

MY LAST KICK

He talks with a furious absence of full stops. He is always hungry for tea—which we both take alone on the lawn when it is fine, or in my sitting-room when it is not—because he has not time to eat at meal-times.

Science has its use after all : one can talk about it ! Austen seems to understand what Médor talks about ; he even answers coherently. Suppose Médor had been an artist, or a *littérateur*, instead of a scientist, where would we all be ? What could Austen and he talk about ?

I need not have been afraid of Austen's eyes, they never look at me ; at least I never catch him looking at me. Several times I look up brusquely hoping to meet his eyes on mine, but I never can. Sometimes, with an obvious effort, he looks at my hands and at my body while he speaks to me—he tries to be natural, and he knows that this is not achieved by surveying the carpet—but, whenever he looks at any part of me, I have the horrible feeling that his imagination is working slowly, painfully over this dreadfully new past. In his eyes I am a thing soiled and though, in the goodness of his heart, he will never willingly express that estimation, I feel it in every one of his tones and of his movements. And it is dreadful ! If this life lasts a little longer I shall begin to consider myself as an unclean thing, something to be wept over, pitied. His mental attitude influences me.

Blaise has kissed me and I have let him. That is quite true. Nothing can efface that, nor that waltz. Perhaps it is much more wrong than I imagined at first. Curiously enough, it is of that kiss that I do not feel guilty. It seemed to have ended my delirium of the