

by the Mother of the House whom we call Nature.

Valmond was alive to it all, almost too alive, for at first the flamboyancy of his spirit touched him off with melodrama. Yet, on the whole, he seemed at first more natural than involved or obscure. His love for children was real, his politeness to women spontaneous. He was seen to carry the load of old Madame Dégardy up the hill, and place it at her own door. He also had offered her a pinch of snuff, which she acknowledged by gravely offering a pinch of her own from a dirty twist of brown paper.

One day he sprang over a fence, took from the hands of coquettish Elise Malboir an axe, and split the knot which she in vain had tried to break. Not satisfied with this, he piled full of wood the stone oven outside the house, and carried water for her from the spring. This came from natural kindness, for he did not see the tempting look she gave him, nor the invitation in her eye, as he turned to leave her. He merely asked her name. But after he had gone, as though