

You can dispose of your life as you choose. Your joint p and agreement are based solely on reason, logic, and dictates of life itself, which, to be lived in health and fulness, requires the mating of man and woman. But, we see your peace destroyed by the eternal frailty of human nature, unless indeed kindness of heart should help you to it back.'

Thérèse had listened, calm, dignified, and with an expression of great deference: 'I know all those things, grandfather; you must not think I have forgotten them,' said she. 'But why has François been living with you for some time past? He might have remained here. There are no lodgings, the schoolmaster's and the schoolmistress's, and do not prevent him from taking possession of the former? I occupy the other. In that fashion he can resume his duties when the boys come back in a few days' time. We are as you say, and I desire to remain free.'

Her father and her mother, Sébastien and Sarah, tried to intervene affectionately; and Geneviève, Louise, Charlotte, indeed all the women present, smiled at her entreated her with their glances; but she would listen to nothing, she rejected their suggestions resolutely, without any anger.

'François has wounded me cruelly,' she said. 'I thought I had quite ceased to love him, and I should be telling you a falsehood if I said that I am now certain I love him still. You cannot wish me to tell an untruth, you cannot wish me to resume life in common with him, when it would be cowardice and shame.'

At this a cry escaped François, who hitherto had remained silent, and visibly anxious. 'But I, Thérèse, I still love you,' he exclaimed. 'I love you as I never loved you before. If you have suffered, I think that I now suffer even more than you have done!'

She turned towards him, and said very gently: 'I will speak the truth, I am willing to believe it. . . . It is not possible that you still love, in spite of your folly, for among our craving for reason, our poor human hearts will remain a source of dementia. And as you suffer so much, there are two of us who suffer . . . dreadfully. But I cannot be your wife again if I no longer love you, if I no longer love you for my husband. It would be unworthy of us both to be ill, in lieu of healing, would be poisoned by it. The