

EPILOGUE

IN THE solitude of his ancient house, Henri de Puymaufray traverses his thoughts. They are thoughts of defeat . . . and of victory. Some pride of love gives this vanquished soul the brave hope that there can be no victory against love. The heat of the battle against the master of Claire, who became the master of Claudia, is dissipated in the calm peace of the soil. Now that Claudia is far away, Claire has returned, Claire who by her own strength will bring Claudia back in time. Life, through suffering, will bring Claudia back to love.

Weakened by the struggle, he gained strength to meet contrary fortune. Claudia is already on the way to forgiveness, en route for the great return to him. Alas! the way is long and hard, and perhaps he will be dead before the day. But he will die with open arms. And even if Claudia is not to return, may she be forgiven. Love does not measure its strength against the weakness of the strongest.

Spring has come. The earth is reawakened, flourishing. Everything feels the thrill of life and bears blossom and bud and flower and fruit in an