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Maurice had already turned on his heel. It was not because he was displeased at the presence of the orphan under the paternal roof. Far from it! If he had all the ardours of youth, he had all its noble and generous instincts. The thought of disputing the part that Madeleine might some day have in the chevalier's will never entered his head. Let it be said, in passing, to the glory of youth, such shameful calculations rarely enter the hearts of twenty years. Maurice was ready to share with his cousin as with a sister; and, if he did show himself more attentive or more tender to her, it was very plainly because Madeleine had forgotten to come into the world fifteen or twenty months sooner.

The marquise and the chevalier had not failed to notice, from the first, the sudden change which was coming in the habits of Maurice, whose tastes had hitherto been so simple and whose humour so facile. They were, in consequence, disturbed without too well understanding it. They had been young in a time when youth, scattered here and there in petty distractions, in elegant frivolities, hardly suspected that dull discontent and profound ennui that were destined to be, later, the torment and martyrdom of a whole generation. Although raised in the retreat, in the interior of the country, Maurice had undergone in his isolated position the influence of new ideas. Ideas are living forces mixed in the air we breathe—the wind carries and sows them at all points of the horizon; and, whatever one may do to escape these invisible currents, howsoever far he keeps himself aloof, he is penetrated, he is impregnated; he is always the progeny of his century. That which chiefly surprised the old chevalier and marquise was not the need of absorbing activity that they explained naturally as the result of the warm blood and impetuosity of youth, but the sombre melancholy in which were swallowed up almost always these ardours and transports. What could they understand, indeed, of the malady of an epoch in which gaiety, exiled from souls of twenty years, would no longer occur under the white hairs of the aged? By dint of thorough study and co-operation, they succeeded, however, in recognizing that the existence that Maurice had hitherto led was neither fruitful nor enjoyable; and that, despite the incomparable charm of sculpture-in-wood, they ought not to be astonished that a young heart was not wholly absorbed in it. This was the opinion of the marquise; the chevalier corroborated it. 'What was to be done, however?' They spoke at first of marriage; but the remedy was found a little too violent; besides, the

marquise made the just observation that they did not marry any longer at twenty; and that, different from the practice of the past, marriage had become less a beginning than an end. In short, after ripe reflection, it was decided that they would send Maurice travelling for two or three years—to Paris first, then, at his choice, in Germany or in Italy—in order to complete his education by thorough knowledge of men and things. This programme was not much more vague than the greater part of those which the provinces trace out for their sons every year, before putting the bridle upon the neck and leading them into Parisian life.

Some time later, on an autumn evening, a year to a day after the arrival of Madeleine, the chevalier, his son, and the marquise were assembled in the chateau of Valtravers. The horse that was to bear Maurice to the neighbouring village, through which passed the mail coach, was waiting saddled and bridled at the foot of the perron. It was the hour of parting. A departure has always something of sadness and solemnity, even when it does not pertain to a sorrowful separation. The chevalier appeared painfully affected; the marquise silently concealed her emotion; Maurice himself felt moved, and when his old father opened his arms to him, he threw himself in tears upon his breast as if he embraced him for the last time. Madame de Fresnes clasped him to her heart with emotion. Lastly, the servants of the house, the oldest, those who had seen him born, embraced him as their child.

Time flew; Maurice must put a stop to all these embraces. It was only at the last moment, when about to put foot in stirrup, that he remembered Madeleine. He looked around for her; and astonished at not seeing her, he was going to call her, when somebody told him that the young girl, gone out since several hours, had not yet returned to the chateau. Committing a few affectionate messages, to be addressed to his cousin, to the charge of the people around him, he moved off at the measured step of his horse, not without turning several times to salute once more with a tender gesture the excellent creatures who followed him with their eyes. Arrived at the gate of the park, about to break into a gallop, he hesitated, like an eagle upon the edge of his eyrie before launching himself into space. He recalled the happy days that he had passed under the shadow of this pretty manor, between the cares of the marquise and the tenderness of his father. He fancied he saw through the moving foliage the gracious phantom of his youth, that regarded him with sorrow and strove to retain him. He fancied he