

as my valet, serving me with admirable care, and never better pleased than when I invited him to talk about himself. He had long since shed his thief-skin, but I fear that it was only the influence of fortunate circumstances which left him without excuse to be or to seem other than as honest as the rest of the world about him.

I have known a great variety of disreputable folk in my lifetime, but never one who had so many winning qualities, or who was so entirely at his ease. A scamp in the company of men of better morals usually becomes hypocritical or appears awkwardly aware of breathing an atmosphere to which he is unused. François had no such difficulties. For half a century he had been for Des Illes something between friend and servant. His former life and habits were well known to the few who came to his master's house. He was comfortable, with some forty thousand francs in the *rentes*, for his old acquaintance, the marquis, had not forgotten his services. He had no necessity to exercise what he still tranquilly called his profession. Like a clever street-dog adopted by a respectable family, though for a time uneasy, he ceased by degrees to wander for the joy of stealing a bone, and became contented with the better and less perilous chances of a dinner at home.

I learned from M. de St. Maur, the duke's son, that while Mme. des Illes lived François remained the most domestic of animals. Her death caused him a grief so profound that for a time his master was troubled lest his reason might suffer. She herself would never hear a word against him. Unlike her husband, she