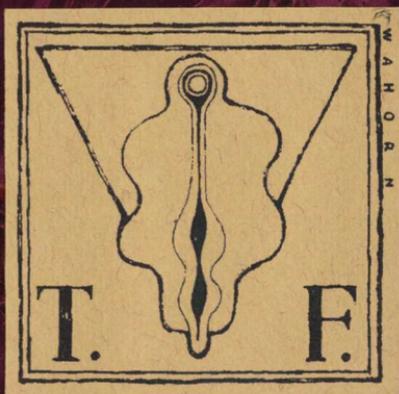
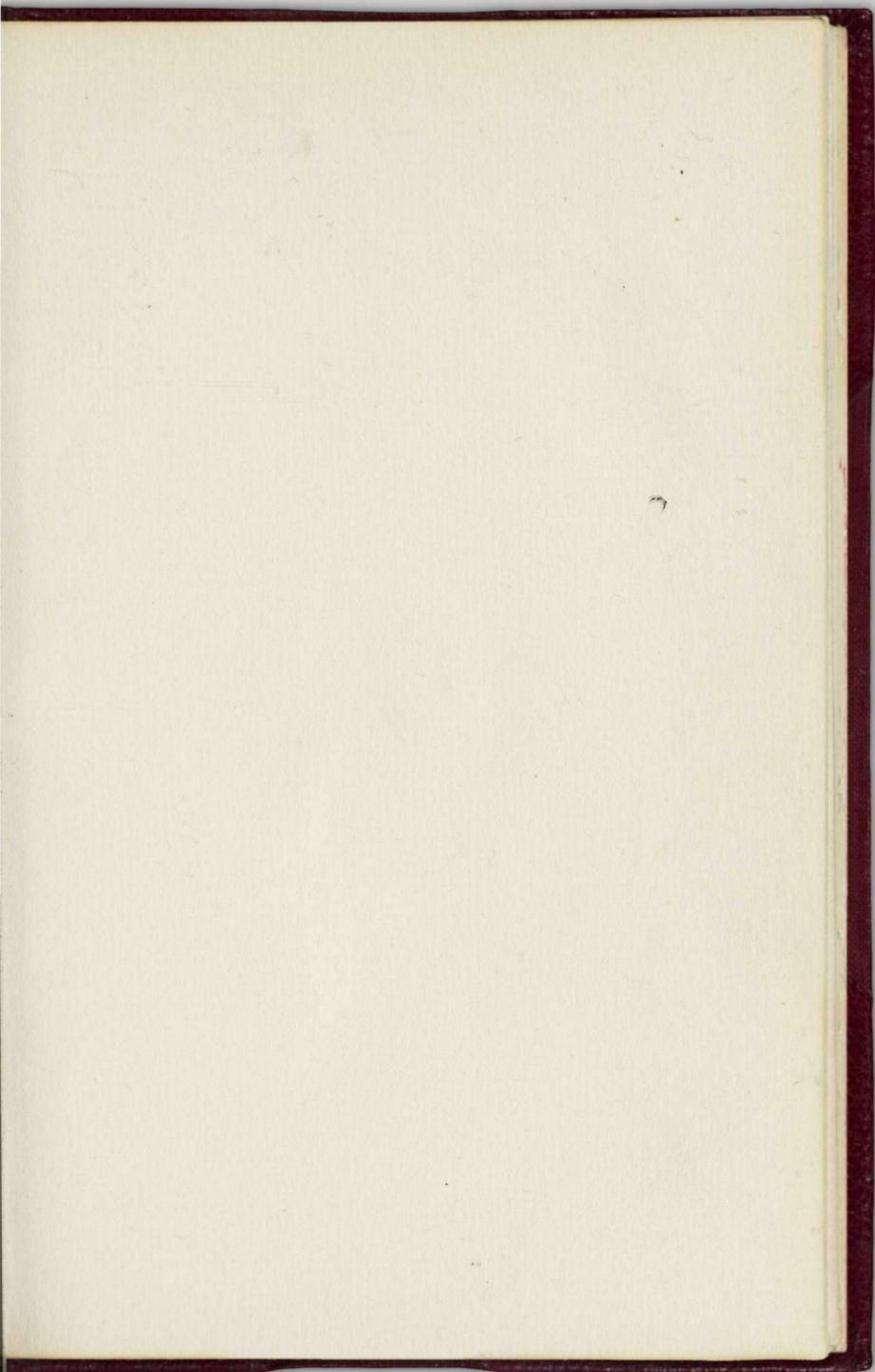


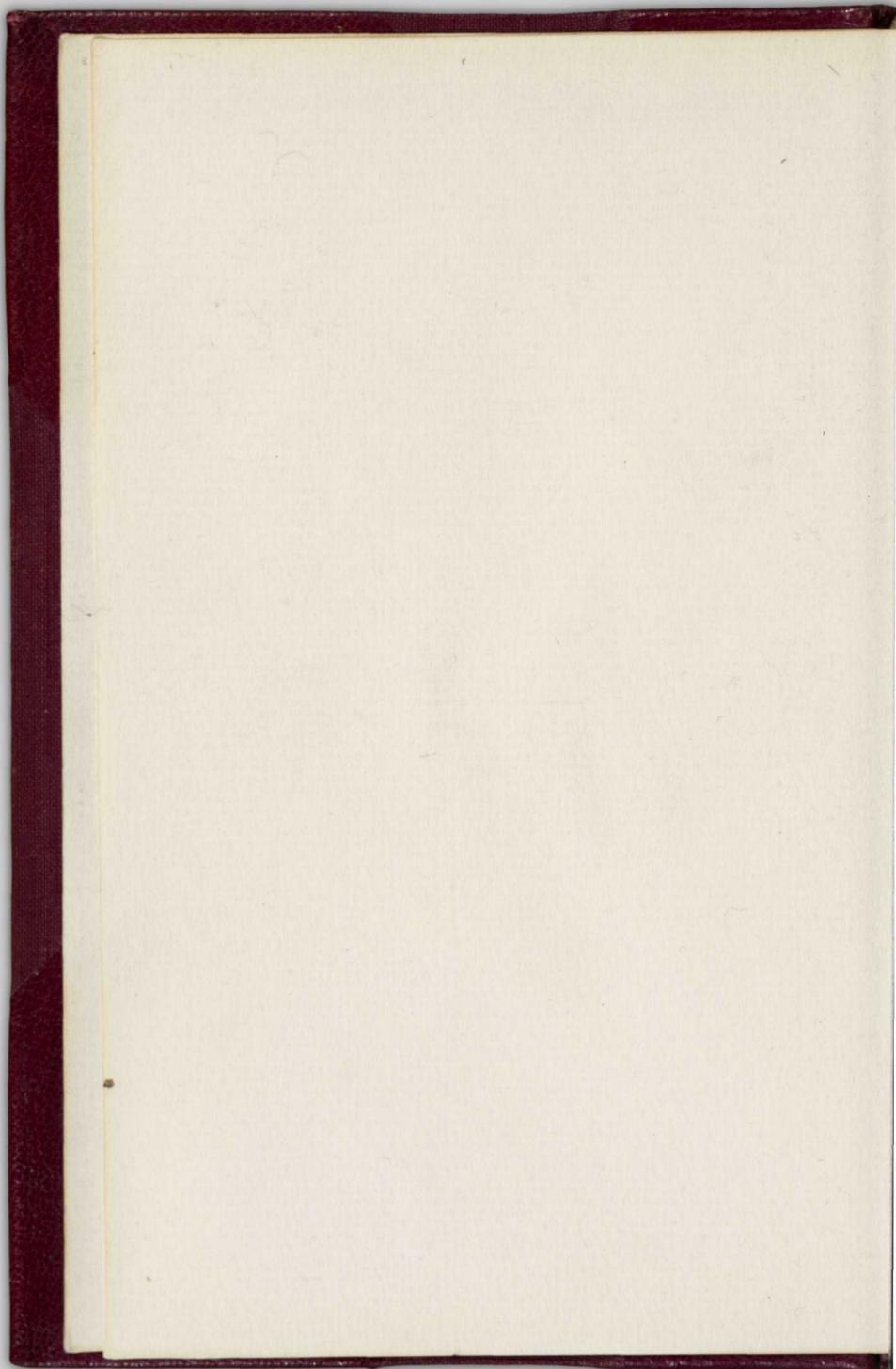
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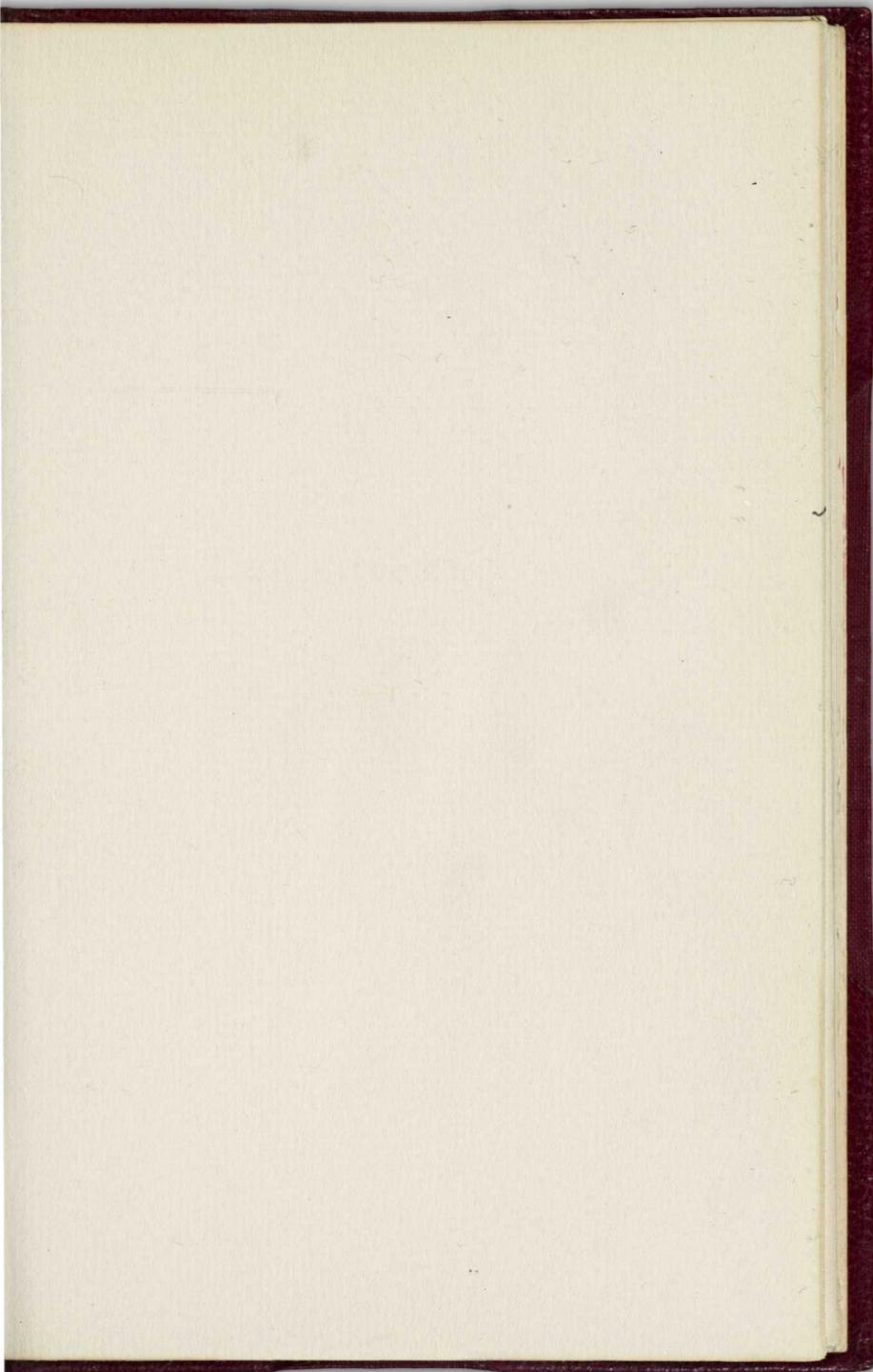


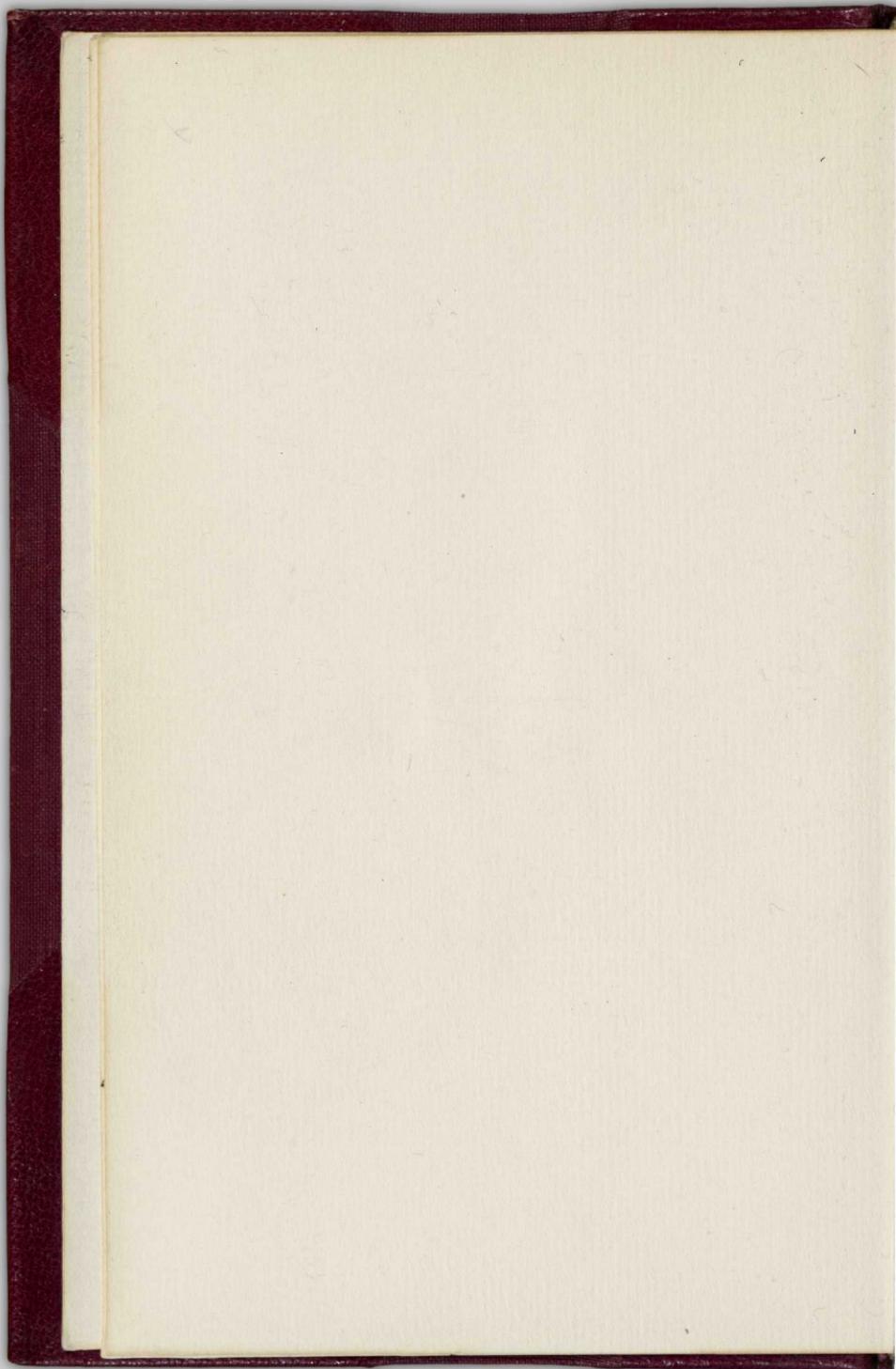
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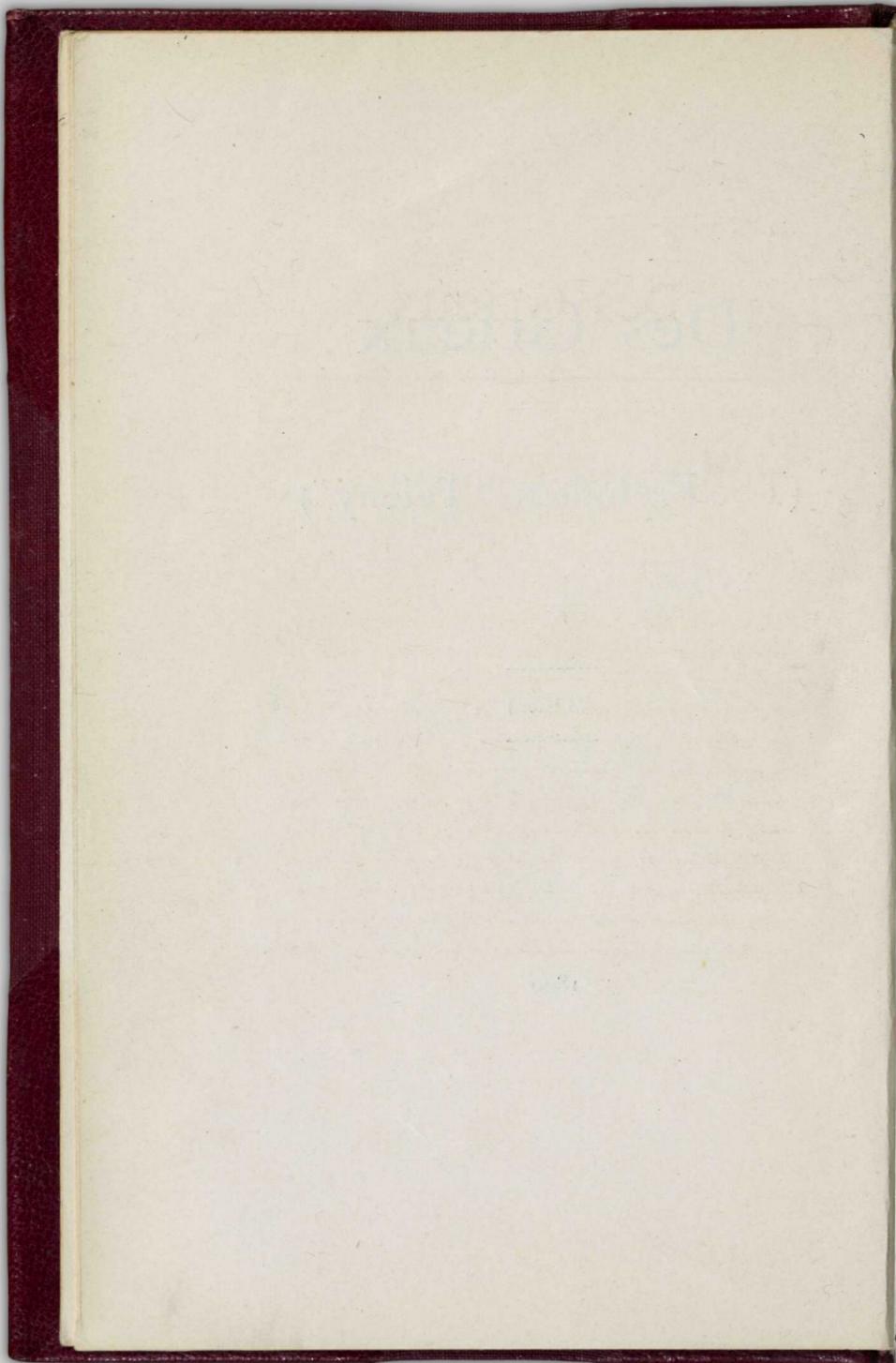
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Des Grieux

(The Prelude to "Teleny")

VOL. I

1899



Des Grieux

CHAPTER I

It was the hottest hour, the hottest day, the hottest month and in the hottest town of southern France.

Summer had now reached its height. The irradiation was so dazzling that the earth seemed to be slowly simmering in a splendid haze; the rays of the sun were so fervid and palpable that instead of ethereal light they looked like fine glowing dust poured forth from some solar crater and sifted down below upon that broiling town.

Not the faintest breeze was blowing and

all life had come to a stand-still in that sluggish town. Save the shrill chirp of the tree-crickets, jubilant amongst the sere dust-covered leaves of the lime-trees, not the slightest sound was heard.

Most of the shutters were as tightly shut as in the dead of the night; the town looked uninhabited. Alone, a young girl, leaning on the broad window-sill of an old stone mansion, was gazing dreamily down on the space below.

“But why was the young girl looking out of the window?” yon evidently ask.

Why? Spinoza said, long ago that “we do not know the causes that determine our actions,” so, I dare say, the young girl herself did not know why she had gone to look out of the window in the glowing sunshine.

The house in question, built at the time of Francis the First, in the purest Renaissance style—if the Rococo can be termed a pure style—was now one of broken fortunes; it was perhaps only the more picturesque thereby, because its mistress, in her comparatively impoverished state, had never at-

tempted to patch it up — as she did her own face :

“ Pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage. ”

The space beside this house, surrounded by low crumbly wall with an old wooden gate, had once been intended for building purposes. It belonged to the owners of the mansion, but this town of bygone greatness has been on its wane for ages so that it is now too wast for its ever-decreasing number of inhabitants.

There are spots where nature, having for a time been over-fruitful, remains sterile for centuries; there are cities which, after a short period of splendour, profound a languid life for ages; there are men who, after a day of youthful promise, drag on for years a dull effete life, dreaming of the past. So it was with this town.

Meanwhile this plot of ground has been used as a kind of common, and, at certain times of the year, it is crowded with canvas booths and penny shows, cheap theatres, and

menageries of cats and poodles instead of tigers and lions.

Now the yard is all but empty, for there is only a shabby round-about in it, and even that is enjoying its mid-day siesta, all covered up, to protect the fierce-looking, leopard-spotted-horses and the garish carriages from the scorching rays of the sun in its zenith.

The only living creatures seen in this little Sahara of dust and sand, are a young man—the owner of the merry-ho-round—and his mongrel dog. The youth—back-propped against the pyramidal mass of tattered canvas, with his bare legs stretched on a bit of matting—is whiling away his time in noon-day dreams.

Visions of love-awaking females flit before his drooping eye-lids, showing him such sights as might have once been seen in some cytherean temple.

All the girls whom he evokes are young and of entrancing beauty, but, unlike himself, —for love delights in contraries—most of them are slender, frail, as fair as moon-breams, as pliable as willow-boughs, as lithe as Elf-

land fairies, with complexions like the snows of Mount Rosa when flushed by the first faint rays of the dawning sun.

A few of them, albeit, are portly, high-bosomed damsels, with powerful hips and jet black shaggy hair. Still, it was not these lust-stirring girls who attracted his glance.

Although most of them were mother-naked, some few were veiled in delicately-tinted diaphanous garments, as vaporous as a morning mist; and these dim draperies only served to enhance those transcendent gifts with which Nature had endowed them.

As he sees them in his mind's eye, dancing in the most lascivious attitudes, fluttering amorously to and fro for his delight, a pleasant quivering sensation creeps softly over all his limbs. He is young, exuberant with health, and it is already very long since he has tasted the shattering intoxication of a women's dewy lips.

Though not much of a dreamer, his erotic fancy is roused to the highest pitch, so that he makes all these fairies act like puppets, and obey his slightest whim; so—while this host

of lovely females entwine their arms, wind their legs and press their budding breasts together, leaping and handling and sporting and toying with each and one another—he orders the fairest of all these houris—a dainty virginette—to shake her thighs lecherously, just enough to show the slight distortion of her tiny slit.

Soon however, not being satisfied with this, and wishing to see more—he bids her lift her beautiful rounded leg and catch her pink-white toe with her small and tapering fingers, and—like a ballet-girl—caper on her other foot.

To bid is to obey.

The secret parts gape wide, the small gap reveals its hidden treasure, the delicate rosy lips, like the flushed petals of some living flower, display a beauteous world of pulpy flesh, in which a tiny pistil is thrilling sensuously.

At the sight of her perfect beauty, his passion overpowers him, his pulses throb, his brain swims, and—the vision being so vivid and real—he forgets himself entirely,

opens his eyes and stares.

Alas! he is only blinded by the white dazzling dust, by the glaring reverberation of the splendid wall opposite. He frowns, he blinks, and hastens to close his eye-lids tightly.

Now all the wanton joys of his over-heated brain have vanished, and nothing is left, save the glare of a conflagration, intermingled with a shower of whirling sparks, crossed and recrossed by a number of fiery microbes all wriggling and chasing one another.

After a few moments he tries to evoke the image of the bewitching Bayadère and bid her display once more those charms which inflame, and at the same time refresh the senses, just as the sight of sparkling waters gives a pleasurable foretaste of freshness to the parched palate of the sore-footed traveller, increasing in him, withal, the keenness of his thirst. The artful virgin resists his lures, and turns a deaf ear to all his incantations. Another vision, albeit, does appear before him.

A few days before, a buxom country maid, together with her stalwart lover, had come to

have a ride on his speckled horses. They had evidently felt great pleasure in being whirled about side by side, and more so, in feeling every now and then, their knees and legs meet and press against each other.

They had spent but a groat, and still, many an impotent millionaire would, I dare say, have given them a half of his yearly income, had he been able to purchase from them those moments of blits.

The youth of the round-about now saw, in his mind's eye, this lover and his lass, as he had seen them upon that night; but his glowing imagination shewed him even much more than what his eyes had really seen.

The girl was a stout and rosy country wench, with a face full of dainty dots and dimples, black langhing eye, a skin mellowed by many a harvest sun, and rounded limbs as firm as the flesh of the wild grape.

As for the young fellow! Lust seemed to exhale from all his pores, to twinkle in his sparkling eyes, to ooze out of his thick and fleshy lips, to bristle in his crisp black moustache.

When the lamps in the yard had all been put out, he saw the couple walk quietly away; and heard murmuring words of love which sounded like the soft cooing of doves.

After a few shuffling steps, they stopped in the darkness, and the youth, taking hold of the girl's face, with his broad palm, stooped down and hungrily pressed his mouth on those luscious lips, pouting up towards his.

At that touch he feels how their pulses must flutter, their nerves must thrill.

Then they looked round to see if anybody was watching them; thereupon the athletic young fellow passed his brawny arm—an arm that might-have felled an oak—round the wench's waist, and clasped her to his chest.

Her whole body seemed to yield to that grasp, her breasts swelled out and heaved to meet that male's caresses.

As their limbs came in close contact, an intense longing flashed in their hungry eyes.

For some time cleaving together, they drank each other's breath and sucked each other's lips with feverish eagerness.

Their legs were pressed together, their

knees rubbed against each other; and they kissed, and kissed; and the more they kissed the more intense their craving for kissing became.

By degrees their blood grew more heated, and bubbling mounted to their head, until their brain reeled in such a way that they could hardly stand. The fumes of concupiscence had now intoxicated them as much as if they had been drunk with wine.

At last they moved on, but without knowing whither they went; therefore, instead of going out of the yard they soon found themselves in one of its farthest corners; there they began again to fondle each other.

Almost without her knowledge, the young man undid his sweet heart's kerchief, unhooked her dress, thrust his hand within her shift, and began to paddle her rounded and full breasts, which were as white as clotted cream, as fragrant as hawthorn blossoms.

Then—unable to resist the temptation—he bent low, kissed her bosom, sucked the small pink nipples; whilst she—who could not keep quiet—pressed her thighs together, and

thrust her fingers through the thick locks of his crisp hair.

He soon rose up again, passed once more his left arm round her waist, thrust his tongue into her mouth and with his right hand up lifted her scanty skirts. She caught hold of his intruding hand and struggled to keep it away, but all the efforts she made only fanned the fire within her, and made her eyes sparkle, so that after a faint skirmish wherein she ever waxed weaker, she yielded to his will, and her middle parts were grasped by the victor's palm.

He—for a trice—played with her bushy hair, seemingly undecided what he was to do next, then—after slightly tickling her in the most sensitive parts—he let down the bib of his breeches and opening her thighs pressed his prickle twixt the small lips gaping to welcome it.

The youth now could hear the slow rhythmic motion of the to-ing and fro-ing, and he lusted in such a way that the blood, rushing to his head, seemed like the sound of many waters.

What a night of love it was! In the dim

milky-way overhead the misty stars were twinkling faintly, numberless tremulous eyes all smiling at the lovers' delight.

A mavis, a mirthful merle, a nightingale, and some other blithe birds, were all warbling amorously in the stillness of the summer evening, mingling their melody with the sound of kisses; the sighing and panting of long pent-up love and the murmur of male desire.

The breash of the hot south wind that blew from the balmy plains across the sea brought with it—from the neighbouring gardens—the scent of the honeysuckle and the musk of the full-blown rose. Nature that night was languishing with love, the overheated earth now shivered with lust.

Now—in the broiling sunshine—the youth of the round-about recalled to his mind all the extacy that couple must have felt in doing the deed of kind. His quickened senses could see her swimming eyes as her soul departed from her in excruciating bliss. He could hear the man's sobs, he could feel his hot breath.

Is it a wonder then that his whole body was convulsed, that his prickle stood hard and turgid, tingling with life replete with blood?

All at once he felt as if he had become androgynous, and like an hermaphrodite, he seemed to receive every thrust that was given, and to thrust himself at the same time. He shuddered with the heat of desire, his nerves were strained to a painful pitch and his joints almost relaxed with too much bliss.

He again opened his eyes to the dazzling sun light, and he could hardly understand who, or where, he was.

He remembered again how he had raved that night, how that ungovernable passion had in its intensity turned into pain.

His brain was burning, his heart was bursting; he had tottered like a drunken man and laid himself down upon the naked ground. As he had lain quivering spasmodically, he seemed to feel the lap of mother earth palpitating under him, just as the husband feels the womb of his wife, when big with child, jerking with an inward motion.

Now, lying on his scanty mat, thinking over

what he had seen, imagining what he had not seen, lust mastered him so mightily, that the sap within him effervesced; his lips grew full and thick, his flesh quivered with excitement, and his rod grew so big and stiff that it almost slit up his old worn-out breeches and thrust itself out of the gap. With one hand he caught hold of it and squeezed it with all his might, as if to still its fluttering; he laid his other hand on the head of the ugly mangy mongrel basking in the sun at his side.

Is there any transmission of emotion between a man and his dog.

Who can tell!

Thought transference dates only since yesterday.

Anyhow a dog has a keener sight, a keener ear and a keener smell than we have; besides his brain is not muddled with German metaphysics.

The dog had hitherto been slumbering peaceably, only waking now and then, to bite the fleas that were harassing him, or to snap at some tediously buzzing fly. Hardly had the master's hand been laid upon the animal's

head, than he started up on his haunches, and—after sniffing the sultry air—rubbed his muzzle on his master's face, whilst the long thin tapering tip of an inflamed penis darted out of its hairy sheath. The mongrel looked intently at the man, with an intelligent appeal, and seemed to say: "We two are unmated outcasts."

The youth thereupon patted the shaggy coat of his only friend with a loving hand, and the cur in return licked the caressing hand with a sensual affection.

The young girl at the window gazed upon the slightest details of the scene underneath; she saw the red flesh peep through the rent, and noticed how the youth grasped that fluttering bird.

She was of a tall, slight, spare, elegant figure, and might have served an artist as an exquisite study of greys. Her hair—soft and glossy—was of a pale golden, or rather a light ashy hue; her complexion—almost of a single tone—was faintly flushed on the cheeks and slightly tending to red on her lips, her eyes—shaded by long flaxen lashes—were of a pale

lustreless hazel grey. Her dress of a shadowy silvery stuff, called, I think, Barège—looked like the lining of a fleecy cloud.

She was generally very much admired; nay, at the time of her marriage, not only the men but the women themselves, raved about her Madonna-like beauty; and yet few were the people gifted with an artistic sense of colour keen enough to appreciate her.

What then was the secret of this universal admiration? you ask.

That of being unlike everybody else. She had the loveliness of a fair young girl in a plain white muslin dress, amidst a crowd of bejewelled ladies in garish silks and gorgeous satins.

Still her beauty was so ethereal, that it shed a dampness on some men, it even made them shiver and feel cold; loving such a woman was almost a sacrilege, it was like lusting after an image of some virgin.

On that sultry midsummer day, she looked more bloodless, more transparent, more lily-like than usual; and yet—saintly as she looked—all her nerves were tingling with excite-

ment, her blood was replete with lechery.

The fact is that only the day before, the catamenial flux had ceased, and she felt like a convalescent arising from a bed of sickness, and feeling a new life flow within her veins.

Thus her monthly flux had left her body weak and languid, and not only that, but it had enkindled an ardent fire in her very womb, the flames of which mounting up to her brain awakened in her an almost irresistible craving for a strong man. It seemed as if nature's fragile flower, having lost all its own dew, was—notwithstanding its scented baths and ablutions—parched by an inward fire, and languished for that water which quenches all thirst, for that milk which flows from the deep fountain of man's virility. Every month, for a few days, that bloody fiend shattered her and laid her at the mercy of a man's lust, making her rave for those caresses for which she had been created. Possibly, had she been able to have her full of that unknown bliss once, she would not have cared for it any more, but abstinence rendered her almost hysteric.

Nature, now, had awakened in her that morbid tenderness, that eagerness for the caress of the other sex; so, as she approached the open casement and saw the youth so full of manly vigour, convulsed—as he was—by lust, and burning to quench the fire that was consuming him, she felt irresistibly drawn towards him; she was in fact like a withering plant, which—fading under the rays of a scorching sun—droops towards the earth as if to breathe the moist vapours that arise from the soil.

Now as she looked upon him, she underwent a strange sensation.

The face of the youth—she thought—was not unknown to her; she had felt its almost mystic fascination before?

But where and when?

Nay, more than that, she knew that body in all its nakedness. This thought brought the blood to her cheeks, for she had never seen a naked man. She pressed her hands against her temples and ransacked the farthest recesses of her brain. Where had she known that man before?

Was it in some former life, in some ethereal region beyond the world?

She could not tell, but she felt sure that she had already loved him; that she had been his bride, in a happier holier world, in the realm of saints and martyrs.

As she gazed upon him, she was ever more under his spell. Now their eyes met, and although he—being in the glare of the golden sunshine—could not see her, for she was behind the more than half-closed shutters, still the glances he shot at her, seemed to sink deep into her pupils, and even beyond them within her very brain.

What was taking place in her, was it a contagion of sympathy?

Her blood at first got heated, then it began to glow, then her wits seemed to wander.

Was love mastering her? She could not tell, she only knew that her heart was beating faster and stronger than usual, and that all the nerves in her body were quivering.

As her eyes were intently fixed upon the young man, her whole attention was entirely engrossed by him, her sight, her hearing,

all her senses had grown keener, having been thrown by concentration into a state of hyperesthesia.

She sees his lips grow full and thick, then part themselves as if by an irresistible longing. She almost feels upon her face his hot scathing breath. Thereupon she notices how his breeches towards his middle part are stirred from within; yes, now and then they heave quietly or else are jerked by an impulsive and impatient motion.

All her nature is whipped to lust at that sight. She feels like the poor cripple lying on the brink of Bethesda's pool gazing at eddies caused by the invisible angel that stirred those life-giving waters.

She saw the trowsers open, she saw the little blind god of love, the creative force of nature, thrust out its ruddy head between the slit of the torn breeches, nay the whole organ of generation would soon have forced its way out, had the young man not thrust it in again, and held it tightly in the palm of his hand. It was a huge sized tool and under that rough cloth it seemed about a foot in length

and several inches in breadth. At that sight a flash of lightning passed before the young girl's eyes, then the blood rushed upwards, downwards, throughout her whole body, but this fluid seemed parched or mixed with some corrosive liquid that muddled and maddened her brain. She saw to her regret the prickle disappear in the young man's grasp, she remarked the shivering which followed this act, his parted languid lips, his half-closed swimming eyes, nay she even noticed his panting and convulsive breath. So, as she gloated upon the youth, she felt within herself all the sensations he himself was undergoing. Thereupon a burning fire was kindled in her womb and spread itself all around her middle parts. Her tiny lips were opened with an inward craving; then, hardly knowing what she was doing, almost urged by a spirit of imitation, or else obeying some imperative order of nature, she lifted up her skirts and thrust the tip of her tapering fore-finger on the top of her slit, just at the foot of Venus' volcanic mount; she skimmed rather than rubbed those sensitive parts. She had hardly touched them

when she felt that sensation which had made the young man writhe when the tiny lips of his phallus had gaped and a pearly drop of that cream of delight had oozed slowly out. Then, both their souls seemed at the same moment to leave their bodies and commingle in an ineffable embrace. Thereupon the fire within them grew more intense, the transient pleasure they had felt—a pain rather than a pleasure—serving only to excite their craving instead of satisfying their carnal appetite. Both remained for some moments overcome by the fever of lust.

The youth had hardly recovered his senses, when—upon opening his eyes—he saw a big white poodle come out of the opposite house.

It was a huge dog all shaven and shorn, with a skin of a delicate pinkish hue, like that of a new-born baby, but freckled all over like a sun-burnt girl. The hair of his mane, the fringe around his ankles and the tuft of his tail, all as white as cotton-wool, were frizzled and combed and scented with *lavende-ambrée*. This foolish abortion of a lion, this loathsome catamite of animals, this old maid's pet, wore

—as if to make it look more ridiculous—a huge blue silk bow on the top of his head.

When he came near the young man, he stood on his hind legs, and began to perform all kind of antics; the youth at first laughed and then he fell a-thinking that such a poodle—properly trained—might prove to be a useful acquisition. The dog by his side seemed to guess his thoughts, and—being an ill-bred cur—began to show his small white teeth and snarl viciously. The poodle however was not discomfited, but continued displaying, not only all his graces, but, on one side, his prickles in a state of erection, and, on the other, the gaping brown hole of his anus, all surrounded by a bulgy rim. The cur, withal, seemed proof against all these temptations. The poodle then jumped about, gave sundry panting barks, pretended to run off, then came back, and all the time he never ceased to ogle and gloat on the other dog's organ, with his large and intelligent brown eyes. At last, apparently unable to withstand the temptation, he made a bold plunge, and at the risk of being bitten by the white teeth, he bent

his head low and began to sniff and smell those parts he seemed so eager to taste. The cur continued to grunt and snarl, then he uplifted one of his legs as a mark of great condescension. The poodle thus encouraged began to lick that capsicum-like lip of the penis with evident gusto. The cur at last stopped snarling, and allowed himself to be caressed, with a look of contempt and unwilling satisfaction. The poodle stopped licking, and began again to caper in a coquettish way round the other dog, uttering at the same time sundry high-pitched barks. Excited in that way the cur jumped up and mounted on the back of the lecherous poodle which stood in a position to receive him. The mongrel caught the dog beneath him firmly with his front legs and began at once a lusty to-and-fro movement.

The poodle that submitted to be thus sodomized seemed to do so as an act of duty; he looked about him with his large lustrous and wondering eyes, apparently scoffing at himself for allowing that ugly, mangy, stinking cur to use him so vilely.

Was it a pleasure for him, was it a necessity or was he simply yielding to his own fate?

Why are all poodles passive?

Were I a believer in the transmigration of souls I might conclude that the spirits of sodomites are made to dwell as a punishment in the body of these dogs, so that every passing cur might use them at his pleasure.

Anyhow, while the dainty poodle was being thus fluttered, the swarthy young man lifted up his eyes; and as the window-shutters had opened slightly, he saw the fair girl at the casement.

Their eyes met. After a few seconds she felt that his glances like refracted rays sank deep within her breast. She was transfixed where she stood and unable either to move or turn away her head. By degrees—as she kept her eyes rivetted upon him—a slight drowsiness came over her, then quietly, unconsciously, her own will passed away.

It seemed to be attracted by the fire of his glances, just as the sun draws out a mist from the bosom of the earth. Once or twice

the young man lifted both his arms and then lowered them quietly, and as he did so the drowsiness increased, all control over herself diminished, and she was ever more under his sway. He seemed to be drawing her towards him with all his might, and therefore she leaned far out on the window-sill as if to obey his summons. But her somnolence increased, and after a while she fell into a perfect sleep. Yet it was not sleep either, for though her body was in a perfect state of lethargy, her mind kept quite awake—nay her senses were quickened and keener than they had been till now; for she heard the young man whisper in a low musical voice, the following words :

When the town is hushed and silent, in
the death-like sleep of night, by the spell
I have upon thee, by the love within thy
heart, thou shalt feel my kisses falling
like warm rain-drops on thy mouth; listen
then, and hear me calling, calling thee as in a
dream; drawing thee from out thy slumbers,
by the magic of my art. Waken then. Oh!
my beloved one, to enjoy the bliss of lust.

Then from out thy open casement I shall creep upon thy couch; for I am the man created, to awaken thee to life.

She slept on, placidly listening to that transmission of thoughts which sounded in her ear like a dull kind of dirge, or rather a last lulling lullaby, which a mother sings to soothe her infant to rest. Little by little the snares of sleep seemed to wax denser, her brain grew duller, and oblivion came over her.

Did she sleep long? She herself did not know.

She was awakened from her trance by her aunt—the mistress of the poodle-dog—who came into the room, and calling her by her name tapped her gently on her back.

What Camille, have you been asleep? said she.

The young girl started and opened her eyes; still she saw nothing but the dazzling sunlight which blinded her. She thereupon looked round bewildered.

Yes, evidently, she had not only been asleep, but also dreaming, for the poodle

was there, standing on his hind legs—as he often did—wagging his head and looking at her with his large brown, almost human, eyes whilst the tip of his penis—like the tapering point of a red pepper—peeped out of its hairy sheath.

Surely, thought the young girl, I have been dreaming, then she shuddered; and—unseen by her aunt—crossed herself devoutly. After that she cast a hurried frightened glance out of the window and heaved a deep sigh of relief. Nothing in the yard, save the roundabout in its canvas coat.

“I have been dozing under the burning rays of the sun—” thought she to herself—“and I have dreamt of the man and his cur.”

“Make haste and dress,” said the old maid on leaving the room—“for I intend to call on the general’s widow before going to vespers, as I’d like to find out whether her sister-in-law’s niece’s daughter is engaged or not.”

That day passed for Camille like most other days, only that she was a trifle more thoughtful and somewhat more flurried and nervous than usual.

Camille was an orphan—her father having died when she had reached her second birthday and her mother two years afterwards—so she had been brought up by this priu old aunt, her father's sister.

They went to the cathedral, instead of going to their usual after-noon church, St-Sebastian; on their return they took their cup of chocolate, Camille read to her aunt, then she played upon the spindle-legged spinet; in the evening—as the clock struck seven—the door opened and cousin Des Grioux came in. At eight they had supper, at nine the two young people played a game at cards with the old spinster who invariably won and chaffed her nephew and niece about being unlucky at cards; as the clock struck half past nine, the cousin got up, pressed his lips on his aunt's hand, kissed his cousin on her mouth, and went off.

Des Grioux was a pale and delicate young man. Besides this, there was nothing remarkable in him except that he was very clean. His face, neck and ears looked as if they had been thoroughly washed with soap and swil-

led with much water, an unusual thing in those days. The syphilis of former generations had given him the transparent complexion of a wax doll whose very colour had disappeared by having been too often scoured. There was besides not the tiniest stain or the slightest speck of dirt on his well-brushed clothes, moreover he always carried about him a smell of laundry, of clean linen, and sweet lavender.

As soon as the cousin left, the old dame and the young girl rubbed their cheeks together—the French fashion of kissing amongst women—and retired to their rooms, for the town kept early hours. At half past ten all the house was fast asleep.

Camille—having gone to bed—lay awake some time in a state of nervous exhaustion. By degrees her eye-lids grew heavy and she managed to get a few snatches of half-conscious slumbers. Still, hardly had she fallen asleep than she woke in the midst of a dream, haunted by the vague terror of having to fall into the clutches of the youth who had a spell over her. Little by little her fears were calmed, her senses grew drowsy, and about

midnight she sank into a deep death-like sleep. Just before the chimes had sounded, she heard, as in a dream, a low, plaintive tune; it seemed like an oft-repeated swelling musical cadence, ever sinking and swelling like the surging of the waves, and as she listened she dreamt that her mother was leaning over her cradle, singing to her, and patting her to rest.

How beautiful she looked as she lay there so lifelessly quiet. As the night was very hot she had thrown off the bed-clothes and her fine lawn chemise hardly veiled her fair body, leaving moreover her nakedness uncovered.

The Arabs, the Turks and all the Oriental nations have always compared a woman's beauty to the full-moon, and in fact the young girl's graceful body had such a pearly whiteness in some parts, and was so pale and grey in others, that, touched up here with a faint pinkish flush or shaded there with slight bluish tints, it seemed to possess all the iridescent tones and all the opaline milkiness of the harvest moon's soft mellow light.

She was very young—hardly sixteen years

of age—and though tall, her limbs had not yet acquired any of the fullness of womanhood; that she was still a blossom could be seen by her upright budding breasts, by the silky golden down that faintly fringed the pale coralline treasure hidden twixt her thighs. There was moreover about her that slight impression of tartness, possessed by fruit that has not yet reached its full and luscious ripeness. Such a sight brought the water not only to the mouth, but elsewhere too.

As the last stroke of twelve died away, the young girl started in her sleep and sat up in her bed.

Where was she? She looked about bewildered. She was lying on her bed, in her own room.

Who had called her? Surely some one had roused her from her sleep. Whose summons had she to obey? Why had she been awakened in the midst of that most delightful dream?

But had she been called? Yes, for the voice was still ringing in her ears. She listened and she heard the low dirge-like ditty, wafted

from afar, but was it the sound of a human voice, or the murmurs of the wavelets lispig a love-song to the sandy shore?

She thrust her fingers through her wavy golden hair, and asked herself whether she was dreaming or awake? She listened again, the song was louder and nearer, yes it was there, under her very windows. The voice was calling her, resisting it was useless, she had to go, but whither?

There was now a slight sound; she did not hear it, the door was opened, she took no notice of it. All at once the poodle that slept in her aunt's room, stood on its hind legs, licking his chops, wagging his tail, looking at her with lewd wondering questioning eyes.

She did not see the dog.

Now she felt herself as in the midst of a strong draught, in the very centre of an impelling current. She yielded, she got down from her bed. Her chemise—the ribbons of which had got undone—fell to her feet. The poodle—always on its hind legs—advanced towards her, his prick was stiff and stark, and the turgid

and tapering red tip darted out like a vermilion snakelet.

With widely opened eyes she stared in front of her and apparently saw nothing.

The poodle put his front paws round her waist, clasped her tightly, and began to-ing and fro-ing, trying, as it seemed, to bend her down, or to uplift itself high enough to get his prickles into her slit. She tried to shriek, but her voice could hardly be heard, she stretched forth her hands to defend herself, then she finally pushed the loathsome dog away from her.

What had made the poodle come into her room that evening and make such an attempt of buggery upon her. Was there any bestial affinity between them?

For a moment the dog withdrew discomfited. She then, palpating her body, seemed to feel herself naked; she stooped down, found her chemise at her feet and slipped it on. The dog stealthily came back, it thrust its woolly head under her shift, and lifting his muzzle between her thighs, he began to lick her coynter lustily and with all the breadth of his

rough tongue. He was well trained and expert in this little lewd game, and either by education or by instinct he touched the top part of the slip, and toyed delicately with the virgin clitoris, which startled and awoke at that gentle touch. Although the sensation was by no means a disagreeable one, although the tickling sent a thrill through all her body, so loathsome was the touch of the beast that she shivered with disgust and thrust him away from her.

The poodle stood up again and looked at the young girl with wondering eyes, he seemed to be asking her what she wanted; then he began to frisk about as if to invite her to follow him. She hurried to throw on a dressing-gown and a pair of slippers, then she stood in a trance-like stillness, swayed only hitherwards and thitherwards by some impelling or repellent power.

The song, which had stopped, began again, louder, more intense than before. The young girl started in her trance and walked on, followed by the poodle, which danced and capered around her, wagged his tail and displayed

all the delight of a hound that sees his master shoulder his gun.

Noiselessly and flittingly the young girl hurried out of the room, went down the stairs, without stumbling or groping for her way, just as if it had been in the broad day-light. She reached the small door opening on the yard, deftly unlocked and unbolted it, and stepped out, followed by the dog.

The night was perfectly dark and sultry, the sky was covered with a mass of lowering clouds, the air was pregnant with electricity.

The young girl with her white diaphanous dress, her hyacinthine hair, the opaline lustre of her complexion, seemed in the darkness to shine with a phosphorescent light.

A man was at the door, it was the youth of the round-about. Seeing her, he uttered a stifled cry, stretched out his arms to receive her, and then strained her to his breast. He pressed his burning mouth on her cold languid lips, and kissed her passionately. After a few seconds,—“Come with me,” said the youth, “here we might be seen; come under my tent.”

She allowed herself to be led away, like a soulless body, or a child having no will of her own. Having arrived at the opening of the tent, he made her crawl in after him; once inside he lifted her up and kissed her again rapturously.

“ You love me, ” said he, “ do you not? ”

“ Yes, ” quoth she, absently.

“ And you are glad to come to me? ”

“ Yes; did you not call me? ”

“ You only came because I called you? ”

“ Yes. ”

The young man seemed astonished at the the power he had over her; for he believed that it was her own lust more than his own magnetic craft that had brought her out; he little knew that a fortuitous concourse of circumstances had helped and abetted him, for his spell a few days later might have been almost powerless.

“ And had I not called you, should you have come? ”

“ No. ”

“ What were you doing when you heard my voice? ”

“ What? I don't know. ”

“ Try and think. ”

After a slight pause. “ I was sleeping. ”

“ And you heard me in a dream? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ And you'll hear me to-morrow night also? ”

“ Yes. ”

“ Will you kiss me? ”

She hesitated a little and then she advanced her pouted lips towards him, but her kiss was as cold as that of a person who felt nothing soever.

“ Give me a warmer kiss than that. ” She did so, and the fire of lust seemed to be awaking in her veins and throbbing in her pulses, so that soon afterwards she glued her lips upon his, and her breath came short and thick. Still when he tried to thrust the tip of his tongue within her mouth, she—with maidenly coyness—seemed to revolt against such an act of lechery.

He stopped for a while and mentally ordered her to yield to his wishes. These were his thoughts :

Open thy sweet lips, beloved one, let me dart it down thy mouth; so, I'll slip it softly in it, and thus thrill thee with delight. Palp my tongue with lips of roses, soft as velvet to the touch, feel it tickling all thy palate, parching up thy blood like wine. With all that its taste is sweeter than the honey dew, that bees sip within the scented flowers, and more mellow than ripe fruit, aye more luscious than bananas, and more creamy than sweet milk. If you wish to glow with fire, suckle it with greater strength, suck it, as the famished baby pulls the nipple in its mouth; clasp it, claw it, drain it, drain it, make me swoon with too much lust.

The young girl evidently heard him thinking, for she forthwith put his order into execution and seemed to lose her senses at the pleasure she felt. Then, having made her suck his nether lip, he rubbed his brawny limbs against her delicate body.

What a contrast there was between them; he was black-haired and of a swarthy complexion, with limbs of steel, and a body all rippling with muscles; she looked like a reed,

that bends with the slightest wind, a hot-house flower that parches at the sun's hot rays, and withers under the slightest touch. Her slender alabaster white arms were entwined round his bull-like neck and her tiny tapering fingers played with his sooty curls. All at once, as he held her clasped by her dainty waist, he put his hand under her gown, passed his palm over her legs and thighs, then finally caught the thin lips of her small slit in his capacious palm. As she felt herself thus touched, she shivered and all her flesh seemed to bicker like the waters of a mere. Then, as a protruding and lewd finger tried to push its way in the soft juicy flesh, she wriggled in his arms like a wounded bird, and, shuddering, vainly endeavoured to push him away from her. But his huge sinewy arm—which was as bulky as a strong man's leg—held her tightly clasped against his quivering body, he then for an instant fixed his jet black eyes upon hers, and the glances of his large and lustrous pupils were like glowing sparks which, falling upon soft wax, bury themselves in it. Thus, under the

spell of that indomitable will, she remained transfixed and motionless. He, thereupon, whispered to her : my flesh is lusting after thine ; for, as the earth now pants for rain, and flowers for dew, so do I pine for love of thee. My pulses beat with wild delight and love and lust. Awake then from thy languid sleep, and let thy flesh with eager heat, melt into mine !

The young girl thereupon, not only stood still, and let him palp her at his will, but she pressed her mouth against his burning lips and drank up his breath. Moreover she opened her thighs so that his fingers might penetrate into her secret parts, and as he softly tickled her, murmurs of pleasure and cooings of delight escaped from her. When he had thus sported with her, toyed with the edge of her lips, passed his hands over her thighs, over the small rounded lobes of her posterior parts, his prickle standing out huge and stiff, he took her small delicate hand and placed it within her soft palm. No sooner had she felt it than she started back, shocked, and seemed about to waken from some horrid dream

in which she had been handling a viper or a loathsome toad; his arm, however, brought her back and glued her against his body, whilst his dark pupils darted again their mesmeric fire into her brain. Once more she yielded tamely, she took hold of his yard and toyed with it, fingered his cullious so gently that it eemed as if they were fanned by a soft breeze, making him thereby feel the most pleasurable titillation.

She had no will whatever of her own, but was only the reflexion of what he himself felt. To prove his power to the utmost, he doffed off his tattered shirt and breeches and remained mother-naked before her. He placed his hands on her shoulders and gently pressed her down, she yielded and fell on her knees before him. He then made her take the fleshy, snub, bean-like tip of his phallus and suck it with as much pleasure as if it had been the most delicate Parisian sweet meat.

But he soon lifted her up again, and taking off all her clothes, he laid her low on his hard and dirty pallet; he again kissed her on her mouth, he toyed with her, he hugged her to

his breast, and then the lust that coursed within his veins kindled up all her blood—both lay side by side tingling with excitement, maddened with rapturous sensuality. Having opened her thighs wide apart, and placed himself between her legs, he took the yard in his hand and point-blanked it on the opening of her cleft. Then he crossed himself devoutly three times, and asked a blessing of the Virgin Mary for what he was about to do, after which he thrust at her with all his might.

His, however, was a sore trial, sore indeed in every sense! Her slit was very narrow, his tool exceedingly bulky, so all that he could do was to wriggle and rub the glans twixt her thin lips. Although he was as strong as a prize-fighter, and his battering-ram was as hard and as powerful an one as you could well behold, still he was unable to break down the bulwark of her virginity, though he did manage to belch forth his fire into her very womb. Then as he spouted out his sperm, his joints relaxed, and he sank down senseless on her; the slit thus opened

a little, but still the priceless pearl was not pierced even by that last lusty blow.

After a short rest he was about to have another go at her, but he perceived that the first glimmers of dawn were already lighting up the sky with their pale saffron light, so he bade the young girl rise and betake herself home.

She got up, put on her chemise and gown, and always in her trance-like state, crept quietly to her room, lay down upon her bed, and unconcerned, went off to sleep.

On the morrow when she woke, at the usual hour, the adventures of the night seemed to her like a bewildering night-mare.



CHAPTER II

On the morrow the young girl awoke as you and I have often done after a bewildering, restless, terror-haunted night, when we have been the prey of some persecuting nightmare. She was, as yet, half asleep, so she felt weary, sore, broken down, but nothing more. Her head was aching with a dull heavy pain, her body was languid, her mind bewildered, lost, but nothing more. She tossed about for some time between wakefulness and oblivion, unable to rouse herself,

unable to fall asleep again, trying to collect her wandering senses.

The first thing that made her feel uncomfortable was the light streaming into her room, whereupon she asked herself how it was that her shutters had been left open? Surely they were shut, or at least ajar, the evening before.

In somnambulism—as in every-day life—one thought recalls another, one remembrance evokes another. Life is a chain of many links, like those Indian puzzle rings; by patient perseverance we can get them to fit into one another. It is like the game played by ten or twenty persons—where a phrase whispered from mouth to ear reaches the last hearer, entirely changed in its meaning as well as in its words.

As she looked at the open window, the golden rays which poured in blinded her, and made her blink her eyes, and the casement seemed to her just then like the frame of the altar-piece, and in the iridescent glittering light she saw the beautiful image of the saint which—for days, nay for months—had un-

consciously, been haunting her, like St-George or St-Denis appeared to Jeanne d'Arc ; and like all hysterical saints given to hallucinations, Sebastian now was visible to her as clearly as if he stood there in tangible flesh.

As she gazed upon this beatific vision she saw that the likeness of the vagrant mixed itself up with that of the martyr, and that he was not only palpitating but even panting with lusty life.

Not a wound was to be seen on his sinewy, stout and smooth body, but moreover, the small strip of stuff wound around his loins had disappeared, and his right hand held that holy-water sprinkler which bountiful nature had so generously provided him with, and he brandled it lustily, nay even with more than holy delight.

Now, whether it was the sight of the saint's quaint gill-like appendage of manhood, or the way he so funnily toyed with it—just as she had once seen a monkey do at the show—or else the knowing wink he cast upon her, but somehow or other the girl—as she was lying on her bed—was, all at

once, thrilled from head to foot. Moreover, this tingling sensation of eager desire concentrated itself in the very focus of all such feeling, the solution of continuity. The burning fire she felt there apparently put the saint to flight, for instead of the altar-piece, she again saw the window widely open and the glare of the morning sun pouring in and flooding the room.

But what was it she felt there at the parting of her thighs, she asked herself? It was surely not a pleasure, no, rather a dull, lingering pain as of a wound received.

She placed her hand on the gaping slit. It was moist, nay, more than moist, it was wet, and with blood too.

Had her monthly courses begun again? She thought and thought, one image brought back another as on the day before, and piecemeal she reconstructed the events of the night before, and she recalled to mind the way in which she had lost her pucelage.

Horror stricken, she jumped down from her bed. Bruised, crushed, dejected, disheartened, she examined her couch. The pool of blood,

the traces of sperm, the creased and tumbled sheets, left no doubt as to what had happened.

Hers had not been a dream, a nightmare, but crude reality ; moreover, it was the sinner and not the saint who had slept with her.

With tears of terror in her eyes, she acknowledged the terrible reality to herself.

She was not a virgin any more, but a— what word is horrible enough to express what she was ?

She had been possessed, enjoyed, deflowered, fluttered. A man—a common vagrant—had taken her, kissed her, toyed with her, used her at his pleasure, poked his prick into her, slit her, and thus abated her maidenhood. Now she was a man's thing, not his wife; besides what a man this was!

What would her life henceforth be ?

She felt sick, her head grew giddy, a spasmodic shivering seized her. First her heart stopped, then again it began to beat wildly. It seemed as if a hand, or rather a claw, was griping her throat tightly and choking her. She could hardly breathe. Soon all this disappeared and a burning pain

settled itself in her bowels and made her writhe.

But was it her fault if she had done what she had done?

Then she fell with her bare knees on the floor and tried to pray. If she had that faith that transports mountains, would God, Christ, the virgin, not take pity on her, work a miracle in her favour and undo what was done?

As she prayed from her innermost soul, she felt that she had the faith, but the pool of blood did not disappear from her bed, she felt no change within her.

And although this man had taken her against her will, could she bear the world's contumely if her story was to be known? Could she bear her disgrace, she, universally considered so proud, so haughty, she, who belonged to one of the oldest and noblest families of the town? But perhaps her guilt—her innocent guilt—might not be known; she would see her lover once more and beg him on her knees to spare her further shame, and leave the town for ever.

But now another thought, a more terrifying, a more shattering thought crossed her brain and almost drove her mad. "Suppose that man's seed was in her womb."

Perhaps in two months—in three months at most—her waist would begin to increase in girth, her stomach to expand, her belly to swell out, in huge uncouth proportions.

That thought was an unbearable one, she felt like dashing her head against the wall.

Why was she punished in such a way, what had she done?

Had she committed a sacrilege in loving the saint with the love of the flesh, had she lusted after him in a lecherous, concupiscent way? If so, this was a deadly sin, like that against the Holy Ghost.

Was she perhaps atoning for the sins of her fathers and forefathers?

But was prayer of no avail, or had the Almighty turned a deaf ear to her?

Could it be possible that God was a cruel fiendish being, a very Moloch delighting to damn his children?

Death was her only remedy, her only

means of escape. The fire of Gehenna could surely not be worse than the pangs she was suffering.

Yes, she would punish herself, and thereby partly atone for the deed she had done.

She lifted her stiffened fingers up to her throat and tried to strangle herself.

When almost choking, her strength failed, her fingers relaxed their grasp. The image of the everlasting Mower appeared before her eyes, and behind the green gaunt image of death, she saw the dull red lambent restless flames of hell. The bottomless pit of Abaddon and all its horrors stared her in the face. It was not the lurid light of purgatory, where hope still remains, but the dark despair of the deep Malebolgian pool.

She shuddered with indescribable horror and clapped her hands upon her eyes not to see that terrible sight any more.

No, she could not hurl herself into eternal damnation, she could not bring herself to meet the wrath of God, to be tortured for ever and ever in throes of fire and brimstone, among loathsome reptiles, to be scourged

with snakes, stung by scorpions, and—what was worse—racked by the incessant torture of unavailing remorse.

No, she would live, go into a nunnery.

She in a convent? She who perhaps bore already a child in her bosom, could she pollute the house where saintly maidens dwelt? No, a house of lewdness was the house fit for her.

But perhaps, hers had been but a dream, a frightful nightmare, a fit of somnambulism. Several times she had walked in the night and done strange things in her sleep.

But what of her nightgown all dabbled with blood, all crumpled and stained by some viscid fluid, the smell of which was present to her nostrils?

Why was the window open, and whose were those foot prints from the casement to her bed? Yes, the dusty traces of a naked foot were visible upon the highly polished floor.

She had but time to close the shutters and wipe away the dust when approaching footsteps stopped and she heard a slight tap at her door.

The softest noise now terrified her, made her shudder and turn pale.

Faint, shivering, frightened, she jumped into her bed, and with a weak, almost inaudible, voice, bade the person who knocked to enter.

Who was it softly tapping at her door, could it be he, her lover? Perhaps some one had seen him come in the night before; the wildest conjectures rushed into her mind.

Evidently her voice had not been heard, a louder knock was heard and, at the same time, the door was opened. It was only the maid who had come to say that her aunt was waiting for her.

Camille told the servant that she was unwell and could not get up; presently the spinster-aunt came to enquire what was the matter. The young girl whispered faintly that her monthly courses had returned and she was feeling a great pain all over her body.

Her weary and worn look, and the dark halo round her eyes, showed plainly that she was not quite her usual self.

“If you are not better, by and by I shall send for the doctor and see if he can do anything for you, though, in such cases...”

“No, no,” said the young girl, frightened, interrupting her aunt abruptly, “I will not see the doctor, he can do nothing for me.”

“In fact, you are right; a husband, I think, is the best cure for such ailments; and as we are speaking about it I think there is no reason for putting off your marriage any longer. You are young—it is true—but like all the girls of our family, precociously developed.”

The young girl did not utter a word, she hid her face in the pillow and cried bitterly.

The aunt, who knew how hysterical girls feel when their whole system is upset by the return of the courses, made her take a few drops of opium, and then left the room, thinking that rest and quietness were the best of sedatives.

A day of agony followed for the poor girl. Every noise jarred upon her nerves, the sound of the round-about drove her to distraction. If she dropped off to sleep, she woke all of a sudden, thinking that somebody had come to

taunt her for what she had done. All at once she saw plainly a gibing face making mouths at her, then another and still another, and all the room was full of these grinning, leering masks; they were horrible to see, she felt that she was growing mad.

She took some drops of cherry-laurel, she was again quieted and even dropped off to sleep; when she awoke she found her aunt's obnoxious poodle, sitting on his haunches, in the middle of the room, and watching her. No sooner were her eyes opened than he jumped up, wagged his tail and came to sniff at her bed, with evident delight. She drove him off and her heavy eye-lids drooped and closed again, but not for long. Soon afterwards the dog had stealthily crept back in the room, got softly on her bed, thrust his muzzle between her thighs, and was deftly licking at the sore and turgid lips, producing a most pleasurable sensation. The young girl dreamt that she was at church and that the priest—in the likeness of St-Sebastian—was imparting his blessing upon her. Unfortunately in the ineffable moment she woke and saw that bugger of a

beast on her bed; she screamed with affright and forthwith threw the loathsome animal away from her.

At last night came on, dreaded night, that filled her with dire apprehension. Little by little every noise was hushed, silence soon reigned everywhere, deep silence outside, hushed silence within. The perfect stillness of the night was only interrupted by some snatches of a song coming occasionally from afar, by the dull barking of a dog at some hollow distance, by the pulsatory ticking of the clock in the hall downstairs, which by its monotonous beatings seemed like the systole and diastole of the house's heart.

By and by all the occasional sounds outside ceased, and nothing was heard save a low murmuring sound, like the cadenced breathing of the town or the low purring of the slumbering earth.

Had it not been for the foolish terrors of the after-world that religion had instilled in her, death just then would have been a boon and a benefit.

Were it not for the priest-craft, would man-

kind feel such a dread to be laid on the soft bosom of our mother earth, and be for ever rocked in an eternal sleep?

Her ideas soon became vague and indistinct, the image of death alone prevailed over all others. As she was dropping off to sleep she with a certain horror roused herself up, fearing lest she was going off into a trance.

She jumped out of her bed, walked up and down the room and tried to keep awake. The looking-glass, in its porcelain frame, on her dressing table attracted her attention. She went and sat down in front of it. She was still pale but her eyes had lost their hollow look, any how she was languid, weary...

If he came, might he not find her ugly?

If he came? Then she wished, she longed for him to come. "No no," said she, half aloud to herself, as if for greater conviction, "if he comes, I shall scream, I shall rouse the whole house."

But he would not come. Midnight was ringing on the clock downstairs. She shuddered. He was not coming. She sighed a

deep, mournful sigh, almost a sigh of disappointment.

Thereupon she felt like grasping her heart in her hand and crushing it, for feeling as she did.

“ Besides, ” thought she, “ why was he to come, he had had what he wanted. When the juice of the lemon is all squeezed out, the rind is thrown away. ” He had got his fill of her, henceforth he would gratify his lust elsewhere.

Still, she knew that people thought her beautiful, could she have faded away in one night ?

She looked at herself again in the glass. How large and lustrous her eyes seemed to grow as she gazed upon herself; the pupils seemed to expand, to glow with a luminous fire. It seemed as if it was he that was staring at her, through her own eyes. She got frightened, for she felt that she was hypnotizing herself; that a peculiar drowsiness—which was not natural sleep—was coming over her.

Mad with terror, not knowing what to do,

she ran to the washing-stand and plunged her hands and then her face into the basin of cold water. She had succeeded; the trance was over.

Half past twelve; he was not coming. It was useless, making believe that she was glad, when she was sorry, utterly sorry. It seemed as if her heart was crushed; she was yearning for him, why did he not come? Her longing every moment grew more intense, more unbearable, it had now become a pain.

Just then she heard a low, a very low kind of lullaby. Did she hear it or did her ears deceive her? She listened, it was louder now. No, she was not mistaken.

It was so soft and sweet that it must have been a snake charmer's song.

Could it have been that Indian air for which Shelley wrote his magic rhyme?

The voice was approaching stealthily.

He was coming, he was near.

What was she to do, to run away, to hide herself, to escape in her aunt's room?

A feeling of dread came over her; why

had that man such a power over her that her limbs refused to obey her will?

She heard a slight creaking noise, she knew that the shutters were being opened.

Now he was getting over the window-sill, he was drawing her to him. She turned round; he was there, naked.

She did not scream, she did not rouse the whole house, she did not utter the faintest sound. He stretched forth his arms, she threw herself in them, he strained her to his breast.

He sat down in the red satin arm chair and took her on his knees. He undid her long golden hair and scattered it in waves over him. He entwined her arms about his neck and taking her head between his hands, kissed her lips eagerly until her mouth grew incarnadined.

She was at first shy to let the youth undo her dress, and plunge his hands in it and grasp her breasts, and toy with her at his will; but he had only to look steadfastly into her eyes, and through them down into the innermost depths, then she was at once subdued, and

she yielded to all his slightest wishes as if she had been his slave.

Besides in his rags he might have been a vagrant; in his splendid nakedness, he was a hero, a saint, a demi-god.

Little by little he undid her dress more cleverly than the ablest maid would have done, and laid her beautiful bosom bare. How dazzling her breasts looked in their warm lactean fairness, all tinted with rosy and golden hues; each nipple looked like a tiny peach blossom floating in a bowl of milk, with a slight halo all around it.

Soon she was entirely naked; then their arms wreathed around each other's necks, they writhed with thrilling joy, rubbing their limbs together, murmuring with pleasure, cooing like two amorous doves, and sucking each other's tongues, rapturously intoxicated with the scent of each other's body.

And you can understand their passionate delight, for they were at the age when life is flush with lust, and the flesh melts away like wax. She by natural selection was framed for love; he was not only very young, but he

had hardly ever tasted the sweetness of a woman's kiss.

Soon after, her senses shivered with inexpressible pleasure, when he bent down and with the tip of his tongue titillated her nipples, making the nerves within them throb with an almost unbearable sensation; meanwhile his fingers deftly touched her hair, flitted over her body, and his toes slightly tickled the soles of her naked feet. Her whole body coming thus in close contact with his own, was tingling with excitement, her brain was giddy, her head was on fire. Her maidenly modesty was thereupon hardly shocked when he put his prickle within her hand, for she hent it with utmost eagerness, and even began rubbing it against the lips of her little slit, that now had recovered all its life and freshness, and was gaping with lust to receive it.

But now that she was thoroughly herself, he wished to initiate her more fully into a new delight and madden her with lechery before giving her the utmost satisfaction man can feel, or woman either; a pleasure he had

only tasted the night before, and which he was again longing to enjoy.

He therefore sat her upon the chair, and kneeling down before her, took her lovely legs upon his shoulders, having thus his head between them. Her thighs being in this way sufficiently opened, he placed his mouth upon herslit. For a moment he breathed the sweet smell that emanated from the golden hair that grew all around.

It was a smell he knew, the scent of a plant that grew in his country and bloomed at Whitsuntide; yes, they called it the snake's flower.

When he had had his fill of that intoxicating smell, then he kissed those lips eagerly, and placed the tip of his tongue on the top of the slit, the most sensitive spot of a woman's body; he seemed at first to sting it rather than to caress and soothe it, and again stirred it almost to pain. She screamed for him to stop, she could not bear it any longer; soon she found herself swimming in a sea of sensual bliss, feeling herself floating in regions of ethereal delight; soon the living berry wept

with joy, her nerves fell flaccid and she fainted away with exhaustion.

But the interior of the den of delight was now demanding its share of satisfaction; it seemed like a mouth parched with feverish thirst and craving for a drop of water to wet its withering palate.

He therefore got up and taking her a-straddle on his knees, thrust his rod—now stiff and standing up like a huge mushroom growing out of a clump of grass—into her cleft. He was about to slide it in with care but she—unable to contain herself any longer—came down plump and received the greater part of it in her.

Two reasons, however, brought them for a trice to a perfect stand-still. The first was that having hardly recovered from the wound she had received the evening before she felt a sharp pain in being thus torn open again. As for the young man—having had until now but very few women, and all those being mature matrons with coyntes like old worn-out slippers—his glans was hardly unhooded, so that, as she came down violently on him,

he was so painfully wedged in that tight orifice that he was all but circumcised by it; this was the second reason. The smart pain, however, was soon unheeded; she wound her arms round his neck, he clasped her by the waist—and they began to pop up and down whilst he wriggled and shook his buttocks; then she leaped and he bucked so that all the remaining bulwarks of her shattered maidenhood were soon battered and laid waste and his prickle penetrated up into the deepest parts, and there—like a jet d'eau—it squirted forth spasmodically a flood of love's milky sap. They panted and they sighed, then they cooed like amorous doves. After a short rest, without taking out the arrow from its quiver, they began feeling each other's flesh; with the palms of their hands they toyed with each other in every possible way, even biting each other like frolicsome dogs. Soon they lusted once more, their wits wildered, and they forthwith began again love's amorous fray. Several were the assaults given, and different were the sieges and the ways in which the lusty battles were fought. The

result however was always the same; their nerves relaxed and the two fighters fell half dead into each other's arms, for passion had made them drunk as with wine. Finally, when for the last time he drew his blunted sword from her sheath his seed was in her womb, and my father was conceived.

On the morrow she had however the full certainty of her fall, and nothing was left to lessen the keenness of her grief save the thought that she had thoroughly enjoyed herself during that night of perfect bliss, proving thereby the fallacy of Dante's saying: that no sorrow is greater than the remembrance of happy times in misery.

Still the shame of having given up her body to the first man that had wanted it was no less poignant. The thought that—in her wakeful state—she had yielded tamely, nay eagerly, to the stings of desire was an unbearable one.

She had succumbed of her own free will; would she be able to resist on the morrow? Now that she was glutted and surfeited with lechery, now that she was alone, of

course she was strong ; still when she had not seen him the whole of the livelong day, would she not welcome him at night ?

Her heart—or rather her innermost conviction—contradicted the lie uttered by her lips.

Moreover, if even she did oppose him on the morrow, would she do so when love waxed stronger by absence, and lust was fanned by abstinence ?

And again : having given him her virginity, being probably with child, by him, of what use was resistance, why not have her fill of pleasure with him ?

What was she then to do, where was she to seek for help ?

If she went to confess, would not the priest advise her what to do ?

What advice, what help was there left to her ?

If the church remitted her sin, would the world absolve her.

No she had lived and loved, she had sinned and fallen so low, that she was lost for ever.

The drop of water in the dust might be upheaved from the mud by the heat of the

sun, but no love can uplift the maid sunken in the mire. Such is the charity of tender hearted christian women.

Death was the only escape, the only expiation.

She had an opiate on her table of which she had already taken a few drops during the catamenial days. Worried with fear, mad with despair, she—without any further thought—took up the bottle and emptied its contents down at a gulp.

Shortly afterwards when the maid came in, she found her fast asleep; she tried to rouse her but could only get from her a few inarticulate groans. Alarmed, she called for help.

Miss Des Grioux came in, and perceiving the empty bottle, sent at once for a doctor.

A strong emetic soon brought back the young girl to life, for the dose of poison she had taken had only been strong enough to stun her, but not to kill her; moreover, as she had been suffering these last few days, the idea of suicide never came into anybody's head.

When she had fully recovered, she made a confession of all that had taken place to her

aunt. The old maid was of course greatly shocked and surprised, still she remembered her own youth with its mishaps, so—instead of making an outcry over spilt milk as most of our shrivelled-hearted, dried-up old virgins would have done—she tried to make the best of a bad bargain, and used all her efforts to compose her niece.

These—said she—are things which happen every day, amongst families where hysteric women, with strong imaginations and weak bodies, are like haunted houses, with shutterless windows and open doors. It is not your fault if you were born like that and not otherwise. Now, as what is done cannot be undone, we must only patch up the whole affair as well as possible, and make as little ado as we can. Therefore leave everything to me, and you'll see that in a year's time you'll think no more of the whole matter; in the meanwhile, the less you brood over it the better.

The first thing she did was to have her niece removed to her own apartment beyond the young fellow's reach; then with the help

of a calming potion, she left her to restore her ruffled senses in sleep.

In the evening when her nephew came she told him that Camille was unwell and that the doctor had prescribed a speedy marriage as her only cure.

All the girls of our family, quoth she, are like forced, hot-house plants; they are women at twelve, marriageable at fourteen. By the will of your fathers and grand-father, you are—sooner or later—to be man and wife; why then leave Camille to languish and waste away her best years?

The supper was more succulent and spicy than usual; a bottle of old Burgundy of a rare vintage, some truffles and the enumeration of his cousin's charms, the erotic conversation and a few glasses of liqueurs somewhat excited the young man's sluggish senses, whipped up his cold blood, and kindled his sensual and salacious imagination.

When he was about to take his leave, the sly old maid asked him to follow her upstairs and see if Camille was asleep. Young Des Grieux did so with a slight trepidation,

whilst a certain lascivious shivering seized his whole body, the like of which he had never felt before, at least for his cousin.

“ Go in gently, go on tip-toe, she is perhaps asleep, and it would be a pity to wake her, ” whispered the aunt.

The young man abashed, hesitated a moment on the threshold, then he stepped in noiselessly.

The chamber was all but dark ; a flickering night-lamp shed a dim rosy light from above. The young girl lay asleep in a huge pink cushioned bed, looking like the princess in the sleeping tower.

With the fire that had enkindled itself in the young man's veins, he saw a mass of fair dishevelled hair, a frail naked arm, a snowy breast, and the outlines of limbs of passing beauty only veiled by a fine sheet. The young man, who had only known the coarse brawny charms of a stout and squat maid of all work, with red hands and broad feet, remained dumb-founded at the sight of such ethereal beauty.

“ May I kiss her hand, aunt ? ” ask-

ed the youth, trembling from top to toe.

He—according to the fashion of the time—had been accustomed to kiss his cousin on her mouth, and did not know whether it would not be a breach of etiquette to kiss her hand.

“You may do what you like, as long as you do not wake her,” said the aunt with a tantalizing smile.

The old dame thereupon drew aside to trim the night lamp, burning so dimly, but unfortunately, the light went out.

The young man felt rather nervous, finding himself in perfect darkness by the girl’s bed.

He groped about and palped all sorts of soft places, then he imprinted a hot feverish moist kiss on a pulpy spot, which proved to be the young girl’s breast. She in her slumbers—evidently dreaming of her lover and feeling the contact of his hot lips on her skin—clasped his head with her hands and kissed it repeatedly.

“Where are you?” asked the aunt.

“Here,” replied the youth in a low goatish voice. The old maid, feeling her way in the

dark, caught hold of his hand, and led him out of the room.

His blood rushing upwards made him reel like a drunken man.

“It is late,” said the wily woman, “moreover I am rather nervous to be left alone, as the doctor said that Camille might be worse to-night, a bed-room is ready for you, had’nt you better stay and sleep here?”

Although the youth was thinking of the scullion’s huge breasts, her powerful hips and mountainous buttocks, still he durst not say no, therefore quivering with excitement he went to his lonely bed.

The aunt seeing that all the lights were extinguished, and every one had retired to rest—the maid with the pretty gardener’s daughter, and the cook with the man-servant—betook herself to her niece’s room, slowly undressed herself, and went off to bed.

As the night was very warm, she, contrary to her habit, did not close the window, nay she even left the shutters apart.

Of course she tossed about and could not sleep; not that she was afraid—for she was a

courageous woman, and she knew that the bell-rope, wherewith she could rouse the whole house, was at hand—but she felt a certain trepidation, which even the bravest of her sex must feel, thinking that from one moment to another a man—a bold young scoundrel—might come in from the open casement. Still such was her fortitude that she awaited his coming with a lusty heart.

Meanwhile she kept thinking of her niece, and of the best way to remedy and patch up what had happened; she recalled to mind her own unfortunate past, that day in the country when hid behind some bushes she saw the young groom bathing quite naked in the river, and the fit of quivering that came over her, when she saw his well-developed manly parts. Then she remembered how she went to see him again and again, then all that followed.

In the midst of her reflections she heard a slight noise outside. She turned round and she saw the shutters open quietly, and a man's form appear on the sill. At that moment—with all her bravery—fear over-

powered her, and she was about to seize the bell-rope and call for help. Still she managed to quiet her fright and to wait—and see what would happen next.

What her niece had told her over and over, about the young man, happened likewise at present; he pulled off his shirt, he cast off his breeches and advanced quite naked towards the bed; he seemed quite at home in the room.

Is was he, surely it could not be anybody else.

In an instant he was by the bed, then on her.

As the night was warm and sultry, she had been lying uncovered, with her legs apart and her thighs well open to enjoy the slight freshness of the breeze wafted in the valley down below. She had nothing on her body but a scanty chemise, and that was all uplifted on her stomach.

What was the young man's surprise to find his prickle slip softly within the bulgy lips, and disappear in all its length within the pulpy yielding flesh; he had never believed that a woman so tight the day before could

have got so wide and baggy in a single day; his astonishment however increased when he felt himself clasped tightly and his body strained against two fat and falling breasts, which were so different from that budding bosom or the slight dainty limbs of the frail virgin he had deflowered and enjoyed on the previous night.

A moment of bewilderment followed, a thousand thoughts flitted through his brain, each chasing the other as snow-flakes on a stormy day.

He had often heard that marriage changes a girl entirely, but could she possibly have grown not only so lax, but so bulky in the space of a day?

Was he dreaming, had he gone into the wrong room, into some other bed? After pondering over it, he concluded—as you and I had done—that his mistress had changed her room and that some other woman had come here in her stead.

In the meanwhile he was tightly clasped and griped and strained and held fast.

His arms, his legs, his whole body was

entwined by the strong tentacles of that soft polypus in which he had plunged so rashly.

Now the warm viscid flesh around his prickle seemed to grow tighter; to glue itself on it, and grasp it and suck it with lips innumerable.

“Who are you?” said the voice of the woman as she bumped herself against him. “Answer me at once,” and she wriggled all her body, so that the hair of their middle parts came in close contact.

He did not give any answer, but allowed her to buck at her will.

“Will you answer at once, who you are, and how dare you come in the middle of the night in an honest woman’s bed?”

He remained silent.

“If you do not reply I shall scream, I shall ring, I shall have you arrested at once.”

Thereupon she clasped him the tighter, and only moved her buttocks.

“Excuse me,” said he falteringly, “but I am like a ship in distress, that enters the very first port at hand.”

“Come, no prevaricating.”

“ No indeed, though I am afraid I have mistaken the harbour, still the anchorage is a good one... ”

The old maid was about to speak, but he at once stopped her mouth with a kiss. She began to suck his tongue, greedily, hungrily, down to its very root, only interrupting herself to beg him not to lift himself up but to press down with all his might.

It was years since the old woman had tasted such a dainty morsel, therefore it was no wonder that she found his basket-weaving delightful and she gave herself up to it to her dear heart's content.

After several assaults made frontwards and backwards, lying, sitting, and standing, the lust of the youth was abated before her senile lechery had subsided. Miss Des Grieux then lighted a night-lamp which gave the faintest of glimmers, and made the young man relate his tale. When he had finished :

“ You see, ” said she, “ I could have you arrested for burglary, for breaking into a house in the middle of the night. ”

“ You are right, ” quoth the youth ruefully.

“ Moreover, as you have used magic arts— for I myself had never yielded so tamely if you had not employed witchcraft or some superhuman power—I could not only have you thrust into prison, but have you tortured, put to death, and burnt for sorcery. ”

The youth gave no answer.

“ Still,” continued the old maid, “ for the pleasure you have given me, I shall have you go scot free this time, for surely you will be hanged elsewhere. Only you must take your solemn oath never to reveal to any human being the mischief you have done, and moreover you must leave this town to-morrow. ”

The youth was loth to do so, for he loved the girl he had enjoyed; but when he heard that she was on the point of death for his sake, he felt grieved and took the oath that was required of him.

He begged hard to see her once more, but the aunt was relentless.

After the promise was given the old dame brought out a light supper, and set it before the youth, and while he regaled himself with half a chicken and a huge piece of pigeon pie,

with truffles and mushrooms, his companion fed on the passing beauty of his athletic limbs. She poured him out the contents of a bottle of Burgundy and he quaffed it down with pleasure, for—although the Hebe was old and fat—the wine was good. She would willingly have gone for another bottle, hoping thereby that the tool of delight which was now so limp and lifeless would lift up its head, but he refused to drink any more.

She patted it and paddled it as it lay there so round, so fat and chubby, looking like a well-fed baby, gorged with milk to the mouth. She toyed with it and fondled it, but it was too weary to wake; she tickled it with one finger, she rubbed it up and down with two and then with three fingers, with the whole hand, still it always remained nerveless and limp. Then she went down on her knees before it, she rubbed it on her nipples, pressed it between the parting of her breast, but it was proof against all blandishments, her caresses were of no avail, nothing seemed able to rouse it from its torpor.

She made one last effort. She unhooded

it, took the tip, then the whole glans into her mouth, and suckled it.

A modest blush suffused itself all over its face and head; at the same time it grew stiff and strained itself to action.

She however did not want to see the work half done, so she deftly continued to pump it, to titillate his hair, to rub the edges, and even to plunge her finger into the hole behind. Anyhow she worked with such masterly skill that at last his whole body was all aglow, and tingling with pleasurable excitement.

He was about to swoon in a spasm of delight, when she stopped, got up and introduced it into her slit, which was as burning and as moist as the hottest room of a Russian bath. She engulfed it down to its very root, so that nothing was left out except the two balls, looking sheepishly forlorn at not being able to join in the fray. She puffed and blew and wriggled, she tweaked him with such avidity that he forthwith shot into her a burning liquid that seemed to her like an explosion of grape shot. Being so thoroughly

tickled she began to mew like an old tabby cat, whilst he, sick, shattered and lifeless, fell on her capacious breast, resting his weary head on her stout shoulders.

Thus that night memorable in the old dame's life—came to an end, but she never forgot the bliss she had felt as long as she lived.

On the morrow the round-about and its owner had disappeared.

And the young girl?

At the usual hour she heard, or at least she dreamt she heard the lover's low and lusting cadences, all intermingled with words of burning love; then she seemed to feel his lips upon her mouth, his breath on her face; but what was he doing, was he licking her?

She woke and found the horrible poodle on her bed; nay, she was clasping his loathsome pink and freckled skin within her arms, whilst he was trying to commit the most heinous of sins with her.

She shrieked, almost fainting with fear; still, having gathered all her strength, she caught hold of the brute, uplifted him and

cast him down with all her might. The poor dog uttered a sound of pain—accustomed to better treatment—he got up, looked at the young girl with blank astonishment, and then went off limping and whining, apparently unable to understand women and their whims.

Upset in body and in mind as Camille was, this shock unnerved her quite; she thus lay awake the greatest part of the night trembling and convulsed with imaginary terrors in prey of anguish and remorse. Heaven had evidently abandoned her to her fate. This thought filled her with the deepest dismay and the most appalling dread; she felt as if she was going mad.

She took another spoonful of her quieting draught, and with its help she managed to fall asleep at day-break.

On the morrow young Des Grieux awoke with that same longing lust with which he had gone to bed the evening before, the whole day the stings of desire seemed to tweak his nerves, and made his prickle stand on its end. He passed his day listlessly as usual, all his

thoughts bent partly on the vision he had seen the evening before, and partly on the little endearments the scullery maid had in store for him, caresses which made her call him a little bugger and a dirty pig.

In the evening he again had supper with his aunt; the viands were more spiced than usual, the wine itself was drugged; moreover the old maid—if we can call her an old maid—kept him talking about Camille's charms and other erotic subjects, then as soon as she saw him thoroughly excited she accompanied him up to the young girl's room.

She had not been many minutes with them, when she was called away. A neighbour—a lady friend of hers—had been suddenly taken ill, and she had been sent for, as everybody knew what an experienced nurse she was.

“ I have to leave you, my dears, therefore you must promise to be very good children till I return. You, Gaston, you can if you like read to your cousin; though—on second thoughts—you had better not, for her head is aching; try to amuse her till I return. ”

The young people had not been left long alone, when the young girl was seized by a strong pain on the pit of her stomach, somewhere round the navel.

It was a most unfortunate coincidence that her aunt—who was half a doctor—was out.

“ Oh, dear! oh, dear! what can I do?” quoth Gaston, “ shall I ring for the servant?”

“ No, no, ” moaned Camille, “ the servants can't help me. ”

The young man recollected what his aunt had said the day before—i. e. that marriage would cure all Camille's ailments. He was willing and ready to help, but he did not know how he could offer his services.

“ Can you think of nothing?” said Camille faintly.

“ Cupping?” quoth he ruefully.

“ No, no, besides you do not know how to go about it. ”

“ It is true, ” replied he in a crest-fallen way.

“ Please hand me that bottle of spirits of balm, I shall try and rub myself with it. ”

“ Shall I rub you? ” he asked with some trepidation

“ If you like, ” moaned the poor girl. Her suffering was so great, and as pain does not know bashfulness, she allowed him to slip his hand under the sheet and directed it to the aching spot. He at first rubbed with the tip of one finger, but he only managed to tickle her and make her jump, so that he found himself going into all kinds of crooked ways and hollow places. Little by little the hand was flattened and he rubbed with the palm of his whole hand.

Soon the spasmodic breathing ceased, relief was effected, but the cure was not quite complete.

As he rubbed, the circle of his operations increased, and the friction soon made the blood rush from his hand to his heart and then to his head; he felt it whirring in his ears, squirting in his eyes, he could hardly see, he almost felt tipsy. Soon, almost without wanting it, his hand, instead of a circle, made an ellipse, and he felt—with the tips of his fingers—a soft down like the first fluff of a

young fledgling, before its feathers appear, or the fur of a new-born kitten. The touch of that fine hair was so electric that before he knew what he was about his whole hand had slipped between the young girl's thighs, rubbing, grasping, groping what he found there, and his lips were on her mouth.

"Gaston," quoth she, weakly, "what are you about?"

"Camille," added he with some show of courage, "are we not to be man and wife soon?"

"Think of the sin and the shame."

"Bosh!" said he, thrusting his other hand in her breast and feeling her flesh.

She feigned to thrust him off from her, but in a feeble way, managing to throw down the sheet and almost slip out of her shift; moreover she lost strength at every assault, whilst she only excited him by her struggle and the sight of her naked charms.

At last doffing off his coat and waistcoat and letting down his breeches he climbed on the bed and mounted on the breach.

Thereupon the combat began anew, and

much more to the point. However when she saw his cock—a very white, unhooded, smooth and tapering round wedge, better fitted for the hole of the anus than for a capacious coynte—playing a tattoo on his stomach, and that for honour's sake he would not run away like a fox without its tail, she twined her legs together and did her best to keep him off; taking care withal that her bosom might remain bare, and her shift should be drawn up and show all that could be seen between her thighs tightly pressed together.

At last—after a long beating about the bush—she waxed faint from the fray she had fought, then confessing herself vanquished, she allowed him to set her legs round his waist; after this he placed his pointed penis in the breach, and in less than no time—as he believed—made away with her maidenhead.

He sighed with pleasure, she cried with pain; in the meanwhile a noise of sniffing, of whining and a slight scratching was heard at the door; a keen ear might likewise have detected a faint rustling of silk which ended soon after in a muffled licking of chops; but

they were too busy with their own work to listen to anything.

Now he puffed and he panted and then he almost swooned with delight, for the only woman he had known was a bawdy young scullery maid, a filly that had been ridden by the whole neighbourhood.

Camille—after the astringent injections she had taken only smarted from the wounds she had received two evenings before—sobbed out of shame, pain and disgust.

Gaston—having done cock's work—rose from the bed as clated and vainglorious as a young chicken that has futtered his father's old hen and that crows and struts about exulting in the deed he has done.

She—humbled, defeated and disheartened, loathed herself for having vilely deceived a man for whom she had always felt a strong sisterly affection, and sickened at the thought that she had allowed herself to play the part of a strumpet, moreover she felt irritated with him for having been such a fool; she therefore hid her head in the pillow, and went off into a fit of convulsive sobs.

The wily aunt deeming the tragi-comical play over, bounced into the room, followed by her faithful poodle, standing on his hind-legs, and stretching his head to see what was going on. The naughty nephew—caught like a boy plunging his forefinger into a pot of preserve—was forthwith sent off to bed. Camille was then soothed and quieted, and the aunt after that went off to bed thinking with a sigh of the previous night's rapturous pleasure.

Shortly afterwards the marriage of the cousins took place.

And were they happy!

Is a marriage based on deceit ever a happy one?

Their character were similar in many traits, both, moreover, were suffering from the same hereditary diseases. They were morbidly sensitive, quick to feel every trifle with too great acuteness, magnifying the slightest incidents of daily life with the subtle keenness of their sickly imaginations into unbearable misfortunes. Neither possessed any power of endurance, any wise discrimination, nor that

placid calmness, which makes us bear patiently "the whips and scorns of time." Nay, they only irritated and aggravated each other's sufferings.

The creaking of a door was enough to jar upon their extremely nervous sensibility, to render them peevish and quarrelsome for a whole day, and finally to make them go to loggerheads in the evening.

She had made a full confession of her guilt—not to the husband—but to the priest who got his perquisites for the absolution he had given her. The church blessed the bond of two beings thoroughly unfit for one another, but their union—fortunately—was a fruitless one, as the only child which bore my grandfather's name was not of his stamp.

For a few days every month she suffered from uterine fury, but those days over she remained listless, indifferent, cold, towards all men in general and her husband in particular.

Soon she had the mortification of knowing that a scullery maid was her husband's mistress, she was humbled to think that a servant

—who smelt of the stable and the sink—with red hands and dirty nails, a freckled face and a fleshy nose, was preferred to her, and though she almost hated her husband now, still she was jealous of him.

As for her child, it had been given out to nurse so she saw but little of it; she felt for it a fitful love, mixed up with gushing tenderness, fretful remorse and shame, she kissed it almost harshly for the sake of the man who had blasted her life, and then thrust it away from her on account of the sin she had committed.

Every day she spent hours at church kneeling before the image of St Sebastian and during the menses her wits almost wildered with devotion.

Life soon became unbearable to her, she got to be more fretful, more peevish, in her morbid sensibility, everything jarred upon her nerves, every smell was loathsome, every noise painful; the craving for perfect rest and forgetfulness grew daily stronger. Soon that attraction which the abyss has for many people existed in her for everything that

brought about instant death. The suicidal mania, predominant in our family, was not to be resisted any longer.

As she often suffered from sleeplessness, she had given orders never to be disturbed in the morning, as she herself used to ring for her maid when she wanted her. One day, however, as no one came and her bell had not been heard, the maid went quietly to her door and listened. It seemed to her that she heard a faint moaning; she tapped lightly, and getting no answer she knocked a little louder, still no reply was given. She tried to open, the door was locked within. Frightened, she went to inform her master of her fears.

The lock was burst open, the room was empty, but in a closet near it, a kind of small boudoir, hung in black velvet, on a low couch of the same material, Camille—in a tight-fitting black gauze dress—was found stretched out lifeless and of a livid palor, looking like a carved image on a sarcophagus.

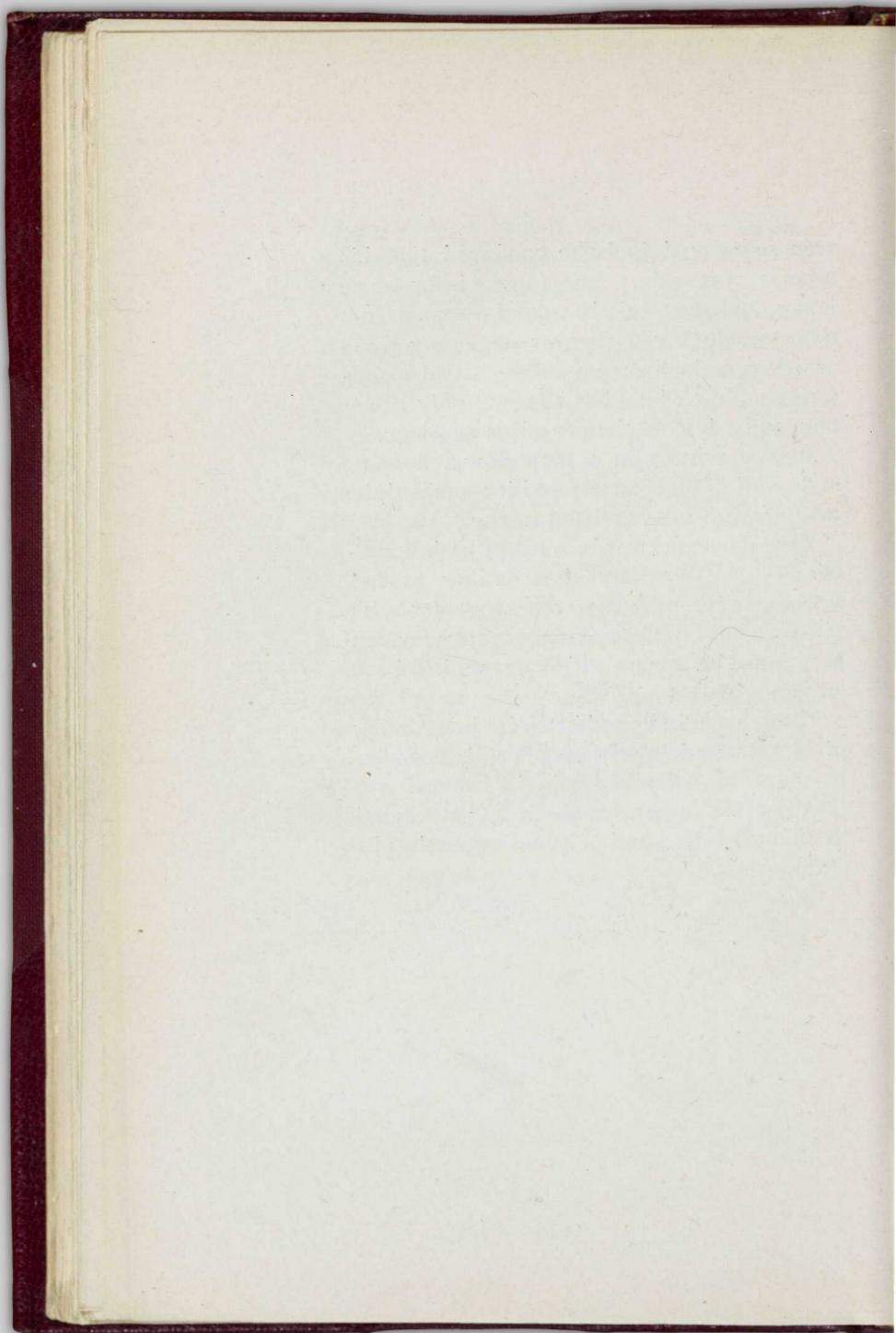
Although she was not quite dead—for her heart was slightly beating—still she was beyond all medical aid, and the doctor who

was summoned in haste confessed that his science was vain. She lingered for some hours, and then quietly passed away. On a table beside her there was an empty phial which contained opium and a sealed manuscript addressed to her son and only to be opened by him on the eve of his marriage.

It was written in a high flown, flowery style, full of high falutin and it contained the drift of what I have related to you.

Two days afterwards, unwept and, uncar- ed for, she was buried according to her wishes, in the robe she wore, together with the—all but withered—snow-drops which her dress, her couch and her room had been strewn with.

Though she imagined herself to be growing plain, stout and dowdy, people still remember her as a frail, fairy-like, ethereal beauty. As for the cause of her suicide, it was attributed to the grief she had felt at her husband's faithlessness.





CHAPTER III

My childhood was a very dull one. I am hardly certain whether I remember my mother or not, for I was only about two years old when she died. By an effort it seems to me that I can recollect having been taken into a dark hushed room, where she was asleep—of having been lifted on a couch and made to kiss her. Her face was as white as marble, seemed quite as cold; so that the contact of my warm lips with that clammy flesh produced an indelible impression upon

me. Still, I believe that this impression has lingered in my mind, because these details have, every now and then, been rehearsed and related to me. It is, therefore, like the ghost of a thought evoked from time to time.

Till about ten years of age my life was passed in an almost claustral loneliness. I lived in a large rambling two-storied house together with my father, and his aunt. My father, however, was almost always absent, and, besides, he took but little notice of us when he was at home. My aunt as a rule got up very late, went daily to the 11 o'clock mass so that I hardly ever saw her before dinner time, at half past one. I had some toys, but no play-mate. I was pampered with dainties, surfeited with sweet meats, but as I took no exercise, I had no appetite, especially for wholesome food.

My days, withal, would have flowed by monotonously, had it not been for an infirmity of mine, which really tortured my life. I was terribly frightened of poodles, they were the bane of my existence. I did not care much for any dogs in general, but at the sight of a

poodle, I grew deathly pale, I trembled from head to foot, and almost fainted for fear. Still I can hardly call it fear, for it was more a kind of loathsomeness, that made me thoroughly sick, than any apprehension of danger.

I have been told that my mother—during her pregnancy—had been frightened by a poodle that my aunt had at that time, and that died shortly afterwards,—still can such a circumstance have produced so great an impression on the fœtus in the earlier stages of gestation? And yet I cannot explain this infirmity of mine otherwise, for neither my father nor my mother had any dread of this particular race of dogs.

As I grew older I tried to reason myself out of this dislike and I have almost succeeded in overcoming it; now I can even bear the sight of one of these canine clowns, provided they do not come unexpectedly bouncing upon me, which they do so very often.

I have very few recollections of those early years, and those I have are hardly worth recording. Still it is astounding how some

trifling facts sink deeply into a child's mind and are never forgotten, whilst many important events pass entirely into oblivion.

When I was about four or five years of age, I was—as usual—playing alone with some blocks of wood, building a tower if I remember rightly. In the same room, there was a young dressmaker, busy at one of my aunt's gowns. This girl—who must have been rather pretty—was about 18 or 19, for she was engaged at the time, and she married shortly afterwards. I remember the fact because she brought me a paper of comfits when the wedding took place.

Well—as I was playing, this dressmaker stopped in her work and looked at me. She was flushed, her eyes were sparkling, and her lips were very red.

“Come here,” said she, “you are a good boy, are you not?”

“Yes,” I replied indifferently. “Come then and give me a kiss; I am very fond of good little boys.”

I looked at her, astonished.

“Come on,” repeated she, with a husky

voice. I at last went up to her. She caught my face between both her hands and kissed me repeatedly and lingeringly on my mouth, with far more eagerness than I had ever been kissed. Of course—like most boys—I felt nothing, and disliked being fondled, especially in that way, for she almost suffocated me.

“As you are a very good boy, to-morrow I’ll bring you some bonbons,” she said.

Then hesitatingly, and after a pause:

“Do you know where I keep my sweeties?”

“No.”

“Well, come nearer, my pet, and I’ll show you,”—her voice was trembling.

I shuffled up to her. She took hold of my hand and held it tightly by the wrist, then opening her legs wide apart and uplifting her skirts, she thrust my little fist between her thighs and pressed it deep between her soft, warm flesh.

“I don’t think there are any comfits there, to-day, but look well, perhaps you might find one or two, you are such a clever little boy.”

I was both astonished and shy; although I could not have given any reason for it, still I instinctively felt that it was a naughty thing to do. I was therefore going to draw my hand away, but curiosity retained me.

What I touched was at the same time warm, pulpy and moist, nay the farther in my hand was plunged, the more intense the heat grew. Moreover to my utter surprise, there was a lot of hair growing over her stomach and all around that sticky flesh.

My bewilderment likewise increased when after a greater exploration I found that she had no birdie, or a little bag with balls, but that she had quite a beard instead

In the meanwhile—always holding me by my arm—she rubbed my little fist in the hot place—always telling me with a husky panting voice to look for sweeties—till I felt it get quite wet.

I asked her what she was doing, if she was piddling on my hand, but she began to pant and to squeeze my arm tightly. “Ah!” she said, with a sigh of satisfaction, “I’ve done it, it was very nice, wasn’t it?”

She dried my hand on her skirt, or shift, and taking it out she put it under my nose.

"Do you like the smell?" she asked. I do not know what I answered, or if I did give her any reply, but I remember that it smelt fishy, and I smelt it over and over all that day. I never forgot it, and now whenever that smell of a woman's coynte mounts to my nostrils, I always remember the girl I masturbated.

"Haven't I a funny pussy," said she, "should you like to see it, my dear?"

I don't think I answered her anything, but I certainly stared with very round eyes.

At that moment there was a noise of footsteps, for she said to me :

"If you are a very good boy, I'll show you my pussy another time. Only mind it's a secret, and as you are a little man, you must mind, and never tell secrets. To-morrow I'll bring you some bonbons. Now go and play' thats a dear." Saying this she pushed me away from her, and resumed her sewing.

I went back to my toys; I played, I smelt my hand and I chewed the cud of my thoughts.

For a long time afterwards I kept thinking and pondering over the whole affair; asking myself whether women have a real pussy between their legs; moreover—being always foud of cats—I should dearly have liked to have seen it.

Shortly after this event there happened another one, which—although I have not exactly cherished it—I could withal never forget, for erotic words and subjects seem to cling with a particular tenacity to a child's mind.

It was a hot summer day, and I was lounging listlessly in the hall down-stairs, the door of which—opening on the street—was ajar. My aunt had gone to vespers, as usual, and had promised to bring me a pretty pair of new boots, if I was a very good boy during her absence.

In the hall, over the door opposite the entrance, there was a huge stuffed vulture, perched—with outstretched wings—on a stand. This bird—as you know—belongs to our crest, and I had therefore been brought up to feel a certain veneration for it; why, I really

cannot tell. To me it has always been the type of cruelty and rapine.

All at once, as I was playing, I turned round, and saw two boys standing at the door, looking at the bird, and making—as thought—all kinds of irrelevant remarks about it, and laughing. They were two ragged street arabs, about twelve or fourteen, little men in comparison to myself.

As they could not see the bird, they advanced a step or two within the hall. I was alone—for the servants were either in the kitchen or up-stairs—still I peremptorily ordered these two young vagrants out of the house.

“Is it your house?” said the elder mockingly.

“Of course it is,” said I, sternly.

A *marmot* who has a house of his own, ” said the younger laughing at the absurdity of the statement.

“Out from here,” added I, with a grand gesture of the hand.

“Your house?” continued the big boy cynically, then taking his pizzle out of his ragged

breeches, and shaking it, "this is yours, baby, and you can come and suck it if you like."

"You have bought the house with this," said the other boy imitating the example of his friend, and splitting with laughter, "haven't you, baby?"

I rushed at them in a mad rage, and my anger must have made me seem formidable, for the two imps turned round and took to their heels.

I had remained the victor without fighting, for the two vagrants—double my size—had fled before my fury, and still I was humbled, crushed, annihilated. Almost out of my senses with the stinging shame I felt, I threw myself on the floor and burst into a fit of hysteric sobs. I was found there soon afterwards by my nurse who vainly coaxed me to tell her what had happened; she summoned all the other servants and questioned them, but nobody knew anything, or could make me utter a word about the matter, for when I tried to speak, the image of the elder boy, shaking his unhooded brown prickle at me tauntingly,

not only closed my mouth but made me burst into another fit of convulsions.

Their words : " This is yours, come and suck it, " and : " You have bought it with this, " were constantly ringing in my ears for days afterwards : I even heard them at night in my dreams. For the first time, at about four or five years of age, I found that life was not worth living, and death just then would have been a relief ; nay, such was my morbid sensitiveness that I found it a hard task to bear my shame.

When my aunt came home, she inquired what was the matter with me, and she was told that I must have been terrified by some stray poodle.

She brought me the little boots she had promised me. I remember them after a lapse of more than twenty years, the tops were of brown yellowish kid and the lower part of patent leather.

As my nurse tried them on, I saw—in my imagination—the elder boy, standing in front of me, shaking his tool menacingly. I at once burst into another fit of convulsive sobbing.

“Just look at *your* pretty little boots,” said the nurse coaxingly, “auntie has bought them for you, and now they are *yours*.”

It seemed as if she actually laid a stress on the words emphasized by the street boy, only to taunt me. I thereupon kicked my legs violently, for the boots had become obnoxious to me and I did not want to keep them on. In fact—since that time—I have not only disliked such boots, but even the people who wore them.

Although—after a few days—I managed to get over the loathsomeness I felt for life, still that trivial incident has never been forgotten.

Another fact that also impressed me at that time was the peculiar copulation of a dog and a bitch. I happened to be at the dining-room window when I witnessed the astounding sight.

Our house—as you know—overlooked a kind of yard, and as its inmates always afforded me great interest, I passed many hours of the day watching them.

It therefore happened, at the time I speak

of, that the owner of one of the booths possessed a dog—a peculiar animal with many long pointed breasts—which I could not help noticing, as it was ever pestered by all the curs of the neighbourhood. One day as I went to the window I saw that, and another dog, tied together—as I imagined—by their tails and they could not get free from one another.

The two pitiable animals were howling, for the children—*cet âge est sans pitié*—were throwing stones at them.

It was a rare sight, so I called everybody to hasten and enjoy it. As soon as my nurse perceived the two dogs, she snatched me up, cuffed me soundly, sent me off from the window, and told me if I ever looked upon such things again, my eyes would drop out of my head.

I therefore began pondering. Why I was a naughty boy? I had not tied the dogs together; and, if I looked at them, why were my eyeballs to fall clean out of their sockets?

Perhaps the dogs had not been tied, per-

haps I ruminated they had stuck their tails into each other's bottoms, just for fun; that of course would not have been a thing to be looked at. It was a riddle which I only solved many years afterwards.

At about ten my father sent me to school. Never having had any playmates of my own age, I was as shy as a girl, and on that account mercilessly plagued and made fun of. The little boys called me "Mademoiselle," and the big ones tormented me. They used to catch me from behind, and clasping me, they began bumping their middle part against my bum, asking me how I'd like it. Thereupon all would laugh. Of course I did not understand what they were hinting at, but I felt sure that in their words there was some hidden meaning which I could not fathom. Nevertheless I used to blush scarlet, having half an intuition that they wanted to do something naughty.

After some time I got to be great friends with one of my school-fellows and he then explained to me what those horrible boys wanted to do. It was he who informed me

one day, as a great secret, that girls had no birdie as we had.

“ No, of course they haven't ” quoth I, proud to show my own knowledge, “ they have a pussy instead. ”

“ A what? ” asked he, astonished.

“ Why, a pussy with lots of hair. ”

He burst out in a loud fit of laughter, tickled at that peculiar idea of mine.

I felt hurt to see him laugh so foolishly and remonstrated with him, but all I said was in vain.

“ No, no, ” said he, “ you are wrong, you can call their little hole a pussy if you like, still you may be sure that they have no hair. ”

I looked at him superciliously, and was about to walk away.

“ What they have, ” continued he, “ is a big bum behind, and another little one in front, but no fur. ”

I would not vouchsafe any explanation as to where I had got my knowledge, for although I had never seen what women have between their legs, still I had felt the bushy hair, and that was enough for me.

Anyhow he understood that I was staunch in my belief, and he therefore took the first opportunity he could find to convince me of the truth of his assertion.

Shortly after this confab we happened to be in his garden, behind a hedge of thick gooseberry bushes, quite a secluded little leafy dell, discussing erotic subjects.

Hearing his younger sister's voice, he called her to him, then, catching hold of her, he threw her on the grass, lifted up her skirts, opened her drawers, showed me the rosy flesh between her thighs, that tiny cleft bordered by two pale lips, like a long mouth, which contorted into grimaces as she tried to free herself from his clutches.

He however sat astraddle on her stomach, and with the tips of his fingers opened the lips. I sank down on my knees and looked within, astonished to see the numerous folds of living flesh.

"You see"—quoth he, "that girls have no hair as you thought."

I had to give in, there was no gainsaying facts.

"Put your finger in and see how moist it feels," said he.

I should, in fact, have liked to continue my explorations but the girl began to screech so loud that we had to let her go.

From that day, with other girls and boys of our own age, or thereabouts, we often compared notes, we measured whose pizzle was the thickest and the longest, whose unhooded most, and above all who could piss the farthest and the highest. It was a triumph indeed to see that water spout up as high as our heads, and sparkle in the sun like real oriental topazes. The girls—I know—envied us such a feat; but then they did what we could not, they filled up their little goyntes with pebbles, for how far does human vanity not reach!

Another delightful thing was to get some girl to lie across our knees, to open her pants, and slap her buttocks till it made our hands, as well as those quiescent lobes, red as poppies, hot as ovens, and tingle with pain; still we found an unexplainable pleasure in the sound cuffs we gave, for it almost made our

tiny prickles stand on an end. This amusement, however, was the beginning and the cause of all my troubles in after-life.

One day, we were interrupted in the very midst of our sport, I remember all the little details of the scene, as if they had happened yesterday; shutting my eyes, and slightly rubbing the lids, I evoke the flushed faces of all my playmates.

It was on a warm spring day; we were in our favourite secluded nook, that grassy path, "with daisies powder'd over," between the hedgerows of gooseberry bushes, in the old fashioned garden. We had, on either side, a wall of glossy green leaves; over head the brown bunches of some old cherry trees, all covered with bunches of wild blossoms, and little greenish or browish leaflets, and as the fresh breeze wafted its scented breath through the entangled boughs—a snow storm of soft petals came fluttering, showering down; white butterflies chasing each other flitted around us. The blithe birds warbled or twittered on the branches and in the bushes; some in long amorous strains,

others trilling merrily with mad delight,—whilst a few added their short and jerky notes which blended themselves in harmonious unison to the great concert, whilst the grave encko seemed to be slowly keeping time to them all.

My school-mate was squatted on the sod, having his sister's friend across his knees. He had lifted up her white petticoats, pulled open her cambric pants and exhibited two rounded lobes of flesh, like a large melon cut in two, only that the colour instead of being orange yellow was of a faint pinkish tint.

To our delight he opened the two lobes widely apart, and thus discovered the little browish dot of her tiny hole, and, forthwith, tried to force his finger into it. The aperture, however, was too small, and as he thrust his index brutally within it—saying that he was planting a May-pole—the poor child screamed with pain.

“*Sotte*,” said he, and pulling out his finger he gave her such a smacking slap, that the white flesh was at once flushed, leaving the incarnadine sign of his five fingers. The first

blow had been too strong and unexpected; the girl uttered a faint cry, at which we all clapped our hands in high glee.

" Ah! you are mewling are you, " said the boy excited, and he immediately gave her another and much stronger slap. The girl uttered a shriller cry, at which we all capered for joy, in a kind of wild dance.

All at once my friend's eldest sister, a girl of 18, appeared arm in arm with the young man to whom she was engaged, at one end of the flowery path. On the other outlet we saw an old aunt—a prim, gaunt, weazened, methodistic spinster, a real methusalah in petticoats—who had always looked upon us as a hellish brood.

Fancy how sheepish, and crestfallen we looked as we held our little pizzles in our hand, and pissed as high as we possibly could.

My friend was whipped before us, we—his guests—were sent home in disgrace.

I was soundly thrashed by my father, lengthily lectured to by my aunt, then scolded by my nurse.

She told me that my hands would wither

away if I ever played with my little birdie again, for God—the Ever-Lurking-Spy—always sees little boys when they do such naughty things. He curses them on earth, and—as. He never fails to write down what ever they do in His big book—He sends them to hell when they die, where they wriggle about with worms in ever consuming flames.

“ With poodles ? ” I asked.

“ Surely, ” quoth she.

Then to impress her words more firmly on my mind she showed me several pictures of sinners wallowing in the bottomless pit.

After that, I was sent supperless to bed, where—when I fell asleep—I raved feverishly the whole night, fancying that I was scampering as fast as I could, trying to escape grim Jehovah—running after me with a switch—and ever and anon, stumbling from giddy heights, then suddenly awaking to find myself in bed.

Terror-haunted, full of anguish, my heart bursting with contrition, motherless and almost fatherless, feeling in the Christian-like way I was brought up—that I was a dis-

grace to myself and to all who knew me, hated by God and man, on account of my manifold sins, I not only wished myself dead, but I think I would have committed suicide had I known how to bring about my end.

My aunt—who was positively weary of me—seized this as a good opportunity for declining any further responsibility in my education, and persuaded my father to put me out as a boarder in some school.

I had hitherto dabbled in early vice thoughtlessly and without malice. In that hot-bed of rottenness—a French boarding-school—I soon learnt all the secrets of life, and still—strange to say—it was not by my school-fellows.

For several reasons I was not placed in the dormitory with the other boys. First I was very young, secondly there was no bed vacant, thirdly my story having been related to the head master, he had been requested to have a sharp look out on my morals; for I was described as a black sheep with the very worst propensities. I was therefore put to sleep with one of the nurses, a stout masculine-looking

woman, past the canonical age. A screen however, divided the room into two compartments.

One sultry summer night, I awoke feeling very hot and feverish; parched with thirst I got up to see if I could find a glass of water. Besides the rays of the moon in her zenith, the early gloaming shed its mellow light in the room. There was no water on my night table, I crossed over on her side, to see if I could find any there. The nurse was lying on her back, her legs somewhat apart, her thighs open, her slit uplifted. All her middle parts were therefore entirely bare. In that pale amber light her skin looked as white and as smooth as newly carved ivory. I should almost have felt inclined to pass my hand over it had my eyes not fallen, at once, on the dark fleece, which covered half of her thighs and almost reached up to her navel.

I was so thoroughly astonished, that I forgot my thirst, I forgot the reason for which I had got down from my bed; I stood there for a while, staring at her with widely-opened eyes.

This woman possessed a pussy, and there was no mistake about it. How I wished my friend had been with me, I might have convinced him of the truth of my assertion, for although little girls—as a rule—had no hair around their slit, women had a regular fleece there.

And yet I hardly believed my eyes, it seemed impossible that she could have such a lot of hair in that place and no beard on her chin, though she had a slight moustache.

As the nurse was sound asleep and snoring loudly, I thought I might just try and see if the hair grew there naturally or if it was a kind of fib to cover her shame. I just passed my hand lightly, tremblingly, over the fur, it was long, crisp and curly; it seemed to grow there. The nurse continued her rumbling noise: I therefore just caught hold of one or two hairs and pulled them slightly. All at once she gave a kind of snort, moved, and her hand came down upon mine. I slipped away my hand, popped down quickly and crawled noiselessly under the bed.

" Guillaume, " said she, stretching out—I believe—her arms in her sleep.

After a pause :

" Guillaume, where are you? "

Of course I gave no answer. By the noise the bed made, I knew that she had turned on the other side. Soon she was again fast asleep, for although she did not snore, she was puffing rhythmically.

I was about to leave my hiding place, when I heard a slight noise ; some one was actually turning the handle of the door. It opened without creaking.

Lying flat on my stomach, I could see the legs of a barefooted man, standing on the threshold.

How I did shiver and quake. I of course concluded that it must be a burglar, coming to murder us. I did not stop to think that the man was in his night gown. My first impulse was to scream ; but fear, and the instinct of self-preservation, made me keep quiet.

If I only had had a sword, I might have cut off his two feet and toppled him down.

The man came close to the side of the bed and stopped for a minute.

What was he doing? My heart was giving some mighty thumps. Perhaps he was smothering the nurse with her own bolster like the little princes in the tower. Presently I heard a sound, but it was very much like a kiss, then another and still another.

No, I could not be nustaken.

“ Oh! Guillaume, is it you, so you're come.” Thereupon she moved on one side, as if she was making place for him.

But then, thought I, this man is no burglar; moreover she was expecting him.

Who could he be?

In the whole house there were several Guillaumes, one of the older boys, one of the junior masters, and a sturdy Auvergnat of a servant man were all Williams, which of them was the conqueror? Moreover was he so very foud of this old virago that he had stealthily crept into her room like a thief, only to kiss her?

Whilst I was lost in these surmises, I saw his bare legs and feet disappear, and by the

noise of the mattress—evidently crushed down—I guessed that Guillaume had got into the matron's bed.

A moment's silence followed; a more expert ear might have detected the straining of muscles, the claspings of naked flesh; mine did not. Then succeeded a suppressed smacking of kisses, together with an interrupted conversation in hushed and husky tones.

What could they be talking about? I strained my ears but I could not catch the slightest syllable.

Soon the mattresses were set in motion, to which a slight and almost musical creaking of the bedstead kept time. They evidently disliked this rhythmical accompaniment, for they tried to strain the wooden frame to make it stop, but the jerks they gave it, as well as their curses, were of no avail, on the contrary the noise grew ever louder. It was now a regular cadence of bumping and plunging, something like a continuous kneading of dough, marked at intervals by a sound like that of a horse's hoof drawn out of the mire.

My wildest conjectures were too vague to

allow me to form any plausible supposition as to what they were about.

Little by little the bucking and pounding as well as the creaking increased both in time as well as in strength. From an *adagio* it had got to be a *presto*, then a *prestissimo*. I was dreadfully frightened lest the whole bedstead would come down upon me and crush me. I therefore crept to the farthest end of the bed, and kept ready to slip out, if the slightest accident happened.

When there I heard the nurse whisper to Guillaume to take care lest he might wake the *marmot*—that was me—with the noise he was making.

“The devil take the brat,” muttered the conqueror, “it is time he was got out of your room.”

Thereupon the thumps and thuds increased, then a puffing and panting, intermingled with grunts of satisfaction, and wriggles which seemed more of pleasure than of pain, together with an undescribable gurgling.

Then in a suppressed *sotto voce* : There I'm doing it, ah!—louder, shudderingly—I'm

doing it, ah!—and after a slight pause he added in a more tremulous and louder voice—ah! I've done it. Then some panting, a few seconds of silence—during which I asked myself what Guillaume had done—and he added with ineffable satisfaction :

Ah! futtering is after all the only thing worth living for in this world.

How those words impressed me. I repeated them over and over to myself, and for days afterwards they kept ever ringing in my ears.

I had found out what Guillaume and the nurse were doing. They were futtering.

Yes, but what was futtering?

I had often heard common people use the word *foutre*, either when they were much astonished or very angry. I knew it was a trivial word. I likewise had heard an idiot called a *foutre* or a *Jean foutre*, that likewise was low. Moreover a man that was dead or done for, was said to be *foutu*. To futter some one was—I had hitherto believed—to thrash a person. How could it then follow that “futtering was the only thing worth living for?”

After a lengthy pause the man added. "But you did not enjoy it, did you?"

Now that Guillaume spoke in his natural voice, I was all but certain that it was the junior master.

The matron added at once :

"No, since that *sacred* brat has been put in my room, I never feel at ease, and all my fun is spoilt."

"Yes, he's a little curse."

"I'm always so frightened that some day or other he'll wake, and then there'll be some bother."

"Oh! he always sleeps like a top."

"I'm not quite so sure of that, he's such a little sneak. For instance just before you came in, I am sure I felt a hand on my coynite."

How I pricked up my ears at the word. "Her coynite!" Then the fur all round her slit, thought I, is called a coynite and not a pussy as the dressmaker told me.

"Well and then?" asked Guillaume.

"Nothing; only I thought it was you."

"Perhaps," added I to myself in a mental monologue, "there are two names for the

same thing, just as some boys call a birdie a handle," any how, in my soliloquy I kept repeating the new word lest I might forget it.

"And you did not go to see if he was in his bed?" was the master's query, for he was always fond of putting everlasting questions.

"No, I turned the other side, and I went off to sleep."

"Then you must have been dreaming."

"Yes I suppose so."

After that they kissed, then the bed creaked again, and she added:

"No, no, you had better go away now, it is almost broad daylight, you came so late."

"Yes, I over slept myself."

Some more kissing took place, then he jumped down, did something to her, but I don't know what, then they kissed again.

"Ta, ta,—on Wednesday next," said he at last.

"Yes," added she, drowsily wallowing on her bed.

The man crept away on tip-toe. He opened the door noiselessly, cast a glance on either side of the passage then sidled out.

From where I was I could see him quite well now, I had not been mistaken in my thoughts; it was the junior master, he taught history and mathematics.

I did think it somewhat strange that the matron should call him Guillaume when everybody called him Mr Durieux, but then there were so many other things to astonish me that this incident was soon forgotten.

I waited just a little and I heard the nurse snore—as she always did when she slept—then glided out of my hiding-place, crept on all fours round the screen and thus went back to my bed. There, it did not take me long to fall asleep.

It was late when I woke, nay the nurse was tugging at me to rouse me from my overpowering drowsiness. But what was she saying : The words I heard were : "Futtering is the only thing worth living for," and I believed I repeated them in an inarticulate way.

"Get up, it's late," added the nurse, giving me another shake.

I opened my eyes, the matron was there

standing beside me, but instead of her face I saw her huge pussy; and I kept muttering the above quoted phrase to myself.

I must have looked at her with scrutinizing astonished eyes, for the virago seemed for a moment quite abashed.

"Why are you looking at me so surprised?" she asked.

"Oh! nothing."

"Still, you seem so bewildered," added she coaxingly.

"I... I think I've been dreaming."

"About what? my pretty pet!"

"I... I don't think I remember."

"Now just suppose you' try a little."

I was itching to ask, still I durst not.

"Come, you are a darling of a child, do try and think what it was."

I paused for a moment, then encouraged by her loving words, and prompted by the curiosity I felt:

"Mrs Lachand..." said I, with a fluttering heart and a trembling voice.

"Well? my love."

"Please, will you tell me what futtering is?"

I shall never forget the transformation that woman's face underwent. From sweet benevolent cozening look, it changed into the ugliest of grim scowls.

She lifted up her hand and gave me a smacking slap, then in a hissing undertone :

“ You dirty, sneaking wretch, ah! you want to know what futtering is, well I'll show you. ”

Thereupon she turned me on my back and pulling up my night-gown she began to thrash me mercilessly, nay the more she struck, the greater pleasure she felt, and the smarter were the blows she gave.

“ Now I hope, you've been futtered to your heart's content, and it'll be enough for a long while, but next time you ask such a thing, I won't thrash you, I'll simply take you by your ear, just as you are, in your night-gown, and drag you to the head-master, before all the boys. We all know what a filthy imp you were when you came to us, so he'll expell you from school at once.

Of course I was sobbing piteously during her speech, so she shook me several times to make me stop, then she began again.

“ Just say such a word again, and your tongue'll wither in your mouth. Don't you know ” you wretched child that you make the good God cry when you say such words. You are old enough to understand that if you make the good God so angry, he might in his wrath strike you dead for ever. ”

“ And a day after, ” said I to myself, mentally.

Her scolding and my whimpering were both suddenly stopped by the sound of the drum. It was the second signal, so I ought to have already been combed, washed and ready to join my school fellows who were marching down to their morning studies.

The nurse soused my head in a basin of water, anxiously bidding me at the same time to forget the terrible word I had uttered, and that for this time she would not speak to the masters, then she helped me to put on my dirty uniform.

All haste was however useless, I was twelve minutes late, therefore I was noted down and got fifty lines to copy during the play hours.

Dull, dispirited, and muddle-headed as I was, smarting from the blows I had received, it was no wonder that I again began to blubber.

Besides it was a wretched feeling to think I was so atrociously wicked that whatever I did and whatever I said made my Heavenly Father snivel, and that it was a mercy my eyes did not drop out of their sockets, my hands grow paralyzed, my tongue wither to the root. Then in my forlorn state I felt a kind of homesickness, I longed for a little love, for a few kind words.

Why had my mother killed herself and left me alone in this world?

This thought brought on another.

"Perhaps," said I to myself, "she did not know the only thing worth living for." I tried not to think of the word "fettering," but my lips uttered it almost against my will. She probably, like myself, did not know this pleasure, and then surely life was not worth a rap.

In fact, was I not the most miserable wretch in the whole school? The boys pestered me because I slept in the matron's room, and

asked me all kinds of silly questions. There I spoilt all the nurse's fun; in fact, since my birth I always seemed to be in everybody's way, a burden to myself and to all who had anything to do with me.

The day dragged on most drearily, for although I knew my lessons well, I was so listless and muddled, that I always answered wrongly. The upshot was that I got two hundred lines more.

In my despondency I was glad when night came on, my bed—a child's bugbear—was a real haven of rest. Although I intended remaining awake, just to see if anything would happen, still, no sooner was my weary head on my pillow, that I went off to sleep.

I only slumbered lightly, for I woke when the matron came in, and again I woke when she wallowed in her bed. As in a dream I heard the clock strike one, then I was conscious of a slight noise, the door of the room was opened and some one came in.

In spite of all my curiosity, I durst not turn round, nor move; I felt sure the matron would be listening to hear if I was awake.

In fact she soon uttered a low hissing sound, then she jumped out of her bed.

The man evidently stopped where he was.

"Is it you, Guillaume?" she asked in a whisper.

"Yes,"—in an undertone.

I was lying flat on my stomach, my face turned to the wall, as quiet as a mouse. Though young, there was however guile enough in me to make me understand that she had come to make sure of my being asleep. Not wanting to get into more trouble but anxious to know—if possible—what futtering was, I began to breathe softly and slowly, even puffing every now and then as sleeping persons usually do. She patted me lightly, called me by my name, asked me if I wanted to do pi-pi, but seeing that I did not budge, she, was thought I—as our Latin books have it—in Morphens' arms. She therefore left me and went to meet Guillaume, who—as I surmised—was always standing at the door.

As soon as they were together, they began to whisper in that same low husky, somewhat nasal, tone, but I could not hear what they

said. By degrees they got more excited and their tones grew louder, and as I listened it did not seem to me that the man's voice was that of Mr Durieux, although this Guillaume—whoever he was—spoke likewise in a goatish way.

But what could they be doing so long together? I turned my head as much as I could, I strained my eyes to their utmost corners.

They were, now, standing close together kissing. She was holding his pizzle, and—I think—rubbing it. He had uplifted her shift and his hand was between her legs. He must have been patting her pussy.

I twisted my head round a little more, now I could see them pretty well, it was not Guillaume Durieux, the junior master, but Guillaume Chretien, a senior scholar, a young Marseillais of about 17, the sturdiest fellow of the whole school.

They seemed to be enjoying their little game, so I asked myself if this was futtering, or if it was only the preliminaries. After they had been amusing themselves a little in that way, they both disappeared behind the

screen, and—by the noise they made—it was evident that they had gone to bed together.

They at first kept quiet for some time, and—in the meanwhile—I began to ponder.

How was it that the good God—who is always horrified at what children do—allows this matron to go to bed every night with another William?

Can he wink at such doings, does he smile at their pranks?

Surely if he has to cry at all the naughty things children do, and the dirty things grown up people indulge in, why then his own life is not worth living.

Meanwhile the two in bed were rehearsing the little game that had been played the evening before. They first proceeded quietly, like a steam-engine just started, but after a few strokes, the speed of the piston-rod increased rapidly.

It was the same thumping and bumping, the same inarticulate sounds of puffing and puffing, of breathing painfully and panting pleasantly, even the same hoarse gurglings, to which the thuds on the mattress, the creak-

ing of the hinges, the straining of the wooden bed kept rhythmic time.

Evidently they were having their fill of pleasure—for surely they would not take so much trouble for nothing—therefore I concluded that they were doing the thing worth living for.

My curiosity had risen to such a pitch of excitement that I could hardly keep still any longer, my craving to see them futtering was irresistible; I was even ready to put myself into jeopardy to gratify my thirst for this forbidden knowledge.

My first plan was to slip on the floor quietly, and go and peep round the screen, but on second thought I concluded it would be better to stand on the bed and look over that partition of paper.

I therefore got up quietly, holding myself—as well as I could—to the wall, and making as little noise as possible,—as I was very light the bed did not make the slightest sound.

For a little while I could not understand much of what I saw, but by degrees I perceived that the matron was lying on her back:

and Guillaume was upon her. They were both moving up and down.

"This," thought I, "is *the beast with two backs* that the boys had once been so much amused about."

Straining my eyes, holding my breath, I advanced cautiously towards the edge of the bed. I now saw that she had her fat legs entwined in his, whilst both were clasped in each other's arms.

"There, there," said she, "move a little, but don't pull yourself up, there, like that push it in as far as you can, ah!"

In my eagerness to see, I bent just a little forwards, when—all at once—the mattress gave way under my feet, and lo! I slipped and fell with a tremendous thud on the floor.

Although I hurt my head and bruised my back, I durst not utter a moan, still I could not help whimpering a little as I tried to extricate myself from the sheet, but before I could get up the matron was by my side, clapping her hand on my mouth and almost smothering me, for fear I might scream.

“What’s the matter with you, you little monster?” She hissed in my ear.

“I... I fell out of my bed.”

“Oh! you fell, you toad”—and catching hold of my hair she shook me violently—“and how did you manage to fall, pray?”

“I... I don’t know, I think I slipped,” I answered gasping.

“In your sleep?” said she relenting.

“Yes, I think I was dreaming.”

“Oh! you were dreaming poor dear, were you?” added she in a soothing voice, kissing me.

Thereupon she helped me to get back into my bed, she tucked me and then bade me go off to sleep.

I had seen what I wanted, though perhaps not quite as much as I should have liked; of course I could not go off to sleep after that.

For a while they kept very silent, then—after some time—I heard the matron come up to my bed. I did exactly what I had done before. She called me again by my name. I did not vouchsafe any answer. She then went back to her bed.

" Now you had better go, " said she gruffly.

" Oh! let me slip it in once more, " rejoined he, coaxingly.

Within myself there was the mental query—What did he want to slip in, and where did he want to slip it?

" No, no, not to-night. "

" Oh! but that cursed toad spoilt every thing just when I was going to shoot. "

I asked myself rather frightened: What was he going to shoot?

" So I felt nothing. "

" And do you think I felt? "

" Well just let me try another shot, " added he, always coaxingly.

" No, no, you've been here too long already, that'll never do, you might be missed, and then there'll be a row. "

" No, no, on Tuesdays Durieux sleeps like a top. "

I could hardly help chuckling. There were many things I did not know, but one thing that I did know was why Durieux slept like a top on Tuesdays.

Then came a good deal of coaxing and kissing but still the matron was inflexible.

"No," said she peremptorily, "it's useless, but I'll tell you what, if you like, you can *faire minette to me*, that can be done noiselessly."

This was a new wonder for me. What were they going to do? They were almost mewling like old cats, were they going to be noiselessly frolicsome like kittens? I did wish they would let me join in their little game. Then I asked myself if I could do *minette* to the nurse? I durst not move any more, for I felt sure their rage would be ungovernable if I spoilt their fun a second time.

Whatever this game was they kept quiet for some time, then there was some wriggling and wallowing, a great deal of strong breathing, the nurse seemed to be having stomach-ache, then a subdued sighing as if the pain was over, and all was silent for a few minutes.

Thereupon I think they rose.

"Did you enjoy it?" quoth he.

"*Fichtre!*" in a decided tone.

"I did it nicely, didn't I?"

“ Very. ”

“ Then, ”—some low words in a longing tone which I could not understand.

“ Go away you pig. ”

“ How hard you are. ”

“ Do you want the toad to jump out of his bed and catch us at it, then the whole school will be roused. ”

“ Then on Friday? ”

“ Yes. ”

He thereupon went to her basin, wet his face and seemed to be washing or rincing his mouth. The first Guillaume had not washed himself.

Query 1. Had it anything to do with the pussy game?

Query 2. Do people always wash after playing pussy!

For some evenings I slept like Mr Durieux did on Tuesdays and I suppose Chretien on Wednesdays. I never heard anything, never woke at all. I had—I think—caught cold, a very slight cold indeed, for I did not perceive it, but the matron who had grown exceedingly fond of me, said that I coughed in the

night and that I breathed with a wheezing sound, so she made me take a cup of tea before going to bed. It was very good and sweet, of pansies and orange leaves—she said—but I was not to mention it to the other boys who would be jealous. I kept taking it for several nights, but whether it was my cold, or the sultry hot days, the more I slept, the more drowsy I grew.

At last—about a fortnight afterwards—having got sick of my *tisane* and being sure I had neither a cold nor a cough any more, I—the matron not mounting guard—instead of drinking it and having it pass through my body into the vessel where it was destined to go, I defly poured it into the night-vase at once.

I went off to sleep, but I did not fall into that lethargy of the evening before. In the middle of the night I had a peculiar dream. I was on board of a ship and the matron was with me, but I do not exactly know whether we were in bed or not. All at once the waves began to roll high and dash against the bow of the vessel, that was labouring to

make headway through the trough of the waters. She was straining her bulwarks, and although the huge sails were swelled by the heavy gale I could hear them flapping rhythmically, keeping time to the creaking sound of the boards and the beams. The engine too was puffing madly and the piston rod going in and out the cylinder was giving mighty thuds. All at once the ship was attacked by pirates—just like in the story I had been reading that very evening—only one of them had got over the matron, as Guillaume Chretien had done a fortnight ago, and she, poor thing, was sobbing and calling for help. Yes, I could hear her plainly, she was panting, wailing, almost screeching.

I thereupon seized a crowbar and ran to her help. Some one had rung the bell, the ship was on fire, I shrieked for help, I yelled...

There was a scuffle. The nurse was by my side almost throttling me, her eyes were out of her head, her hair all dishevelled, she was looking like a devil. A man appeared likewise by my bed.

“ If you scream, you dirty black guard, I'll just murder you. ”

I tried to scream, but the nurse gagged me. I now recognized the man that had thus threatened me. It was Guillaume, the broad-shouldered Auvergnat servant man. Another second and he vanished behind the screen.

A few moments afterwards there were lights and footsteps in the passage, but the door being locked no one could come in. The nurse told them, however, that there was nothing the matter with me, I had been dreaming and pulled the bell-rope in my sleep; so they all went off grumbling and evidently cursing me as giving more trouble than the whole school together.

I was shaken and thumped in bed, and ordered to go off to sleep at once, which I tried to do as quickly as I possibly could.

My stay in that boarding-school was, however, not to be of long duration.

Not long after the incident of that night, Mr Durieux was explaining to us something about the Persian wars. The subject was an

interesting one, and most of us—contrary to our habits,—were straining our ears to listen to every word he uttered. I remember he was saying that the lads of 15 and 16 had fought like heroes.

All at once the boy next to me—the one who had wanted to know if I had ever seen a beast with two backs—whispered in my ear :

“ Just ask him at what age one can fire off a shot ! ”

“ Why ! ” rejoined I innocently, not understanding the drift of the question.

“ For the fun of the thing. ”

“ But there’s no fun. ”

“ Well, ask him and you’ll see if there isn’t. ”

“ Then ask him yourself. ”

“ Oh ! you are frightened, ” he whispered.

“ No I’m not. ”

“ Then ask. ”

I did as I was bid, simply, straightforwardly.

I saw Mr Durieux blush scarlet and bounce off his chair, as if he had been jerked out of it.

The whole class burst into a loud fit of laughter. Mr Durieux glared at me, rapped with the book he held, and ordered silence.

The scholars, who had never seen him in such a rage, seemed cowed down.

"Leave the class," said he to me with an angry scowl.

"But why?" said I, trembling.

"Get out, at once, do you hear."

"But sir," said I, stammering, "I didn't mean, that is, it's not I, it's..."

"Will you go out at once, you scoundrel, or I'll call Guillaume."

I knew that Guillaume—in fact all three Guillaumes—bore me a grudge. I rose at once, casting an imploring glance at my neighbour, hoping that he would get up and explain. He sat quietly with head bowed down.

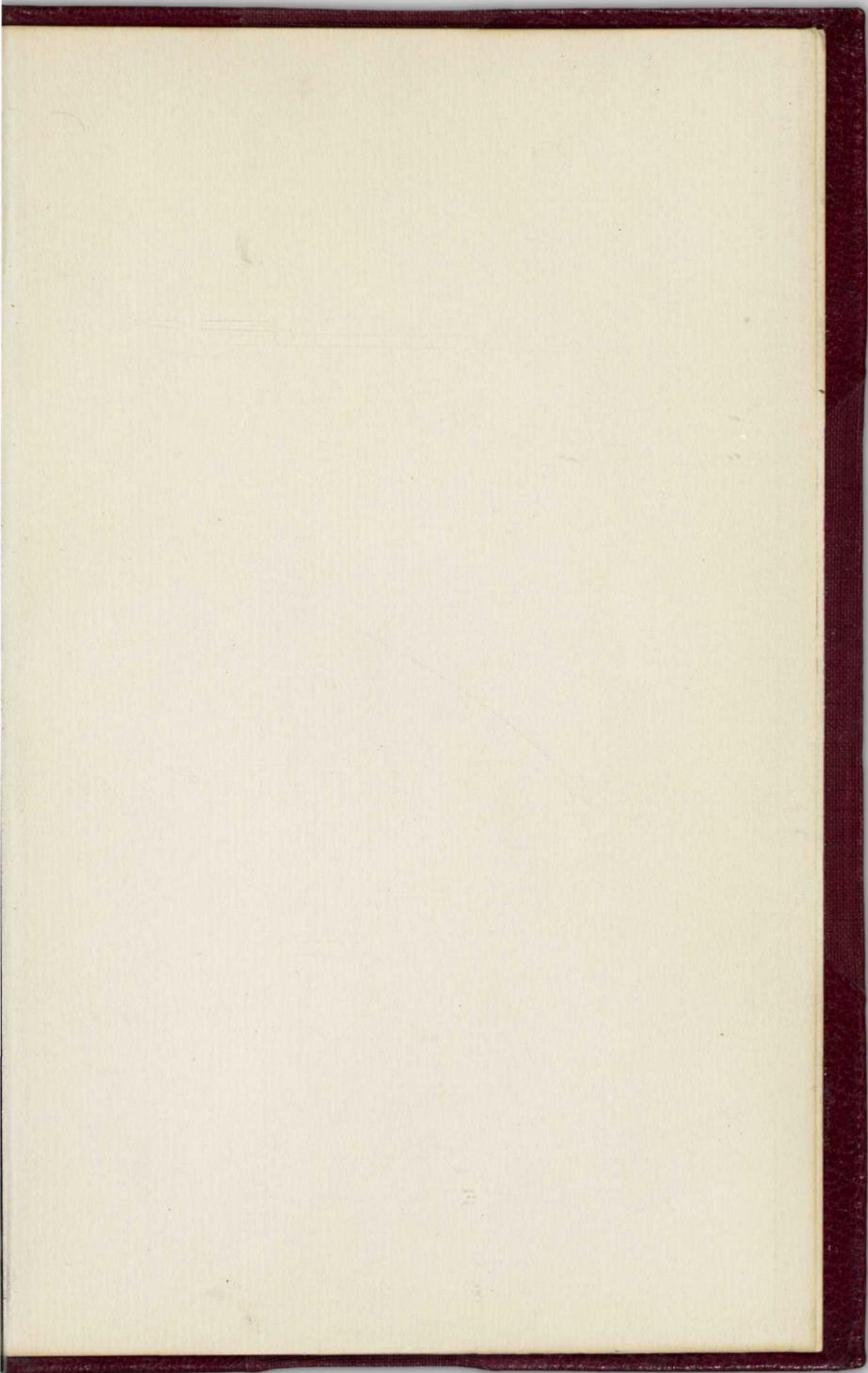
I was locked up in a closed by myself, never saw any of the other boys again, then, after a few days, I was expelled from school.

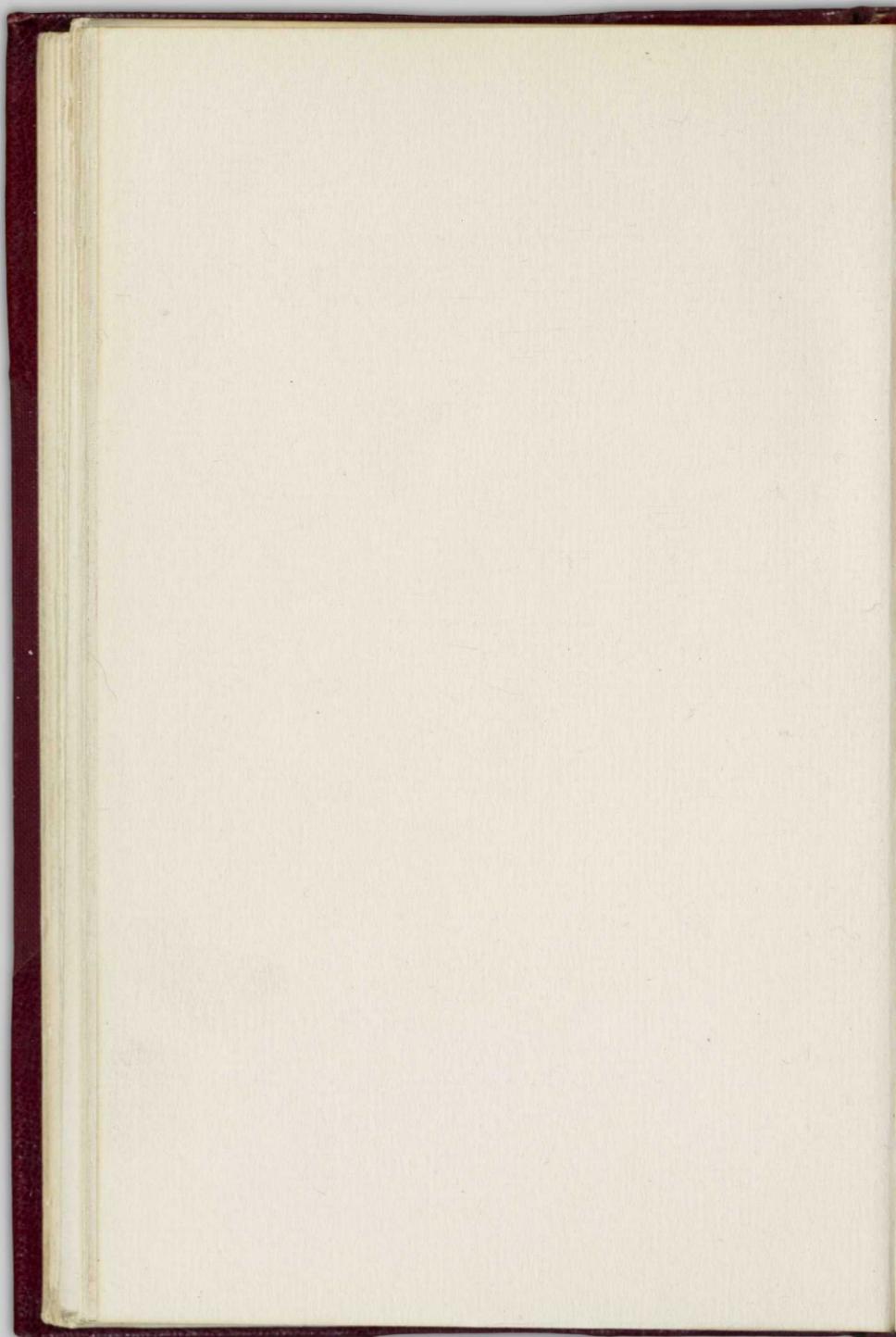
Why, I did not know.

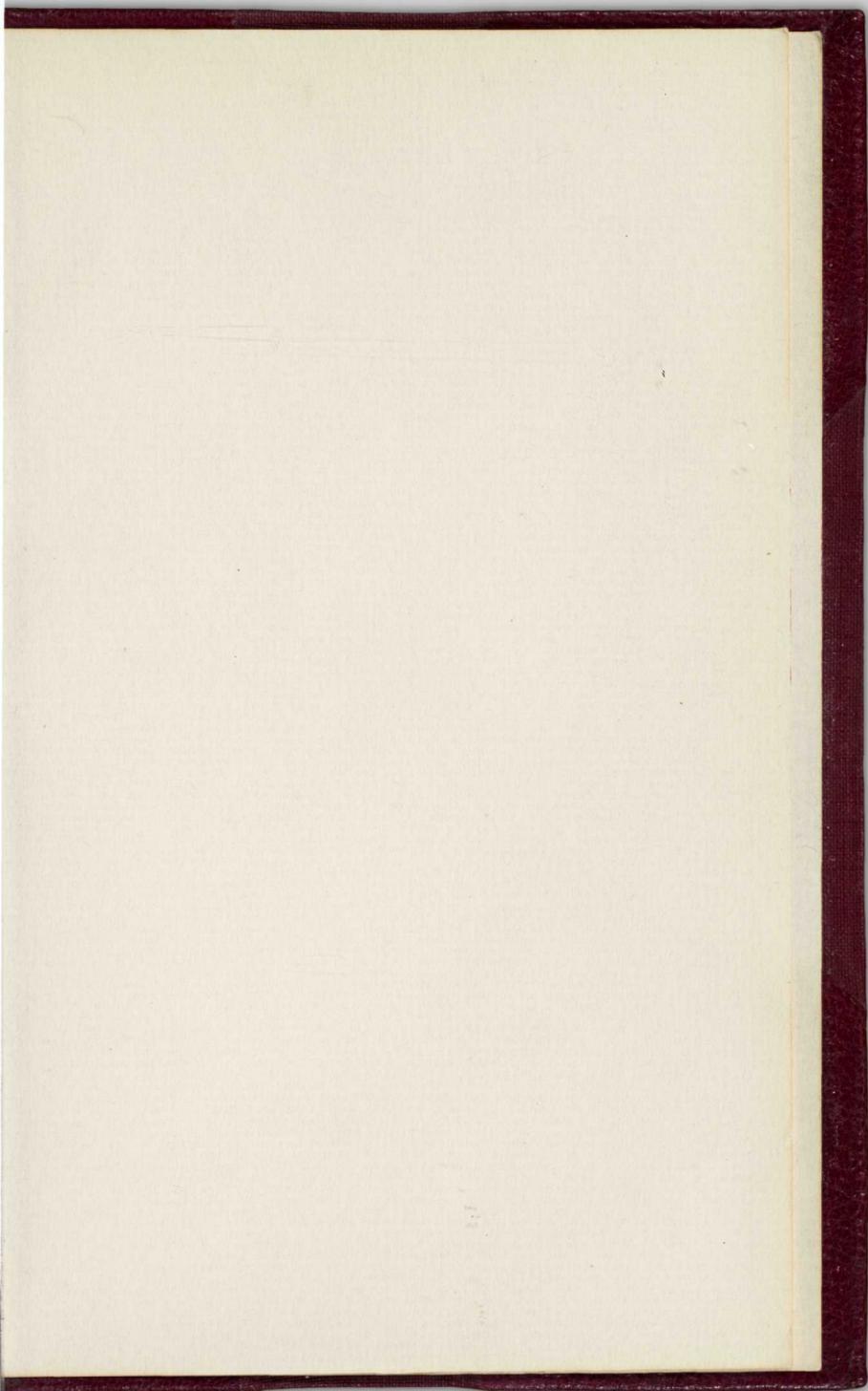
I was told something about black sheep, and contamination, wheat and tares, but I did

not understand what they meant, still I suppose they were right, they were learned professors and I was only a little motherless boy.

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