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nature, spreading around her without ostentation, animation, happiness and life.

One can easily form an idea of the position of Madeleine between the chevalier and marquise. She was the joy of their old age, and like a sweet beam of light that illuminated the end of their days. Mingling in unison, these three existences flowed in slow and peaceful waves, and nothing foreshadowed that the transparent limpidity would ever be altered. It nevertheless happened that these pure waves were troubled.

The letters of Maurice were at first full of charm and poesy, fresh and fragrant as so many bouquets collected in the dew of the fields. It is in this way that they write in that happy age, too quickly stolen away. At the fading hour when life already commences to decline, have you ever found at the bottom of some old drawer some of the letters of your youth? Have you been surprised to read them? In reading them, have you seen pass through your tears the image of your happy years? By a bitter return upon the present state of your heart, have you asked yourself if it was indeed from that same source, to-day near to exhaustion, that could have issued all these treasures of enthusiasm and of faith, of grace and of virtue, of expansion and of love? It was letters of this character that Maurice wrote at twenty.

The days of poet were therefore days of festivity at Valtravers. When she saw the rural agent coming in the distance, Madeleine ran to meet him, and returned triumphant to the chateau. Ordinarily it was she who read aloud the letters of her cousin. Whenever she found her name there, which did not always happen, one might have seen her bosom heave, and a rosy light, almost imperceptible, coloured an instant the alabaster of her face. If there was no question about the little cousin, which happened frequently, she appeared neither surprised nor saddened, only one might have remarked that she was graver and more silent the rest of the day. These letters of Maurice caused every fibre of the good chevalier to vibrate in unison, who could therein follow through the outbreaks of impassioned tenderness, the developments of an elevated spirit and of a vivid intelligence. Moreover, some old friends that he had in Paris wrote to congratulate him, vying with each other in praising his son and relating his prodigies. Everything was going for the best; the days of return were already spoken of.

But at the end of a year the letters of our young friend became rarer and rarer, and shorter, less and less affectionate and tender.

Vague in thought, constrained in expression, they betrayed evidently a great trouble of sense and soul. The little colony commenced by being afflicted in silence; it ended by being seriously alarmed and by complaining. To the indulgent reproaches that they addressed him, Maurice could only oppose evasive answers. The term fixed for his sojourn at Paris had long since expired; but Maurice showed no disposition to set out, as had been decided, either for Germany or for Italy. When the chevalier urged it, at first he did not answer; then, pushed to extremity, by the insistence of his father, he answered in language little contained, in which impatience under the rein was plainly exhibited. If the old friends wrote again it was in order to express regret at not seeing Maurice as in the past. Finally some shells came hursting now and then, in form of lettres de change, upon the honest manor, struck with a dreadful gloom. These things were not accomplished in a week, nor even in a month. Altogether, three years had transpired in coming to the point we mention.

This was not all. If, thanks to the more or less specious pretexts with which Maurice sought still to colour his excuses, M. de Valtravers had been able to enterlain some illusions upon the conduct of his son, the good souls with which the departments abound would not have failed to deprive him of them. As he was a perfect gentleman, in the best acceptation of this word, become so common since the thing is so rare, — generous, accessible to all, charming mind, noble heart, loyal character—the chevalier naturally found many enemies in the country; not among his peasants, who loved him, but, for example, in the neighbouring city, in which some bailiffs and barristers, frequenters of taverns, leaders of liberalism and vermin of the province, did not pardon him for returning into his domains and making himself beloved therein. Now the whole city knew for a long time the truth concerning the existence that young de Valtravers led at Paris; for the province is a good mother that never abandons her absent sons; she follows them through life with an eager, curious and jealous eye, every ready to crush those who stumble in order to be avenged upon those who rise. In general, if you wish to throw despair and consternation into that human locality that has seen you born or grown up, arrive with head erect and by the right road to success, to honour or to fortune. If you wish, on the other hand, to spread a lively joy, go astray, that your virtuous fellow-men may weep