

prised if that timid rustic didn't lay a claim to the lot for the love of God and the good of the Church. . . .

And held on with her teeth, too," he added graphically.

Mills' face remained grave. Very grave. I was amused at those little venomous outbreaks of the fatal Mr. Blunt. Again I knew myself utterly forgotten. But I didn't feel dull and I didn't even feel sleepy. That last strikes me as strange at this distance of time, in regard of my tender years and of the depressing hour which precedes the dawn. We had been drinking that straw-coloured wine, too, I won't say like water (nobody would have drunk water like that) but, well . . . and the haze of tobacco smoke was like the blue mist of great distances seen in dreams.

Yes, that old sculptor was the first who joined them in the sight of all Paris. It was that old glory that opened the series of companions of those morning rides; a series which extended through three successive Parisian spring-times and comprised a famous physiologist, a fellow who seemed to hint that mankind could be made immortal or at least everlastingly old; a fashionable philosopher and psychologist who used to lecture to enormous audiences of women with his tongue in his cheek (but never permitted himself anything of the kind when talking to Rita); that surly dandy Cabanel (but he only once, from mere vanity), and everybody else at all distinguished including also a celebrated person who turned out later to be a swindler. But he was really a genius. . . . All this according to Mr. Blunt, who gave us all those details with a sort of languid zest covering a secret irritation.

"Apart from that, you know," went on Mr. Blunt, "all she knew of the world of men and women (I mean till Allègre's death) was what she had seen of it from the saddle two hours every morning during four months of the year or so. Absolutely all, with Allègre self-deny-