, a cousin is better than a brother, for he can marry you,” said Charles.

“So be it!” cried Nanon, opening the door of her lair.

The two lovers, alarmed, fled into the hall, where Eugenie took up her work and Charles began to read the litanies of the Virgin in Madame Grandet’s prayer–book.

“Mercy!” cried Nanon, “now they’re saying their prayers.”

As soon as Charles announced his immediate departure, Grandet bestirred himself to testify much interest in his nephew. He became very liberal of all that cost him nothing; took pains to find a packer; declared the man asked too much for his cases; insisted on making them himself out of old planks; got up early in the morning to fit and plane and nail together the strips, out of which he made, to his own satisfaction, some strong cases, in which he packed all Charles’s effects; he also took upon himself to send them by boat down the Loire, to insure them, and get them to Nantes in proper time.

After the kiss taken in the passage, the hours fled for Eugenie with frightful rapidity.

Sometimes she thought of following her cousin. Those who have known that most endearing of all passions,—the one whose duration is each day shortened by time, by age, by mortal illness, by human chances and fatalities,—they will understand the poor girl's tortures. She wept as she walked in the garden, now so narrow to her, as indeed the court, the house, the town all seemed. She launched in thought upon the wide expanse of the ocean he was about to traverse. At last the eve of his departure came. That morning, in the absence of Grandet and of Nanon, the precious case which contained the two portraits was solemnly installed in the only drawer of the old cabinet which could be locked, where the now empty velvet purse was lying. This deposit was not made without a goodly number of tears and kisses. When Eugenie placed the key within her bosom she had no courage to forbid the kiss with which Charles sealed the act.

"It shall never leave that place, my friend," she said.

"Then my heart will be always there."

"Ah! Charles, it is not right," she said, as though she blamed him.

"Are we not married?" he said. "I have thy promise,—then take mine."

"Thine; I am thine forever!" they each said, repeating the words twice over.

No promise made upon this earth was ever purer. The innocent sincerity of Eugenie had sanctified for a moment the young man's love.

On the morrow the breakfast was sad. Nanon herself, in spite of the gold–embroidered robe and the Jeannette cross bestowed by Charles, had tears in her eyes.

"The poor dear monsieur who is going on the seas—oh, may God guide him!"

At half–past ten the whole family started to escort Charles to the diligence for Nantes. Nanon let loose the dog, locked the door, and insisted on carrying the young man's carpet–bag. All the tradesmen in the tortuous old street were on the sill of their shop–doors to watch the procession, which was joined in the market–place by Maitre Cruchot.

"Eugenie, be sure you don't cry," said her mother.

"Nephew," said Grandet, in the doorway of the inn from which the coach started, kissing Charles on both cheeks, "depart poor, return rich; you will find the honor of your father safe. I answer for that myself, I—Grandet; for it will only depend on you to—"

"Ah! my uncle, you soften the bitterness of my departure. Is it not the best gift that you could make me?"

Not understanding his uncle's words which he had thus interrupted, Charles shed tears of gratitude upon the tanned cheeks of the old miser, while Eugenie pressed the hand of her cousin and that of her father with all her strength. The notary smiled, admiring the sly speech of the old man, which he alone had understood. The family stood about the coach until it started; then as it disappeared upon the bridge, and its rumble grew fainter in the distance, Grandet said:

"Good–by to you!"

Happily no one but Maitre Cruchot heard the exclamation. Eugenie and her mother had gone to a corner of the quay from which they could still see the diligence and wave their

white handkerchiefs, to which Charles made answer by displaying his.

“Ah! mother, would that I had the power of God for a single moment,” said Eugenie, when she could no longer see her lover’s handkerchief.

* * * * *

Not to interrupt the current of events which are about to take place in the bosom of the Grandet family, it is necessary to cast a forestalling eye upon the various operations which the goodman carried on in Paris by means of Monsieur des Grassins. A month after the latter’s departure from Saumur, Grandet, became possessed of a certificate of a hundred thousand francs a year from his investment in the Funds, bought at eighty francs net. The particulars revealed at his death by the inventory of his property threw no light upon the means which his suspicious nature took to remit the price of the investment and receive the certificate thereof. Maitre Cruchot was of opinion that Nanon, unknown to herself, was the trusty instrument by which the money was transported; for about this time she was absent five days, under a pretext of putting things to rights at Froidfond,—as if the goodman were capable of leaving anything lying about or out of order!

In all that concerned the business of the house of Guillaume Grandet the old cooper’s intentions were fulfilled to the letter. The Bank of France, as everybody knows, affords exact information about all the large fortunes in Paris and the provinces. The names of des Grassins and Felix Grandet of Saumur were well known there, and they enjoyed the esteem bestowed on financial celebrities whose wealth comes from immense and unencumbered territorial possessions. The arrival of the Saumur banker for the purpose, it was said, of honorably liquidating the affairs of Grandet of Paris, was enough to avert the shame of protested notes from the memory of the defunct merchant. The seals on the property were taken off in presence of the creditors, and the notary employed by Grandet went to work at once on the inventory of the assets. Soon after this, des Grassins called a meeting of the creditors, who unanimously elected him, conjointly with Francois Keller, the head of a rich banking–house and one of those principally interested in the affair, as liquidators, with full power to protect both the honor of the family and the interests of the claimants. The credit of Grandet of Saumur, the hopes he diffused by means of des Grassins in the minds of all concerned, facilitated the transactions. Not a single creditor proved recalcitrant; no one thought of passing his claim to his profit–and–loss account; each and all said confidently, “Grandet of Saumur will pay.”

Six months went by. The Parisians had redeemed the notes in circulation as they fell due, and held them under lock and key in their desks. First result aimed at by the old cooper! Nine months after this preliminary meeting, the two liquidators distributed forty–seven per cent to each creditor on his claim. This amount was obtained by the sale of the securities, property, and possessions of all kinds belonging to the late Guillaume Grandet, and was paid over with scrupulous fidelity. Unimpeachable integrity was shown in the transaction. The creditors gratefully acknowledged the remarkable and incontestable honor displayed by the Grandets. When these praises had circulated for a certain length of time, the creditors asked for the rest of their money. It became necessary to write a collective letter to Grandet of Saumur.

“Here it comes!” said the old man as he threw the letter into the fire. “Patience, my good

friends!”

In answer to the proposals contained in the letter, Grandet of Saumur demanded that all vouchers for claims against the estate of his brother should be deposited with a notary, together with acquittances for the forty–seven per cent already paid; he made this demand under pretence of sifting the accounts and finding out the exact condition of the estate. It roused at once a variety of difficulties. Generally speaking, the creditor is a species of maniac, ready to agree to anything one day, on the next breathing fire and slaughter; later on, he grows amicable and easy–going. To–day his wife is good–humored, his last baby has cut its first tooth, all is well at home, and he is determined not to lose a sou; on the morrow it rains, he can’t go out, he is gloomy, he says yes to any proposal that is made to him, so long as it will put an end to the affair; on the third day he declares he must have guarantees; by the end of the month he wants his debtor’s head, and becomes at heart an executioner. The creditor is a good deal like the sparrow on whose tail confiding children are invited to put salt,—with this difference, that he applies the image to his claim, the proceeds of which he is never able to lay hold of. Grandet had studied the atmospheric variations of creditors, and the creditors of his brother justified all his calculations. Some were angry, and flatly refused to give in their vouchers.

“Very good; so much the better,” said Grandet, rubbing his hands over the letter in which des Grassins announced the fact.

Others agreed to the demand, but only on condition that their rights should be fully guaranteed; they renounced none, and even reserved the power of ultimately compelling a failure. On this began a long correspondence, which ended in Grandet of Saumur agreeing to all conditions. By means of this concession the placable creditors were able to bring the dissatisfied creditors to reason. The deposit was then made, but not without sundry complaints.

“Your goodman,” they said to des Grassins, “is tricking us.”

Twenty–three months after the death of Guillaume Grandet many of the creditors, carried away by more pressing business in the markets of Paris, had forgotten their Grandet claims, or only thought of them to say:

“I begin to believe that forty–seven per cent is all I shall ever get out of that affair.”

The old cooper had calculated on the power of time, which, as he used to say, is a pretty good devil after all. By the end of the third year des Grassins wrote to Grandet that he had brought the creditors to agree to give up their claims for ten per cent on the two million four hundred thousand francs still due by the house of Grandet. Grandet answered that the notary and the broker whose shameful failures had caused the death of his brother were still living, that they might now have recovered their credit, and that they ought to be sued, so as to get something out of them towards lessening the total of the deficit.

By the end of the fourth year the liabilities were definitely estimated at a sum of twelve hundred thousand francs. Many negotiations, lasting over six months, took place between the creditors and the liquidators, and between the liquidators and Grandet. To make a long story short, Grandet of Saumur, anxious by this time to get out of the affair, told the liquidators, about the ninth month of the fourth year, that his nephew had made a fortune in the Indies and was disposed to pay his father’s debts in full; he therefore could not take

upon himself to make any settlement without previously consulting him; he had written to him, and was expecting an answer. The creditors were held in check until the middle of the fifth year by the words, “payment in full,” which the wily old miser threw out from time to time as he laughed in his beard, saying with a smile and an oath, “Those Parisians!”

But the creditors were reserved for a fate unexampled in the annals of commerce. When the events of this history bring them once more into notice, they will be found still in the position Grandet had resolved to force them into from the first.

As soon as the Funds reached a hundred and fifteen, Pere Grandet sold out his interests and withdrew two million four hundred thousand francs in gold, to which he added, in his coffers, the six hundred thousand francs compound interest which he had derived from the capital. Des Grassins now lived in Paris. In the first place he had been made a deputy; then he became infatuated (father of a family as he was, though horribly bored by the provincial life of Saumur) with a pretty actress at the Theatre de Madame, known as Florine, and he presently relapsed into the old habits of his army life. It is useless to speak of his conduct; Saumur considered it profoundly immoral. His wife was fortunate in the fact of her property being settled upon herself, and in having sufficient ability to keep up the banking–house in Saumur, which was managed in her name and repaired the breach in her fortune caused by the extravagance of her husband. The Cruchotines made so much talk about the false position of the quasi–widow that she married her daughter very badly, and was forced to give up all hope of an alliance between Eugenie Grandet and her son. Adolphe joined his father in Paris and became, it was said, a worthless fellow. The Cruchots triumphed.

“Your husband hasn’t common sense,” said Grandet as he lent Madame des Grassins some money on a note securely endorsed. “I am very sorry for you, for you are a good little woman.”

“Ah, monsieur,” said the poor lady, “who could have believed that when he left Saumur to go to Paris on your business he was going to his ruin?”

“Heaven is my witness, madame, that up to the last moment I did all I could to prevent him from going. Monsieur le president was most anxious to take his place; but he was determined to go, and now we all see why.”

In this way Grandet made it quite plain that he was under no obligation to des Grassins.

* * * * *

In all situations women have more cause for suffering than men, and they suffer more. Man has strength and the power of exercising it; he acts, moves, thinks, occupies himself; he looks ahead, and sees consolation in the future. It was thus with Charles. But the woman stays at home; she is always face to face with the grief from which nothing distracts her; she goes down to the depths of the abyss which yawns before her, measures it, and often fills it with her tears and prayers. Thus did Eugenie. She initiated herself into her destiny. To feel, to love, to suffer, to devote herself,—is not this the sum of woman’s life? Eugenie was to be in all things a woman, except in the one thing that consoles for all. Her happiness, picked up like nails scattered on a wall—to use the fine simile of Bossuet —would never so much as fill even the hollow of her hand. Sorrows are never long in

coming; for her they came soon. The day after Charles's departure the house of Monsieur Grandet resumed its ordinary aspect in the eyes of all, except in those of Eugenie, to whom it grew suddenly empty. She wished, if it could be done unknown to her father, that Charles's room might be kept as he had left it. Madame Grandet and Nanon were willing accomplices in this *statu quo*.

"Who knows but he may come back sooner than we think for?" she said.

"Ah, don't I wish I could see him back!" answered Nanon. "I took to him! He was such a dear, sweet young man,—pretty too, with his curly hair." Eugenie looked at Nanon. "Holy Virgin! don't look at me that way, mademoiselle; your eyes are like those of a lost soul."

From that day the beauty of Mademoiselle Grandet took a new character. The solemn thoughts of love which slowly filled her soul, and the dignity of the woman beloved, gave to her features an illumination such as painters render by a halo. Before the coming of her cousin, Eugenie might be compared to the Virgin before the conception; after he had gone, she was like the Virgin Mother,—she had given birth to love. These two Marys so different, so well represented by Spanish art, embody one of those shining symbols with which Christianity abounds.

Returning from Mass on the morning after Charles's departure,—having made a vow to hear it daily,—Eugenie bought a map of the world, which she nailed up beside her looking–glass, that she might follow her cousin on his westward way, that she might put herself, were it ever so little, day by day into the ship that bore him, and see him and ask him a thousand questions,—"Art thou well? Dost thou suffer? Dost thou think of me when the star, whose beauty and usefulness thou hast taught me to know, shines upon thee?" In the mornings she sat pensive beneath the walnut–tree, on the worm–eaten bench covered with gray lichens, where they had said to each other so many precious things, so many trifles, where they had built the pretty castles of their future home. She thought of the future now as she looked upward to the bit of sky which was all the high walls suffered her to see; then she turned her eyes to the angle where the sun crept on, and to the roof above the room in which he had slept. Hers was the solitary love, the persistent love, which glides into every thought and becomes the substance, or, as our fathers might have said, the tissue of life. When the would–be friends of Pere Grandet came in the evening for their game at cards, she was gay and dissimulating; but all the morning she talked of Charles with her mother and Nanon. Nanon had brought herself to see that she could pity the sufferings of her young mistress without failing in her duty to the old master, and she would say to Eugenie,—

"If I had a man for myself I'd—I'd follow him to hell, yes, I'd exterminate myself for him; but I've none. I shall die and never know what life is. Would you believe, mamz'elle, that old Cornoiller (a good fellow all the same) is always round my petticoats for the sake of my money,—just for all the world like the rats who come smelling after the master's cheese and paying court to you? I see it all; I've got a shrewd eye, though I am as big as a steeple. Well, mamz'elle, it pleases me, but it isn't love."

X

Two months went by. This domestic life, once so monotonous, was now quickened with the intense interest of a secret that bound these women intimately together. For them Charles lived and moved beneath the grim gray rafters of the hall. Night and morning Eugenie opened the dressing–case and gazed at the portrait of her aunt. One Sunday morning her mother surprised her as she stood absorbed in finding her cousin's features in his mother's face. Madame Grandet was then for the first time admitted into the terrible secret of the exchange made by Charles against her daughter's treasure.

"You gave him all!" cried the poor mother, terrified. "What will you say to your father on New Year's Day when he asks to see your gold?"

Eugenie's eyes grew fixed, and the two women lived through mortal terror for more than half the morning. They were so troubled in mind that they missed high Mass, and only went to the military service. In three days the year 1819 would come to an end. In three days a terrible drama would begin, a bourgeois tragedy, without poison, or dagger, or the spilling of blood; but—as regards the actors in it—more cruel than all the fabled horrors in the family of the Atrides.

"What will become of us?" said Madame Grandet to her daughter, letting her knitting fall upon her knees.

The poor mother had gone through such anxiety for the past two months that the woollen sleeves which she needed for the coming winter were not yet finished. This domestic fact, insignificant as it seems, bore sad results. For want of those sleeves, a chill seized her in the midst of a sweat caused by a terrible explosion of anger on the part of her husband.

"I have been thinking, my poor child, that if you had confided your secret to me we should have had time to write to Monsieur des Grassins in Paris. He might have sent us gold pieces like yours; though Grandet knows them all, perhaps—"

"Where could we have got the money?"

"I would have pledged my own property. Besides, Monsieur des Grassins would have—"

"It is too late," said Eugenie in a broken, hollow voice. "To–morrow morning we must go and wish him a happy New Year in his chamber."

"But, my daughter, why should I not consult the Cruchots?"

"No, no; it would be delivering me up to them, and putting ourselves in their power. Besides, I have chosen my course. I have done right, I repent of nothing. God will protect me. His will be done! Ah! mother, if you had read his letter, you, too, would have thought only of him."

The next morning, January 1, 1820, the horrible fear to which mother and daughter were a prey suggested to their minds a natural excuse by which to escape the solemn entrance into Grandet's chamber. The winter of 1819–1820 was one of the coldest of that epoch. The snow encumbered the roofs.

Madame Grandet called to her husband as soon as she heard him stirring in his chamber, and said,—

“Grandet, will you let Nanon light a fire here for me? The cold is so sharp that I am freezing under the bedclothes. At my age I need some comforts. Besides,” she added, after a slight pause, “Eugenie shall come and dress here; the poor child might get an illness from dressing in her cold room in such weather. Then we will go and wish you a happy New Year beside the fire in the hall.”

“Ta, ta, ta, ta, what a tongue! a pretty way to begin the new year, Madame Grandet! You never talked so much before; but you haven’t been sopping your bread in wine, I know that.”

There was a moment’s silence.

“Well,” resumed the goodman, who no doubt had some reason of his own for agreeing to his wife’s request, “I’ll do what you ask, Madame Grandet. You are a good woman, and I don’t want any harm to happen to you at your time of life,—though as a general thing the Bertellieres are as sound as a roach. Hein! isn’t that so?” he added after a pause. “Well, I forgive them; we got their property in the end.” And he coughed.

“You are very gay this morning, monsieur,” said the poor woman gravely.

“I’m always gay,—

> “‘Gai, gai, gai, le tonnelier,
> Raccommodez votre cuvier!’”

he answered, entering his wife’s room fully dressed. “Yes, on my word, it is cold enough to freeze you solid. We shall have a fine breakfast, wife. Des Grassins has sent me a pate–de–foie–gras truffled! I am going now to get it at the coach–office. There’ll be a double napoleon for Eugenie in the package,” he whispered in Madame Grandet’s ear. “I have no gold left, wife. I had a few stray pieces—I don’t mind telling you that—but I had to let them go in business.”

Then, by way of celebrating the new year, he kissed her on the forehead.

“Eugenie,” cried the mother, when Grandet was fairly gone, “I don’t know which side of the bed your father got out of, but he is good–tempered this morning. Perhaps we shall come out safe after all?”

“What’s happened to the master?” said Nanon, entering her mistress’s room to light the fire. “First place, he said, ‘Good–morning; happy New Year, you big fool! Go and light my wife’s fire, she’s cold’; and then, didn’t I feel silly when he held out his hand and gave me a six–franc piece, which isn’t worn one bit? Just look at it, madame! Oh, the kind man! He is a good man, that’s a fact. There are some people who the older they get the harder they grow; but he,—why he’s getting soft and improving with time, like your ratafia! He is a good, good man—”

The secret of Grandet’s joy lay in the complete success of his speculation. Monsieur des Grassins, after deducting the amount which the old cooper owed him for the discount on a hundred and fifty thousand francs in Dutch notes, and for the surplus which he had

advanced to make up the sum required for the investment in the Funds which was to produce a hundred thousand francs a year, had now sent him, by the diligence, thirty thousand francs in silver coin, the remainder of his first half–year's interest, informing him at the same time that the Funds had already gone up in value. They were then quoted at eighty–nine; the shrewdest capitalists bought in, towards the last of January, at ninety–three. Grandet had thus gained in two months twelve per cent on his capital; he had simplified his accounts, and would in future receive fifty thousand francs interest every six months, without incurring any taxes or costs for repairs. He understood at last what it was to invest money in the public securities,—a system for which provincials have always shown a marked repugnance,—and at the end of five years he found himself master of a capital of six millions, which increased without much effort of his own, and which, joined to the value and proceeds of his territorial possessions, gave him a fortune that was absolutely colossal. The six francs bestowed on Nanon were perhaps the reward of some great service which the poor servant had rendered to her master unawares.

"Oh! oh! where's Pere Grandet going? He has been scurrying about since sunrise as if to a fire," said the tradespeople to each other as they opened their shops for the day.

When they saw him coming back from the wharf, followed by a porter from the coach–office wheeling a barrow which was laden with sacks, they all had their comments to make:—

"Water flows to the river; the old fellow was running after his gold," said one.

"He gets it from Paris and Froidfond and Holland," said another.

"He'll end by buying up Saumur," cried a third.

"He doesn't mind the cold, he's so wrapped up in his gains," said a wife to her husband.

"Hey! hey! Monsieur Grandet, if that's too heavy for you," said a cloth–dealer, his nearest neighbor, "I'll take it off your hands."

"Heavy?" said the cooper, "I should think so; it's all sous!"

"Silver sous," said the porter in a low voice.

"If you want me to take care of you, keep your tongue between your teeth," said the goodman to the porter as they reached the door.

"The old fox! I thought he was deaf; seems he can hear fast enough in frosty weather."

"Here's twenty sous for your New Year, and *mum*!" said Grandet. "Be off with you! Nanon shall take back your barrow. Nanon, are the linnets at church?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Then lend a hand! go to work!" he cried, piling the sacks upon her. In a few moments all were carried up to his inner room, where he shut himself in with them. "When breakfast is ready, knock on the wall," he said as he disappeared. "Take the barrow back to the coach–office."

The family did not breakfast that day until ten o'clock.

"Your father will not ask to see your gold downstairs," said Madame Grandet as they got

back from Mass. “You must pretend to be very chilly. We may have time to replace the treasure before your fete–day.”

Grandet came down the staircase thinking of his splendid speculation in government securities, and wondering how he could metamorphose his Parisian silver into solid gold; he was making up his mind to invest in this way everything he could lay hands on until the Funds should reach a par value. Fatal reverie for Eugenie! As soon as he came in, the two women wished him a happy New Year,—his daughter by putting her arms round his neck and caressing him; Madame Grandet gravely and with dignity.

“Ha! ha! my child,” he said, kissing his daughter on both cheeks. “I work for you, don’t you see? I think of your happiness. Must have money to be happy. Without money there’s not a particle of happiness. Here! there’s a new napoleon for you. I sent to Paris for it. On my word of honor, it’s all the gold I have; you are the only one that has got any gold. I want to see your gold, little one.”

“Oh! it is too cold; let us have breakfast,” answered Eugenie.

“Well, after breakfast, then; it will help the digestion. That fat des Grassins sent me the pate. Eat as much as you like, my children, it costs nothing. Des Grassins is getting along very well. I am satisfied with him. The old fish is doing Charles a good service, and gratis too. He is making a very good settlement of that poor deceased Grandet’s business. Hoo! hoo!” he muttered, with his mouth full, after a pause, “how good it is! Eat some, wife; that will feed you for at least two days.”

“I am not hungry. I am very poorly; you know that.”

“Ah, bah! you can stuff yourself as full as you please without danger, you’re a Bertelliere; they are all hearty. You are a bit yellow, that’s true; but I like yellow, myself.”

The expectation of ignominious and public death is perhaps less horrible to a condemned criminal than the anticipation of what was coming after breakfast to Madame Grandet and Eugenie. The more gleefully the old man talked and ate, the more their hearts shrank within them. The daughter, however, had an inward prop at this crisis,—she gathered strength through love.

“For him! for him!” she cried within her, “I would die a thousand deaths.”

At this thought, she shot a glance at her mother which flamed with courage.

“Clear away,” said Grandet to Nanon when, about eleven o’clock, breakfast was over, “but leave the table. We can spread your little treasure upon it,” he said, looking at Eugenie. “Little? Faith! no; it isn’t little. You possess, in actual value, five thousand nine hundred and fifty–nine francs and the forty I gave you just now. That makes six thousand francs, less one. Well, now see here, little one! I’ll give you that one franc to make up the round number. Hey! what are you listening for, Nanon? Mind your own business; go and do your work.”

Nanon disappeared.

“Now listen, Eugenie; you must give me back your gold. You won’t refuse your father, my little girl, hein?”

The two women were dumb.

“I have no gold myself. I had some, but it is all gone. I’ll give you in return six thousand francs in *livres*, and you are to put them just where I tell you. You mustn’t think anything more about your ‘dozen.’ When I marry you (which will be soon) I shall get you a husband who can give you the finest ‘dozen’ ever seen in the provinces. Now attend to me, little girl. There’s a fine chance for you; you can put your six thousand francs into government funds, and you will receive every six months nearly two hundred francs interest, without taxes, or repairs, or frost, or hail, or floods, or anything else to swallow up the money. Perhaps you don’t like to part with your gold, hey, my girl? Never mind, bring it to me all the same. I’ll get you some more like it,—like those Dutch coins and the *portugaises*, the rupees of Mogul, and the *genovines*,—I’ll give you some more on your fete–days, and in three years you’ll have got back half your little treasure. What’s that you say? Look up, now. Come, go and get it, the precious metal. You ought to kiss me on the eyelids for telling you the secrets and the mysteries of the life and death of money. Yes, silver and gold live and swarm like men; they come, and go, and sweat, and multiply—”

Eugenie rose; but after making a few steps towards the door she turned abruptly, looked her father in the face, and said,—

“I have not got *my* gold.”

“You have not got your gold!” cried Grandet, starting up erect, like a horse that hears a cannon fired beside him.

“No, I have not got it.”

“You are mistaken, Eugenie.”

“No.”

“By the shears of my father!”

Whenever the old man swore that oath the rafters trembled.

“Holy Virgin! Madame is turning pale,” cried Nanon.

“Grandet, your anger will kill me,” said the poor mother.

“Ta, ta, ta, ta! nonsense; you never die in your family! Eugenie, what have you done with your gold?” he cried, rushing upon her.

“Monsieur,” said the daughter, falling at Madame Grandet’s knees, “my mother is ill. Look at her; do not kill her.”

Grandet was frightened by the pallor which overspread his wife’s face, usually so yellow.

“Nanon, help me to bed,” said the poor woman in a feeble voice; “I am dying—”

Nanon gave her mistress an arm, Eugenie gave her another; but it was only with infinite difficulty that they could get her upstairs, she fell with exhaustion at every step. Grandet remained alone. However, in a few moments he went up six or eight stairs and called out,—

“Eugenie, when your mother is in bed, come down.”

“Yes, father.”

She soon came, after reassuring her mother.

“My daughter,” said Grandet, “you will now tell me what you have done with your gold.”

“My father, if you make me presents of which I am not the sole mistress, take them back,” she answered coldly, picking up the napoleon from the chimney–piece and offering it to him.

Grandet seized the coin and slipped it into his breeches’ pocket.

“I shall certainly never give you anything again. Not so much as that!” he said, clicking his thumb–nail against a front tooth. “Do you dare to despise your father? have you no confidence in him? Don’t you know what a father is? If he is nothing for you, he is nothing at all. Where is your gold?”

“Father, I love and respect you, in spite of your anger; but I humbly ask you to remember that I am twenty–three years old. You have told me often that I have attained my majority, and I do not forget it. I have used my money as I chose to use it, and you may be sure that it was put to a good use—”

“What use?”

“That is an inviolable secret,” she answered. “Have you no secrets?”

“I am the head of the family; I have my own affairs.”

“And this is mine.”

“It must be something bad if you can’t tell it to your father, Mademoiselle Grandet.”

“It is good, and I cannot tell it to my father.”

“At least you can tell me when you parted with your gold?”

Eugenie made a negative motion with her head.

“You had it on your birthday, hein?”

She grew as crafty through love as her father was through avarice, and reiterated the negative sign.

“Was there ever such obstinacy! It’s a theft,” cried Grandet, his voice going up in a crescendo which gradually echoed through the house. “What! here, in my own home, under my very eyes, somebody has taken your gold!—the only gold we have!—and I’m not to know who has got it! Gold is a precious thing. Virtuous girls go wrong sometimes, and give—I don’t know what; they do it among the great people, and even among the bourgeoisie. But give their gold!—for you have given it to some one, hein?—”

Eugenie was silent and impassive.

“Was there ever such a daughter? Is it possible that I am your father? If you have invested it anywhere, you must have a receipt—”

“Was I free—yes or no—to do what I would with my own? Was it not mine?”

“You are a child.”

“Of age.”

Dumbfounded by his daughter’s logic, Grandet turned pale and stamped and swore. When at last he found words, he cried: “Serpent! Cursed girl! Ah, deceitful creature! You know I love you, and you take advantage of it. She’d cut her father’s throat! Good God! you’ve given our fortune to that ne’er–do–well,—that dandy with morocco boots! By the shears of my father! I can’t disinherit you, but I curse you,—you and your cousin and your children! Nothing good will come of it! Do you hear? If it was to Charles—but, no; it’s impossible. What! has that wretched fellow robbed me?—”

He looked at his daughter, who continued cold and silent.

“She won’t stir; she won’t flinch! She’s more Grandet than I’m Grandet! Ha! you have not given your gold for nothing? Come, speak the truth!”

Eugenie looked at her father with a sarcastic expression that stung him.

“Eugenie, you are here, in my house,—in your father’s house. If you wish to stay here, you must submit yourself to me. The priests tell you to obey me.” Eugenie bowed her head. “You affront me in all I hold most dear. I will not see you again until you submit. Go to your chamber. You will stay there till I give you permission to leave it. Nanon will bring you bread and water. You hear me—go!”

Eugenie burst into tears and fled up to her mother. Grandet, after marching two or three times round the garden in the snow without heeding the cold, suddenly suspected that his daughter had gone to her mother; only too happy to find her disobedient to his orders, he climbed the stairs with the agility of a cat and appeared in Madame Grandet’s room just as she was stroking Eugenie’s hair, while the girl’s face was hidden in her motherly bosom.

“Be comforted, my poor child,” she was saying; “your father will get over it.”

“She has no father!” said the old man. “Can it be you and I, Madame Grandet, who have given birth to such a disobedient child? A fine education,—religious, too! Well! why are you not in your chamber? Come, to prison, to prison, mademoiselle!”

“Would you deprive me of my daughter, monsieur?” said Madame Grandet, turning towards him a face that was now red with fever.

“If you want to keep her, carry her off! Clear out—out of my house, both of you! Thunder! where is the gold? what’s become of the gold?”

Eugenie rose, looked proudly at her father, and withdrew to her room. Grandet turned the key of the door.

“Nanon,” he cried, “put out the fire in the hall.”

Then he sat down in an armchair beside his wife’s fire and said to her,—

“Undoubtedly she has given the gold to that miserable seducer, Charles, who only wanted our money.”

“I knew nothing about it,” she answered, turning to the other side of the bed, that she might escape the savage glances of her husband. “I suffer so much from your violence that I shall never leave this room, if I trust my own presentiments, till I am carried out of it in my coffin. You ought to have spared me this suffering, monsieur,—you, to whom I have

caused no pain; that is, I think so. Your daughter loves you. I believe her to be as innocent as the babe unborn. Do not make her wretched. Revoke your sentence. The cold is very severe; you may give her some serious illness."

"I will not see her, neither will I speak to her. She shall stay in her room, on bread and water, until she submits to her father. What the devil! shouldn't a father know where the gold in his house has gone to? She owned the only rupees in France, perhaps, and the Dutch ducats and the *genovines*—"

"Monsieur, Eugenie is our only child; and even if she had thrown them into the water—"

"Into the water!" cried her husband; "into the water! You are crazy, Madame Grandet! What I have said is said; you know that well enough. If you want peace in this household, make your daughter confess, pump it out of her. Women understand how to do that better than we do. Whatever she has done, I sha'n't eat her. Is she afraid of me? Even if she has plastered Charles with gold from head to foot, he is on the high seas, and nobody can get at him, hein!"

"But, monsieur—" Excited by the nervous crisis through which she had passed, and by the fate of her daughter, which brought forth all her tenderness and all her powers of mind, Madame Grandet suddenly observed a frightful movement of her husband's wen, and, in the very act of replying, she changed her speech without changing the tones of her voice, —"But, monsieur, I have not more influence over her than you have. She has said nothing to me; she takes after you."

"Tut, tut! Your tongue is hung in the middle this morning. Ta, ta, ta, ta! You are setting me at defiance, I do believe. I daresay you are in league with her."

He looked fixedly at his wife.

"Monsieur Grandet, if you wish to kill me, you have only to go on like this. I tell you, monsieur,—and if it were to cost me my life, I would say it,—you do wrong by your daughter; she is more in the right than you are. That money belonged to her; she is incapable of making any but a good use of it, and God alone has the right to know our good deeds. Monsieur, I implore you, take Eugenie back into favor; forgive her. If you will do this you will lessen the injury your anger has done me; perhaps you will save my life. My daughter! oh, monsieur, give me back my daughter!"

"I shall decamp," he said; "the house is not habitable. A mother and daughter talking and arguing like that! Broooouh! Pouah! A fine New Year's present you've made me, Eugenie," he called out. "Yes, yes, cry away! What you've done will bring you remorse, do you hear? What's the good of taking the sacrament six times every three months, if you give away your father's gold secretly to an idle fellow who'll eat your heart out when you've nothing else to give him? You'll find out some day what your Charles is worth, with his morocco boots and supercilious airs. He has got neither heart nor soul if he dared to carry off a young girl's treasure without the consent of her parents."

When the street–door was shut, Eugenie came out of her room and went to her mother.

"What courage you have had for your daughter's sake!" she said.

"Ah! my child, see where forbidden things may lead us. You forced me to tell a lie."

“I will ask God to punish only me.”

“Is it true,” cried Nanon, rushing in alarmed, “that mademoiselle is to be kept on bread and water for the rest of her life?”

“What does that signify, Nanon?” said Eugenie tranquilly.

“Goodness! do you suppose I’ll eat *frippe* when the daughter of the house is eating dry bread? No, no!”

“Don’t say a word about all this, Nanon,” said Eugenie.

“I’ll be as mute as a fish; but you’ll see!”

* * * * *

Grandet dined alone for the first time in twenty–four years.

“So you’re a widower, monsieur,” said Nanon; “it must be disagreeable to be a widower with two women in the house.”

“I did not speak to you. Hold your jaw, or I’ll turn you off! What is that I hear boiling in your saucepan on the stove?”

“It is grease I’m trying out.”

“There will be some company to–night. Light the fire.”

The Cruchots, Madame des Grassins, and her son arrived at the usual hour of eight, and were surprised to see neither Madame Grandet nor her daughter.

“My wife is not very well, and Eugenie is with her,” said the old wine–grower, whose face betrayed no emotion.

At the end of an hour spent in idle conversation, Madame des Grassins, who had gone up to see Madame Grandet, came down, and every one inquired,—

“How is Madame Grandet?”

“Not at all well,” she answered; “her condition seems to me really alarming. At her age you ought to take every precaution, Papa Grandet.”

“We’ll see about it,” said the old man in an absent way.

They all wished him good–night. When the Cruchots got into the street Madame des Grassins said to them,—

“There is something going on at the Grandets. The mother is very ill without her knowing it. The girl’s eyes are red, as if she had been crying all day. Can they be trying to marry her against her will?”

* * * * *

When Grandet had gone to bed Nanon came softly to Eugenie’s room in her stockinged feet and showed her a pate baked in a saucepan.

“See, mademoiselle,” said the good soul, “Cornoiller gave me a hare. You eat so little that this pate will last you full a week; in such frosty weather it won’t spoil. You sha’n’t live on dry bread, I’m determined; it isn’t wholesome.”

“Poor Nanon!” said Eugenie, pressing her hand.

“I’ve made it downright good and dainty, and *he* never found it out. I bought the lard and the spices out of my six francs: I’m the mistress of my own money”; and she disappeared rapidly, fancying she heard Grandet.

XI

For several months the old wine–grower came constantly to his wife's room at all hours of the day, without ever uttering his daughter's name, or seeing her, or making the smallest allusion to her. Madame Grandet did not leave her chamber, and daily grew worse. Nothing softened the old man; he remained unmoved, harsh, and cold as a granite rock. He continued to go and come about his business as usual; but ceased to stutter, talked less, and was more obdurate in business transactions than ever before. Often he made mistakes in adding up his figures.

"Something is going on at the Grandets," said the Grassinists and the Cruchotines.

"What has happened in the Grandet family?" became a fixed question which everybody asked everybody else at the little evening–parties of Saumur. Eugenie went to Mass escorted by Nanon. If Madame des Grassins said a few words to her on coming out of church, she answered in an evasive manner, without satisfying any curiosity. However, at the end of two months, it became impossible to hide, either from the three Cruchots or from Madame des Grassins, the fact that Eugenie was in confinement. There came a moment when all pretexts failed to explain her perpetual absence. Then, though it was impossible to discover by whom the secret had been betrayed, all the town became aware that ever since New Year's day Mademoiselle Grandet had been kept in her room without fire, on bread and water, by her father's orders, and that Nanon cooked little dainties and took them to her secretly at night. It was even known that the young woman was not able to see or take care of her mother, except at certain times when her father was out of the house.

Grandet's conduct was severely condemned. The whole town outlawed him, so to speak; they remembered his treachery, his hard–heartedness, and they excommunicated him. When he passed along the streets, people pointed him out and muttered at him. When his daughter came down the winding street, accompanied by Nanon, on her way to Mass or Vespers, the inhabitants ran to the windows and examined with intense curiosity the bearing of the rich heiress and her countenance, which bore the impress of angelic gentleness and melancholy. Her imprisonment and the condemnation of her father were as nothing to her. Had she not a map of the world, the little bench, the garden, the angle of the wall? Did she not taste upon her lips the honey that love's kisses left there? She was ignorant for a time that the town talked about her, just as Grandet himself was ignorant of it. Pious and pure in heart before God, her conscience and her love helped her to suffer patiently the wrath and vengeance of her father.

One deep grief silenced all others. Her mother, that gentle, tender creature, made beautiful by the light which shone from the inner to the outer as she approached the tomb,—her mother was perishing from day to day. Eugenie often reproached herself as the innocent cause of the slow, cruel malady that was wasting her away. This remorse, though her mother soothed it, bound her still closer to her love. Every morning, as soon as her father left the house, she went to the bedside of her mother, and there Nanon brought her breakfast. The poor girl, sad, and suffering through the sufferings of her mother, would

turn her face to the old servant with a mute gesture, weeping, and yet not daring to speak of her cousin. It was Madame Grandet who first found courage to say,—

“Where is *he*? Why does *he* not write?”

“Let us think about him, mother, but not speak of him. You are ill—you, before all.”

“All” meant “him.”

“My child,” said Madame Grandet, “I do not wish to live. God protects me and enables me to look with joy to the end of my misery.”

Every utterance of this woman was unfalteringly pious and Christian. Sometimes, during the first months of the year, when her husband came to breakfast with her and tramped up and down the room, she would say to him a few religious words, always spoken with angelic sweetness, yet with the firmness of a woman to whom approaching death lends a courage she had lacked in life.

“Monsieur, I thank you for the interest you take in my health,” she would answer when he made some commonplace inquiry; “but if you really desire to render my last moments less bitter and to ease my grief, take back your daughter: be a Christian, a husband, and a father.”

When he heard these words, Grandet would sit down by the bed with the air of a man who sees the rain coming and quietly gets under the shelter of a gateway till it is over. When these touching, tender, and religious supplications had all been made, he would say,—

“You are rather pale to–day, my poor wife.”

Absolute forgetfulness of his daughter seemed graven on his stony brow, on his closed lips. He was unmoved by the tears which flowed down the white cheeks of his unhappy wife as she listened to his meaningless answers.

“May God pardon you,” she said, “even as I pardon you! You will some day stand in need of mercy.”

Since Madame Grandet’s illness he had not dared to make use of his terrible “Ta, ta, ta, ta!” Yet, for all that, his despotic nature was not disarmed by this angel of gentleness, whose ugliness day by day decreased, driven out by the ineffable expression of moral qualities which shone upon her face. She was all soul. The spirit of prayer seemed to purify her and refine those homely features and make them luminous. Who has not seen the phenomenon of a like transfiguration on sacred faces where the habits of the soul have triumphed over the plainest features, giving them that spiritual illumination whose light comes from the purity and nobility of the inward thought? The spectacle of this transformation wrought by the struggle which consumed the last shreds of the human life of this woman, did somewhat affect the old cooper, though feebly, for his nature was of iron; if his language ceased to be contemptuous, an imperturbable silence, which saved his dignity as master of the household, took its place and ruled his conduct.

When the faithful Nanon appeared in the market, many quips and quirks and complaints about the master whistled in her ears; but however loudly public opinion condemned Monsieur Grandet, the old servant defended him, for the honor of the family.

“Well!” she would say to his detractors, “don’t we all get hard as we grow old? Why shouldn’t he get horny too? Stop telling lies. Mademoiselle lives like a queen. She’s alone, that’s true; but she likes it. Besides, my masters have good reasons.”

At last, towards the end of spring, Madame Grandet, worn out by grief even more than by illness, having failed, in spite of her prayers, to reconcile the father and daughter, confided her secret troubles to the Cruchots.

“Keep a girl of twenty–three on bread and water!” cried Monsieur de Bonfons; “without any reason, too! Why, that constitutes wrongful cruelty; she can contest, as much in as upon—”

“Come, nephew, spare us your legal jargon,” said the notary. “Set your mind at ease, madame; I will put a stop to such treatment to–morrow.”

Eugenie, hearing herself mentioned, came out of her room.

“Gentlemen,” she said, coming forward with a proud step, “I beg you not to interfere in this matter. My father is master in his own house. As long as I live under his roof I am bound to obey him. His conduct is not subject to the approbation or the disapprobation of the world; he is accountable to God only. I appeal to your friendship to keep total silence in this affair. To blame my father is to attack our family honor. I am much obliged to you for the interest you have shown in me; you will do me an additional service if you will put a stop to the offensive rumors which are current in the town, of which I am accidentally informed.”

“She is right,” said Madame Grandet.

“Mademoiselle, the best way to stop such rumors is to procure your liberty,” answered the old notary respectfully, struck with the beauty which seclusion, melancholy, and love had stamped upon her face.

“Well, my daughter, let Monsieur Cruchot manage the matter if he is so sure of success. He understands your father, and how to manage him. If you wish to see me happy for my few remaining days, you must, at any cost, be reconciled to your father.”

On the morrow Grandet, in pursuance of a custom he had begun since Eugenie’s imprisonment, took a certain number of turns up and down the little garden; he had chosen the hour when Eugenie brushed and arranged her hair. When the old man reached the walnut–tree he hid behind its trunk and remained for a few moments watching his daughter’s movements, hesitating, perhaps, between the course to which the obstinacy of his character impelled him and his natural desire to embrace his child. Sometimes he sat down on the rotten old bench where Charles and Eugenie had vowed eternal love; and then she, too, looked at her father secretly in the mirror before which she stood. If he rose and continued his walk, she sat down obligingly at the window and looked at the angle of the wall where the pale flowers hung, where the Venus–hair grew from the crevices with the bindweed and the sedum,—a white or yellow stone–crop very abundant in the vineyards of Saumur and at Tours. Maitre Cruchot came early, and found the old wine–grower sitting in the fine June weather on the little bench, his back against the division wall of the garden, engaged in watching his daughter.

“What may you want, Maitre Cruchot?” he said, perceiving the notary.

“I came to speak to you on business.”

“Ah! ah! have you brought some gold in exchange for my silver?”

“No, no, I have not come about money; it is about your daughter Eugenie. All the town is talking of her and you.”

“What does the town meddle for? A man’s house is his castle.”

“Very true; and a man may kill himself if he likes, or, what is worse, he may fling his money into the gutter.”

“What do you mean?”

“Why, your wife is very ill, my friend. You ought to consult Monsieur Bergerin; she is likely to die. If she does die without receiving proper care, you will not be very easy in mind, I take it.”

“Ta, ta, ta, ta! you know a deal about my wife! These doctors, if they once get their foot in your house, will come five and six times a day.”

“Of course you will do as you think best. We are old friends; there is no one in all Saumur who takes more interest than I in what concerns you. Therefore, I was bound to tell you this. However, happen what may, you have the right to do as you please; you can choose your own course. Besides, that is not what brings me here. There is another thing which may have serious results for you. After all, you can’t wish to kill your wife; her life is too important to you. Think of your situation in connection with your daughter if Madame Grandet dies. You must render an account to Eugenie, because you enjoy your wife’s estate only during her lifetime. At her death your daughter can claim a division of property, and she may force you to sell Froidfond. In short, she is her mother’s heir, and you are not.”

These words fell like a thunderbolt on the old man, who was not as wise about law as he was about business. He had never thought of a legal division of the estate.

“Therefore I advise you to treat her kindly,” added Cruchot, in conclusion.

“But do you know what she has done, Cruchot?”

“What?” asked the notary, curious to hear the truth and find out the cause of the quarrel.

“She has given away her gold!”

“Well, wasn’t it hers?” said the notary.

“They all tell me that!” exclaimed the old man, letting his arms fall to his sides with a movement that was truly tragic.

“Are you going—for a mere nothing,”—resumed Cruchot, “to put obstacles in the way of the concessions which you will be obliged to ask from your daughter as soon as her mother dies?”

“Do you call six thousand francs a mere nothing?”

“Hey! my old friend, do you know what the inventory of your wife’s property will cost, if Eugenie demands the division?”

“How much?”

“Two, three, four thousand francs, perhaps! The property would have to be put up at auction and sold, to get at its actual value. Instead of that, if you are on good terms with —”

“By the shears of my father!” cried Grandet, turning pale as he suddenly sat down, “we will see about it, Cruchot.”

After a moment’s silence, full of anguish perhaps, the old man looked at the notary and said,—

“Life is very hard! It has many griefs! Cruchot,” he continued solemnly, “you would not deceive me? Swear to me upon your honor that all you’ve told me is legally true. Show me the law; I must see the law!”

“My poor friend,” said the notary, “don’t I know my own business?”

“Then it is true! I am robbed, betrayed, killed, destroyed by my own daughter!”

“It is true that your daughter is her mother’s heir.”

“Why do we have children? Ah! my wife, I love her! Luckily she’s sound and healthy; she’s a Bertelliere.”

“She has not a month to live.”

Grandet struck his forehead, went a few steps, came back, cast a dreadful look on Cruchot, and said,—

“What can be done?”

“Eugenie can relinquish her claim to her mother’s property. Should she do this you would not disinherit her, I presume?—but if you want to come to such a settlement, you must not treat her harshly. What I am telling you, old man, is against my own interests. What do I live by, if it isn’t liquidations, inventories, conveyances, divisions of property?—”

“We’ll see, we’ll see! Don’t let’s talk any more about it, Cruchot; it wrings my vitals. Have you received any gold?”

“No; but I have a few old louis, a dozen or so, which you may have. My good friend, make it up with Eugenie. Don’t you know all Saumur is pelting you with stones?”

“The scoundrels!”

“Come, the Funds are at ninety–nine. Do be satisfied for once in your life.”

“At ninety–nine! Are they, Cruchot?”

“Yes.”

“Hey, hey! Ninety–nine!” repeated the old man, accompanying the notary to the street–door. Then, too agitated by what he had just heard to stay in the house, he went up to his wife’s room and said,—

“Come, mother, you may have your daughter to spend the day with you. I’m going to Froidfond. Enjoy yourselves, both of you. This is our wedding–day, wife. See! here are

sixty francs for your altar at the Fete–Dieu; you've wanted one for a long time. Come, cheer up, enjoy yourself, and get well! Hurrah for happiness!"

He threw ten silver pieces of six francs each upon the bed, and took his wife's head between his hands and kissed her forehead.

"My good wife, you are getting well, are not you?"

"How can you think of receiving the God of mercy in your house when you refuse to forgive your daughter?" she said with emotion.

"Ta, ta, ta, ta!" said Grandet in a coaxing voice. "We'll see about that."

"Merciful heaven! Eugenie," cried the mother, flushing with joy, "come and kiss your father; he forgives you!"

But the old man had disappeared. He was going as fast as his legs could carry him towards his vineyards, trying to get his confused ideas into order. Grandet had entered his seventy–sixth year. During the last two years his avarice had increased upon him, as all the persistent passions of men increase at a certain age. As if to illustrate an observation which applies equally to misers, ambitious men, and others whose lives are controlled by any dominant idea, his affections had fastened upon one special symbol of his passion. The sight of gold, the possession of gold, had become a monomania. His despotic spirit had grown in proportion to his avarice, and to part with the control of the smallest fraction of his property at the death of his wife seemed to him a thing "against nature." To declare his fortune to his daughter, to give an inventory of his property, landed and personal, for the purposes of division—

"Why," he cried aloud in the midst of a field where he was pretending to examine a vine, "it would be cutting my throat!"

He came at last to a decision, and returned to Saumur in time for dinner, resolved to unbend to Eugenie, and pet and coax her, that he might die regally, holding the reins of his millions in his own hands so long as the breath was in his body. At the moment when the old man, who chanced to have his pass–key in his pocket, opened the door and climbed with a stealthy step up the stairway to go into his wife's room, Eugenie had brought the beautiful dressing–case from the oak cabinet and placed it on her mother's bed. Mother and daughter, in Grandet's absence, allowed themselves the pleasure of looking for a likeness to Charles in the portrait of his mother.

"It is exactly his forehead and his mouth," Eugenie was saying as the old man opened the door. At the look which her husband cast upon the gold, Madame Grandet cried out,—

"O God, have pity upon us!"

The old man sprang upon the box as a famished tiger might spring upon a sleeping child.

"What's this?" he said, snatching the treasure and carrying it to the window. "Gold, good gold!" he cried. "All gold,—it weighs two pounds! Ha, ha! Charles gave you that for your money, did he? Hein! Why didn't you tell me so? It was a good bargain, little one! Yes, you are my daughter, I see that—" Eugenie trembled in every limb. "This came from Charles, of course, didn't it?" continued the old man.

“Yes, father; it is not mine. It is a sacred trust.”

“Ta, ta, ta, ta! He took your fortune, and now you can get it back.”

“Father!”

Grandet took his knife to pry out some of the gold; to do this, he placed the dressing–case on a chair. Eugenie sprang forward to recover it; but her father, who had his eye on her and on the treasure too, pushed her back so violently with a thrust of his arm that she fell upon her mother’s bed.

“Monsieur, monsieur!” cried the mother, lifting herself up.

Grandet had opened his knife, and was about to apply it to the gold.

“Father!” cried Eugenie, falling on her knees and dragging herself close to him with clasped hands, “father, in the name of all the saints and the Virgin! in the name of Christ who died upon the cross! in the name of your eternal salvation, father! for my life’s sake, father!—do not touch that! It is neither yours nor mine. It is a trust placed in my hands by an unhappy relation: I must give it back to him uninjured!”

“If it is a trust, why were you looking at it? To look at it is as bad as touching it.”

“Father, don’t destroy it, or you will disgrace me! Father, do you hear?”

“Oh, have pity!” said the mother.

“Father!” cried Eugenie in so startling a voice that Nanon ran upstairs terrified. Eugenie sprang upon a knife that was close at hand.

“Well, what now?” said Grandet coldly, with a callous smile.

“Oh, you are killing me!” said the mother.

“Father, if your knife so much as cuts a fragment of that gold, I will stab myself with this one! You have already driven my mother to her death; you will now kill your child! Do as you choose! Wound for wound!”

Grandet held his knife over the dressing–case and hesitated as he looked at his daughter.

“Are you capable of doing it, Eugenie?” he said.

“Yes, yes!” said the mother.

“She’ll do it if she says so!” cried Nanon. “Be reasonable, monsieur, for once in your life.”

The old man looked at the gold and then at his daughter alternately for an instant. Madame Grandet fainted.

“There! don’t you see, monsieur, that madame is dying?” cried Nanon.

“Come, come, my daughter, we won’t quarrel for a box! Here, take it!” he cried hastily, flinging the case upon the bed. “Nanon, go and fetch Monsieur Bergerin! Come, mother,” said he, kissing his wife’s hand, “it’s all over! There! we’ve made up—haven’t we, little one? No more dry bread; you shall have all you want—Ah, she opens her eyes! Well, mother, little mother, come! See, I’m kissing Eugenie! She loves her cousin, and she may marry him if she wants to; she may keep his case. But don’t die, mother; live a long time

yet, my poor wife! Come, try to move! Listen! you shall have the finest altar that ever was made in Saumur."

"Oh, how can you treat your wife and daughter so!" said Madame Grandet in a feeble voice.

"I won't do so again, never again," cried her husband; "you shall see, my poor wife!" He went to his inner room and returned with a handful of louis, which he scattered on the bed. "Here, Eugenie! see, wife! all these are for you," he said, fingering the coins. "Come, be happy, wife! feel better, get well; you sha'n't want for anything, nor Eugenie either. Here's a hundred *louis d'or* for her. You won't give these away, will you, Eugenie, hein?"

Madame Grandet and her daughter looked at each other in astonishment.

"Take back your money, father; we ask for nothing but your affection."

"Well, well, that's right!" he said, pocketing the coins; "let's be good friends! We will all go down to dinner to–day, and we'll play loto every evening for two sous. You shall both be happy. Hey, wife?"

"Alas! I wish I could, if it would give you pleasure," said the dying woman; "but I cannot rise from my bed."

"Poor mother," said Grandet, "you don't know how I love you! and you too, my daughter!" He took her in his arms and kissed her. "Oh, how good it is to kiss a daughter when we have been angry with her! There, mother, don't you see it's all over now? Go and put that away, Eugenie," he added, pointing to the case. "Go, don't be afraid! I shall never speak of it again, never!"

Monsieur Bergerin, the celebrated doctor of Saumur, presently arrived. After an examination, he told Grandet positively that his wife was very ill; but that perfect peace of mind, a generous diet, and great care might prolong her life until the autumn.

"Will all that cost much?" said the old man. "Will she need medicines?"

"Not much medicine, but a great deal of care," answered the doctor, who could scarcely restrain a smile.

"Now, Monsieur Bergerin," said Grandet, "you are a man of honor, are not you? I trust to you! Come and see my wife how and when you think necessary. Save my good wife! I love her,—don't you see?—though I never talk about it; I keep things to myself. I'm full of trouble. Troubles began when my brother died; I have to spend enormous sums on his affairs in Paris. Why, I'm paying through my nose; there's no end to it. Adieu, monsieur! If you can save my wife, save her. I'll spare no expense, not even if it costs me a hundred or two hundred francs."

In spite of Grandet's fervent wishes for the health of his wife, whose death threatened more than death to him; in spite of the consideration he now showed on all occasions for the least wish of his astonished wife and daughter; in spite of the tender care which Eugenie lavished upon her mother,—Madame Grandet rapidly approached her end. Every day she grew weaker and wasted visibly, as women of her age when attacked by serious illness are wont to do. She was fragile as the foliage in autumn; the radiance of heaven shone through her as the sun strikes athwart the withering leaves and gilds them. It was a

death worthy of her life,—a Christian death; and is not that sublime? In the month of October, 1822, her virtues, her angelic patience, her love for her daughter, seemed to find special expression; and then she passed away without a murmur. Lamb without spot, she went to heaven, regretting only the sweet companion of her cold and dreary life, for whom her last glance seemed to prophesy a destiny of sorrows. She shrank from leaving her ewe–lamb, white as herself, alone in the midst of a selfish world that sought to strip her of her fleece and grasp her treasures.

“My child,” she said as she expired, “there is no happiness except in heaven; you will know it some day.”

XII

On the morrow of this death Eugenie felt a new motive for attachment to the house in which she was born, where she had suffered so much, where her mother had just died. She could not see the window and the chair on its castors without weeping. She thought she had mistaken the heart of her old father when she found herself the object of his tenderest cares. He came in the morning and gave her his arm to take her to breakfast; he looked at her for hours together with an eye that was almost kind; he brooded over her as though she had been gold. The old man was so unlike himself, he trembled so often before his daughter, that Nanon and the Cruchotines, who witnessed his weakness, attributed it to his great age, and feared that his faculties were giving away. But the day on which the family put on their mourning, and after dinner, to which meal Maitre Cruchot (the only person who knew his secret) had been invited, the conduct of the old miser was explained.

“My dear child,” he said to Eugenie when the table had been cleared and the doors carefully shut, “you are now your mother’s heiress, and we have a few little matters to settle between us. Isn’t that so, Cruchot?”

“Yes.”

“Is it necessary to talk of them to–day, father?”

“Yes, yes, little one; I can’t bear the uncertainty in which I’m placed. I think you don’t want to give me pain?”

“Oh! father—”

“Well, then! let us settle it all to–night.”

“What is it you wish me to do?”

“My little girl, it is not for me to say. Tell her, Cruchot.”

“Mademoiselle, your father does not wish to divide the property, nor sell the estate, nor pay enormous taxes on the ready money which he may possess. Therefore, to avoid all this, he must be released from making the inventory of his whole fortune, part of which you inherit from your mother, and which is now undivided between you and your father —”

“Cruchot, are you quite sure of what you are saying before you tell it to a mere child?”

“Let me tell it my own way, Grandet.”

“Yes, yes, my friend. Neither you nor my daughter wish to rob me,—do you, little one?”

“But, Monsieur Cruchot, what am I to do?” said Eugenie impatiently.

“Well,” said the notary, “it is necessary to sign this deed, by which you renounce your rights to your mother’s estate and leave your father the use and disposition, during his lifetime, of all the property undivided between you, of which he guarantees you the capital.”

“I do not understand a word of what you are saying,” returned Eugenie; “give me the deed, and show me where I am to sign it.”

Pere Grandet looked alternately at the deed and at his daughter, at his daughter and at the deed, undergoing as he did so such violent emotion that he wiped the sweat from his brow.

“My little girl,” he said, “if, instead of signing this deed, which will cost a great deal to record, you would simply agree to renounce your rights as heir to your poor dear, deceased mother’s property, and would trust to me for the future, I should like it better. In that case I will pay you monthly the good round sum of a hundred francs. See, now, you could pay for as many masses as you want for anybody—Hein! a hundred francs a month—in *livres*?”

“I will do all you wish, father.”

“Mademoiselle,” said the notary, “it is my duty to point out to you that you are despoiling yourself without guarantee—”

“Good heavens! what is all that to me?”

“Hold your tongue, Cruchot! It’s settled, all settled,” cried Grandet, taking his daughter’s hand and striking it with his own. “Eugenie, you won’t go back on your word?—you are an honest girl, hein?”

“Oh! father!—”

He kissed her effusively, and pressed her in his arms till he almost choked her.

“Go, my good child, you restore your father’s life; but you only return to him that which he gave you: we are quits. This is how business should be done. Life is a business. I bless you! you are a virtuous girl, and you love your father. Do just what you like in future. To–morrow, Cruchot,” he added, looking at the horrified notary, “you will see about preparing the deed of relinquishment, and then enter it on the records of the court.”

The next morning Eugenie signed the papers by which she herself completed her spoliation. At the end of the first year, however, in spite of his bargain, the old man had not given his daughter one sou of the hundred francs he had so solemnly pledged to her. When Eugenie pleasantly reminded him of this, he could not help coloring, and went hastily to his secret hiding–place, from whence he brought down about a third of the jewels he had taken from his nephew, and gave them to her.

“There, little one,” he said in a sarcastic tone, “do you want those for your twelve hundred francs?”

“Oh! father, truly? will you really give them to me?”

“I’ll give you as many more next year,” he said, throwing them into her apron. “So before long you’ll get all his gewgaws,” he added, rubbing his hands, delighted to be able to speculate on his daughter’s feelings.

Nevertheless, the old man, though still robust, felt the importance of initiating his daughter into the secrets of his thrift and its management. For two consecutive years he made her order the household meals in his presence and receive the rents, and he taught her slowly and successively the names and remunerative capacity of his vineyards and his farms.

About the third year he had so thoroughly accustomed her to his avaricious methods that they had turned into the settled habits of her own life, and he was able to leave the household keys in her charge without anxiety, and to install her as mistress of the house.

* * * * *

Five years passed away without a single event to relieve the monotonous existence of Eugenie and her father. The same actions were performed daily with the automatic regularity of clockwork. The deep sadness of Mademoiselle Grandet was known to every one; but if others surmised the cause, she herself never uttered a word that justified the suspicions which all Saumur entertained about the state of the rich heiress's heart. Her only society was made up of the three Cruchots and a few of their particular friends whom they had, little by little, introduced into the Grandet household. They had taught her to play whist, and they came every night for their game. During the year 1827 her father, feeling the weight of his infirmities, was obliged to initiate her still further into the secrets of his landed property, and told her that in case of difficulty she was to have recourse to Maitre Cruchot, whose integrity was well known to him.

Towards the end of this year the old man, then eighty–two, was seized by paralysis, which made rapid progress. Dr. Bergerin gave him up. Eugenie, feeling that she was about to be left alone in the world, came, as it were, nearer to her father, and clasped more tightly this last living link of affection. To her mind, as in that of all loving women, love was the whole of life. Charles was not there, and she devoted all her care and attention to the old father, whose faculties had begun to weaken, though his avarice remained instinctively acute. The death of this man offered no contrast to his life. In the morning he made them roll him to a spot between the chimney of his chamber and the door of the secret room, which was filled, no doubt, with gold. He asked for an explanation of every noise he heard, even the slightest; to the great astonishment of the notary, he even heard the watch–dog yawning in the court–yard. He woke up from his apparent stupor at the day and hour when the rents were due, or when accounts had to be settled with his vine–dressers, and receipts given. At such times he worked his chair forward on its castors until he faced the door of the inner room. He made his daughter open it, and watched while she placed the bags of money one upon another in his secret receptacles and relocked the door. Then she returned silently to her seat, after giving him the key, which he replaced in his waistcoat pocket and fingered from time to time. His old friend the notary, feeling sure that the rich heiress would inevitably marry his nephew the president, if Charles Grandet did not return, redoubled all his attentions; he came every day to take Grandet's orders, went on his errands to Froidfond, to the farms and the fields and the vineyards, sold the vintages, and turned everything into gold and silver, which found their way in sacks to the secret hiding–place.

At length the last struggle came, in which the strong frame of the old man slowly yielded to destruction. He was determined to sit at the chimney–corner facing the door of the secret room. He drew off and rolled up all the coverings which were laid over him, saying to Nanon, "Put them away, lock them up, for fear they should be stolen."

So long as he could open his eyes, in which his whole being had now taken refuge, he turned them to the door behind which lay his treasures, saying to his daughter, "Are they there? are they there?" in a tone of voice which revealed a sort of panic fear.

“Yes, my father,” she would answer.

“Take care of the gold—put gold before me.”

Eugenie would then spread coins on a table before him, and he would sit for hours together with his eyes fixed upon them, like a child who, at the moment it first begins to see, gazes in stupid contemplation at the same object, and like the child, a distressful smile would flicker upon his face.

“It warms me!” he would sometimes say, as an expression of beatitude stole across his features.

When the cure of the parish came to administer the last sacraments, the old man’s eyes, sightless, apparently, for some hours, kindled at the sight of the cross, the candlesticks, and the holy–water vessel of silver; he gazed at them fixedly, and his wen moved for the last time. When the priest put the crucifix of silver–gilt to his lips, that he might kiss the Christ, he made a frightful gesture, as if to seize it; and that last effort cost him his life. He called Eugenie, whom he did not see, though she was kneeling beside him bathing with tears his stiffening hand, which was already cold.

“My father, bless me!” she entreated.

“Take care of it all. You will render me an account yonder!” he said, proving by these last words that Christianity must always be the religion of misers.

* * * * *

Eugenie Grandet was now alone in the world in that gray house, with none but Nanon to whom she could turn with the certainty of being heard and understood,—Nanon the sole being who loved her for herself and with whom she could speak of her sorrows. La Grande Nanon was a providence for Eugenie. She was not a servant, but a humble friend. After her father’s death Eugenie learned from Maitre Cruchot that she possessed an income of three hundred thousand francs from landed and personal property in the arrondissement of Saumur; also six millions invested at three per cent in the Funds (bought at sixty, and now worth seventy–six francs); also two millions in gold coin, and a hundred thousand francs in silver crown–pieces, besides all the interest which was still to be collected. The sum total of her property reached seventeen millions.

“Where is my cousin?” was her one thought.

The day on which Maitre Cruchot handed in to his client a clear and exact schedule of the whole inheritance, Eugenie remained alone with Nanon, sitting beside the fireplace in the vacant hall, where all was now a memory, from the chair on castors which her mother had sat in, to the glass from which her cousin drank.

“Nanon, we are alone—”

“Yes, mademoiselle; and if I knew where he was, the darling, I’d go on foot to find him.”

“The ocean is between us,” she said.

While the poor heiress wept in company of an old servant, in that cold dark house, which was to her the universe, the whole province rang, from Nantes to Orleans, with the seventeen millions of Mademoiselle Grandet. Among her first acts she had settled an

annuity of twelve hundred francs on Nanon, who, already possessed of six hundred more, became a rich and enviable match. In less than a month that good soul passed from single to wedded life under the protection of Antoine Cornoiller, who was appointed keeper of all Mademoiselle Grandet's estates. Madame Cornoiller possessed one striking advantage over her contemporaries. Although she was fifty–nine years of age, she did not look more than forty. Her strong features had resisted the ravages of time. Thanks to the healthy customs of her semi–conventual life, she laughed at old age from the vantage–ground of a rosy skin and an iron constitution. Perhaps she never looked as well in her life as she did on her marriage–day. She had all the benefits of her ugliness, and was big and fat and strong, with a look of happiness on her indestructible features which made a good many people envy Cornoiller.

"Fast colors!" said the draper.

"Quite likely to have children," said the salt merchant. "She's pickled in brine, saving your presence."

"She is rich, and that fellow Cornoiller has done a good thing for himself," said a third man.

When she came forth from the old house on her way to the parish church, Nanon, who was loved by all the neighborhood, received many compliments as she walked down the tortuous street. Eugenie had given her three dozen silver forks and spoons as a wedding present. Cornoiller, amazed at such magnificence, spoke of his mistress with tears in his eyes; he would willingly have been hacked in pieces in her behalf. Madame Cornoiller, appointed housekeeper to Mademoiselle Grandet, got as much happiness out of her new position as she did from the possession of a husband. She took charge of the weekly accounts; she locked up the provisions and gave them out daily, after the manner of her defunct master; she ruled over two servants,—a cook, and a maid whose business it was to mend the house–linen and make mademoiselle's dresses. Cornoiller combined the functions of keeper and bailiff. It is unnecessary to say that the women–servants selected by Nanon were "perfect treasures." Mademoiselle Grandet thus had four servants, whose devotion was unbounded. The farmers perceived no change after Monsieur Grandet's death; the usages and customs he had sternly established were scrupulously carried out by Monsieur and Madame Cornoiller.

At thirty years of age Eugenie knew none of the joys of life. Her pale, sad childhood had glided on beside a mother whose heart, always misunderstood and wounded, had known only suffering. Leaving this life joyfully, the mother pitied the daughter because she still must live; and she left in her child's soul some fugitive remorse and many lasting regrets. Eugenie's first and only love was a wellspring of sadness within her. Meeting her lover for a few brief days, she had given him her heart between two kisses furtively exchanged; then he had left her, and a whole world lay between them. This love, cursed by her father, had cost the life of her mother and brought her only sorrow, mingled with a few frail hopes. Thus her upward spring towards happiness had wasted her strength and given her nothing in exchange for it. In the life of the soul, as in the physical life, there is an inspiration and a respiration; the soul needs to absorb the sentiments of another soul and assimilate them, that it may render them back enriched. Were it not for this glorious human phenomenon, there would be no life for the heart; air would be wanting; it would

suffer, and then perish. Eugenie had begun to suffer. For her, wealth was neither a power nor a consolation; she could not live except through love, through religion, through faith in the future. Love explained to her the mysteries of eternity. Her heart and the Gospel taught her to know two worlds; she bathed, night and day, in the depths of two infinite thoughts, which for her may have had but one meaning. She drew back within herself, loving, and believing herself beloved. For seven years her passion had invaded everything. Her treasuries were not the millions whose revenues were rolling up; they were Charles's dressing–case, the portraits hanging above her bed, the jewels recovered from her father and proudly spread upon a bed of wool in a drawer of the oaken cabinet, the thimble of her aunt, used for a while by her mother, which she wore religiously as she worked at a piece of embroidery,—a Penelope's web, begun for the sole purpose of putting upon her finger that gold so rich in memories.

It seemed unlikely that Mademoiselle Grandet would marry during the period of her mourning. Her genuine piety was well known. Consequently the Cruchots, whose policy was sagely guided by the old abbe, contented themselves for the time being with surrounding the great heiress and paying her the most affectionate attentions. Every evening the hall was filled with a party of devoted Cruchotines, who sang the praises of its mistress in every key. She had her doctor in ordinary, her grand almoner, her chamberlain, her first lady of honor, her prime minister; above all, her chancellor, a chancellor who would fain have said much to her. If the heiress had wished for a train–bearer, one would instantly have been found. She was a queen, obsequiously flattered. Flattery never emanates from noble souls; it is the gift of little minds, who thus still further belittle themselves to worm their way into the vital being of the persons around whom they crawl. Flattery means self–interest. So the people who, night after night, assembled in Mademoiselle Grandet's house (they called her Mademoiselle de Froidfond) outdid each other in expressions of admiration. This concert of praise, never before bestowed upon Eugenie, made her blush under its novelty; but insensibly her ear became habituated to the sound, and however coarse the compliments might be, she soon was so accustomed to hear her beauty lauded that if any new–comer had seemed to think her plain, she would have felt the reproach far more than she might have done eight years earlier. She ended at last by loving the incense, which she secretly laid at the feet of her idol. By degrees she grew accustomed to be treated as a sovereign and to see her court pressing around her every evening.

Monsieur de Bonfons was the hero of the little circle, where his wit, his person, his education, his amiability, were perpetually praised. One or another would remark that in seven years he had largely increased his fortune, that Bonfons brought in at least ten thousand francs a year, and was surrounded, like the other possessions of the Cruchots, by the vast domains of the heiress.

"Do you know, mademoiselle," said an habitual visitor, "that the Cruchots have an income of forty thousand francs among them!"

"And then, their savings!" exclaimed an elderly female Cruchotine, Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt.

"A gentleman from Paris has lately offered Monsieur Cruchot two hundred thousand francs for his practice," said another. "He will sell it if he is appointed *juge de paix*."

“He wants to succeed Monsieur de Bonfons as president of the Civil courts, and is taking measures,” replied Madame d’Orsonval. “Monsieur le president will certainly be made councillor.”

“Yes, he is a very distinguished man,” said another,—“don’t you think so, mademoiselle?”

Monsieur de Bonfons endeavored to put himself in keeping with the role he sought to play. In spite of his forty years, in spite of his dusky and crabbed features, withered like most judicial faces, he dressed in youthful fashions, toyed with a bamboo cane, never took snuff in Mademoiselle de Froidfond’s house, and came in a white cravat and a shirt whose pleated frill gave him a family resemblance to the race of turkeys. He addressed the beautiful heiress familiarly, and spoke of her as “Our dear Eugenie.” In short, except for the number of visitors, the change from loto to whist, and the disappearance of Monsieur and Madame Grandet, the scene was about the same as the one with which this history opened. The pack were still pursuing Eugenie and her millions; but the hounds, more in number, lay better on the scent, and beset the prey more unitedly. If Charles could have dropped from the Indian Isles, he would have found the same people and the same interests. Madame des Grassins, to whom Eugenie was full of kindness and courtesy, still persisted in tormenting the Cruchots. Eugenie, as in former days, was the central figure of the picture; and Charles, as heretofore, would still have been the sovereign of all. Yet there had been some progress. The flowers which the president formerly presented to Eugenie on her birthdays and fete–days had now become a daily institution. Every evening he brought the rich heiress a huge and magnificent bouquet, which Madame Cornoiller placed conspicuously in a vase, and secretly threw into a corner of the court–yard when the visitors had departed.

Early in the spring, Madame des Grassins attempted to trouble the peace of the Cruchotines by talking to Eugenie of the Marquis de Froidfond, whose ancient and ruined family might be restored if the heiress would give him back his estates through marriage. Madame des Grassins rang the changes on the peerage and the title of marquise, until, mistaking Eugenie’s disdainful smile for acquiescence, she went about proclaiming that the marriage with “Monsieur Cruchot” was not nearly as certain as people thought.

“Though Monsieur de Froidfond is fifty,” she said, “he does not look older than Monsieur Cruchot. He is a widower, and he has children, that’s true. But then he is a marquis; he will be peer of France; and in times like these where you will find a better match? I know it for a fact that Pere Grandet, when he put all his money into Froidfond, intended to graft himself upon that stock; he often told me so. He was a deep one, that old man!”

“Ah! Nanon,” said Eugenie, one night as she was going to bed, “how is it that in seven years he has never once written to me?”

XIII

While these events were happening in Saumur, Charles was making his fortune in the Indies. His commercial outfit had sold well. He began by realizing a sum of six thousand dollars. Crossing the line had brushed a good many cobwebs out of his brain; he perceived that the best means of attaining fortune in tropical regions, as well as in Europe, was to buy and sell men. He went to the coast of Africa and bought Negroes, combining his traffic in human flesh with that of other merchandise equally advantageous to his interests. He carried into this business an activity which left him not a moment of leisure. He was governed by the desire of reappearing in Paris with all the prestige of a large fortune, and by the hope of regaining a position even more brilliant than the one from which he had fallen.

By dint of jostling with men, travelling through many lands, and studying a variety of conflicting customs, his ideas had been modified and had become sceptical. He ceased to have fixed principles of right and wrong, for he saw what was called a crime in one country lauded as a virtue in another. In the perpetual struggle of selfish interests his heart grew cold, then contracted, and then dried up. The blood of the Grandets did not fail of its destiny; Charles became hard, and eager for prey. He sold Chinamen, Negroes, birds' nests, children, artists; he practised usury on a large scale; the habit of defrauding custom–houses soon made him less scrupulous about the rights of his fellow men. He went to the Island of St. Thomas and bought, for a mere song, merchandise that had been captured by pirates, and took it to ports where he could sell it at a good price. If the pure and noble face of Eugenie went with him on his first voyage, like that image of the Virgin which Spanish mariners fastened to their masts, if he attributed his first success to the magic influence of the prayers and intercessions of his gentle love, later on women of other kinds,—blacks, mulattoes, whites, and Indian dancing–girls,—orgies and adventures in many lands, completely effaced all recollection of his cousin, of Saumur, of the house, the bench, the kiss snatched in the dark passage. He remembered only the little garden shut in with crumbling walls, for it was there he learned the fate that had overtaken him; but he rejected all connection with his family. His uncle was an old dog who had filched his jewels; Eugenie had no place in his heart nor in his thoughts, though she did have a place in his accounts as a creditor for the sum of six thousand francs.

Such conduct and such ideas explain Charles Grandet's silence. In the Indies, at St. Thomas, on the coast of Africa, at Lisbon, and in the United States the adventurer had taken the pseudonym of Shepherd, that he might not compromise his own name. Charles Shepherd could safely be indefatigable, bold, grasping, and greedy of gain, like a man who resolves to snatch his fortune *quibus cumque viis*, and makes haste to have done with villany, that he may spend the rest of his life as an honest man.

With such methods, prosperity was rapid and brilliant; and in 1827 Charles Grandet returned to Bordeaux on the "Marie Caroline," a fine brig belonging to a royalist house of business. He brought with him nineteen hundred thousand francs worth of gold–dust, from which he expected to derive seven or eight per cent more at the Paris mint. On the brig he

met a gentleman–in–ordinary to His Majesty Charles X., Monsieur d'Aubrion, a worthy old man who had committed the folly of marrying a woman of fashion with a fortune derived from the West India Islands. To meet the costs of Madame d'Aubrion's extravagance, he had gone out to the Indies to sell the property, and was now returning with his family to France.

Monsieur and Madame d'Aubrion, of the house of d'Aubrion de Buch, a family of southern France, whose last *captal*, or chief, died before 1789, were now reduced to an income of about twenty thousand francs, and they possessed an ugly daughter whom the mother was resolved to marry without a *dot*,—the family fortune being scarcely sufficient for the demands of her own life in Paris. This was an enterprise whose success might have seemed problematical to most men of the world, in spite of the cleverness with which such men credit a fashionable woman; in fact, Madame d'Aubrion herself, when she looked at her daughter, almost despaired of getting rid of her to any one, even to a man craving connection with nobility. Mademoiselle d'Aubrion was a long, spare, spindling demoiselle, like her namesake the insect; her mouth was disdainful; over it hung a nose that was too long, thick at the end, sallow in its normal condition, but very red after a meal,—a sort of vegetable phenomenon which is particularly disagreeable when it appears in the middle of a pale, dull, and uninteresting face. In one sense she was all that a worldly mother, thirty–eight years of age and still a beauty with claims to admiration, could have wished. However, to counterbalance her personal defects, the marquise gave her daughter a distinguished air, subjected her to hygienic treatment which provisionally kept her nose at a reasonable flesh–tint, taught her the art of dressing well, endowed her with charming manners, showed her the trick of melancholy glances which interest a man and make him believe that he has found a long–sought angel, taught her the manoeuvre of the foot,—letting it peep beneath the petticoat, to show its tiny size, at the moment when the nose became aggressively red; in short, Madame d'Aubrion had cleverly made the very best of her offspring. By means of full sleeves, deceptive pads, puffed dresses amply trimmed, and high–pressure corsets, she had obtained such curious feminine developments that she ought, for the instruction of mothers, to have exhibited them in a museum.

Charles became very intimate with Madame d'Aubrion precisely because she was desirous of becoming intimate with him. Persons who were on board the brig declared that the handsome Madame d'Aubrion neglected no means of capturing so rich a son–in–law. On landing at Bordeaux in June, 1827, Monsieur, Madame, Mademoiselle d'Aubrion, and Charles lodged at the same hotel and started together for Paris. The hotel d'Aubrion was hampered with mortgages; Charles was destined to free it. The mother told him how delighted she would be to give up the ground–floor to a son–in–law. Not sharing Monsieur d'Aubrion's prejudices on the score of nobility, she promised Charles Grandet to obtain a royal ordinance from Charles X. which would authorize him, Grandet, to take the name and arms of d'Aubrion and to succeed, by purchasing the entailed estate for thirty–six thousand francs a year, to the titles of Captal de Buch and Marquis d'Aubrion. By thus uniting their fortunes, living on good terms, and profiting by sinecures, the two families might occupy the hotel d'Aubrion with an income of over a hundred thousand francs.

"And when a man has a hundred thousand francs a year, a name, a family, and a position at court,—for I will get you appointed as gentleman–of–the–bedchamber,—he can do what he likes," she said to Charles. "You can then become anything you choose,—master

of the rolls in the council of State, prefect, secretary to an embassy, the ambassador himself, if you like. Charles X. is fond of d'Aubrion; they have known each other from childhood."

Intoxicated with ambition, Charles toyed with the hopes thus cleverly presented to him in the guise of confidences poured from heart to heart. Believing his father's affairs to have been settled by his uncle, he imagined himself suddenly anchored in the Faubourg Saint–Germain,—that social object of all desire, where, under shelter of Mademoiselle Mathilde's purple nose, he was to reappear as the Comte d'Aubrion, very much as the Dreux reappeared in Breze. Dazzled by the prosperity of the Restoration, which was tottering when he left France, fascinated by the splendor of aristocratic ideas, his intoxication, which began on the brig, increased after he reached Paris, and he finally determined to take the course and reach the high position which the selfish hopes of his would–be mother–in–law pointed out to him. His cousin counted for no more than a speck in this brilliant perspective; but he went to see Annette. True woman of the world, Annette advised her old friend to make the marriage, and promised him her support in all his ambitious projects. In her heart she was enchanted to fasten an ugly and uninteresting girl on Charles, whose life in the West Indies had rendered him very attractive. His complexion had bronzed, his manners had grown decided and bold, like those of a man accustomed to make sharp decisions, to rule, and to succeed. Charles breathed more at his ease in Paris, conscious that he now had a part to play.

Des Grassins, hearing of his return, of his approaching marriage and his large fortune, came to see him, and inquired about the three hundred thousand francs still required to settle his father's debts. He found Grandet in conference with a goldsmith, from whom he had ordered jewels for Mademoiselle d'Aubrion's *corbeille*, and who was then submitting the designs. Charles had brought back magnificent diamonds, and the value of their setting, together with the plate and jewelry of the new establishment, amounted to more than two hundred thousand francs. He received des Grassins, whom he did not recognize, with the impertinence of a young man of fashion conscious of having killed four men in as many duels in the Indies. Monsieur des Grassins had already called several times. Charles listened to him coldly, and then replied, without fully understanding what had been said to him,—

"My father's affairs are not mine. I am much obliged, monsieur, for the trouble you have been good enough to take,—by which, however, I really cannot profit. I have not earned two millions by the sweat of my brow to fling them at the head of my father's creditors."

"But suppose that your father's estate were within a few days to be declared bankrupt?"

"Monsieur, in a few days I shall be called the Comte d'Aubrion; you will understand, therefore, that what you threaten is of no consequence to me. Besides, you know as well as I do that when a man has an income of a hundred thousand francs his father has *never failed*." So saying, he politely edged Monsieur des Grassins to the door.

* * * * *

At the beginning of August in the same year, Eugenie was sitting on the little wooden bench where her cousin had sworn to love her eternally, and where she usually breakfasted if the weather were fine. The poor girl was happy, for the moment, in the fresh and joyous

summer air, letting her memory recall the great and the little events of her love and the catastrophes which had followed it. The sun had just reached the angle of the ruined wall, so full of chinks, which no one, through a caprice of the mistress, was allowed to touch, though Cornoiller often remarked to his wife that “it would fall and crush somebody one of these days.” At this moment the postman knocked, and gave a letter to Madame Cornoiller, who ran into the garden, crying out:

“Mademoiselle, a letter!” She gave it to her mistress, adding, “Is it the one you expected?”

The words rang as loudly in the heart of Eugenie as they echoed in sound from wall to wall of the court and garden.

“Paris—from him—he has returned!”

Eugenie turned pale and held the letter for a moment. She trembled so violently that she could not break the seal. La Grande Nanon stood before her, both hands on her hips, her joy puffing as it were like smoke through the cracks of her brown face.

“Read it, mademoiselle!”

“Ah, Nanon, why did he return to Paris? He went from Saumur.”

“Read it, and you’ll find out.”

Eugenie opened the letter with trembling fingers. A cheque on the house of “Madame des Grassins and Coret, of Saumur,” fluttered down. Nanon picked it up.

My dear Cousin,—

“No longer ‘Eugenie,’” she thought, and her heart quailed.

You—

“He once said ‘thou.’” She folded her arms and dared not read another word; great tears gathered in her eyes.

“Is he dead?” asked Nanon.

“If he were, he could not write,” said Eugenie.

She then read the whole letter, which was as follows:

My dear Cousin,—You will, I am sure, hear with pleasure of the success of my enterprise. You brought me luck; I have come back rich, and I have followed the advice of my uncle, whose death, together with that of my aunt, I have just learned from Monsieur des Grassins. The death of parents is in the course of nature, and we must succeed them. I trust you are by this time consoled. Nothing can resist time, as I am well aware. Yes, my dear cousin, the day of illusions is, unfortunately, gone for me. How could it be otherwise? Travelling through many lands, I have reflected upon life. I was a child when I went away,—I have come back a man. To–day, I think of many I did not dream of then. You are free, my dear cousin, and I am free still. Nothing apparently hinders the realization of our early hopes; but my nature is too loyal to hide from you the situation in which I find myself. I have not forgotten our

relations; I have always remembered, throughout my long wanderings, the little wooden seat—

Eugenie rose as if she were sitting on live coals, and went away and sat down on the stone steps of the court.

—the little wooden seat where we vowed to love each other forever, the passage, the gray hall, my attic chamber, and the night when, by your delicate kindness, you made my future easier to me. Yes, these recollections sustained my courage; I said in my heart that you were thinking of me at the hour we had agreed upon. Have you always looked at the clouds at nine o'clock? Yes, I am sure of it. I cannot betray so true a friendship,—no, I must not deceive you. An alliance has been proposed to me which satisfies all my ideas of matrimony. Love in marriage is a delusion. My present experience warns me that in marrying we are bound to obey all social laws and meet the conventional demands of the world. Now, between you and me there are differences which might affect your future, my dear cousin, even more than they would mine. I will not here speak of your customs and inclinations, your education, nor yet of your habits, none of which are in keeping with Parisian life, or with the future which I have marked out for myself. My intention is to keep my household on a stately footing, to receive much company,—in short, to live in the world; and I think I remember that you love a quiet and tranquil life. I will be frank, and make you the judge of my situation; you have the right to understand it and to judge it.

I possess at the present moment an income of eighty thousand francs. This fortune enables me to marry into the family of Aubrion, whose heiress, a young girl nineteen years of age, brings me a title, a place of gentleman–of–the–bed–chamber to His Majesty, and a very brilliant position. I will admit to you, my dear cousin, that I do not love Mademoiselle d'Aubrion; but in marrying her I secure to my children a social rank whose advantages will one day be incalculable: monarchical principles are daily coming more and more into favor. Thus in course of time my son, when he becomes Marquis d'Aubrion, having, as he then will have, an entailed estate with a rental of forty thousand francs a year, can obtain any position in the State which he may think proper to select. We owe ourselves to our children.

You see, my cousin, with what good faith I lay the state of my heart, my hopes, and my fortune before you. Possibly, after seven years' separation, you have yourself forgotten our youthful loves; but I have never forgotten either your kindness or my own words. I remember all, even words that were lightly uttered,—words by which a man less conscientious than I, with a heart less youthful and less upright, would scarcely feel himself bound. In telling you that the marriage I propose to make is solely one of convenience, that I still remember our childish love, am I not putting myself entirely in your hands and making you the mistress of my fate? am I not telling you that if I must renounce my social ambitions, I shall willingly content myself with the pure and simple happiness of which you have shown me so sweet an image?

"Tan, ta, ta—tan, ta, ti," sang Charles Grandet to the air of *Non piu andrai*, as he signed

himself,—

Your devoted cousin, Charles.

“Thunder! that’s doing it handsomely!” he said, as he looked about him for the cheque; having found it, he added the words:—

> P.S.—I enclose a cheque on the des Grassins bank for eight thousand francs to your order, payable in gold, which includes the capital and interest of the sum you were kind enough to lend me. I am expecting a case from Bordeaux which contains a few things which you must allow me to offer you as a mark of my unceasing gratitude. You can send my dressing–case by the diligence to the hotel d’Aubrion, rue Hillerin–Bertin.

“By the diligence!” said Eugenie. “A thing for which I would have laid down my life!”

Terrible and utter disaster! The ship went down, leaving not a spar, not a plank, on a vast ocean of hope! Some women when they see themselves abandoned will try to tear their lover from the arms of a rival, they will kill her, and rush to the ends of the earth,—to the scaffold, to their tomb. That, no doubt, is fine; the motive of the crime is a great passion, which awes even human justice. Other women bow their heads and suffer in silence; they go their way dying, resigned, weeping, forgiving, praying, and recollecting, till they draw their last breath. This is love,—true love, the love of angels, the proud love which lives upon its anguish and dies of it. Such was Eugenie’s love after she had read that dreadful letter. She raised her eyes to heaven, thinking of the last words uttered by her dying mother, who, with the prescience of death, had looked into the future with clear and penetrating eyes: Eugenie, remembering that prophetic death, that prophetic life, measured with one glance her own destiny. Nothing was left for her; she could only unfold her wings, stretch upward to the skies, and live in prayer until the day of her deliverance.

“My mother was right,” she said, weeping. “Suffer—and die!”

XIV

Eugenie came slowly back from the garden to the house, and avoided passing, as was her custom, through the corridor. But the memory of her cousin was in the gray old hall and on the chimney–piece, where stood a certain saucer and the old Sevres sugar–bowl which she used every morning at her breakfast.

This day was destined to be solemn throughout and full of events. Nanon announced the cure of the parish church. He was related to the Cruchots, and therefore in the interests of Monsieur de Bonfons. For some time past the old abbe had urged him to speak to Mademoiselle Grandet, from a purely religious point of view, about the duty of marriage for a woman in her position. When she saw her pastor, Eugenie supposed he had come for the thousand francs which she gave monthly to the poor, and she told Nanon to go and fetch them; but the cure only smiled.

“To–day, mademoiselle,” he said, “I have come to speak to you about a poor girl in whom the whole town of Saumur takes an interest, who, through lack of charity to herself, neglects her Christian duties.”

“Monsieur le cure, you have come to me at a moment when I cannot think of my neighbor, I am filled with thoughts of myself. I am very unhappy; my only refuge is in the Church; her bosom is large enough to hold all human woe, her love so full that we may draw from its depths and never drain it dry.”

“Mademoiselle, in speaking of this young girl we shall speak of you. Listen! If you wish to insure your salvation you have only two paths to take,—either leave the world or obey its laws. Obey either your earthly destiny or your heavenly destiny.”

“Ah! your voice speaks to me when I need to hear a voice. Yes, God has sent you to me; I will bid farewell to the world and live for God alone, in silence and seclusion.”

“My daughter, you must think long before you take so violent a step. Marriage is life, the veil is death.”

“Yes, death,—a quick death!” she said, with dreadful eagerness.

“Death? but you have great obligations to fulfil to society, mademoiselle. Are you not the mother of the poor, to whom you give clothes and wood in winter and work in summer? Your great fortune is a loan which you must return, and you have sacredly accepted it as such. To bury yourself in a convent would be selfishness; to remain an old maid is to fail in duty. In the first place, can you manage your vast property alone? May you not lose it? You will have law–suits, you will find yourself surrounded by inextricable difficulties. Believe your pastor: a husband is useful; you are bound to preserve what God has bestowed upon you. I speak to you as a precious lamb of my flock. You love God too truly not to find your salvation in the midst of his world, of which you are noble ornament and to which you owe your example.”

At this moment Madame des Grassins was announced. She came incited by vengeance and the sense of a great despair.

“Mademoiselle,” she said—“Ah! here is monsieur le cure; I am silent. I came to speak to you on business; but I see that you are conferring with—”

“Madame,” said the cure, “I leave the field to you.”

“Oh! monsieur le cure,” said Eugenie, “come back later; your support is very necessary to me just now.”

“Ah, yes, indeed, my poor child!” said Madame des Grassins.

“What do you mean?” asked Eugenie and the cure together.

“Don’t I know about your cousin’s return, and his marriage with Mademoiselle d’Aubrion? A woman doesn’t carry her wits in her pocket.”

Eugenie blushed, and remained silent for a moment. From this day forth she assumed the impassible countenance for which her father had been so remarkable.

“Well, madame,” she presently said, ironically, “no doubt I carry my wits in my pocket, for I do not understand you. Speak, say what you mean, before monsieur le cure; you know he is my director.”

“Well, then, mademoiselle, here is what des Grassins writes me. Read it.”

Eugenie read the following letter:—

> My dear Wife,—Charles Grandet has returned from the Indies and has been in Paris about a month—

“A month!” thought Eugenie, her hand falling to her side. After a pause she resumed the letter,—

> I had to dance attendance before I was allowed to see the future Vicomte d’Aubrion. Though all Paris is talking of his marriage and the banns are published—

“He wrote to me after that!” thought Eugenie. She did not conclude the thought; she did not cry out, as a Parisian woman would have done, “The villain!” but though she said it not, contempt was none the less present in her mind.

> The marriage, however, will not come off. The Marquis d’Aubrion will never give his daughter to the son of a bankrupt. I went to tell Grandet of the steps his uncle and I took in his father’s business, and the clever manoeuvres by which we had managed to keep the creditor’s quiet until the present time. The insolent fellow had the face to say to me—to me, who for five years have devoted myself night and day to his interests and his honor!—that *his father’s affairs were not his*! A solicitor would have had the right to demand fees amounting to thirty or forty thousand francs, one per cent on the total of the debts. But patience! there are twelve hundred thousand francs legitimately owing to the creditors, and I shall at once declare his father a bankrupt.
>
> I went into this business on the word of that old crocodile Grandet, and I have made promises in the name of his family. If Monsieur de vicomte d’Aubrion does not care for his honor, I care for mine. I shall explain my position to the creditors. Still, I have

too much respect for Mademoiselle Eugenie (to whom under happier circumstances we once hoped to be allied) to act in this matter before you have spoken to her about it—

There Eugenie paused, and coldly returned the letter without finishing it.

“I thank you,” she said to Madame des Grassins.

“Ah! you have the voice and manner of your deceased father,” Madame des Grassins replied.

“Madame, you have eight thousand francs to pay us,” said Nanon, producing Charles’s cheque.

“That’s true; have the kindness to come with me now, Madame Cornoiller.”

“Monsieur le cure,” said Eugenie with a noble composure, inspired by the thought she was about to express, “would it be a sin to remain a virgin after marriage?”

“That is a case of conscience whose solution is not within my knowledge. If you wish to know what the celebrated Sanchez says of it in his treatise ‘De Matrimonio,’ I shall be able to tell you to–morrow.”

The cure went away; Mademoiselle Grandet went up to her father’s secret room and spent the day there alone, without coming down to dinner, in spite of Nanon’s entreaties. She appeared in the evening at the hour when the usual company began to arrive. Never was the old hall so full as on this occasion. The news of Charles’s return and his foolish treachery had spread through the whole town. But however watchful the curiosity of the visitors might be, it was left unsatisfied. Eugenie, who expected scrutiny, allowed none of the cruel emotions that wrung her soul to appear on the calm surface of her face. She was able to show a smiling front in answer to all who tried to testify their interest by mournful looks or melancholy speeches. She hid her misery behind a veil of courtesy. Towards nine o’clock the games ended and the players left the tables, paying their losses and discussing points of the game as they joined the rest of the company. At the moment when the whole party rose to take leave, an unexpected and striking event occurred, which resounded through the length and breadth of Saumur, from thence through the arrondissement, and even to the four surrounding prefectures.

“Stay, monsieur le president,” said Eugenie to Monsieur de Bonfons as she saw him take his cane.

There was not a person in that numerous assembly who was unmoved by these words. The president turned pale, and was forced to sit down.

“The president gets the millions,” said Mademoiselle de Gribeaucourt.

“It is plain enough; the president marries Mademoiselle Grandet,” cried Madame d’Orsonval.

“All the trumps in one hand,” said the abbe.

“A love game,” said the notary.

Each and all said his say, made his pun, and looked at the heiress mounted on her millions

as on a pedestal. The drama begun nine years before had reached its conclusion. To tell the president, in face of all Saumur, to “stay,” was surely the same thing as proclaiming him her husband. In provincial towns social conventionalities are so rigidly enforced than an infraction like this constituted a solemn promise.

“Monsieur le president,” said Eugenie in a voice of some emotion when they were left alone, “I know what pleases you in me. Swear to leave me free during my whole life, to claim none of the rights which marriage will give you over me, and my hand is yours. Oh!” she added, seeing him about to kneel at her feet, “I have more to say. I must not deceive you. In my heart I cherish one inextinguishable feeling. Friendship is the only sentiment which I can give to a husband. I wish neither to affront him nor to violate the laws of my own heart. But you can possess my hand and my fortune only at the cost of doing me an inestimable service.”

“I am ready for all things,” said the president.

“Here are fifteen hundred thousand francs,” she said, drawing from her bosom a certificate of a hundred shares in the Bank of France. “Go to Paris,—not to–morrow, but instantly. Find Monsieur des Grassins, learn the names of my uncle’s creditors, call them together, pay them in full all that was owing, with interest at five per cent from the day the debt was incurred to the present time. Be careful to obtain a full and legal receipt, in proper form, before a notary. You are a magistrate, and I can trust this matter in your hands. You are a man of honor; I will put faith in your word, and meet the dangers of life under shelter of your name. Let us have mutual indulgence. We have known each other so long that we are almost related; you would not wish to render me unhappy.”

The president fell at the feet of the rich heiress, his heart beating and wrung with joy.

“I will be your slave!” he said.

“When you obtain the receipts, monsieur,” she resumed, with a cold glance, “you will take them with all the other papers to my cousin Grandet, and you will give him this letter. On your return I will keep my word.”

The president understood perfectly that he owed the acquiescence of Mademoiselle Grandet to some bitterness of love, and he made haste to obey her orders, lest time should effect a reconciliation between the pair.

When Monsieur de Bonfons left her, Eugenie fell back in her chair and burst into tears. All was over.

The president took the mail–post, and reached Paris the next evening. The morning after his arrival he went to see des Grassins, and together they summoned the creditors to meet at the notary’s office where the vouchers had been deposited. Not a single creditor failed to be present. Creditors though they were, justice must be done to them,—they were all punctual. Monsieur de Bonfons, in the name of Mademoiselle Grandet, paid them the amount of their claims with interest. The payment of interest was a remarkable event in the Parisian commerce of that day. When the receipts were all legally registered, and des Grassins had received for his services the sum of fifty thousand francs allowed to him by Eugenie, the president made his way to the hotel d’Aubrion and found Charles just entering his own apartment after a serious encounter with his prospective father–in–law.

The old marquis had told him plainly that he should not marry his daughter until all the creditors of Guillaume Grandet had been paid in full.

The president gave Charles the following letter:—

> My Cousin,—Monsieur le president de Bonfons has undertaken to place in your hands the aquittance for all claims upon my uncle, also a receipt by which I acknowledge having received from you the sum total of those claims. I have heard of a possible failure, and I think that the son of a bankrupt may not be able to marry Mademoiselle d'Aubrion. Yes, my cousin, you judged rightly of my mind and of my manners. I have, it is true, no part in the world; I understand neither its calculations nor its customs; and I could not give you the pleasures that you seek in it. Be happy, according to the social conventions to which you have sacrificed our love. To make your happiness complete I can only offer you your father's honor. Adieu! You will always have a faithful friend in your cousin

Eugenie.

The president smiled at the exclamation which the ambitious young man could not repress as he received the documents.

"We shall announce our marriages at the same time," remarked Monsieur de Bonfons.

"Ah! you marry Eugenie? Well, I am delighted; she is a good girl. But," added Charles, struck with a luminous idea, "she must be rich?"

"She had," said the president, with a mischievous smile, "about nineteen millions four days ago; but she has only seventeen millions to–day."

Charles looked at him thunderstruck.

"Seventeen mil—"

"Seventeen millions; yes, monsieur. We shall muster, Mademoiselle Grandet and I, an income of seven hundred and fifty thousand francs when we marry."

"My dear cousin," said Charles, recovering a little of his assurance, "we can push each other's fortunes."

"Agreed," said the president. "Here is also a little case which I am charged to give into your own hands," he added, placing on the table the leather box which contained the dressing–case.

"Well, my dear friend," said Madame d'Aubrion, entering the room without noticing the president, "don't pay any attention to what poor Monsieur d'Aubrion has just said to you; the Duchesse de Chaulieu has turned his head. I repeat, nothing shall interfere with the marriage—"

"Very good, madame. The three millions which my father owed were paid yesterday."

"In money?" she asked.

"Yes, in full, capital and interest; and I am about to do honor to his memory—"

"What folly!" exclaimed his mother–in–law. "Who is this?" she whispered in Grandet's

ear, perceiving the president.

“My man of business,” he answered in a low voice.

The marquise bowed superciliously to Monsieur de Bonfons.

“We are pushing each other’s fortunes already,” said the president, taking up his hat. “Good–by, cousin.”

“He is laughing at me, the old cockatoo! I’d like to put six inches of iron into him!” muttered Charles.

The president was out of hearing. Three days later Monsieur de Bonfons, on his return to Saumur, announced his marriage with Eugenie. Six months after the marriage he was appointed councillor in the Cour royale at Angers. Before leaving Saumur Madame de Bonfons had the gold of certain jewels, once so precious to her, melted up, and put, together with the eight thousand francs paid back by her cousin, into a golden pyx, which she gave to the parish church where she had so long prayed for *him*. She now spent her time between Angers and Saumur. Her husband, who had shown some public spirit on a certain occasion, became a judge in the superior courts, and finally, after a few years, president of them. He was anxiously awaiting a general election, in the hope of being returned to the Chamber of deputies. He hankered after a peerage; and then—

“The king will be his cousin, won’t he?” said Nanon, la Grande Nanon, Madame Cornoiller, bourgeoise of Saumur, as she listened to her mistress, who was recounting the honors to which she was called.

Nevertheless, Monsieur de Bonfons (he had finally abolished his patronymic of Cruchot) did not realize any of his ambitious ideas. He died eight days after his election as deputy of Saumur. God, who sees all and never strikes amiss, punished him, no doubt, for his sordid calculations and the legal cleverness with which, *accurante Cruchot*, he had drawn up his marriage contract, in which husband and wife gave to each other, “in case they should have no children, their entire property of every kind, landed or otherwise, without exception or reservation, dispensing even with the formality of an inventory; provided that said omission of said inventory shall not injure their heirs and assigns, it being understood that this deed of gift is, etc., etc.” This clause of the contract will explain the profound respect which monsieur le president always testified for the wishes, and above all, for the solitude of Madame de Bonfons. Women cited him as the most considerate and delicate of men, pitied him, and even went so far as to find fault with the passion and grief of Eugenie, blaming her, as women know so well how to blame, with cruel but discreet insinuation.

“Madame de Bonfons must be very ill to leave her husband entirely alone. Poor woman! Is she likely to get well? What is it? Something gastric? A cancer?”—“She has grown perfectly yellow. She ought to consult some celebrated doctor in Paris.”—“How can she be happy without a child? They say she loves her husband; then why not give him an heir? —in his position, too!”—“Do you know, it is really dreadful! If it is the result of mere caprice, it is unpardonable. Poor president!”

Endowed with the delicate perception which a solitary soul acquires through constant meditation, through the exquisite clear–sightedness with which a mind aloof from life

fastens on all that falls within its sphere, Eugenie, taught by suffering and by her later education to divine thought, knew well that the president desired her death that he might step into possession of their immense fortune, augmented by the property of his uncle the notary and his uncle the abbe, whom it had lately pleased God to call to himself. The poor solitary pitied the president. Providence avenged her for the calculations and the indifference of a husband who respected the hopeless passion on which she spent her life because it was his surest safeguard. To give life to a child would give death to his hopes, —the hopes of selfishness, the joys of ambition, which the president cherished as he looked into the future.

God thus flung piles of gold upon this prisoner to whom gold was a matter of indifference, who longed for heaven, who lived, pious and good, in holy thoughts, succoring the unfortunate in secret, and never wearying of such deeds. Madame de Bonfons became a widow at thirty–six. She is still beautiful, but with the beauty of a woman who is nearly forty years of age. Her face is white and placid and calm; her voice gentle and self–possessed; her manners are simple. She has the noblest qualities of sorrow, the saintliness of one who has never soiled her soul by contact with the world; but she has also the rigid bearing of an old maid and the petty habits inseparable from the narrow round of provincial life. In spite of her vast wealth, she lives as the poor Eugenie Grandet once lived. The fire is never lighted on her hearth until the day when her father allowed it to be lighted in the hall, and it is put out in conformity with the rules which governed her youthful years. She dresses as her mother dressed. The house in Saumur, without sun, without warmth, always in shadow, melancholy, is an image of her life. She carefully accumulates her income, and might seem parsimonious did she not disarm criticism by a noble employment of her wealth. Pious and charitable institutions, a hospital for old age, Christian schools for children, a public library richly endowed, bear testimony against the charge of avarice which some persons lay at her door. The churches of Saumur owe much of their embellishment to her. Madame de Bonfons (sometimes ironically spoken of as mademoiselle) inspires for the most part reverential respect: and yet that noble heart, beating only with tenderest emotions, has been, from first to last, subjected to the calculations of human selfishness; money has cast its frigid influence upon that hallowed life and taught distrust of feelings to a woman who is all feeling.

“I have none but you to love me,” she says to Nanon.

The hand of this woman stanches the secret wounds in many families. She goes on her way to heaven attended by a train of benefactions. The grandeur of her soul redeems the narrowness of her education and the petty habits of her early life.

Such is the history of Eugenie Grandet, who is in the world but not of it; who, created to be supremely a wife and mother, has neither husband nor children nor family. Lately there has been some question of her marrying again. The Saumur people talk of her and of the Marquis de Froidfond, whose family are beginning to beset the rich widow just as, in former days, the Cruchots laid siege to the rich heiress. Nanon and Cornoiller are, it is said, in the interests of the marquis. Nothing could be more false. Neither la Grande Nanon nor Cornoiller has sufficient mind to understand the corruptions of the world.