

TO A YOUNG MAN.

I DEDICATE this book to you, my young countryman, with whom I am so well acquainted, although I may not know your place of birth, your name, your parents, your fortune or your ambitions—nothing but that you are over eighteen and under twenty-five years of age, and that you will search in our books for the answers to the questions which are troubling you. And the answers which you will find depend a little upon your moral life, a little upon your own soul, for your moral life is the moral life of France itself—your soul is her soul. In twenty years from now you and your brothers will hold in your hands the destiny of this ancient country, which is our common mother—you will be the nation itself. What will you have learned from our teachings? No man of letters, however insignificant he may be, but should tremble at the responsibility.

You will find in "The Disciple" the study of one of these responsibilities. May you find here a proof that the friend who writes these lines has the merit, if he possesses no other, of believing profoundly in the seriousness of his art. May you