

souls of Prosper Magnan and Walhenfer and Taillefer now midway through this nineteenth century of ours? And as for endowing a charitable institution or awarding periodic prizes to virtue—most of our charitable institutions appear to me to be harboring scoundrels, and the prize of virtue would fall to the greatest rogues.

“And not only so. Would these investments, more or less gratifying to vanity, be any reparation? And is it my place to make any? Then I am in love, passionately in love. My love has come to be my life. If, without any apparent reason, I propose that a young girl, accustomed to splendor and elegance, and a life abundant in all the luxuries art can devise, a girl who indolently enjoys Rossini’s music at the Bouffons,—if to her I should propose that she should rob herself of fifteen hundred thousand francs for the benefit of aged imbeciles and problematical scrofula patients, she would laugh and turn her back upon me, or her confidante would take me for a wag who makes jokes in poor taste. If in an ecstacy of love I extol the charms of humble life in a cottage by the Loire, if I ask her to give up, for my sake, her life in Paris, it would be a virtuous life to begin with, and probably would end in a sad experience for me, for I should lose the girl’s heart: she is passionately fond of dancing and of pretty dresses, and, for the time being, of me. Enter some smart stripling of an officer with a nicely curled moustache, who shall play the piano, rave about Byron, and mount a horse gracefully, and I shall be supplanted. What is to be done? Gentlemen, advise me, for pity’s sake?”

Then one of the party, who hitherto had not breathed a word, the Englishman with a Puritanical cast of face, not unlike the father of Jeanie Deans, shrugged his shoulders.

“Idiot that you were,” he said. “What made you ask him if he came from Beauvais?”

PARIS, May 1831.