

upon your ruin. When our fellow-men weep for us, it is only because they have well wished to laugh.

Hence, Maurice, in a short time, became for the town in question a wonderful subject of public scandal and interior satisfaction. Traitorously concealed under the mantle of pity, hatred took joy at heart. The chevalier was spared neither charitable advices, nor compliments of hypocritical condolence; nor anonymous letters did the rest.

The marquise devoured her tears in silence; the chevalier disappeared from view. All happiness was banished since a long time from under the roof of these old friends. Madeleine went from one to the other like a consoling angel. She defended Maurice, and spoke still of the approaching return of the prodigal son; but she herself no longer believed it, and frequently hid herself to weep in solitude. I was plainly perceived that the good chevalier was seriously struck, for, commencing to neglect his wood-carving, he soon wholly abandoned it. He no longer had any inclination for anything; Madeleine alone possessed the secret of unbending his forehead and bringing a pale smile upon his lips. He said to her at times: 'I ought indeed, poor child, to occupy myself before dying in assuring your dear destiny; for, from the way he is going, it is not Maurice that will watch over you when I am no more.' 'Never mind, never mind, father; do not worry about that. I wish only to love you; I shall need nothing when you are gone. See, I am large enough to watch over myself. I have good courage, thank God! and what you have done in our Germany, you and Madame the Marquise, why, my uncle, I shall do in your France. I shall work, why not?'

The old man smiled softly, shaking his head. One day the young girl took it upon herself to write in secret to her cousin. It was a lovely letter. Maurice did not answer. As to the chevalier, he no longer wrote; scarcely did he permit, in the latter part of the time, anyone to speak of his son in his presence. As he grew feeble and feeble, and as he felt his end arrive, he determined, however, to send toward this unfortunate young man a last cry of love and despair.

The response was slow in coming; they waited three months; finally it arrived. It was, that absent from Paris for about a year, traveling no one knew where, nor in company with whom, Maurice had not received until his return the last advices of his father. God be praised! this young man was returning to better sentiments; his letter showed it. They saw revealed in it the distress of a lacerated soul, which by a supreme effort

was striving to raise itself. He embraced the knees of his old friend; he covered with tears and kisses the hands of the marquise; Madeleine herself was found mixed with the tears of his repentance. He asked only a few weeks to finish breaking bad associations. In a few weeks he was going to set out; he was going to bid an eternal adieu to the world that had led him astray; driven by the tempest, he was going to re-enter the port, never more to leave it. 'Paternal roof, I am then going to see thee again! I am then going to return to the soft nest of my childhood! Amiable companions of my youth, I am then going to clasp you in my arms; you also, little cousin, well-grown, very beautiful, no doubt!' Exalted by these vivid images, his imagination found for an instant the grace and freshness of youth. Unfortunately, when this letter arrived at the chateau, the chevalier had been dead twenty-four hours. The lamp of his life was extinguished at evening near the window where they had rolled his fauteuil, between the Marquise and Madeleine, who each held one hand.

The same day of the funeral, after the earth had covered all that remained here below of that excellent being that chance had made nobleman, and that work and poverty had made man, the marquise led away Madeleine, orphan for the second time.

'My child,' said she, 'thy work is not accomplished. Thou yet must assist me in dying, and close my eyes.' They threw themselves in each other's arms and remained in a long embrace.

'Ah!' cried the marquise, 'since you have restored my daughter to me, it is right that I should hold the place of mother.'

From this day, Madeleine lived at the chateau de Fresnes. A week before his death the chevalier had put in the hands of the marquise a holographic last testament, by which he bequeathed to his niece his *metairie* of Coudray, having a value of eighty to a hundred thousand francs. This testament was couched in affectionate and touching terms; all the exquisite delicacy of the testator was therein revealed in a few charming lines. When, in order to tranquillize, doubtless, Madeleine with respect to her future, Madame de Fresnes confided to her this precious gage of the tenderness of her uncle, with a movement of pious recognition the young girl pressed it to her lips and to her heart; then having torn it, she sacredly slipped the pieces into her bosom.

'Oh! my child, what have you done?' cried the marquise, apparently dismayed, in reality charmed.

'Is it you, noble heart, that ask this?'

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