

possession of that
 umn evening, five
 presented herself,
 consisting of a little

V.

MISERY.

new position than
 eleine re-entered re-
 ceau, in which the
 her grow up and
 her as if a young
 the past, modestly,
 preoccupied with
 o her care. Her
 uly in the profusion
 spread around her;
 have been difficult
 fortune; except for
 passed for the little
 charity of her uncle.
 utest that she in-
 ould be changed in
 e house, and that
 d cavalier should
 as if he were not
 at any instant. As
 a any other apart-
 om in which had
 s of her childhood
 youth. Whenever
 orders upon some-
 she never failed to
 ascertain what the
 e in similar cir-
 ccessary to admo-
 ich latter happen-
 s prepared the way
 this: 'I think, my
 at your excellent
 ould have said or
 sft often that the
 mory of the beings
 do nothing which
 and to reflect, be-
 they might have
 Finally, whenever
 was only with re-
 rience whose king-
 uring his minis-
 than regent.

ity having spread
 not slow in pre-
 traversers became a
 of holy sepulchre
 ety of all the cele-
 . During several
 ee pilgrims might
 their way to the

holy spot to make there their devotions. Small country squires, ruined lords, noble-
 men's sons, boys young and old; some in
 broken-down carriages, some on foot, some
 on horseback,—all flowed hither to recite
 their characteristic *pater noster*. Al-
 though serious and reflective, Made-
 leine possessed that good and art-
 less gaiety which proceeds from a pure
 conscience, from an upright heart and
 healthy intellect. She replied to these
 faithfuls that it was an edifying spectacle to
 see a poor orphan become all at once the ob-
 ject of so pure a culte, of so disinterested a
 zeal. She had, indeed, heard in Germany
 that France was the native country of pious
 souls and generous hearts, but she had never
 hitherto suspected that they pushed the reli-
 gion of misfortune to such an extreme.
 Moved even to tears, she had only one re-
 gret, which was, she found herself so happy
 in her humble condition that she did not
 wish to exchange it even for the rare honour
 which they offered her. Thus she dismissed
 in order these devoted and pious individuals.

However, Madeleine had always seriously
 answered in this same sense, whenever the
 cavalier or marquise had urged her to
 marry. This child had decided that she would
 not marry. If such was her inclination, I
 approve it, having never understood the
 petty ridicule that is attached to spinsters.
 Would it not appear that a husband is a com-
 modity alike so indispensable and rare that
 one cannot get along without it, and at the
 same time one never runs the risk of losing it?
 There is scarcely any ugly or poor creature
 who has not met some one upon her way
 through life; now, I venture to think that she
 who has resigned herself to live in solitude,
 has done so rather than consent to a mes-
 alliance of heart and soul.

Freed from her suitors, Madeleine con-
 tinued to live in her retreat, devoting her
 days to the cares of her little empire, the
 performance of charity and the culture of
 the arts she loved. She had exhumed from
 the library of her uncle some old books that
 served to ripen her intelligence. In her
 smiling gravity, in her calm and serene
 beauty, she represented at twenty-one grace
 and reason, good sense and poesy, like flow-
 ers that imbibe moisture from the earth
 through their roots, and drink in at the
 same time through the balmy calyx the dew
 of heaven. She was also religious, and
 every Sunday she went to hear mass at
 Neuilly-les-Bois. She visited freely that
 wretched village which had seen her so help-
 less, in which she now had her poor and
 orphans who blessed her name. After leav-
 ing the church she rarely forgot to visit

the good farmer's wife who had charitably
 offered her to taste the milk of her cows.
 As to M. Pierrot, she was never able to suc-
 ceed in taming him. Either because in her
 presence he felt overwhelmed with remorse,
 or else fearing she might reclaim the piece of
 silver that he had earned so well, the little
 scamp took to his heels whenever he saw
 her coming.

When the funeral tints that death left
 behind it were dissipated about Madeleine,
 when time has changed into joyous shades the
 spectres of her grief, this young girl might
 have been called happy, were it not for an
 incessant preoccupation which banished hap-
 piness from her bosom. 'What was Maurice
 doing? What had become of him?' Since
 the death of his father, he had given signs of
 life only by ever-increasing bursts of dissi-
 pation. Having come into possession of Val-
 travers, yielding to the impulse of an adora-
 ble delicacy, which only elevated minds can
 divine without difficulty, and which com-
 mon natures strive vainly to comprehend,
 Madeleine had written to him to excuse her
 good fortune. This letter, which he ought
 to have borne respectfully to his lips, unless
 he were already dead to every sentiment of
 virtue, remained without response. And
 yet, despite so many reasons for driving him
 from her heart, whatever had been done and
 whatever had been said, Madeleine still
 looked after this unfortunate young man
 with a troubled and anxious thought; she
 saw him again, in her dreams, just as he ap-
 peared the autumn evening when, for the
 first time, he had opened the hospitable door
 to her. She was then only a little girl;
 but, at this age, which we men regard only
 as an escape from the nursery, who knows
 what is already germinating in these hearts
 of fifteen years? Girls have no childhood;
 and, however young be his wife, unless he
 has grown up with her, the husband ought
 not to flatter himself with having received
 the first fragrance of her soul.

Omniscience, that sees the diamond form-
 ing in the bowels of the earth, and the pearl
 growing in the depths of the ocean—Omni-
 science alone could have known what passed
 in the breast of that child since the first
 meeting. Madeleine had long refused to be-
 lieve that Maurice had fallen as low as peo-
 ple affirmed. Long she had defended him
 against all, even against his so indulgent
 father, against the good marquise. Finally,
 when, having seen the days of the cavalier
 shortened, and the domain of his ancestors
 sold at public auction, she was obliged to
 submit to the evidence; but this young man
 was none the less left the inner thought, the
 hidden romance of her life. These preoccu-