

She reads a good deal. Her favourite authors are Chateaubriand and Maeterlinck. In Maeterlinck she loves the mystery. "We never know people properly," she says. "They are just as difficult to understand as things that happen are. We never know whose fault it is when good or bad things happen, and we don't really know whether we ought to be angry or to be sorry with people who do harm. Wicked people are like a thunderstorm, don't you think? And a lazy woman is like a hot room. Both are unhealthy, but they cannot help it."

Marguerite Audoux does not say these things to be clever. She says them quite simply, and they express her natural way of thought, which is simplicity and purity itself.

She wrote her book when and how she could, on scraps of cheap paper, and she does not know herself now whether she hoped to have it published when she wrote it. She did hope for publication when she had finished it, but that was because she was hungry.

I met a friend just outside Marguerite Audoux's house after my first visit to her. "Tiens," he said, "tu viens de la mansarde de