

low that his wife, stooping over his chair, could hardly hear him; but she knew that all he said had the one refrain — "I have worked for twenty years, and this is the end of it all. 'I might have left poor Joseph in exile. I might have allowed Lancilly to tumble into ruins. What has come of it all! Nothing, nothing but disappointment and failure. Is it not enough to break a man's heart, to give the best of his whole life, and to fail!"

The wind went on roaring. Absorbed in his own thoughts, he did not hear the house door open and shut, then the door of the room, then the light steps of Angelot and Hélène across the floor.

"Look up, Urbain!" his wife said with a sudden inspiration. "*There* is your success, dear friend!"

There was a bright pink colour in Hélène's cheeks; her eyes and lips, once so sad, were smiling in perfect content; her fair curls were blown about her face; she was gloriously beautiful. Angelot held her hand, and his dark eyes glowed as he looked at her.

"We have been fighting the elements," he said.

Urbain and Anne gazed at them, these two splendid young creatures for whom life was beginning. The philosopher's brow and eyes lightened suddenly, and he smiled.

"And by your triumphant looks, you have conquered them!" he said. "Is that my doing, Anne? Is that my success, my victory?" he