

felt, you would have acquired the virtues which are a part of womanhood; you would have known the charm of chastity, the refinements of modesty, the two virtues that are the glory of a maiden.—You do not love.”

Esther's gesture of horror was seen by the priest, but it had no effect on the impassibility of her confessor.

“Yes; for you love him for yourself and not for himself, for the temporal enjoyments that delight you, and not for love itself. If he has thus taken possession of you, you cannot have felt that sacred thrill that is inspired by a being on whom God has set the seal of the most adorable perfections. Has it never occurred to you that you would degrade him by your past impurity, that you would corrupt a child by the overpowering seductions which earned you your nickname glorious in infamy? You have been illogical with yourself, and your passion of a day——”

“Of a day?” she repeated, raising her eyes.

“By what other name can you call a love that is not eternal, that does not unite us in the future life of the Christian, to the being we love?”

“Ah, I will be a Catholic!” she cried in a hollow, vehement tone, that would have earned her the mercy of the Lord.

“Can a girl who has received neither the baptism of the Church nor that of knowledge; who can neither read, nor write, nor pray; who cannot take a step without the stones in the street rising up to accuse her; noteworthy only for the fugitive gift of beauty which sickness may destroy to-morrow; can such a vile, degraded creature, fully aware too of her degradation—for if you had been ignorant of it and less devoted, you would have been more excusable—can the intended victim to suicide and hell hope to be the wife of Lucien de Rubempré?”

Every word was a poniard thrust piercing the depths of her heart. At every word the louder sobs and abundant tears of the desperate girl showed the power with which light had flashed upon an intelligence as pure as that of a savage, upon a soul at length aroused, upon a nature over which depravity