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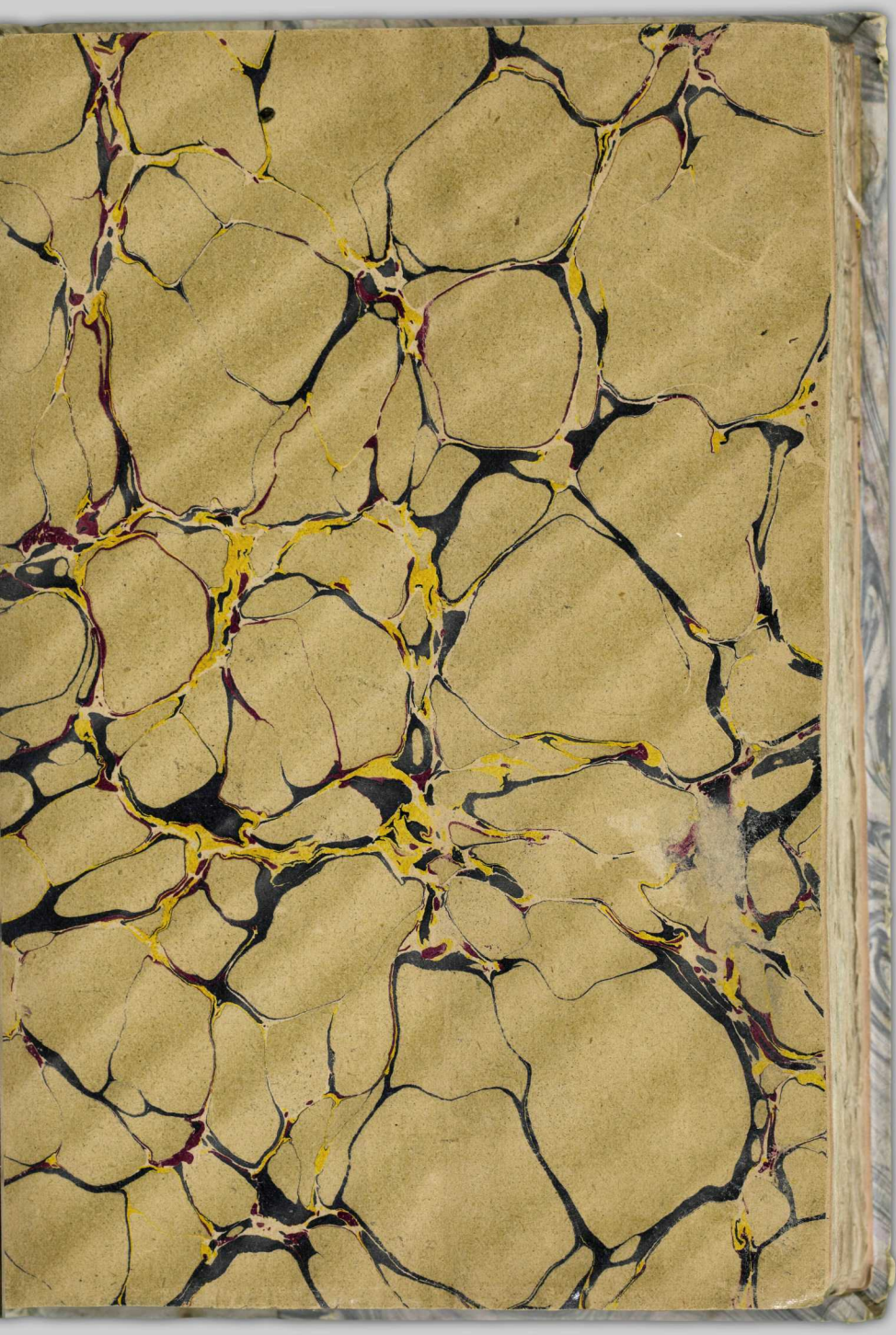

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TELENY

OR

THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

VOLUME I

TELENY

OR

THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

160

EDITION : 200 Copies

TELENY

OR

THE REVERSE OF THE MEDAL

A PHYSIOLOGICAL ROMANCE OF TO-DAY

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOLUME I

COSMOPOLI
1893

CHAPTER I

"TELL me your story from its very beginning, Des Grieux," said he, interrupting me; "and how you got to be acquainted with him."

"It was at a grand charity concert where he was playing; for though amateur performances are one of the many plagues of modern civilization, still, my mother being one of the lady patronesses, I felt it incumbent to be present."

"But he was not an amateur, was he?"

"Oh, no! Still at that time he was only just beginning to make a name."

"Well, go on."

"He had already sat down at the piano when I got to my *stalle d'orchestre*. The first thing

he played was a favourite *gavotte* of mine—one of those slight, graceful, and easy melodies that seem to smell of *lavande ambrée*, and in some way or other put you in mind of Lulli and Watteau, of powdered ladies dressed in yellow satin gowns, flirting with their fans."

"And then?"

"As he reached the end of the piece, he cast several sidelong glances towards—as I thought—the lady patroness. When he was about to rise, my mother—who was seated behind me—tapped me on my shoulder with her fan, only to make one of the many unseasonable remarks women are for ever pestering you with, so that, by the time I had turned round to applaud, he had disappeared."

"And what happened afterwards?"

"Let me see. I think there was some singing."

"But did he not play any more?"

"Oh, yes! He came out again towards the middle of the concert. As he bowed, before taking his place at the piano, his eyes seemed to be looking out for someone in the pit. It was

then—as I thought—that our glances met for the first time."

"What kind of a man was he?"

"He was a rather tall and slight young man of twenty-four. His hair, short and curled—after the fashion Bressan, the actor, had brought into vogue—was of a peculiar ashy hue; but this—as I knew afterwards—was due to its being always imperceptibly powdered. Anyhow, the fairness of his hair contrasted with his dark eyebrows and his short moustache. His complexion was of that warm, healthy paleness which, I believe, artists often have in their youth. His eyes—though generally taken for black—were of a deep blue colour; and although they ever appeared so quiet and serene, still a close observer would every now and then have seen in them a scared and wistful look, as if he were gazing at some dreadful dim and distant vision. An expression of the deepest sorrow invariably succeeded this painful glamour."

"And what was the reason of his sadness?"

"At first, whenever I asked him, he always shrugged his shoulders, and answered laughingly,

'Do you never see ghosts?' When I got to be on more intimate terms with him, his invariable reply was—'My fate; that horrible, horrible fate of mine!' But then, smiling and arching his eyebrows, he always hummed, '*Non ci pensiam.*'"

"He was not of a gloomy or brooding disposition, was he?"

"No, not at all; he was only very superstitious."

"As all artists, I believe."

"Or rather, all persons like — well, like ourselves; for nothing renders people so superstitious as vice——"

"Or ignorance."

"Oh! that is quite a different kind of superstition."

"Was there any peculiar dynamic quality in his eyes?"

"For myself of course there was; yet he had not what you would call hypnotizing eyes; his glances were far more dreamy than piercing, or staring; and still they had such penetrating power that, from the very first time I saw him,

I felt that he could dive deep into my heart; and although his expression was anything but sensual, still, every time he looked at me, I felt all the blood within my veins was always set aglow."

"I have often been told that he was very handsome; is it true?"

"Yes, he was remarkably good looking, and still even more peculiar, than strikingly handsome. His dress, moreover, though always faultless, was a trifle eccentric. That evening for instance, he wore at his button-hole a bunch of white heliotrope, although camellias and gardenias were then in fashion. His bearing was most gentlemanly, but on the stage—as well as with strangers—slightly supercilious."

"Well, after your glances met?"

"He sat down and began to play. I looked at the programme; it was a wild Hungarian rhapsody by an unknown composer with a crack-jaw name; its effect, however, was perfectly entrancing. In fact, in no music is the sensuous element so powerful as in that of the Tsiganes. You see, from a minor scale—"

"Oh! please no technical terms, for I hardly know one note from another."

"Anyhow, if you have ever heard a tsardas, you must have felt that, although the Hungarian music is replete with rare rhythmical effects, still, as it quite differs from our set rules of harmony, it jars upon our ears. These melodies begin by shocking us, then by degrees subdue, until at last they enthrall us. The gorgeous fioriture, for instance, with which they abound are of a decided luxurious Arabic character, and——"

"Well, never mind about the fioriture of the Hungarian music, and do go on with your story."

"That is just the difficult point, for you cannot disconnect him from the music of his country; nay, to understand him you must begin by feeling the latent spell which pervades every song of Tsigane. A nervous organization—having once been impressed by the charm of a tsardas—ever thrills in response to those magic numbers. Those strains usually begin with a soft and low andante, something like the plaintive

wail of forlorn hope, then the ever changing rhythm—increasing in swiftness—becomes "wild as the accents of lovers' farewell," and without losing any of its sweetness, but always acquiring new vigour and solemnity, the prestissimo—syncopated by sighs—reaches a paroxysm of mysterious passion, now melting into a mournful dirge, then bursting out into the brazen blast of a fiery and warlike anthem.

"He, in beauty, as well as in character, was the very personification of this entrancing music.

"As I listened to his playing I was spell-bound; yet I could hardly tell whether it was with the composition, the execution, or the player himself. At the same time the strangest visions began to float before my eyes. First I saw the Alhambra in all the luxuriant loveliness of its Moorish masonry—those sumptuous symphonies of stones and bricks—so like the flourishes of those quaint Gipsy melodies. Then a smouldering unknown fire began to kindle itself within my breast. I longed to feel that mighty love which maddens one to crime, to feel the blasting lust of men who live beneath the scorching sun, to drink down deep

from the cup of some satyrion philtre.

"The vision changed; instead of Spain, I saw a barren land, the sun-lit sands of Egypt, wet by the sluggish Nile; where Adrian stood wailing, forlorn, disconsolate for he had lost for ever the lad he loved so well. Spell bound by that soft music, which sharpened every sense, I now began to understand things hitherto so strange, the love the mighty monarch felt for his fair Grecian slave, Antinöus, who—like unto Christ—died for his master's sake. And thereupon my blood all rushed from my heart into my head, then it coursed down, through every vein, like waves of molten lead.

"The scene then changed, and shifted into the gorgeous towns of Sodom and Gomorrah, weird, beautiful and grand; to me the pianist's notes just then seemed murmuring in my ear with the panting of an eager lust, the sound of thrilling kisses.

"Then—in the very midst of my vision—the pianist turned his head and cast one long, lingering, slumberous look at me, and our glances met again. But was he the pianist, was he Antinöus, or rather, was he not one of those two

angels which God sent to Lot? Anyhow, the irresistible charm of his beauty was such that I was quite overcome by it; and the music just then seemed to whisper:

> "'Could you not drink his gaze like wine,
> Yet though its splendour swoon
> In the silence languidly
> As a tune into a tune?'

"That thrilling longing I had felt grew more and more intense, the craving so insatiable that it was changed to pain; the burning fire had now been fanned into a mighty flame, and my whole body was convulsed and writhed with mad desire. My lips were parched, I gasped for breath; my joints were stiff, my veins were swollen, yet I sat still, like all the crowd around me. But suddenly a heavy hand seemed to be laid upon my lap, something was hent and clasped and grasped, which made me faint with lust. The hand was moved up and down, slowly at first, then fast and faster it went in rhythm with the song. My brain began to reel as throughout every vein a burning lava coursed, and then, some drops even gushed out——I panted——

"All at once the pianist finished his piece with a crash amidst the thundering applause of the whole theatre. I myself heard nothing but the din of thunder, I saw a fiery hail, a rain of rubies and emeralds that was consuming the cities of the plain, and he, the pianist, standing naked in the lurid light, exposing himself to the thunderbolts of heaven and to the flames of hell. As he stood there, I saw him — in my madness — change all at once into Anubis, the dog-headed God of Egypt, then by degrees into a loathsome poodle. I started, I shivered, felt sick, but speedily he changed to his own form again.

"I was powerless to applaud, I sat there dumb, motionless, nerveless, exhausted. My eyes were fixed upon the artist who stood there bowing listlessly, scornfully; while his own glances full of 'eager and impassioned tenderness,' seemed to be seeking mine and mine alone. What a feeling of exultation awakened within me! But could he love me, and me only? For a trice the exultation gave way to bitter jealousy. Was I growing mad, I asked myself?

"As I looked at him, his features seemed to be

overshadowed by a deep melancholy, and—horrible to behold—I saw a small dagger plunged in his breast, with the blood flowing fast from the wound. I not only shuddered, but almost shrieked with fear, the vision was so real. My head was spinning round, I was growing faint and sick, I fell back exhausted in my chair, covering my eyes with my hands."

"What a strange hallucination, I wonder what brought it about?"

"It was, indeed, something more than an hallucination, as you will see hereafter. When I lifted up my head again, the pianist was gone. I then turned round, and my mother—seeing how pale I was—asked me if I felt ill. I muttered something about the heat being very oppressive.

"'Go into the green room,' said she, 'and have a glass of water.'

"'No, I think I had better go home.'

"I felt, in fact, that I could not listen to any more music that evening. My nerves were so utterly unstrung that a maudlin song would just then have exasperated me, whilst another intoxicating melody might have made

me lose my senses.

"As I got up I felt so weak and exhausted that it seemed as if I were walking in a trance, so, without exactly knowing whither I wended my steps, I mechanically followed some persons in front of me, and, a few moments afterwards, I unexpectedly found myself in the green room.

"The saloon was almost empty. At the further end a few dandies were grouped round a young man in evening dress, whose back was turned towards me. I recognized one of them as Briancourt."

"What, the General's son?"

"Precisely."

"I remember him. He always dressed in such a conspicuous way."

"Quite so. That evening, for instance, when every gentleman was in black, he, on the contrary, wore a white flannel suit; as usual, a very open Byron-like collar, and a red Lavalliére cravat tied in a huge bow."

"Yes, for he had a most lovely neck and throat."

"He was very handsome, although I, for

myself, had always tried to avoid him. He had a way of ogling which made you feel quite uncomfortable. You laugh, but it is quite true. nere are some men who, when staring at a woman, seem all the while to be undressing her. Briancourt had that indecent way of looking at everybody. I vaguely felt his eyes all over me, and that made me shy."

"But you were acquainted with him, were you not?"

"Yes, we had been at some Kindergarten or other together, but, being three years younger than he, I was always in a lower class. Anyhow, that evening, upon perceiving him, I was about to leave the room, when the gentleman in the evening suit turned round. It was the pianist. As our eyes met again, I felt a strange flutter within me, and the fascination of his looks was so powerful that I was hardly able to move. Then, attracted onwards as I was, instead of quitting the green room, I walked on slowly, almost reluctantly, towards the group. The musician, without staring, did not, however, turn his eyes away from me. I was quivering from

head to foot. He seemed to be slowly drawing me to him, and I must confess the feeling was such a pleasant one that I yielded entirely to it.

"Just then Briancourt, who had not seen me, turned round, and recognizing me, nodded in his off-hand way. As he did so, the pianist's eyes brightened, and he whispered something to him, whereupon the General's son, without giving him any answer, turned towards me, and, taking me by the hand, said:

"'Camille, allow me to introduce you to my friend Réné. M. Réné Teleny—M. Camille Des Grieux.'

"I bowed, blushing. The pianist stretched forth his ungloved hand. In my fit of nervousness I had pulled off both my gloves, so that I now put my bare hand into his.

"He had a perfect hand for a man, rather large than small, strong yet soft, and with long, tapering fingers, so that his grasp was firm and steady.

"Who has not been sentient of the manifold feelings produced by the touch of a hand? Many persons seem to bear a temperature of

their own about them. They are hot and feverish in mid-winter, while others are cold and icy in the dog-days. Some hands are dry and parched, others continually moist, clammy, and slimy. There are fleshy, pulpy, muscular, or thin, skeleton and bony hands. The grasp of some is like that of an iron vice, others feel as limp as a bit of rag. There is the artificial product of our modern civilization, a deformity like a Chinese lady's foot, always enclosed in a glove during the day, often poulticed at night, tended by a manicure; they are as white as snow, if not as chaste as ice. How that little useless hand would shrink from the touch of the gaunt, horny, clay-coloured, begrimed workman's hand, which hard, unremitting labour has changed into a kind of hoof. Some hands are coy, others paddle you indecently; the grip of some is hypocritical, and not what it pretends to be; there is the velvety, the unctuous, the priestly, the humbug's hand; the open palm of the spendthrift, the usurer's tight-fisted claw. There is, moreover, the magnetic hand, which seems to have a secret affinity for your own; its simple touch thrills your whole

nervous system, and fills you with delight.

"How can I express all that I felt from the contact of Teleny's hand? It set me on fire; and, strange to say, it soothed me at the same time. How sweeter, softer, it was, than any woman's kiss. I felt his grasp steal slowly over all my body, caressing my lips, my throat, my breast; my nerves quivered from head to foot with delight, then it sank downwards into my reins, and Priapus, re-awakened, uplifted his head. I actually felt I was being taken possession of, and I was happy to belong to him.

"I should have liked to have said something polite in acknowledgment for the pleasure he had given me by his playing, still what unhackneyed phrase could have expressed all the admiration I felt for him?

"'But, gentlemen,' said he, 'I am afraid I am keeping you away from the music.'

"'I, myself, was just going away,' quoth I.

"'The concert bores you then, does it?'

"'No, on the contrary; but after having heard you play, I cannot listen to any more music to-night.'

"He smiled and looked pleased.

"'In fact, Réné, you have outdone yourself this evening,' said Briancourt. 'I never heard you play like that before.'

"'Do you know why?'

"'No, unless it is that you had such a full theatre.'

"'Oh, no! it is simply because, whilst I was playing the gavotte, I felt that somebody was listening to me.'

"'Oh! somebody!' echoed the young men, laughing.

"'Amongst a French public, especially that of a charity concert, do you really think that there are many persons who listen? I mean who listen intently with all their heart and soul. The young men are obliging the ladies, these are scrutinizing each other's toilette; the fathers, who are bored, are either thinking of the rise and fall of the stocks, or else counting the number of gas-lights, and reckoning how much the illumination will cost.'

"'Still, among such a crowd there is surely more than one attentive listener,' said Odillot the

lawyer.

"'Oh, yes! I dare say; as for instance the young lady who has been thrumming the piece you have just played, but there is hardly more than one,—how can I express it?—well more than one sympathetic listener.'

"'What do you mean by a sympathetic listener?' asked Courtois, the stock-broker.

"'A person with whom a current seems to establish itself; some one who feels, while listening, exactly as I do whilst I am playing, who sees perhaps the same visions as I do—'

"'What! do you see visions when you play?' asked one of the bystanders, astonished.

"'Not as a rule, but always when I have a sympathetic listener?'

"'And do you often have such a listener?' said I, with a sharp pang of jealousy.

"'Often? Oh, no! seldom, very seldom, hardly ever in fact, and then——'

"'Then what?'

"'Never like the one of this evening.'

"'And when you have no listener?' asked Courtois.

"'Then I play mechanically, and in a humdrum kind of way.'

"'Can you guess whom your listener was this evening?' added Briancourt, smiling sardonically, and then with a leer at me.

"'One of the many beautiful ladies of course,' quoth Odillot, 'you are a lucky fellow.'

"'Yes,' said another, 'I wish I were your neighbour at that table d'hôte, so that you might pass me the dish after you have helped yourself.'

"'Was it some beautiful girl?' said Courtois questioningly. Teleny looked deep into my eyes, smiled faintly, and replied:

"'Perhaps.'

"'Do you think you will ever know your listener?' enquired Briancourt.

"Teleny again fixed his eyes on mine, and added faintly:

"'Perhaps.'

"'But what clue have you to lead to this discovery?' asked Odillot.

"'His visions must coincide with mine.'

"'I know what my vision would be if I had any,' quoth Odillot.

"'What would it be?' enquired Courtois.

"'Two lily-white breasts with nipples like two pink rosebuds, and lower down, two moist lips like those pink shells which opening with awakening lust, reveal a pulpy luxurious world, only of a deep coralline hue, and then these two pouting lips must be surrounded by a slight golden or black down——'

"'Enough, enough, Odillot, my mouth waters at your vision, and my tongue longs to taste the flavour of those lips,' said the stock-broker, his eyes gleaming like those of a satyr, and evidently in a state of priapism.

"'Is not that your vision, Teleny?'

"The pianist smiled enigmatically:

"'Perhaps.'

"'As for me,' said one of the young men who had not yet spoken, 'a vision evoked by a Hungarian rhapsody would be either of vast plains, of bands of gipsies, or of men with round hats, wide trousers and short jackets, riding on fiery horses.'

"'Or of booted and laced soldiers dancing with black eyed girls,' added another.

"I smiled, thinking how different my vision had been from these. Teleny, who was watching me, noticed the movement of my lips.

"'Gentlemen,' said the musician, 'Odillot's vision was provoked not by my playing, but by some good-looking young girl he had been ogling; as for yours they are simply reminiscences of some pictures or ballets.'

"'What was your vision, then?' asked Briancourt.

"'I was just going to put you the same question,' retorted the pianist.

"'My vision was something like Odillot's, though not exactly the same.'

"'Then it must have been *le revers de la medaille*—the back side,' quoth the lawyer, laughing; 'that is, two snow-clad lovely hillocks and deep in the valley below, a well, a tiny hole with a dark margin, or rather a brown halo around it.'

"'Well, let us have your vision now,' insisted Briancourt.

"'My visions are so vague and indistinct, they fade away so quickly, that I can hardly

remember them,' he answered, evasively.

"'But they are beautiful, are they not?'

"'And horrible withal,' quoth he.

"'Like the god-like corpse of Antinöus, seen by the silvery light of the opaline moon, floating on the lurid waters of the Nile,' I said.

"All the young men looked astonished at me. Briancourt laughed in a jarring way.

"'You are a poet or a painter,' said Teleny, gazing at me with half-shut eyes. Then, after a pause: 'Anyhow you are right to quiz me, but you must not mind my visionary speeches, for there is always so much of the madman in the composition of every artist.' Then, darting a dim ray from his sad eyes deep into mine, 'When you are better acquainted with me, you will know that there is so much more of the madman than of the artist in me.'

"Thereupon he took out a strongly-scented fine lawn handkerchief, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead.

"'And now,' added he, 'I must not keep you here a minute longer with my idle talk, otherwise the lady patronesses will be angry,

and I really cannot afford to displease the ladies;' and with a stealthy glance at Briancourt, 'Can I?' he added.

"'No, that would be a crime against the fair sex,' replied one.

"'Moreover, the other musicians would say I did it out of spite; for no one is gifted with such strong feelings of jealousy as amateurs, be they actors, singers, or instrumentalists, so *au revoir*.'

"Then, with a deeper bow than he had vouchsafed to the public, he was about to leave the room, when he stopped again: 'But you, M. Des Grieux, you said you were not going to stay, may I request the pleasure of your company?'

"'Most willingly,' said I, eagerly.

"Briancourt again smiled ironically — why, I could not understand. Then he hummed a snatch of "Madame Angot," which operetta was then in fashion, the only words which caught my ears being—

"'Il est, dit-on, le favori,'

and these were marked purposely.

"Teleny, who had heard them as well as I had, shrugged his shoulders, and muttered something between his teeth.

"'A carriage is waiting for me at the back door,' said he, slipping his arm under mine. 'Still, if you prefer walking——'

"'Very much so, for it has been so stiflingly hot in the theatre.'

"'Yes, very hot,' added he, repeating my words, and evidently thinking of something else. Then all at once, as if struck by a sudden thought, 'Are you superstitious?' said he.

"'Superstitious?' I was rather struck by the quaintness of his question. 'Well—yes, rather, I believe.'

"'I am very much so. I suppose it is my nature, for you see the Gipsy element is strong in me. They say that educated people are not superstitious. Well, first I have had a wretched education; and then I think that if we really knew the mysteries of nature, we could probably explain all those strange coincidences that are ever happening.' Then, stopping abruptly, 'Do you believe in the transmission of thought, of

feelings, of sensations?'

"'Well, I really do not know—I——'

"'You must believe,' added he, authoritatively. 'You see we have had the same vision at once. The first thing you saw was the Alhambra, blazing in the fiery light of the sun, was it not?'

"'It was,' said I, astonished.

"'And you thought you would like to feel that powerful withering love that shatters both the body and the soul? You do not answer. Then afterwards came Egypt, Antinöus and Adrian. You were the Emperor, I was the slave.'

"Then, musingly, he added, almost to himself: 'Who knows, perhaps I shall die for you one day!' And his features assumed that sweet resigned look which is seen on the demi-god's statues.

"I looked at him bewildered.

"'Oh! you think I am mad, but I am not, I am only stating facts. You did not feel that you were Adrian, simply because you are not accustomed to such visions; doubtless all this will be clearer to you some day; as for me, there is,

you must know, Asiatic blood in my veins, and——'

"But he did not finish his phrase, and we walked on for a while in silence, then:

"'Did you not see me turn round during the gavotte, and look for you? I began to feel you just then, but I could not find you out; you remember, don't you?'

"'Yes, I did see you look towards my side, and——'

"'And you were jealous!'

"'Yes,' said I, almost inaudibly.

"He pressed my arms strongly against his body for all answer, then after a pause, he added hurriedly, and in a whisper:

"'You must know that I do not care for a single girl in this world, I never did. I could never love a woman.'

"My heart was beating strongly, I felt a choking feeling as if something was griping my throat.

"'Why should he be telling me this?' said I to myself.

"'Did you not smell a scent just then?'

"'A scent,—when?'

"'When I was playing the gavotte; you have forgotten perhaps."

"'Let me see, you are right, what scent was it?'

"'*Lavande ambrée.*'

"'Exactly.'

"'Which you do not care for, and which I dislike; tell me, which is your favourite scent?'

"'*Heliotrope blanc.*'

"Without giving me an answer, he pulled out his handkerchief and gave it to me to smell.

"'All our tastes are exactly the same, are they not?' And saying this, he looked at me with such a passionate and voluptuous longing, that the carnal hunger depicted in his eyes made me feel faint.

"'You see, I always wear a bunch of white heliotrope; let me give this to you, that its smell may remind you of me to-night, and perhaps make you dream of me.'

"And taking the flowers from his button-hole, he put them into mine with one hand, whilst he slipped his left arm round my waist and clasped

me tightly, pressing me against his whole body for a few seconds. That short space of time seemed to me an eternity.

"I could feel his hot and panting breath against my lips. Below, our knees touched, and I felt something hard press and move against my thigh.

"My emotion just then was such that I could hardly stand; for a moment I thought he would kiss me—nay, the crisp hair of his moustache was slightly tickling my lips, producing a most delightful sensation. However, he only looked deep into my eyes with a demoniac fascination.

"I felt the fire of his glances sink deep into my breast, and far below. My blood began to boil and bubble like a burning fluid, so that I felt my——, (what the Italians call a 'birdie,' and what they have portrayed as a winged cherub) struggle within its prison, lift up its head, open its tiny lips, and again spout one or two drops of that creamy, life-giving fluid.

"But those few tears—far from being a soothing balm—seemed to be drops of caustic,

burning me, and producing a strong, unbearable irritation.

I was tortured. My mind was a hell. My body was on fire.

"'Is he suffering as much as I am?' said I to myself.

"Just then he unclasped his arm from round my waist, and it fell lifeless of its own weight like that of a man asleep.

"He stepped back, and shuddered as if he had received a strong electric shock. He seemed faint for a moment, then wiped his damp forehead, and sighed loudly. All the colour had fled from his face, and he became deathly pale.

"'Do you think me mad?' said he. Then, without waiting for a reply: 'but who is sane and who is mad? Who is virtuous and who is vicious in this world of ours? Do you know? I don't.'

"The thought of my father came to my mind, and I asked myself, shuddering, whether my senses, too, were leaving me.

"There was a pause. Neither of us spoke for some time. He had entwined his fingers

within mine, and we walked on for a while in silence.

"All the blood vessels of my member were still strongly extended and the nerves stiff, the spermatic ducts full to overflowing; therefore, the erection continuing, I felt a dull pain spread over and near all the organs of generation, whilst the remainder of my body was in a state of prostration, and still—notwithstanding the pain and languor—it was a most pleasurable feeling to walk on quietly with our hands clasped, his head almost leaning on my shoulder.

"'When did you first feel my eyes on yours?' asked he in a low hushed tone, after some time.

"'When you came out for the second time.'

"'Exactly; then our glances met, and then there was a current between us, like a spark of electricity running along a wire, was it not?'

"'Yes, an uninterrupted current.'

"'But you really felt me just before I went out, is it not true?'

"For all answer I pressed his fingers tightly.

"'I never knew a man whose feelings coin-

cided so well with mine. Tell me, do you think any woman could feel so intensely?'

"My head sank down, I could not give him any answer.

"'We shall be friends?' said he, taking hold of both my hands.

"'Yes,' said I shyly.

"'Yes, but great friends, *bosom* friends, as the English say.'

"'Yes.'

"Thereupon he clasped me again to his breast and muttered in my ear some words of an unknown tongue, so low and musical, that they almost seemed like a spell.

"'Do you know what that means?' quoth he.

"'No.'

"'Oh, friend! my heart doth yearn for thee."

CHAPTER II

"THAT whole night I was excited and feverish, I tossed about on my bed unable to find any rest; and when at last I fell asleep it was only to be haunted by the most lascivious and erotic dreams.

"Once, for instance, it seemed to me that Teleny was not a man, but a woman; moreover, he was my own sister.

"'But you never had a sister, had you?'

"'No, of course not. Some day I shall tell you the reason why I am an only son. In this hallucination, I—like Amon the son of David,—loved my sister, and I was so vexed that I fell sick, for I thought it not only hard—but a most heinous act—to do something to her. I therefore

struggled hard to crush my love; but one night, unable to overcome the maddening passion that was consuming me, I yielded to it and stealthily crept into her room.

"By the rosy light of her night-lamp, I saw her lying, or rather, stretched across her bed. I shivered with lust at the sight of that pearly-white flesh. I should have liked to have been a beast of prey to devour it.

"Her loose and dishevelled golden hair was scattered in locks all over the pillow. Her lawn chemise scarcely veiled part of her nakedness, whilst it enhanced the beauty of what was left bare. The ribbons with which this garment had been tied on her shoulder had come undone, and thus exhibited her right breast to my hungry, greedy glances. It stood up firm and plump, for she was a very young virgin, and its dainty shape was no bigger than a large-sized champagne bowl, and as Symonds says:

"Her breasts shone like pinks that lilies wreath."

As her right arm was uplifted and bent under her head, I could see a bushy mass of dark auburn

hair under her arm-pit.

She was lying in the enticing position of Danaë at the moment when she was deflowered by Jupiter in the shape of a golden shower; that is, her knees were drawn up, and her thighs widely apart. Although she was fast asleep, and her chest barely heaved as she drew her breath, still her flesh seemed to creep as if under the spell of an eager amorous desire, and her half-opened lips pouted forth ready to be kissed.

"I quietly drew near the bed on the tip of my toes, just like a cat about to spring on a mouse, and then slowly crawled between her legs. My heart was beating fast, I was eager to gaze upon the sight I so longed to see. As I approached on all fours, head foremost, a strong smell of white heliotrope mounted up to my head, intoxicating me.

"Trembling with excitement, opening my eyes wide and straining my sight, my glances dived between her thighs. At first nothing could be seen but a mass of crisp auburn hair, all curling in tiny ringlets, and growing there as if to hide the entrance of that well of pleasure. First I

lightly lifted up her chemise, then I gently brushed the hair aside, and parted the two lovely lips which opened by themselves at the touch of my fingers as if to afford me entrance.

"This done, I fed my greedy eyes upon that dainty pink flesh that looked like the ripe and luscious pulp of some savoury fruit appetizing to behold, and within those cherry lips there nestled a tiny bud—a living flower of flesh and blood.

"I had evidently tickled it with the tip of my finger, for, as I looked upon it, it shivered as if endowed with a life of its own, and it protruded itself out towards me. At its beck I longed to taste it, to fondle it, and therefore, unable to resist, I bent down and pressed my tongue upon it, over it, within it, seeking every nook and corner around it, darting into every chink and cranny, whilst she, evidently enjoying the little game, helped me in my work, shaking her buttocks with a lusty delight in such a way that after a few minutes the tiny flower began to expand its petals and shed forth its ambrosial dew, not a drop of which did my tongue allow to escape.

"In the meanwhile she panted and screamed,

and seemed to swoon away with joy. Excited as I was, I hardly allowed her time enough to come to herself; but, rising over her, and taking in my hand my phallus—which, as you know, is a good-sized one—I introduced the glans into the entrance.

"The slit was a very tiny one, but the lips were moist, and I pressed down with all my strength. Little by little I felt it bursting all the side tissues, and tearing away and battering down every obstacle in its way. She bravely helped me on with my work of destruction, opening her thighs to her utmost, pushing herself against me, and struggling to get the whole column within her, screaming at the same time both with pleasure and with pain. I plunged and replunged with eager rapture, shoving and driving it further in at every stroke, till, having at last burst every barrier, I felt it touch the innermost recesses of the womb, where the tip of my rod seemed to be tickled and sucked by innumerable tiny lips.

"What an overpowering pleasure I felt. I seemed to float between heaven and earth,

I groaned, I shrieked with delight.

"Tightly wedged as my prickle was, I tried to pull it out slowly, when all at once I heard a noise in the room. I saw a stronger light than that of the night lamp, then a hand was placed on my back. I heard my name being uttered aloud.

"Imagine my shame, my confusion, my horror. It was my mother, and I was over my sister.

"'Camille, what is the matter, are you ill?' said she.

"I awoke, shivering with fear and consternation, asking myself where I was, if I had defiled my sister, or what had happened?

"Alas! it was but too true, the last drops of that shattering fluid were still oozing from me. My mother was standing by my bedside, in flesh and blood. Mine, then, had not been a dream!

"But, where was my sister, or the girl I had enjoyed? Moreover, was this stiff rod I was holding in my hand, mine or Teleny's?

"Surely I was alone and in my bed. Then what did my mother want with me? And how

did that loathsome poodle, standing there on its hind legs leering at me, get into my room?

"I finally came to my senses, and saw that the poodle was only my shirt, which I had thrown on a chair, before going to bed. Being now thoroughly awake, my mother made me understand that hearing me groan and shriek, she had come in to see if I were unwell. Of course I hastened to assure her that I was in perfect health, and had only been the prey of a frightful nightmare. She thereupon put her fresh hand upon my hot forehead. The soothing touch of her soft hand cooled the fire burning within my brain, and allayed the fever raging in my blood.

"When I was quietened, she made me drink a bumper of sugared water flavoured with essence of orange-flowers, and then left me. I once more dropped off to sleep. I awoke, however, several times, and always to see the pianist before me.

"On the morrow likewise, when I came to myself, his name was ringing in my ears, my lips were muttering it, and my first thoughts reverted to him. I saw him—in my mind's eye—standing

there on the stage, bowing before the public, his burning glances rivetted on mine.

"I lay for some time in my bed, drowsily contemplating that sweet vision, so vague and indefinite, trying to recall his features which had got mixed up with those of the several statues of Antinöus which I had seen.

"Analyzing my feelings, I was now conscious that a new sensation had come over me — a vague feeling of uneasiness and unrest. There was an emptiness in me, still I could not understand if the void was in my heart or in my head. I had lost nothing and yet I felt lonely, forlorn, nay almost bereaved. I tried to fathom my morbid state, and all I could find out was that my feelings were akin to those of being home-sick or mother-sick, with this simple difference, that the exile knows what his cravings are, but I did not. It was something indefinite like the *Sehnsucht* of which the Germans speak so much, and which they really feel so little.

"The image of Teleny haunted me, the name of Réné was ever on my lips. I kept repeating it over and over for dozens of times. What a

sweet name it was! At its sound my heart was beating faster. My blood seemed to have become warmer and thicker. I got up slowly. I loitered over my dress. I stared at myself within the looking-glass, and I saw Teleny in it instead of myself; and behind him arose our blended shadows, as I had seen them on the pavement the evening before.

"Presently the servant tapped at the door; this recalled me to self-consciousness. I saw myself in the glass, and found myself hideous, and for the first time in my life I wished myself good-looking—nay, entrancingly handsome.

"The servant who had knocked at the door informed me that my mother was in the breakfast-room, and had sent to see if I were unwell. The name of my mother recalled my dream to my mind, and for the first time I almost preferred not meeting her."

"Still, you were then on good terms with your mother, were you not?"

"Certainly. Whatever faults she might have had, no one could have been more affectionate; and though she was said to be somewhat light

and fond of pleasure, she had never neglected me."

"She struck me, indeed, as a talented person, when I knew her."

"Quite so; in other circumstances she might have proved even a superior woman. Very orderly and practical in all her household arrangements, she always found plenty of time for everything. If her life was not according to what we generally call 'the principles of morality,' or rather, Christian hypocrisy, the fault was my father's, not hers, as I shall perhaps tell you some other time.

"As I entered the breakfast-room, my mother was struck with the change in my appearance, and she asked me if I was feeling unwell.

"'I must have a little fever,' I replied; 'besides, the weather is so sultry and oppressive.'

"'Oppressive?' quoth she, smiling.

"'Is it not?'

"'No; on the contrary, it is quite bracing. See, the barometer has risen considerably.'

"'Well, then, it must have been your concert that upset my nerves.'

"'My concert!' said my mother, smiling, and handing me some coffee.

"It was useless for me to try to taste it, the very sight of it turned me sick.

"My mother looked at me rather anxiously.

"'It is nothing, only for some time back I have been getting sick of coffee.'

"'Sick of coffee? you never said so before.'

"'Did I not?' said I, absently.

"'Will you have some chocolate, or some tea?'

"'Can I not fast for once?'

"'Yes, if you are ill—or if you have some great sin to atone for.'

"I looked at her and shuddered. Could she be reading my thoughts better than myself?

"'A sin?' quoth I, with an astonished look.

"'Well, you know even the righteous——'

"'And what then?' said I, interrupting her snappishly; but to make up for my supercilious way of speaking, I added in gentler tones:

"'I do not feel hungry; still, to please you, I'll have a glass of champagne and a biscuit.'

"'Champagne, did you say?'

"'Yes.'

"'So early in the morning, and on an empty stomach.'

"'Well, then I'll have nothing at all,' I answered pettishly. 'I see you are afraid I'm going to turn drunkard.'

"My mother said nothing, she only looked at me wistfully for a few minutes, an expression of deep sorrow was seen in her face, then—without adding another word—she rang the bell and ordered the wine to be brought."

"But what made her so sad?"

"Later on, I understood that she was frightened that I was already getting to be like my father."

"And your father—?"

"I'll tell you his story another time.

"After I had gulped down a glass or two of champagne, I felt revived by the exhilarating wine: our conversation then turned on the concert, and although I longed to ask my mother if she knew anything about Teleny, still I durst not utter the name which was foremost on my lips, nay I had even to restrain myself not to repeat it aloud every now and then.

"At last my mother spoke of him herself, commending first his playing and then his beauty.

"'What, do you find him good-looking?' I asked abruptly.

"'I should think so,' replied she, arching her eyebrows in an astonished way, 'is there anybody who does not? Every woman finds him an Adonis; but then you men differ so much from us in your admiration for your own sex, that you sometimes find insipid those whom we are taken up with. Anyhow, he is sure to succeed as an artist, as all the ladies will be falling in love with him.'

"I tried not to wince upon hearing these last words, but do what I could, it was impossible to keep my features quite motionless.

"My mother seeing me frown, added, smilingly:

"'What, Camille, are you going to become as vain as some acknowledged belle, who cannot hear anybody made much of without feeling that any praise given to another woman is so much subtracted from what is due to her?'

"'All women are free to fall in love with him

if they choose,' I answered snappishly, 'you know quite well that I never piqued myself either on my good looks or upon my conquests.'

"'No, it is true, still to-day you are like the dog in the manger, for what is it to you whether the women are taken up with him or not, especially if it is such a help to him in his career?'

"'But cannot an artist rise to eminence by his talent alone?'

"'Sometimes,' added she with an incredulous smile, 'though seldom, and only with that superhuman perseverance which gifted persons often lack, and Teleny—'

"My mother did not finish her phrase in words, but the expression of her face, and above all of the corners of her mouth, revealed her thoughts.

"'And you think that this young man is such a degraded being as to allow himself to be kept by a woman, like a—'

"'Well, it is not exactly being kept — at least, he would not consider it in that light. He might, moreover, allow himself to be helped in a thousand ways otherwise than by money, but his piano would be his *gagne-pain*.'

"'Just like the stage is for most ballet-girls; then I should not like to be an artist.'

"'Oh! they are not the only men who owe their success to a mistress, or to a wife. Read "Bel Ami," and you will see that many a successful man, and even more than one celebrated personage, owes his greatness to——'

"'A woman?'

"'Exactly; it is always: *Cherchez la femme.*'

"'Then this is a disgusting world.'

"'Having to live in it, we must make the best of it we can, and not take matters quite so tragically as you do.'

"'Anyhow, he plays well. In fact, I never heard anyone play like he did last night.'

"'Yes, I grant that last night he did play brilliantly, or, rather, sensationally; but it also must be admitted that you were in a rather morbid state of health and mind, so that music must have had an uncommon effect upon your nerves.'

"'Oh! you think there was an evil spirit within me troubling me, and that a cunning player — as the Bible has it — was alone able to

quiet my nerves.'

"My mother smiled.

"'Well, now-a-days, we are all of us more or less like Saul; that is to say, we are all occasionally troubled with an evil spirit.'

"Thereupon her brow grew clouded, and she interrupted herself, for evidently the remembrance of my late father came to her mind; then she added, musingly—

"'And Saul was really to be pitied.'

"I did not give her an answer. I was only thinking why David had found favour in Saul's sight. Was it because 'he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to'? Was it also for this reason that, as soon as Jonathan had seen him, 'the soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul'?

"Was Teleny's soul knit with my own? Was I to love and hate him, as Saul loved and hated David? Anyhow, I despised myself and my folly. I felt a grudge against the musician who had bewitched me; above all, I loathed the whole womankind, the curse of the world.

"All at once my mother drew me from my gloomy thoughts.

"'You are not going to the office to-day, if you do not feel well,' said she, after a while."

"What! you were in trade then, were you?"

"Yes, my father had left me a very profitable business, and a most trustworthy and excellent manager who for years had been the soul of the house. I was then twenty-two, and my part in the concern was to pocket the lion's share of the profits. Still, I must say I not only had never been lazy, but, moreover, was rather serious for a young man of my age, and, above all, in my circumstances. I had but one hobby—a most harmless one. I was fond of old majolica, old fans, and old lace, of which I have now a rather fine collection."

"The finest one I ever saw."

"Well, I went to the office as usual, but do what I could it was quite impossible for me to settle down to any kind of work.

"Teleny's vision was mixing itself up with whatever I happened to be doing, muddling every-

thing up. Moreover, my mother's words were ever present to my mind. Every woman was in love with him, and their love was necessary to him. I thereupon tried hard to banish him from my thoughts. 'Where there is a will there is a way,' said I to myself, 'so I shall soon get rid of this foolish, maudlin infatuation.'"

"But you did not succeed, did you?"

"No! the more I tried not to think of him, the more I did think. Have you in fact ever heard some snatches of a half-remembered tune ringing in your ears? Go where you will, listen to whatever you like, that tune is ever tantalizing you You can no more recollect the whole of it than you can get rid of it. If you go to bed it keeps you from falling asleep; you slumber and you hear it in your dreams; you wake, and it is the very first thing you hear. So it was with Teleny; he actually haunted me, his voice—so sweet and low—was ever repeating in those unknown accents: Oh! friend, my heart doth yearn for thee.

"And now his lovely image never left my eyes, the touch of his soft hand was still on mine, I even

felt his scented breath upon my lips; thus in that eager longing, every now and then I stretched my arms to seize and to strain him to my breast, and the hallucination was so strong in me that soon I fancied I could feel his body on my own.

"A strong erection thereupon took place, which stiffened every nerve and almost made me mad; but though I suffered, still the pain I felt was sweet."

"Excuse my interrupting you, but had you never been in love before you had met Teleny?"

"Never."

"Strange."

"Why so?"

"At two-and-twenty?"

"Well, you see I was predisposed to love men and not women, and without knowing it I had always struggled against the inclinations of my nature. It is true that several times I thought I had already been in love, still it was only upon knowing Teleny that I understood what real love was. Like all boys I had believed myself bound to feel spoony, and I had done my best to persuade myself that I was deeply smitten.

Having once casually come across a youg girl with laughing eyes, I had concluded that she was just what an ideal Dulcinea ought to be; I therefore followed her about, every time I met her, and sometimes even tried to think of her at odd moments, when I had nothing to do."

"And how did the affair end?"

"In a most ridiculous way. The thing happened I think, about a year or two before I left the *Lycée;* yes, I remember, it was during the mid-summer holidays, and the very first time I had ever travelled alone.

"Being of a rather shy disposition, I was somewhat flurried and nervous at having to elbow my way through the crowd, to hurry and push about to get my ticket, to take care so as not to get into a train going in the wrong direction.

"The upshot of all this was that, before being thoroughly aware of it, I found myself seated in front of the girl I believed myself in love with, and moreover in a carriage reserved for the fair sex.

"Unfortunately, in the same carriage there was a creature who surely could not go under

that denomination; for, although I cannot swear as to her sex, I can take my oath she was not fair. In fact, as far as I can remember her, she was a real specimen of the wandering English old maid, clad in a waterproof coat something like an ulster. One of those heterogenous creatures continually met with on the Continent, and I think everywhere else except in England; for I have come to the conclusion that Great Britain manufactures them especially for exportation. Anyhow, I had hardly taken my place, when—

"'Monseer,' says she, in a snarling, barking way, 'cette compartement est reserved for dames soules.'

"I suppose she meant '*seules*,' but at that moment, confused as I was, I took her at her word.

"'Dames soules!'—'drunken ladies!' said I, terrified, looking around at all the ladies.

"My neighbours began to titter.

"'Madame says that this carriage is reserved for ladies,' added the mother of my girl, 'of course a young man is not—well, not expected to smoke here, but—'

"'Oh! if that is the only objection I certainly shall not allow myself to smoke.'

"'No, no!' said the old maid evidently much shocked, 'vous exit, go out, ou moi crier!' 'Garde,' she shouted out of the window, 'faites go out cette monseer!'

"The guard appeared at the door, and not only ordered, but ignominously turned me out of that carriage, just as if I had been a second Col. Baker.

"I was so ashamed of myself, so mortified, that my stomach — which had always been delicate—was actually quite upset by the shock I had received, therefore no sooner had the train started than I began to be, first uncomfortable, then to feel a rumbling pain, and at last a pressing want, so much so that I could hardly sit down on my seat, squeeze as much as I could, and I dared not move for fear of the consequences.

"After some time the train stopped for a few minutes, no guard came to open the carriage door, I managed to get up, no guard was to be seen, no place where I could ease myself. I was debating what to do when the train started off.

"The only occupant of the carriage was an old gentleman, who—having told me to make myself comfortable, or rather to put myself at my ease—went off to sleep and snored like a top; I might as well have been alone.

"I formed several plans for unburdening my stomach, which was growing more unruly every moment, but only one or two seemed to answer; and yet I could not put them into execution, for my lady-love only a few carriages off was every now and then looking out of the window, so it would never have done if, instead of my face, she all at once saw—my full moon. I could not for the same reason use my hat as what the Italians call—a *comodina*, especially as the wind was blowing strongly towards her.

"The train stopped again, but only for three minutes. What could one do in three minutes, especially with a stomach-ache like mine? Another stoppage; two minutes. By dint of squeezing I now felt that I could wait a little longer. The train moved and then once more came to a standstill. Six minutes. Now was my chance, or never. I jumped out.

"It was a kind of country station, apparently a junction, and everybody was getting out.

"The guard bawled out: 'Les voyageurs pour —— en voiture.'

"Where is the lavatory?' I enquired of him.

"He wished to shove me into the train. I broke loose, and asked the same question of another official.

"'There,' said he, pointing to the water-closet, 'but be quick.'

"I ran towards it, I rushed into it without looking where I went. I violently pushed open the door.

"I heard first a groan of ease and of comfort, followed by a splash and a waterfall, then a screech, and I saw my English damsel, not sitting, but perched upon the closet seat.

"The engine whistled, the bell rang, the guard blew his horn, the train was moving.

"I ran back as fast as I could, regardless of consequences, holding my falling trousers in my hands, and followed by the wrathful screeching English old maid, very much like a wee chicken running away from an old hen."

"And——"

"Everyone was at the carriage windows laughing at my misadventure.

"A few days afterwards I was with my parents at the Pension Bellevue, at the baths of N——, when, on going down to the table d'hôte dinner, I was surprised to find the young lady in question seated with her mother, almost opposite to the place usually occupied by my parents. Upon seeing her, I, of course, blushed scarlet, I sat down, and she and the elderly lady exchanged glances and smiled. I wriggled on my chair in a most uncomfortable way, and I dropped the spoon which I had taken up.

"'What is the matter with you, Camille?' asked my mother, seeing me grow red and pale.

"'Oh, nothing! Only I—I—that is to say, my—my stomach is rather out of order,' said I, in a whisper, finding no better excuse on the spur of the moment.

"'Your stomach again?' said my mother, in an under-tone.

"'What, Camille! have you the belly-ache?' said my father, in his off-hand way, and with his

stentorian voice.

"I was so ashamed of myself and so upset, that, hungry as I was, my stomach began to make the most fearful rumbling noises.

"Everyone at table, I think, was giggling, when all at once I heard a well-known snarling, barking, shrill voice say—

"'Gaason, demandez that monseer not to parler cochonneries at table.'

"I cast a glance towards the side whence the voice proceeded, and, sure enough, that horrible, wandering English old maid was there.

"I felt as if I could have sunk under the table for shame, seeing everyone stare at me. Anyhow, I had to bear it; and at last the lengthy meal came to an end. I went up to my room, and, for that day, I saw nothing more of my acquaintances.

"On the morrow I met the young girl out with her mother. When she saw me, her laughing eyes had a merrier twinkle than ever. I durst not look at her, much less follow her about as I was wont to do.

"There were several other girls at the *pension*,

and she soon got to be on friendly terms with them, for she was in fact an universal favourite. I, on the contrary, kept aloof from everyone, feeling sure that my mishap was not only known but had become a general topic of conversation.

"One afternoon, a few days afterwards, I was in the vast garden of the *pension*, hidden behind some ilex shrubs, brooding over my ill luck, when all at once I saw Rita—for her name was Marguerite — walking in a neighbouring alley, together with several other girls.

"I had no sooner perceived her when she told her friends to go on, whilst she began to lag behind.

"She stopped, turned her back upon her companions, lifted up her dress far above her knee, and displayed a very pretty though rather thin leg incased in a close-fitting, black silk stocking. The string which attached the stocking to her unmentionables had got undone, and she began to tie it.

"By bending low I might quietly have peeped between her legs, and seen what the slit of her

pantaloons afforded to the view; but it never came into my head to do so. The fact is, I had really never cared for her or for any other woman. I only thought now is my time to find her alone and to bow to her, without having all the other girls to giggle at me. So I quietly got out of my hiding-place, and advanced towards the next alley.

"As I turned the corner, what a sight did I see! There was the object of my sentimental admiration, squatted on the ground, her legs widely opened apart, her skirts all carefully tucked up."

"So at last you saw——"

"A faint glimpse of pinkish flesh, and a stream of yellow liquid pouring down and flowing on the gravel, bubbling with much froth, accompanied by the rushing sound of many waters, whilst, as if to greet my appearance, a rumbling noise like that of an unctuous cannonade came from behind."

"And what did you do?"

"Don't you know we always do the things which ought not to be done, and leave undone the things which ought to be done, as I think the

Prayer Book says? So, instead of slipping away unperceived, and hiding behind a bush to try and have a glimpse at the mouth from which the rill escaped, I foolishly remained stock still—speechless, dumbfoundered. It was only when she lifted up her eyes that I recovered the use of my tongue.

"'*Oh, mademoiselle! pardon!*' said I; 'but really I did not know that you were here—that is to say that——'

"'*Sot—stupide—imbecile—bête—animal!*" quoth she, with quite a French volubility, rising and getting as red as a peony. Then she turned her back upon me, but only to face the wandering old maid, who appeared at the other end of the avenue, and who greeted her with a prolonged 'Oh!' that sounded like the blast of a fog-trumpet."

"And——"

"And the only love I ever had for a woman thus came to an end."

CHAPTER III

"THEN you had never loved before you made Teleny's acquaintance?"

"Never; that is the reason why—for some time—I did not quite understand what I felt. Thinking it over, however, I afterwards came to the conclusion that I had felt the first faint stimulus of love already long before, but as it had always been with my own sex, I was unconscious that this was love."

"Was it for some boy of your age?"

"No, always for grown up men, for strong muscular specimens of manhood. I had from childhood a hankering for males of the prize-fighter's type, with huge limbs, rippling muscles, mighty thews; for brutal strength in fact.

"My first infatuation was for a young Hercules of a butcher, who came a-courting our maid—a pretty girl, as far as I can remember. He was a stout athletic fellow with sinewy arms, who looked as if he could have felled an ox with a blow of his fist.

"I often used to sit and watch him unawares, noting every expression of his face whilst he was making love, almost feeling the lust he felt himself.

"How I did wish he would speak to me instead of joking with my stupid maid. I felt jealous of her although I liked her very much. Sometimes he used to take me up and fondle me, but that was very seldom; one day, however, when—apparently excited—he had tried hard to kiss her, and had not succeeded, he took me up and greedily pressed his lips against mine, kissing me as if he were parched with thirst.

"Although I was but a very little child, still I think this act must have brought about an erection, for I remember every pulse of mine was fluttering. I still remember the pleasure I felt when—like a cat—I could rub myself against his

legs, nestle between his thighs, sniff him like a dog, or pat and paddle him; but, alas! he seldom heeded me.

"My greatest delight in my boyhood was to see men bathing. I could hardly keep myself from rushing up to them; I should have liked to handle and kiss them all over. I was quite beyond myself when I saw one of them naked.

"A phallus acted upon me, as—I suppose—it does upon a very hot woman; my mouth actually watered at its sight, especially if it was a good-sized, full-blooded one, with an unhooded thick and fleshy glans.

"Withal, I never understood that I loved men and not women. What I felt was that convulsion of the brain that kindles the eyes with a fire full of madness, an eager bestial delight, a fierce sensual desire. Love I thought was a quiet chaffy drawing-room flirtation, something soft, maudlin and æsthetic, quite different from that passion full of rage and hatred which was burning within me. In a word, much more of a sedative than an aphrodisiac.'

"Then I suppose you had never had a

woman ? "

" Oh, yes ! several ; though by chance, rather than by choice. Nevertheless, for a Frenchman of my age, I had begun life rather late. My mother—although considered a very light person, much given to pleasnre—had taken more care of my bringing up than many serious, prosy, fussy women would have done ; for she always had a great deal of tact and observation. Therefore I had never been put as a boarder into any school, for she knew that such places of education are—as a rule—only hot-beds of vice. Who is the *interne* of either sex who has not begun life by tribadism, onanism, or sodomy.

" My mother, besides, was frightened lest I might have inherited my father's sensual disposition, and she, therefore, did her best to withhold me from all early temptations, and in fact she really succeeded in keeping me out of mischief.

" I was therefore at fifteen and sixteen far more innocent than any of my school fellows, yet I managed to hide my utter ignorance by pretending to be more profligate and *blasé*.

"Whenever they spoke of women—and they did so every day—I smiled knowingly, so that they soon came to the conclusion that 'still waters run deep.'"

"And you knew absolutely nothing?"

"I only knew that there was something about putting it in and pulling it out.

"At fifteen, I was one day in our garden, strolling listlessly about in a little meadow by the roadside at the back of the house.

"I was walking on the mossy grass, as soft as a velvety carpet, so that my footsteps were not heard. All at once I stopped by an old disused kennel, which often served me as a seat.

"When I got there I heard a voice within it. I bent down my ear, and listened without moving. Thereupon I heard a young girl's voice say,—

"'Put it in and then pull it out; then put it in again, and pull it out; and so on for some time.'

"'But I can't put it in,' was the reply.

"'Now,' said the first. 'I open my hole widely with both my hands. Push it in; stick it in—more—much more—as much as you can.'

"'Well—but take away your fingers.'

"'There—it's all out again; try and push it in.'

"'But I can't. Your hole is shut,' mutters the boy's voice.

"'Press down.'

"'But why have I to put it in?'

"'Well, you see my sister has a soldier for her good friend; and they always do like that when they are alone together. Haven't you seen the cocks jump on the hens, and peck at them? Well, they also do like that, only my sister and the soldier kiss and kiss; so that it takes them a long time to do it.'

"'And he always puts it in and pulls it out?'

"'Of course; only just at the end my sister always tells him to mind and not finish it in her, so that he may not make her a child. So now, if you wish to be my good friend—as you say you want—push it in—with your fingers, if you can't otherwise; but pay attention and don't finish in me, because you may make me a child.'

"Thereupon I peeped in, and I saw our gardener's youngest daughter — a girl of ten or twelve—stretched on her back, whilst a little vagrant of about seven was sprawling over her, trying his best to put her instructions into practice.

"That was my first lesson, and I had thereby a faint inkling of what men and women do when they are lovers."

"And you were not curious to know more about the matter?"

"Oh, yes! Many a time I should have yielded to the temptation, and have accompanied my friends in their visit to some wenches—whose charms they always extolled in a peculiar low, nasal, goatish voice, and with an unexplainable shivering of the whole body—had I not been kept back by the fear of being laughed at by them and by the girls themselves; for I should still have been as inexperienced in knowing what to do with a woman as Daphnis himself, before Lycenion had slipped under him, and thus initiated him into the mysteries of love; and yet hardly more initiation is required in the matter

than for the new-born babe to take to the breast."

"But when did your first visit to a brothel take place?"

"Upon leaving college, when the mystic laurel and bays had wreathed our brows. According to tradition we were to partake of a farewell supper and make jolly together, before separating in our divers paths in life."

"Yes, I remember those merry suppers of the Quartier Latin."

"When the supper was over—"

"And everyone more or less tipsy—"

"Precisely; it was agreed that we should pass the evening in visiting some of the houses of nightly entertainment. Although I was myself rather merry, and usually up to any kind of joke, still I felt somewhat shy, and would willingly have given my friends the slip, rather than expose myself to their ridicule and to all the horrors of syphilis; but do what I could it was impossible to get rid of them.

"They called me a sneak, they imagined that I wanted to spend the evening with some

mistress, a pretty *grisette*, or a fashionable *cocotte*, for the term *horizontale* had not yet come into fashion. Another hinted that I was tied to my mammy's apron-strings, that my dad had not allowed me to take the latch-key. A third said that I wanted to go and '*menarmi la villa*' as Aretino crudely expresses it.

"Seeing that it was impossible to escape, I consented with a good grace to accompany them.

"A certain Biou, young in years, but old in craft, who—like an elderly tom-cat—had, at sixteen, already lost an eye in a battle of love, (having got some syphilitic virus into it), proposed to shew us life in the unknown parts of the real Quartier Latin.

"'First,' said he, 'I'll take you to a place where we'll spend little and have some jolly fun; it 'll just put us 'en train' and from there we'll go to another house, to fire off our pistols, or I should rather say our revolvers, for mine is a seven shot barrel.'

"His single eye twinkled with delight, and his trousers were stirred from within as he said this. We all agreed to his proposal, I especially

feeling quite glad that I might at first remain only a spectator. I wondered, however, what the sight would be like.

"We had an endless drive through the narrow straggling streets, alleys, and by-ways, where painted women appeared in gorgeous dresses at the filthy windows of some wretched houses.

"As it was getting late, all the shops were now shut, except the fruiterers, who sold fried fish, mussels, and potatoes. These disgorged an offensive smell of dirt, grease, and hot oil, which mixed itself up with the stench of the gutters and that of the cesspools in the middle of the streets.

"In the darkness of the ill-lighted thoroughfares more than one *café chantant* and beer-house flared with red gas-lights, and as we passed them we felt the puffs of warm, close air reeking with alcohol, tobacco, and sour beer.

"All those streets were thronged with a motley crowd. There were tipsy men with scowling, ugly faces, slip-shod vixens, and pale, precociously withered children all tattered and torn,

singing obscene songs.

"At last we came to a kind of slum, where the carriages stopped before a low, beetling-browed house which seemed to have suffered from water on the brain when a child. It had a crazy look; and being, moreover, painted in yellowish-red, its many excoriations gave it the appearance of having some loathsome, scabby, skin disease. This place of infamous resort seemed to forewarn the visitor of the illness festering within its walls.

"We went in at a small door, up a winding, greasy, slippery staircase, lighted by an asthmatic, flickering gas-light. Although I was loth to lay my hand on the bannisters, it was almost impossible to mount those muddy stairs without doing so.

"On the first landing we were greeted by a grey-haired old hag, with a bloated yet bloodless face. I really do not know what made her so repulsive to me—perhaps it was her sore and lashless eyes, her mean expression, or her trade—but the fact is, I had never in all my life seen such a ghoul-like creature. Her mouth with its

toothless gums and its hanging lips seemed like the sucker of some polypus; it was so foul and slimy.

"She welcomed us with many low courtesies and fawning words of endearment, and ushered us into a low and tawdry room, where a flaring petroleum light shed its crude sheen all around.

"Some frowsy curtains at the windows, a few old arm-chairs, and a long, battered, and much-stained divan completed the furniture of this room, which had a mixed stench of musk and onions; but, as I was just then gifted with a rather strong imagination, I at times detected—or I thought I did—a smell of carbolic acid and of iodine; albeit the loathsome smell of musk overpowered all other odours.

"In this den, several—what shall I call them?—syrens? no, harpies! were crouched or lolled about.

"Although I tried to put on a most indifferent, *blasé* look, still my face must have expressed all the horror I felt. This is then, said I to myself, one of those delightful houses of pleasure, of which I have heard so many glowing tales?

"These painted-up Jezebels, cadaverous or bloated, are the Paphian maids, the splendid votaresses of Venus, whose magic charms make the senses thrill with delight, the houris on whose breasts you swoon away and are ravished into paradise.

"My friends seeing my utter bewilderment began to laugh at me. I thereupon sat down and tried stupidly to smile.

"Three of those creatures at once came up to me, one of them putting her arms round my neck kissed me, and wanted to dart her filthy tongue into my mouth; the others began to handle me most indecently. The more I resisted, the more bent they seemed on making a Laocoon of me."

"But why were you singled out as their victim?"

"I really do not know, but it must have been because I looked so innocently scared, or because my friends were all laughing at my horror-stricken face.

"One of those poor women—a tall dark girl, an Italian, I believe—was evidently in the very

last stage of consumption. She was in fact a mere skeleton, and still—had it not been for the mask of chalk and red with which her face was covered—traces of a former beauty might still have been discerned in her; seeing her now, anyone not inured to such sights could not but feel a sense of the deepest pity.

"The second was red-haired, gaunt, pock-marked, goggle-eyed and repulsive.

"The third: old, short, squat and obese; quite a bladder of fat. She went by the name of the *cantinière*.

"The first was dresssed in grass-green, or prassino; the red-haired strumpet wore a robe which once must have been blue; the old slut was clad in yellow.

"All these dresses, however, were stained and very much the worse for wear. Besides, some slimy viscid fluid which had left large spots everywhere, made them seem as if all the snails of Burgundy had been crawling over them.

"I managed to get rid of the two younger ones, but I was not so successful with the *cantinière*.

"Having seen that her charms, and all her little endearments, had no effect upon me, she tried to rouse my sluggish senses by more desperate means.

"As I said before, I was sitting upon the low divan; she thereupon stood in front of me and pulled her dress up to her waist, thus exhibiting all her hitherto hidden attractions. It was the first time I had seen a naked woman, and this one was positively loathsome. And yet, now that I think of it, her beauty might well be compared with that of the Shulamite, for her neck was like the tower of David, her navel resembled a round goblet, her belly a huge heap of blighted wheat. Her hair, beginning from her waist and falling down to her knees, was not exactly like a flock of goats—as the hair of Solomon's bride—but in quantity it surely was like that of a good-sized black sheep-skin.

"Her legs—similar to those described in the biblical song—were two massive columns straight up and down, without any sign of calf or ankle about them. Her whole body, in fact, was one bulky mass of quivering fat. If her smell was not

quite that of Lebanon it was surely of musk, patchouli, stale fish and perspiration; but as my nose came in closer contact with the fleece, the smell of stale fish predominated.

"She stood for a minute in front of me; then, coming nearer by a step or two, put one foot on the divan, and opening her legs as she did so, she took my head between her fat, clammy hands.

"'*Viens mon cheri, fais minette a ton petit chat.*'

"As she said this I saw the black mass of hair part itself; two huge dark lips first appeared, then opened, and within those bulgy lips—which inside had the colour and the look of stale butcher's meat—I saw something like the tip of a dog's penis when in a state of erection, protrude itself towards my lips.

"All my schoolfellows burst out laughing—why, I did not exactly understand; for I had not the slightest idea of what *minette* was, or what the old whore wanted of me; nor could I see that anything so loathsome could be turned into a joke."

"Well, and how did that jolly evening come

to an end?"

"Drinks had been ordered—beer, spirits, and some bottles of frothy stuff, yclept champagne, which surely was not the produce of the sunny vines of France, but of which the women imbibed copiously.

"After this, not wishing us to leave the house without having been entertained in some way or other, and to get a few more francs out of our pockets, they proposed to shew us some tricks that they could do amongst themselves.

"It was apparently a rare sight, and the one for which we had come to this house. My friends acquiesced unanimously. Thereupon the old bladder of fat undressed herself stark naked, and shook her buttocks in a kind of poor imitation of the Eastern Dance of the Wasp. The poor consumptive wretch followed her example, and slipped off her dress by a simple shake of her body.

"At the sight of that huge mass of flabby hog's lard flapping on either side of the rump, the thin whore lifted up her hand, and gave her friend a smart slap on the buttocks, but the hand

seemed to sink in it, as into a mass of butter.

"'Ah!' said the *cantinière;* 'this is the little game you like, is it?'

"And she answered the blow by a smarter one on her friend's backside.

"Thereupon the consumptive girl began to run round the room, and the *cantinière* toddled after her in the most provoking attitude, each trying to slap the other.

"As the old prostitute passed Biou, he gave her a loud smack with his open palm, and soon after, most of the other students followed suit, evidently much excited by this little game of flagellation, until the buttocks of the two women were of a crimson red.

"The *cantinière* having at last managed to seize her friend, she sat down, and laid her across her knees, saying, 'Now, my friend, you will get it to your heart's content.'

"And suiting the action to the words, she belaboured her soundly; that is, striking her as strongly as her chubby little hands allowed her.

"The young woman having at last succeeded in getting up, both the women thereupon began to

kiss and fondle each other. Then, with thighs against thighs and breasts against breasts, they stood a moment in that position; after which, they brushed aside the bushy hair that covered the lower part of the so-called Mount of Venus, and opening their thick brown and bulgy lips, they placed one clitoris in contact with the other, and these as they touched wagged with delight; then, encircling their arms round each other's backs, with their mouths close together, breathing each other's fetid breath, the one sucking alternately the other's tongue, they began to rub mightily together. They twisted, they writhed, and they shook, putting themselves into all kinds of contortions for some time, yet hardly able to stand on account of the intensity of the rapture they felt.

"At last, the consumptive girl, clasping with her hands the backside of the other one, and thus opening the huge pulpy buttocks, called out,—

"'*Une feuille de rose.*'

"Of course I greatly wondered what she meant, and I asked myself where she could find a rose-leaf, for there was not a flower to be seen

in the house; and then I said to myself,—having got one what will she do with it?

"I was not left to wonder long, for the *cantinière* did to her friend what she had done to her. Thereupon two other whores came and knelt down before the backsides that were thus held open for them, put their tongues in the little black holes of the anuses, and began to lick them, to the pleasure of the active and passive prostitutes, and to that of all the lookers-on.

"Moreover, the kneeling women, thrusting their forefingers between the legs of the standing strumpets and on the lower extremity of the lips, began to rub vigorously.

"The consumptive girl thus masturbated, kissed, rubbed, and licked, began to writhe furiously, to pant, to sob and to scream with joy, delight, and almost pain, until half fainting.

"'*Aïe, là, là, assez, aïe, c'est fait,*' followed by cries, screams, monosyllables, and utterances of keen delight and unbearable pleasure.

"'Now it is my turn,' said the *cantinière*, and stretching herself on the low couch, she opened her legs widely so that the two thick dark lips

gaped widely, and disclosed a clitoris which in its erection was of such a size, that in my ignorance I concluded this woman to be an hermaphrodite.

"Her friend the other *gougnotte*,—this was the first time I had heard the expression—though hardly recovered, went and placed her head between the *cantinière's* legs, lips against lips, and her tongue on the stiff, red, moist, and wagging clitoris, she too being in such a position that her own middle parts were in the reach of the other whore's mouth.

"They wriggled and moved, they rubbed and bumped each other, and their dishevelled hair spread itself not only on the couch but also on the floor; they clasped each other, thrust their fingers into the holes of the other's backside, squeezed the nipples of their breasts, and dug their nails into the fleshy parts of their bodies, for in their erotic fury they were like two wild Mænads, and only smothered their cries in the fury of their kisses.

"Though their lust seemed to grow ever stronger, still it did not overcome them, and

the fat and tough old strumpet in her eagerness to enjoy was now pressing down her lover's head with both her hands and with all her might, as if she were actually trying to get it all in her womb.

"The sight was really loathsome, and I turned my head aside so as not to see it, but the view that offered itself all around was, if anything, more disgusting.

"The whores had unbuttoned all the young men's trousers, some were handling their organs, caressing their testicles or licking their backsides; one was kneeling before a young student and greedily sucking his huge and fleshy phallus, another girl was sitting a-straddle on a young man's knees, springing up and coming down again as if she had been in a baby-jumper—evidently running a Paphian race, and (perhaps there were not enough prostitutes, or it was done for the fun of the thing) one woman was being had by two men at the same time, one in front, the other behind. There were also other enormities, but I had not time enough to see

everything.

"Moreover, many of the young men who were already tipsy when they came here, having drunk champagne, absinthe and beer, began now to feel squeamish, to be quite sick, to hiccough, and finally to throw up.

"In the midst of this nauseous scene, the consumptive whore went off into a fit of hysterics, crying and sobbing at the same time, whilst the fat one who was now thoroughly excited, would not allow her to lift up her head; and having got her nose where the tongue had hitherto been, she was rubbing herself against it with all her might, screaming:

"'Lick on, lick stronger, don't take away your tongue now that I am about to enjoy it; there, I am finishing, lick on, suck me, bite me.'

"But the poor cadaverous wretch in the paroxysm of her delirium had managed to slip away her head.

"'*Regarde donc quel con*,' said Biou, pointing to that mass of quivering flesh amidst the black

and froth-covered viscid hair. 'I shall just get my knee into it, and rub her soundly. Now, you'll see!'

"He pulled off his trousers, and was about to suit the action to the words, when a slight cough was heard. It was at once followed by a piercing cry; and before we could understand what was the matter, the body of the tough old prostitute was bathed in blood. The cadaverous wretch had in a fit of lubricity broken a blood vessel, and was dying—dying—dead!

"'*Ah! la sale bougre!*' said the ghoul-like woman with the bloodless face. 'It's all over with the slut now, and she owes me . . . .'

"I do not remember the sum she mentioned. In the meanwhile, however, the *cantinière* continued to writhe in her senseless and ungovernable rage, twisting and distorting herself; but at last, feeling the warm blood flow in her womb, and bathe her inflamed parts, she began to pant, to scream, and to leap with delight, for the ejaculation was at length taking place.

"Thus it happened that the death-rattle of

the one mixed itself up with the panting and gurgling of the other.

"In that confusion I slipped away, cured for ever of the temptation of again visiting such a house of nightly entertainment."

CHAPTER IV

"LET us now go back to our story."

"When was it that you met Teleny again?"

"Not for some time afterwards. The fact is that although I continued to feel irresistibly attracted towards him, drawn as it were by an impelling power the strength of which I could at times hardly withstand, still I continued to avoid him.

"Whenever he played in public I always went to hear him—or rather, to look at him; and I only lived during those short moments when he was on the stage. My glasses would then be rivetted upon him; my eyes gloated upon his

heavenly figure, so full of youth, life, and manhood.

"The longing that I felt to press my mouth on his beautiful mouth and parted lips was so intense that it always made my penis water.

"At times the space between us seemed to lessen and dwindle in such a way that I felt as though I could breathe his warm and scented breath—nay, I actually seemed to feel the contact of his body against my own.

"The sensation produced by the mere thought that his skin was touching mine excited my nervous system in such a way that the intensity of this barren pleasure produced at first a pleasant numbness over my whole body, which being prolonged, soon turned into a dull pain.

"He himself always appeared to feel my presence in the theatre, for his eyes invariably looked for me until they pierced the densest crowd to find me out. I knew, however, that he could not really see me in the corner where I was ensconced, either in the pit, the gallery, or at the bottom of some box. Still, go whithersoever I would, his glances were always directed towards me. Ah,

those eyes! as unfathomable as the dim water of a well. Even now, as I remember them after these many years, my heart beats, and I feel my head grow giddy thinking of them. If you had seen those eyes, you would know what that burning languor which poets are always writing about really is.

"Of one thing I was justly proud. Since that famous evening of the charity concert, he played — if not in a more theoretically correct way—far more brilliantly and more sensationally than he had ever done before.

"His whole heart now poured itself out in those voluptuous Hungarian melodies, and all those whose blood was not frozen with envy and age were entranced by that music.

"His name, therefore, began to atract large audiences, and although musical critics were divided in their opinions, the papers always had long articles about him."

"And—being so much in love with him—you had the fortitude to suffer, and yet to resist the temptation of seeing him."

"I was young and inexperienced, therefore

moral; for what is morality but prejudice?"

"Prejudice?"

"Well, is nature moral? Does the dog that smells and licks with evident gusto the first bitch that he meets, trouble his unsophisticatcd brains with morality? Does the poodle that endeavours to sodomize that little cur coming across the street care what a canine Mrs. Grundy will say about him?

"No, unlike poodles, or young Arabs, I had been inculcated with all kinds of wrong ideas, so when I understood what my natural feelings for Teleny were, I was staggered, horrified; and filled with dismay, I resolved to stifle them.

"Indeed, had I known human nature better, I should have left France, gone to the antipodes, placed the Himalayas as a barrier between us."

"Only to yield to your natural tastes with someone else, or with him, had you happened to meet unexpectedly after many years."

"You are quite right; physiologists tell us that the body of man changes after seven years; a man's passions, however, remain always the same; though smouldering in a latent state, they

are in his bosom all the same; his nature is surely no better because he has not given vent to them. He is only humbugging himself and cheating everybody by pretending to be what he is not; I know that I was born a sodomite, the fault is my constitution's, not mine own.

"I read all I could find about the love of one man for another, that loathsome crime against nature taught to us not only by the very gods themselves, but by all the greatest men of olden times, for even Minos himself seems to have sodomized Theseus.

"I, of course, looked upon it as a monstrosity, a sin — as Origen says — far worse than idolatry. And yet I had to admit that the world—even after the cities of the plain had been destroyed — throve well enough notwithstanding this aberration, for Paphian girls in the great days of Rome were but too often discarded for pretty little boys.

"It was but time for Christianity to come and sweep away all the monstrous vices of this world with its brand new broom. Catholicism later on burnt those men who sowed in a sterile

field—in effigy.

"The popes had their catamites, the kings had their *mignons*, and if all the host of priests, monks, friars and caluyers were forgiven, they—it must be admitted—did not always commit buggery, or cast away their seed on rocky soil, although religion did not intend their implements to be baby-making tools.

"As for the Templars, if they were burnt, it surely could not have been on account of their pæderasty, for it had been winked at long enough.

"What amused me, however, was to see that every writer impeached all his neighbours of indulging in this abomination; his own people alone were free from this shocking vice.

"The Jews accused the Gentiles, and the Gentiles the Jews, and—like syphilis—all the black sheep who had this perverted taste had always imported it from abroad. I also read in a modern medical book, how the penis of a sodomite becomes thin and pointed like a dog's, and how the human mouth gets distorted when used for vile purposes, and I shuddered with horror and

disgust. Even the sight of that book blanched my cheek!

"It is true that since then, experience has taught me quite another lesson, for I must confess that I have known scores of whores, and many other women besides, who have used their mouths not only for praying and for kissing their confessor's hand, and yet I have never perceived that their mouths were crooked, have you?

"As for my cock, or yours, its bulky head —but you blush at the compliment, so we will drop this subject.

"At that time I tortured my brain, fearing to have committed this heinous sin morally, if not materially.

"Mosaic religion, rendered stricter by the Talmudic law, has invented a cowl to be used in the act of copulation. It wraps up the whole body of the husband, leaving in the middle of the gown but a tiny hole—like that in a little boy's pants—to pass the penis through, and thus enable him to squirt his sperm into his wife's ovaries, fecundating her in this way, but preventing as much as possible all carnal pleasure. Ah,

yes! but people have long since taken French leave of the cowl, hoodwinking the whole affair by hooding their falcon with a "French letter."

"Yes, but are we not born with a leaden cowl—namely, this Mosaic religion of ours, improved upon by Christ's mystic precepts, and rendered impossibly perfect by Protestant hypocrisy; for if a man commit adultery with a woman every time he looks at her, did I not commit sodomy with Teleny every time I saw him or even thought of him?

"There were moments however when, nature being stronger than prejudice, I should right willingly have given up my soul to perdition—nay, yielded my body to suffer in eternal hell-fire—if in the meanwhile I could have fled somewhere on the confines of this earth, on some lonely island, where in perfect nakedness I could have lived for some years in deadly sin with him, feasting upon his fascinating beauty.

"Still I resolved to keep aloof from him, to be his motive power, his guiding spirit, to make of him a great, a famous, artist. As for the fire of lewdness burning within me—well, if I could

not extinguish it, I could at least subdue it.

"I suffered. My thoughts, night and day, were with him. My brain was always aglow; my blood was over-heated; my body ever shivering with excitement. I daily read all the newspapers to see what they said about him; and whenever his name met my eyes the paper shook in my trembling hands. If my mother or anybody else mentioned his name I blushed and then grew pale.

"I remember what a shock of pleasure, not unmingled with jealousy, I felt, when for the first time I saw his likeness in a window amongst those of other celebrities. I went and bought it at once, not simply to treasure and doat upon it, but also that other people might not look at it."

"What! you were so very jealous?"

"Foolishly so. Unseen and at a distance I used to follow him about, after every concert he played.

"Usually he was alone. Once, however, I saw him enter a cab waiting at the back door of the theatre. It had seemed to me as if someone else was within the vehicle—a woman, if I had

not been mistaken. I hailed another cab, and followed them. Their carriage stopped at Teleny's house. I at once bade my Jehu do the same.

"I saw Teleny alight. As he did so, he offered his hand to a lady, thickly veiled, who tripped out of the carriage and darted into the open doorway. The cab then went off.

"I bade my driver wait there the whole night. At dawn the carriage of the evening before came and stopped. My driver looked up. A few minutes afterwards the door was again opened. The lady hurried out, was handed into her carriage by her lover. I followed her, and stopped where she alighted.

"A few days afterwards I knew whom she was."

"And who was she?"

"A lady of an unblemished reputation with whom Teleny had played some duets.

"In the cab, that night, my mind was so intently fixed upon Teleny that my inward self seemed to disintegrate itself from my body and to follow like his own shadow the man I loved. I unconsciously threw myself into a kind of trance

and I had a most vivid hallucination, which, strange as it might appear, coincided with all that my friend did and felt.

"For instance, as soon as the door was shut behind them, the lady caught Teleny in her arms, and gave him a long kiss. Their entrance would have lasted several seconds more, had Teleny not lost his breath.

"You smile; yes, I suppose you yourself are aware how easily people lose their breath in kissing, when the lips do not feel that blissful intoxicating lust in all its intensity. She would have given him another kiss, but Teleny whispered to her: 'Let us go up to my room; there we shall be far safer than here.'

"Soon they were in his apartment.

"She looked timidly around, and seeing herself in that young man's room alone with him, she blushed and seemed thoroughly ashamed of herself.

"'Oh! Réné,' said she, 'what must you think of me?'

"'That you love me dearly,' quoth he; 'do you not?'

"'Yes, indeed; not wisely, but too well.'

"Thereupon, taking off her wrappers, she rushed up and clasped her lover in her arms, showering her warm kisses on his head, his eyes, his cheeks and then upon his mouth. That mouth I so longed to kiss!

"With lips pressed together, she remained for some time inhaling his breath, and—almost frightened at her boldness—she touched his lips with the tip of her tongue. Then, taking courage, soon afterwards she slipped it in his mouth, and then after a while, she thrust it in and out, as if she were enticing him to try the act of nature by it; she was so convulsed with lust by this kiss that she had to clasp herself to him not to fall, for the blood was rushing to her head, and her knees were almost giving way beneath her. At last, taking his right hand, after squeezingly it hesitatingly for a moment, she placed it within her breasts, giving him her nipple to pinch, and as he did so, the pleasure she felt was so great that she was swooning away for joy.

"'Oh, Teleny!' said she; 'I can't! I can't

any more.'

"And she rubbed herself as strongly as she could against him, protruding her middle parts against his."

"And Teleny?"

"Well, jealous as I was, I could not help feeling how different his manner was now from the rapturous way with which he had clung to me that evening, when he had taken the bunch of heliotrope from his button-hole and had put it in mine.

"He accepted rather than returned her caresses. Anyhow, she seemed pleased, for she thought him shy.

"She was now hanging on him. One of her arms was clasped around his waist, the other one around his neck. Her dainty, tapering be-jewelled fingers were playing with his curly hair, and paddling his neck.

"He was squeezing her breasts, and, as I said before, slightly fingering her nipples.

"She gazed deep into his eyes, and then sighed.

"'You do not love me,' at last she said.

'I can see it in your eyes. You are not thinking of me, but of somebody else.'

"And it was true. At that moment he was thinking of me—fondly, longingly; and then, as he did so, he got more excited, and he caught her in his arms, and hugged and kissed her with far more eagerness than he had hitherto done—nay, he began to suck her tongue as if it had been mine, and then began to thrust his own into her mouth.

"After a few moments of rapture she, this time, stopped to take breath.

"'Yes, I am wrong. You love me. I see it now. You do not despise me because I am here, do you?'

"'Ah! if you could only read in my heart, and see how madly I love you, darling!'

"And she looked at him with longing, passionate eyes.

"'Still you think me light, don't you? I am an adulteress!'

"And thereupon she shuddered, and hid her face in her hands.

"He looked at her for a moment pitifully,

then he took down her hands gently, and kissed her.

"'You do not know how I have tried to resist you, but I could not. I am on fire. My blood is no longer blood, but some burning love-philtre. I cannot help myself,' said she, lifting up her head defiantly as if she were facing the whole world, 'here I am, do with me what you like, only tell me that you love me, that you love no other woman but me, swear it.'

"'I swear,' said he, languidly, 'that I love no other woman.'

"She did not understand the meaning of his words.

"'But tell it to me again, say it often, it is so sweet to hear it repeated from the lips of those we doat on,' said she, with passionate eagerness.

"'I assure you that I have never cared for any woman so much as I do for you.'

"'Cared?' said she, disappointed.

"'Loved, I mean.'

"'And you can swear it?'

"'On the cross if you like,' added he, smiling.

"'And you do not think badly of me because I am here? Well, you are the only one for whom I have ever been unfaithful to my husband; though God knows if he be faithful to me. Still my love does not atone for my sin, does it?'

"Teleny did not give her any answer for an instant, he looked at her with dreamy eyes, then shuddered as if awaking from a trance.

"'Sin,' he said, 'is the only thing worth living for.'

"She looked at him rather astonished, but then she kissed him again and again and answered: 'Well, yes, you are perhaps right; it is so, the fruit of the forbidden tree was pleasant to the sight, to the taste, and to the smell."

"They sat down on a divan. When they were clasped again in each other's arms he slipped his hand somewhat timidly and almost unwillingly under her skirts.

"She caught hold of his hand, and arrested it.

"'No, Réné, I beg of you! Could we not love each other with a Platonic love? Is that not enough?'

"'Is it enough for you?' said he, almost

superciliously.

"She pressed her lips again upon his, and almost relinquished her grasp. The hand went stealthily up along the leg, stopped a moment on the knees, caressing them; but the legs closely pressed together prevented it from slipping between them, and thus reaching the higher storey. It crept slowly up, nevertheless, caressing the thighs through the fine linen underclothing, and thus, by stolen marches, it reached its aim. The hand then slipped between the opening of the drawers, and began to feel the soft skin. She tried to stop him.

"'No, no!' said she; 'please dont; you are tickling me.'

"He then took courage, and plunged his fingers boldly in the fine curly locks of the fleece that covered all her middle parts.

"She continued to hold her thighs tightly closed together, especially when the naughty fingers began to graze the edge of the moist lips. At that touch, however, her strength gave way; the nerves relaxed, and allowed the tip of a finger to worm its way within the slit—nay, the tiny berry protruded

out to welcome it.

"After a few moments she breathed more strongly. She encircled his breast with her arms, kissed him, and then hid her head on his shoulder.

"'Oh, what a rapture I feel!' she cried. 'What a magnetic fluid you possess to make me feel I as do!'

"He did not give her any answer; but, unbuttoning his trousers, he took hold of her dainty little hand. He endeavoured to introduce it within the gap. She tried to resist, but weakly, and as if asking but to yield. She soon gave way, and boldly caught hold of his phallus, now stiff and hard, moving lustily by its own inward strength.

"After a few moments of pleasant manipulation, their lips pressed together, he lightly, and almost against her knowledge, pressed her down on the couch, lifted up her legs, pulled up her skirts without for a moment taking his tongue out of her mouth or stopping his tickling of her tingling clitoris already wet with its own tears. Then—sustaining his weight on his elbows—he got his

legs between her thighs. That her excitement increased could be visibly seen by the shivering of the lips which he had no need to open as he pressed down upon her, for they parted of themselves to give entrance to the little blind God of Love.

"With one thrust he introduced himself within the precincts of Love's temple; with another, the rod was halfway in; with the third, he reached the very bottom of the den of pleasure; for, though she was no longer in the first days of earliest youth, still she had hardly reached her prime, and her flesh was not only firm, but she was so tight that he was fairly clasped and sucked by those pulpy lips; so, after moving up and down a few times, thrusting himself always further, he crushed her down with his full weight; for both his hands were either handling her breasts, or else, having slipped them under her, he was opening her buttocks; and then, lifting her firmly upon him, he thrust a finger in her backside hole, thus wedging her on both sides, making her feel a more intense pleasure by thus sodomizing her.

"After a few seconds of this little game he began to breathe strongly—to pant. The milky fluid that had for days accumulated itself now rushed out in thick jets, coursing up into her very womb. She, thus flooded, shewed her hysteric enjoyment by her screams, her tears, her sighs. Finally, all strength gave way; arms and legs stiffened themselves; she fell lifeless on the couch; whilst he remained stretched over her at the risk of giving the Count, her husband, an heir of gipsy blood.

"He soon recovered his strength, and rose. She was then recalled to her senses, but only to melt into a flood of tears.

"A bumper of champagne brought them both, however, to a less gloomy sense of life. A few partridge sandwiches, some lobster patties, a caviare salad, with a few more glasses of champagne, together with many *marrons glacés*, and a punch made of maraschino, pineapple juice and whisky, drunk out of the same goblet soon finished by dispelling their gloominess.

"'Why should we not put ourselves at our ease, my dear?' said he. 'I'll set you the

example, shall I?'

"'By all means.'

"Thereupon Teleny took off his white tie, that stiff and uncomfortable useless appendage invented by fashion only to torture mankind, yclept a shirt collar, then his coat and waistcoat, and he remained only in his shirt and trousers.

"'Now, my dear, allow me to act as your maid.'

"The beautiful woman at first refused, but yielded after some kisses; and, little by little, nothing was left of all her clothing but an almost transparent *crêpe de Chine* chemise, dark steel-blue silk stockings, and satin slippers.

"Teleny covered her bare neck and arms with kisses, pressed his cheeks against the thick, black hair of her arm-pits, and tickled her as he did so. This little titillation was felt all over her body, and the slit between her legs opened again in such a way that the delicate little clitoris, like a red hawthorn berry, peeped out as if to see what was going on. He held her for a moment crushed against his chest, and his '*merle*'—as

the Italians call it—flying out of his cage, he thrust it into the opening ready to receive it.

"She pushed lustily against him, but he had to keep her up, for her legs were almost giving way, so great was the pleasure she felt. He therefore stretched her down on the panther rug at his feet, without unclasping her.

"All sense of shyness was now overcome. He pulled off his clothes, and pressed down with all his strength. She—to receive his instrument far deep in her sheath—clasped him with her legs in such a way that he could hardly move. He was, therefore, only able to rub himself against her; but that was more than enough, for after a few violent shakes of their buttocks, legs pressed, and breasts crushed, the burning liquid which he injected within her body gave her a spasmodic pleasure, and she fell senseless on the panther skin whilst he rolled, motionless, by her side.

"Till then I felt that my image had always been present before his eyes, although he was enjoying this handsome woman — so beautiful, for she had hardly yet reached the bloom of ripe womanhood; but now the pleasure she had given

him had made him quite forget me. I therefore hated him. For a moment I felt that I should like to be a wild beast—to drive my nails into his flesh, to torture him like a cat does a mouse, and to tear him into pieces.

"What right had he to love anybody but myself? Did I love a single being in this world as I loved him? Could I feel pleasure with anyone else?

"No, my love was not a maudlin sentimentality, it was the maddening passion that overpowers the body and shatters the brain!

"If he could love women, why did he then make love to me, obliging me to love him, making me a contemptible being in my own eyes?

"In the paroxysm of my excitement I writhed, I bit my lips till they bled. I dug my nails into my flesh; I cried out with jealousy and shame. It wanted but little to have made me jump out of the cab, and go and ring at the door of his house.

"This state of things lasted for a few moments, and then I began to wonder what he was doing, and the fit of hallucination came

over me again. I saw him awakening from the slumber into which he had fallen when overpowered by enjoyment.

"As he awoke he looked at her. Now I could see her plainly, for I believe that she was only visible to me through his medium."

"But you fell asleep, and dreamt all this whilst you were in the cab, did you not?"

"Oh, no! All happened as I am telling you. I related my whole vision to him some time afterwards, and he acknowledged that everything had occurred exactly as I had seen it."

"But how could this be?"

"There was, as I told you before, a strong transmission of thoughts between us. This is by no means a remarkable coincidence. You smile and look incredulous; well, follow the doings of the Psychical Society, and this vision will certainly not astonish you any more."

"Well, never mind, go on."

"As Teleny awoke, he looked at his mistress lying on the panther-skin at his side.

"She was as sound asleep as anyone would be after a banquet, intoxicated by strong drink;

or as a baby, that having sucked its fill, stretches itself glutted by the side of its mother's breast. It was the heavy sleep of lusty life, not the placid stillness of cold death. The blood—like the sap of a young tree in spring—mounted to her parted, pouting lips, through which a warm scented breath escaped at cadenced intervals, emitting that slight murmur which the child hears as he listens in a shell—the sound of slumbering life.

"The breasts — as if swollen with milk — stood up, and the nipples erect seemed to be asking for those caresses she was so fond of; over all her body there was a shivering of insatiable desire.

"Her thighs were bare, and the thick curly hair that covered her middle parts, as black as jet, was sprinkled over with pearly drops of milky dew.

"Such a sight would have awakened an eager, irrepressible desire in Joseph himself, the only chaste Israelite of whom we have ever heard; and yet Teleny, leaning on his elbow, was gazing at her with all the loathsomeness we feel when we look at a kitchen table covered with the offal

of the meat, the hashed scraps, the dregs of the wines which have supplied the banquet that has just glutted us.

"He looked at her with the scorn which a man has for the woman who has just administered to his pleasure, and who has degraded herself and him. Moreover, as he felt unjust towards her, he hated her, and not himself.

"I felt again that he did not love her, but me, though she had made him for a few moments forget me.

"She seemed to feel his cold glances upon her, for she shivered, and, thinking she was asleep in bed, she tried to cover herself up; and her hand, fumbling for the sheet, pulled up her chemise, only uncovering herself more by that action. She woke as she did so, and caught Teleny's reproachful glances.

"She looked around, frightened. She tried to cover herself as much as she could; and then, entwining one of her arms round the young man's neck—

"'Do not look at me like that,' she said. 'Am I so loathsome to you? Oh! I see it. You

despise me.' And her eyes filled with tears. 'You are right. Why did I yield? Why did I not resist the love that was torturing me? Alas! it was not you; but I who sought you, who made love to you; and now you feel for me nothing but disgust. Tell me, is it so? You love another woman! No!—tell me you don't!'

"'I don't,' said Teleny, earnestly.

"'Yes, but swear.'

"'I have already sworn before, or at least offered to do so? What is the use of swearing, if you don't believe me?'

"Though all lust was gone, Teleny felt a heartfelt pity for that handsome young woman, who, maddened by love for him, had put into jeopardy her whole existence to throw herself into his arms.

"Who is the man that is not flattered by the love he inspires in a high-born, wealthy, and handsome young woman, who forgets her marriage vows to enjoy a few moments' bliss in his arms? But, then, why do women generally love men who often care so little for them?

"Teleny did his best to comfort her, to tell her

over and over again that he cared for no woman, to assure her that he would be eternally faithful to her for her sacrifice; but pity is not love, nor is affection the eagerness of desire.

"Nature was more than satisfied; her beauty had lost all its attraction; they kissed again and again; he languidly passed his hands all over her body, from the nape of the neck to the deep dent between those round hills, which seemed covered with fallen snow, giving her a most delightful sensation as he did so; he caressed her breasts, suckled and bit the tiny protruding nipples, whilst his fingers were often thrust far within the warm flesh hidden under that mass of jet-black hair. She glowed, she breathed, she shivered with pleasure; but Teleny, though performing his work with masterly skill, remained cold at her side.

"'No, I see that you don't love me; for it is not possible that you—a young man——'

"She did not finish. Teleny felt the sting of her reproaches, but remained passive; for the phallus is not stiffened by taunts.

"She took the lifeless object in her delicate

fingers. She rubbed and manipulated it. She even rolled it between her two soft hands. It remained like a piece of dough. She sighed as piteously as Ovid's mistress must have done on a like occasion. She did like this woman did some hundreds of years before. She bent down; she took the tip of that inert piece of flesh between her lips—the pulpy lips which looked like a tiny apricot—so round, sappy, and luscious. Soon it was all in her mouth. She sucked it with as much evident pleasure as if she were a famished baby taking her nurse's breast. As it went in and out, she tickled the prepuce with her expert tongue, touched the tiny lips on her palate.

"The phallus, though somewhat harder, remained always limp and nerveless.

"You know our ignorant forefathers believed in the practice called 'nouer les aiguillettes'—that is, rendering the male incapable of performing the pleasant work for which Nature has destined him. We, the enlightened generation, have discarded such gross superstitions, and still our ignorant forefathers were sometimes right."

"What! you do not mean to say that you

believe in such tomfoolery?"

"It might be tomfoolery, as you say; but still it is a fact. Hypnotize a person, and then you will see if you can get the mastery over him or not."

"Still, you had not hypnotized Teleny?"

"No, but our natures seemed to be bound to one another by a secret affinity."

"At that moment I felt a secret shame for Teleny. Not being able to understand the working of his brain, she seemed to regard him in the light of a young cock, who, having crowed lustily once or twice at early dawn, has strained his neck to such a pitch that he can only emit hoarse, feeble, gurgling sounds out of it after that.

"Moreover, I almost felt sorry for that woman; and I thought, if I were only in her place, how disappointed I should be. And I sighed, repeating almost audibly,—'Were I but in her stead.'

"The image which had formed itself within my mind so vividly was all at once reverberated within Réné's brain; and he thought, if instead of this lady's mouth those lips were my lips; and

his phallus at once stiffened and awoke into life; the glands swelled with blood; not only an erection took place, but it almost ejaculated. The Countess—for she was a Countess—was herself surprised at this sudden change, and stopped, for she had now obtained what she wanted; and she knew that—'Depasser le but, c'est manquer la chose.'

"Teleny, however, began to fear that if he had his mistress's face before his eyes, my image might entirely vanish; and that—beautiful as she was—he would never be able to accomplish his work to the end. So he began by covering her with kisses; then deftly turned her on her back. She yielded without understanding what was required of her. He bent her pliant body on her knees, so that she presented a most beautiful sight to his view.

"This splendid sight ravished him to such an extent that by looking at it his hitherto limp tool acquired its full size and stiffness, and in its lusty vigour leapt in such a way that it knocked against his navel.

"He was even tempted for a moment to intro-

duce it within the small dot of a hole, which if not exactly the den of life is surely that of pleasure; but he forbore. He even resisted the temptation of kissing it, or of darting his tongue into it; but bending over her, and placing himself between her legs, he tried to introduce the glans within the aperture of her two lips, now thick and swollen by dint of much rubbing.

"Wide apart as her legs were, he first had to open the lips with his fingers on account of the mass of bushy hair that grew all around them; for now the tiny curls had entangled themselves together like tendrils, as if to bar the entrance; therefore, when he had brushed the hair aside, he pressed his tool in it, but the turgid dry flesh arrested him. The clitoris thus pressed danced with delight, so that he took it in his hand, and rubbed and shook it softly and gently on the top part of her lips.

"She began to shake, to rub herself with delight; she groaned, she sobbed hysterically; and when he felt himself bathed with delicious tears he thrust his instrument far within her body, clasping her tightly around the neck. So, after

a few bold strokes, he managed to get in the whole of the rod down to the very root of the column, crushing his hair against hers, so far in the utmost recesses of the womb that it gave her a pleasurable pain as it touched the neck of the vagina.

"For about ten minutes—which to her felt an eternity—she continued panting, throbbing, gasping, groaning, shrieking, roaring, laughing, and crying in the vehemence of her delight.

"'Oh! Oh! I am feeling it again! In—in —quick—quicker! There! there!—enough!—stop!'

"But he did not listen to her, and he went on plunging and re-plunging with increasing vigour. Having vainly begged for a truce, she began to move again with renewed life.

"Having her *a retro*, his whole thoughts were thus concentrated upon me; and the tightness of the orifice in which the penis was sheathed, added to the titillation produced by the lips of the womb, gave him such an overpowering sensation that he redoubled his strength, and shoved his muscular instrument with such mighty strokes

that the frail woman shook under the repeated thumps. Her knees were almost giving way under the brutal force he displayed. When again, all at once, the flood-gates of the seminal ducts were open, and he squirted a jet of molten liquid down into the innermost recesses of her womb.

"A moment of delirium followed; the contraction of all her muscles gripped him and sucked him up eagerly, greedily; and after a short spasmodic convulsion, they both fell senseless side by side, still tightly wedged in one another."

"And so ends the Epistle!"

"Not quite so, for nine months afterwards the Countess gave birth to a fine boy——"

"Who, of course, looked like his father? Doesn't every child look like its father?"

"Still this one happened to look neither like the Count nor like Teleny."

"Who the deuce did it look like then?"

"Like myself."

"Bosh!"

"Bosh as much as you like. Anyhow, the rickety old count is very proud of this son of his, having discovered a certain likeness between his

only heir and the portrait of one of his ancestors. He is always pointing out this atavism to all his visitors; but whenever he struts about, and begins to expound learnedly over the matter, I am told that the Countess shrugs her shoulders and puckers down her lips contemptuously, as if she was not quite convinced of the fact."

CHAPTER V

"YOU have not yet told me when you met Teleny, or how your meeting was brought about."

"Just have a little patience, and you will know all. You can understand that after I had seen the Countess leave his house at dawn, bearing on her face the expression of the emotions she had felt, I was anxious to get rid of my criminal infatuation.

"At times I even persuaded myself that I did not care for Réné any more. Only when I thought that all my love had vanished, he had but to look at me, and I felt it gush back stronger than ever, filling my heart and bereaving me of my reason.

"I could find no rest either night or day.

"I thereupon made up my mind not to see Teleny again, nor to attend any of his concerts; but lovers' resolutions are like April showers, and at the last minute the slightest excuse was good enough to make me waver and change my decision.

"I was, moreover, curious and anxious to know if the Countess or anybody else would go to meet him again, and pass the night with him."

"Well, and were these visits repeated?"

"No, the Count returned unexpectedly; and then both he and the Countess started for Nice.

"A short time afterwards, however, as I was always on the watch, I saw Teleny leave the theatre with Briancourt.

"There was nothing strange in that. They walked arm-in-arm, and wended their way towards Teleny's lodgings.

"I lingered behind, following them step by step at some distance. I had been jealous of the Countess; I was ten times more so of Briancourt.

"If he is going to pass every night with a new bed-fellow, said I to myself, why did he tell me that his heart was yearning for mine?

"And still within my soul I felt sure that he loved me; that all these other loves were caprices; that his feelings for me were something more than the pleasure of the senses; that it was real, heart-sprung, genuine love.

"Having reached the door of Teleny's house, both the young men stopped and began to talk.

"The street was a solitary one. Only some belated home-goers were every now and then to be seen, trudging sleepily onward. I had stopped at the corner of the street, pretending to read an advertisement, but in reality to follow the movements of the two young men.

"All at once I thought they were about to part, for I saw Briancourt stretch out both his hands and grasp Teleny's. I shivered with gladness. After all, I have wronged Briancourt, was the thought that came into my mind; must every man and woman be in love with the pianist?

"My joy, however, was not of long duration,

for Briancourt had pulled Teleny towards him, and their lips met in a long kiss, a kiss which for me was gall and wormwood; then, after a few words, the door of Teleny's house was opened and the two young men went in.

"When I had seen them disappear, tears of rage, of anguish, of disappointment started to my eyes, I ground my teeth, I bit my lips to the blood, I stamped my feet, I ran on like a madman, I stopped for a moment before the closed door, and vented my anger in thumping the feelingless wood. At last, hearing footsteps approaching, I went on. I walked about the streets for half the night, then fagged out mentally and bodily, I returned home at early dawn."

"And your mother?"

"My mother was not in town just then, she was at ——, where I shall tell you her adventures some other time, for I can assure you they are worth hearing."

"On the morrow, I took a firm resolution not to go to Teleny's concerts any more, not to follow him about, but to forget him entirely. I should have left the town, but I thought I had found out

another means of getting rid of this horrible infatuation.

"Our chamber-maid having lately got married, my mother had taken into her service—for reasons best known to herself—a country wench of sixteen or thereabout, but who, strange to say, looked far younger than she really was, for as a rule those village girls look far older than their years. Although I did not find her good looking, still everybody seemed smitten by her charms. I cannot say she had anything rustic or countrified about her, for that would awake at once in your mind a vague idea of something awkward or ungainly, whilst she was as pert as a sparrow, and as graceful as a kitten; still she had a strong country freshness, — nay, I might almost say, tartness,—about her like that of a strawberry or a raspberry that grows in mossy thickets.

"Seeing her in her town-dress you always fancied you had once met her in picturesque rags, with a bit of red kerchief on her shoulders, and with the savage grace of a young roe standing under leafy boughs, surrounded by eglantine and briers, ready to dart off at the slightest sound.

"She had the slender lithesomeness of a young boy, and might well have been taken for one, had it not been for the budding, round, and firm breasts, that swelled out her dress.

"Although she seemed slily conscious that not one of her movements was lost on the bystanders, still she not only seemed heedless of anyone's admiration, but was even quite vexed if it were expressed either by words or by signs.

"Woe to the poor fellow who could not keep his feelings within bounds; she soon made him feel that if she had the beauty and freshness of the dog-rose, she also had its sharp thorns.

"Of all the men she had ever known, I was the only one that had never taken the slightest notice of her. For my part, she simply—like all women — left me perfectly indifferent. I was therefore the only man she liked. Her cat-like grace, however, her slightly hoydenish ways, which gave her the appearance of a Ganymede, pleased me, and although I knew very well that I felt no love nor even the slightest attraction for her, still I believed that I might learn to like and perhaps be fond of her. Could I but have felt

some sensuality towards her, I think I would even have gone so far as to marry her, rather than become a sodomite, and have an unfaithful man who did not care for me, as my lover.

"Anyhow, I asked myself, might I not feel some slight pleasure with her, just enough to quiet my senses, to lull my maddened brain to rest?

"And yet which was the greater evil of the two, the one of seducing a poor girl to ruin her, and making her the mother of a poor unhappy child, or that of yielding to the passion which was shattering my body and my mind?

"Our honourable society winks at the first peccadillo, and shudders with horror at the second, and as our society is composed of honourable men, I suppose the honourable men which make up our virtuous society are right.

"What private reasons they have to make them think in this way, I really do not know.

"In the exasperated state in which I was, life was intolerable, I could not bear it any longer.

"Weary and worn out by a sleepless night, with my blood parched by excitement and by

absinthe, I returned home, took a cold bath, dressed, and called the girl into my room.

"When she saw my jaded look, my pale face, my hollow eyes, she stared at me, then—

"'Are you ill, sir?' she asked.

"'Yes; I am not well.'

"'And where were you last night?'

"'Where?' I asked, scornfully.

"'Yes; you did not come home,' said she, defiantly.

"I answered her with a nervous laugh.

"I understood that a nature like hers had to be mastered all of a sudden rather than tamed by degrees. I therefore caught her within my arms and pressed my lips upon hers. She tried to free herself, but rather like a defenceless bird fluttering with its wings than like a cat thrusting out its claws from inside its velvet paws.

"She writhed within my arms, rubbing her breasts against my chest, her thighs against my legs. Nevertheless, I kept her crushed against my body, kissing her mouth, pressing my burning lips against her own, breathing her fresh and healthy breath.

"It was the first time she had ever been kissed on her mouth, and, as she told me afterwards, the sensation shook her whole frame like a strong electric current.

"I saw, in fact, that her head was reeling, and her eyes swimming with the emotion which my kisses produced on her nervous constitution.

"When I wanted to thrust my tongue into her mouth, her maidenly coyness revolted; she resisted and would not have it. It seemed, said she, as if a piece of burning iron had been thrust into her mouth, and it made her feel as though she was committing a most heinous crime.

"'No, no,' cried she, 'you are smothering me. You are killing me, leave me, I cannot breathe, leave me or I'll call for help.'

"But I persisted and soon my tongue down to its very root was in her mouth. I then lifted her up in my arms, for she was as light as a feather, and I stretched her upon the bed. There the fluttering bird was no longer a defenceless dove, but rather a falcon with claws and sharp beak, struggling with might and main, scratching and biting my hands, threatening to pull out my eyes,

thumping me with all her strength.

"Nothing is a greater incentive to pleasure than a fight. A short tussle with some tingling slaps and a few cuffs will set any man aglow, whilst a sound flagellation will rouse the blood of the most sluggish old man, better than any aphrodisiac.

"The struggle excited her as much as it did me, and yet no sooner had I stretched her down, than she managed forthwith to roll down all in a bundle on the floor; but I was up to her tricks and over her. She managed, however, to slip like an eel from under me, and with a bound like a young kid, made for the door. I had, however, locked it.

"A new scuffle ensued, I was now bent upon having her. Had she yielded tamely, I should have ordered her out of the room, but resistance rendered her desirable.

"I clasped her within my arms, she writhed and sighed, and every part of our bodies came into strong contact. Then I thrust my leg between her's, our arms were entwined and her breasts were palpitating against my chest.

During all this time she belaboured me with blows, and each one as it fell seemed to set both her blood and mine on fire.

"I had thrown off my coat. The buttons of my waistcoat and trousers were all giving way, my shirt-collar had been torn off, my shirt was soon in rags, my arms were bleeding in several places. Her eyes were glistering like those of a lynx, her lips were pouted with lust, she now seemed to struggle not to defend her maidenhood, but rather for the pleasure the fight gave her.

"As I pressed my mouth on her's, I felt her whole body quiver with delight, nay once—and once only — I felt the tip of her tongue thrust slightly within my mouth, and then she seemed maddened with pleasure. She was in fact like a young Mænad in her first initiation.

"I actually began to desire her, and yet I felt sorry to sacrifice her at once on love's altar, for this little game was worth being rehearsed more than once.

"I lifted her again in my arms and put her on the bed.

"How pretty she looked as I held her down. Her curly and wavy hair dishevelled by the fight was strewed in locks all over the pillows. Her dark lively eyes, with their short but thick lashes, were twinkling with an almost phosphorescent fire, her face all aglow was bedabbled with my blood, her parted, panting lips would have made the soft phallus of some old worn-out *monsignore* leap with renewed life.

"I had pinioned her down and for a moment stood over her, admiring her. My glances seemed to irritate her, and she struggled once more to be free.

"The hooks and eyes of her dress had given way, so that there was just a glimpse of fair flesh, gilt by many a glowing harvest sun, and of two swelling breasts, to be seen; and you know how much more exciting this glimpse is than the exhibition of all the flesh exhibited at balls, theatres, and brothels.

"I tore away all obstacles. I thrust one hand into her bosom, and I tried to slip the other one under her dress; but her skirts were so tightly twisted between her legs, and these

were so firmly entwined together, that there was no getting them apart.

"After many stifled cries, that seemed more like the twittering of some wounded bird, after much tugging and tearing on my side, scratching and biting on her's, my hand finally reached her naked knees; then it slipped up to the thighs. She was not stout, but as firm and as muscular as an acrobat. My hand reached the parting of the two legs; finally, I felt the slight down that covers Venus's Mount.

"It was useless to try and thrust my fore-finger between the lips. I rubbed her a little. She screamed for mercy. The lips parted slightly. I tried to get my finger in.

"'You are hurting me; you are scratching me,' she cried.

"Finally her legs relaxed, her dress was up, and she burst into tears — tears of fear, shame, and vexation!

"My finger then stopped; and as I withdrew it I felt that it was also wet with tears—tears which were by no means briny ones.

"'Come, don't be frightened!' said I, taking

her head between my hands, and kissing her repeatedly. 'I was only joking. I do not mean to harm you. There, you can get up! You can go, if you like. I surely will not detain you against your free will.'

"And thereupon I thrust my hand within her breasts, and began to pinch the tiny nipple, in size no bigger than a luscious wild strawberry, of which she seemed to have all the fragrance. She shook with excitement and delight as I did so.

"'No,' said she, without attempting to get up, 'I am in your power. You can do with me what you like. I can't help myself any longer. Only remember, if you ruin me I shall kill myself.'

"There was such an earnestness in her eyes as she said this that I shivered, and let her go. Could I ever forgive myself, if I were the cause of her committing self-murder?

"And still the poor girl looked at me with such loving, longing eyes, that it was plain she was unable to bear the scathing fire that consumed her. Was it not my duty, then, to make

her feel that soothing ecstacy of bliss she evidently longed to taste?

"'I swear to you,' said I, 'that I shall do you no harm; so do not be afraid, only keep quiet.'

"I pulled up her thick linen chemise, and I perceived the tiniest slit that could be seen, with two lips of a coralline hue, shaded by a soft, silky, black down. They had the colour, the gloss, the freshness of those pink shells so plentiful on Eastern strands.

"Leda's charms, which made Jupiter turn into a swan, or Danæ's, when she opened her thighs to receive far into her womb the burning golden shower, could not have been more tempting than the lips of this young girl.

"They parted of their own inward life, displaying, as they did so, a tiny berry, fresh with healthy life—a drop of dew incarnadined within the crimson petals of a budding rose.

"My tongue pressed it closely for a second, and the girl was madly convulsed with that burning pleasure she had never dreamt of before. A moment afterwards we were again in each

other's arms.

"'Oh, Camille,' said she, 'you do not know how I love you!'

"She waited for an answer. I closed her mouth with a kiss.

"'But tell me. Do you love me? Can you love me only a little?'

"'Yes,' said I, faintly; for even in such a moment I could not bring myself to tell a lie.

"She looked at me for a second.

"'No, you don't.'

"'Why not?'

"'I don't know. I feel that you do not care a straw for me. Tell me, is it not so?'

"'Well, if you think so, how can I convince you to the contrary?'

"'I don't ask you to marry me. I would not be any man's kept mistress, but if you really love me——'

"She did not finish her phrase.

"'Well!'

"'Can you not understand?' said she, hiding her face behind my ear, and nestling closer to me.

"'No.'

"'Well, if you love me, I am yours.'

"What was I to do?

"I felt loath to have a girl who offered herself so unconditionally, and yet would it not have been more than foolish to let her go without satisfying her craving and my own desire?"

"And then you know as for committing suicide it's all nonsense."

"Not quite so much as you think."

"Well, well, what did you do?"

"I? Well, I went halfway.

"Kissing her, I laid her on her side, I opened the tiny lips, I pressed the tip of my phallus between them. They parted, and little by little, half of the glans, then the whole head, went in.

"I pushed gently, but it seemed caught on each side, and especially in front it found an almost insurmountable obstacle. Just as when driving a nail in a wall, the point meets a stone, and hammering away, the tip gets blunt, then turns on itself, so as I pressed harder, the point of my tool was crushed and strangled.

I wriggled to find a way out of this blind alley.

"She groaned, but more with pain than with pleasure. I groped my way in the dark and gave another thrust, but my battering ram only crushed its head the more against the stronghold. I was in doubt whether I had not better put her on her back and force my entrance in real battle array, but as I pulled back I felt that I was almost overcome—no, not almost—but quite so, for I squirted her all over with my creamy, life-giving fluid. She, poor thing, felt nothing, or very little, whilst I, unnerved as I had been till then, and exhausted by my nightly rambles, fell almost senseless by her side. She looked at me for a moment, then sprang up like a cat, caught up the key that had fallen out of my pocket, and with a bound—was out of the door.

"Being too jaded to follow her, I was, a few moments afterwards, fast asleep; the first sound rest I had had for a long time.

"For a few days I was somewhat quieted, I even gave up attending the concerts and haunts where I could see Réné; I almost began to think that in time I might get indifferent, and

forget him.

"I was too eager, I endeavoured so hard to blot him at once from my mind, that my very anxiety prevented me from succeeding in doing so; I was so frightened not to be able to forget him, that that fear itself always brought his image to my mind."

"And your girl?"

"If I am not mistaken she felt for me what I felt for Teleny. She deemed it her bounden duty to avoid me, she even tried to despise me, to hate me, but she could not succeed in doing so."

"But why to hate you?"

"She seemed to understand that if she was still a virgin, it was simply because I cared so little for her; I had felt some pleasure with her, and that was more than enough for me.

"Had I loved and deflowered her, she would only have loved me more tenderly for the wound I had inflicted upon her.

"When I asked her if she was not grateful to me for having respected her maidenhood, she simply answered, 'No!' and it was a very

decided 'no' indeed. 'Besides,' added she, 'you did nothing, simply because you could do nothing.'

"'I could not?'

"'No.'

"A scuffle ensued again. She was once more locked within my arms and we were wrestling like two prize fighters, with as much eagerness though surely with less skill. She was a muscular little vixen, by no means weak; moreover she had begun to understand the zest which fighting gives to the victory.

"It was a real pleasure to feel her body palpitating against mine; and though she was longing to yield, it was only after much ado that I could get my mouth on her's.

"With no little difficulty I put her on my bed, and managed to get my head under her skirts.

"Women are silly creatures, full of absurd prejudices; and this unsophisticated country wench considered the compliment I was about to pay to her sexual organ as something like buggery.

"She called me a dirty beast, a pig, and other such pleasing epithets. She began by writhing and wriggling, and trying to slip away from me, but she thus only added to the pleasure I was giving her.

"Finally, she wedged my head between her thighs and pressed the nape of my neck with both her hands, so that even if I had wanted to take my tongue away from her burning lips, I could only have done so with an effort.

"I, however, remained there, darting, licking, scraping the little clitoris, till it cried for mercy, and its tears convinced her that this was a pleasure not to be disdained, for this I have found is the only argument with which to convince a woman.

"When all the inner parts were thoroughly lubricated by my tongue, and moistened by the soothing overflowings of unbearable pleasure; when she had tasted that ecstatic joy which one virgin can give to another without inflicting any pain or breaking the seal of her innocence, then the sight of her rapture made my own cock crow lustily. I therefore let it out of its dim dungeon, to drive it into the dark den.

"My acorn went in merrily, and then it was stopped in its career. Another mighty thrust gave me more pain than pleasure, for the resistance was so great that my ramrod seemed sprained in the action; the narrow and firm walls of the vagina dilated, and my piston was jammed in as though in a tight glove, and yet the hymeneal tissue was not reached.

"I asked myself why foolish nature has thus barred the way of pleasure? Is it to make the vain-glorious bridegroom believe that he is the pioneer of the unexplored regions, but does he not know that midwives are always artfully repairing the locks that adulterine keys have opened? Is it to make a religious ceremony out of it, and to give the plucking of this bud to some father confessor, this having long been among the many perquisites of the priestcraft?

"The poor girl felt as if a knife was being plunged within her, still she did not scream, nor moan, although her eyes filled with tears.

"Another thrust, one more effort, and the veil of the temple would be rent in twain.

"I stopped in time, however.

"'Can I, or can I not have you?'

"'You have ruined me already,' she replied, quietly.

"'I have not; you are still a virgin, simply because I am not a rascal. Only tell me, can I have you or not?'

"'If you love me, you can have me, but if you only do so for a moment's pleasure . . . . still, do what you like, but I swear that I'll kill myself afterwards, if you don't care for me.'

"'These are things that are said and not done.'

"'You'll see.'

"I pulled my phallus out of the den, but before allowing her to rise, I tickled her gently with the tip, making her feel ample satisfaction for the pain I had inflicted on her.

"'Could I or could I not have had you?' said I.

"'Imbecile,' she hissed like a snake, as she slipped out of my arms and was beyond my reach.

"'Wait till next time, and you will then see who is the imbecile,' said I, but she was already

out of hearing."

"I must own you were somewhat of a greenhorn; I suppose, however, that you had your revenge, next time."

"My revenge, if it can be called by that name, was a fearful one.

"Our coachman, a young, stalwart, broad-shouldered and brawny fellow, whose fondness had hitherto expended itself on his horses, had fallen in love with this slight girl, who looked as sapless as a holly twig.

"He had tried to woo her in honourable fashion in every possible way. His former continence and his newly-born passion had softened all that was boorish in him, he had plied her with flowers, ribbons and trinkets, but she had scornfully refused all his presents.

"He had offered to marry her at once; he had gone so far as to make her a free gift of a cottage and a bit of land he possessed in his country.

"She exasperated him by treating him almost with scorn, resenting his love as an insult. An irresistible longing was in his eyes, in her's a

vacant stare.

"Goaded to madness by her indifference, he had tried by strength what he could not obtain by love, and had had to understand that the fairer sex is not always the weaker one.

"After his attempt and failure she tantalized him all the more. Whenever she met him she would put her thumb-nail up to her top teeth and emit a slight sound.

"The cook, who had a latent fondness for this strong and sinewy young fellow, and who must have had an inkling that something had taken place between this girl and myself, evidently informed him of the fact, arousing thereby in him an ungovernable fit of jealousy.

"Stung to the quick, he hardly knew whether he loved or hated this girl most, and he cared but little what became of him provided he could satisfy his craving for her. All the softness which love had awakened gave way to the sexual energy of the male.

"Unperceived, or probably let in by the cook, he stealthily secreted himself in her room, and ensconced himself behind an old screen, which,

together with other lumber, had been stowed away there.

"His intention was to remain hidden till she was fast asleep, and then to get into her bed, and, *nolens volens*, to pass the night with her.

"After waiting there some time in mortal anxiety—for every minute was like an hour to him—he finally saw her come in.

"As she did so, she shut and locked the door behind her. His whole frame shook with joy at that slight act. First she clearly did not expect anyone, then she was in his possession.

"Two holes which he had made in the paper of the screen enabled him to see everything perfectly. Little by little she prepared herself for the night. She undid her hair, then did it up again in a loose knot. After which she took off her dress, her stays, her skirts, and all her under-garments. At last she was in her chemise.

"She then, with a deep sigh, took a rosary, and began to pray. He himself was a religious man, and would fain have repeated his prayers after her, but he vainly tried to mumble a few words. All his thoughts were on her.

"The moon was now in its full, and flooded the room with its mellow light, falling on her naked arms, on her rounded shoulders and small protruding breasts, shedding upon them all kinds of opaline tints, giving them the delicate gloss of satin and the sheen of amber, while the linen chemise fell in folds on her nether parts with the softness of flannel.

"He remained there motionless, almost awe-stricken, with his eyes fastened upon her, holding his thick, feverish breath, gloating on her with that fixed eagerness with which the cat watches the mouse, or the hunter the game. All the powers of his body seemed concentrated in the sense of vision.

"At last she finished her prayers, crossed herself, and rose. She lifted her right foot to get into her rather high bed, shewing the coachman her slender though well-shaped legs, her small but rounded buttocks, and, as she bent forward, the nether part of the two lips gaped, as one knee was already on the bed.

"The coachman, however, had not time enough to see this, for with a cat-like bound he

was already on her.

"She uttered the faintest of cries, but he had already clasped her in his arms.

"'Leave me! leave me! or I'll call for help.'

"'Call as much as you like, darling; but no one can or will come to your help before I have had you, for I swear by the Virgin Mary that I'll not leave this room before I've enjoyed you. If that *bougre* can use you for his pleasure, so shall I. If he has not—well, after all it is better to be a poor man's wife than a rich man's whore; and you know whether I have been wanting to marry you or not.'

"Saying these words, holding her with one hand clasped as in a vice, her back against him, he tried with the other to twist her head round so as to get to her lips; but, seeing that he could not, he pressed her down on the bed. Holding her by the nape of the neck, he thrust his other hand between her legs and gripped her middle part in his brawny palm.

"Being ready before-hand, thrusting himself between her parted legs, he began to press his

instrument against the lower part of the half-opened lips.

"Swollen and dry as they had remained after my attempt, his good-sized turgid phallus slipped, and the tip lodged itself at the upper corner. Then, like a heavy laden stamen when kissed by the deflowering wind scatters its pollen on the open ovaries around it, so, hardly had the turgid and overflowing phallus touched the tiny clitoris when it jutted forth its sappy seed not only on it, but it squirted over all the surrounding parts. As she felt her stomach and thighs bathed by the warm fluid, it seemed to her that she was burnt by some scalding corrosive poison, and she writhed as if in pain.

"But the more she struggled, the greater was the pleasure he felt, and his groans and the gurgling that seemed to mount from his middle parts up to his throat, testified the rapture in which he was. He rested for a moment but his organ lost none of its strength or stiffness, her contortions only excited him the more. Putting his huge hand between her legs,

he uplifted her on the bed, higher than she was, and brutally holding her down, he pressed the fleshy extremity of the glans against her, and the lips bathed in the slimy fluid parted asunder easily.

" It was hardly a question with him now of pleasure given or received, it was the wild overpowering eagerness which the male brute displays in possessing the female, for you might have killed him, but he would not have left go his hold. He thrust at her with all the mighty heaviness of a bull; with another effort, the glans was lodged between the lips, another one more, half the column was already in, when it was stopped by the as yet unperforated but highly dilated virginal membrane. Feeling himself thus stopped at the outer orifice of the vagina he felt a moment of exultation.

" He kissed her head with rapture.

" ' You are mine,' he cried with joy; ' mine for life and death, mine for ever and ever.'

" She evidently must have compared his wild delight with my cold indifference, and yet she tried to scream, but his hand stopped her

mouth. She bit him, still he did not heed it.

"Then, regardless of the pain he was causing, heedless of the strain he was giving the prisoner lodged in its narrow cage, he clasped her with all his strength, and with a last powerful thrust the vulva was not only reached but crossed; the membrane—so strong in the poor girl—was slit, his priapus was lodged deep into the vagina, and it slid up to the neck of the womb.

"She uttered a loud, shrill, piercing cry of pain and anguish, and the scream vibrating through the stillness of the night was heard all over the house. Regardless of any consequences of the noises already heard in answer to the scream, regardless of the blood gushing forth, he rapturously plunged and re-plunged his lance in the wound he had made, and his groans of pleasure were mixed with her plaintive wail.

"Finally he pulled his limber weapon out of her; she was free, but senseless and faint.

"I was just upon the steps, when I heard the cry. Although I was not thinking of the poor girl, still at once it seemed to me as if I recognized her voice, I flew up the steps, I

rushed into the house, and I found the cook pale and trembling in the passage.

"'Where is Catherine?'

"'In her room—I—I think.'

"'Then, who screamed?'

"'But—but I don't know. Perhaps she did.'

"'And why don't you go to her help?'

"'The door is locked,' said she, looking aghast.

"I rushed to the door. I shook it with all my strength.

"'Catherine, open! What's the matter?'

"At the sound of my voice the poor girl came back to life.

"With another mighty shake I burst the lock. The door opened.

"I had just time enough to catch sight of the girl in her blood-stained chemise.

"Her loose hair was all dishevelled. Her eyes were gleaming with a wild fire. Her face was contorted by pain, shame, and madness. She looked like Cassandra after she had been violated by Ajax's soldiers.

"As she stood, not far from the window, her glances from the coachman fell upon me with loathing and scorn.

"She now knew what the love of men was. She rushed to the casement. I bounded towards her, but forestalling me, she leapt out before the coachman or myself could prevent her; and although I caught the end of her garment, her weight tore it, and I was left with a rag in my hand.

"We heard a heavy thud, a scream, a few groans, then silence.

The girl had been true to her word.

END OF VOLUME I

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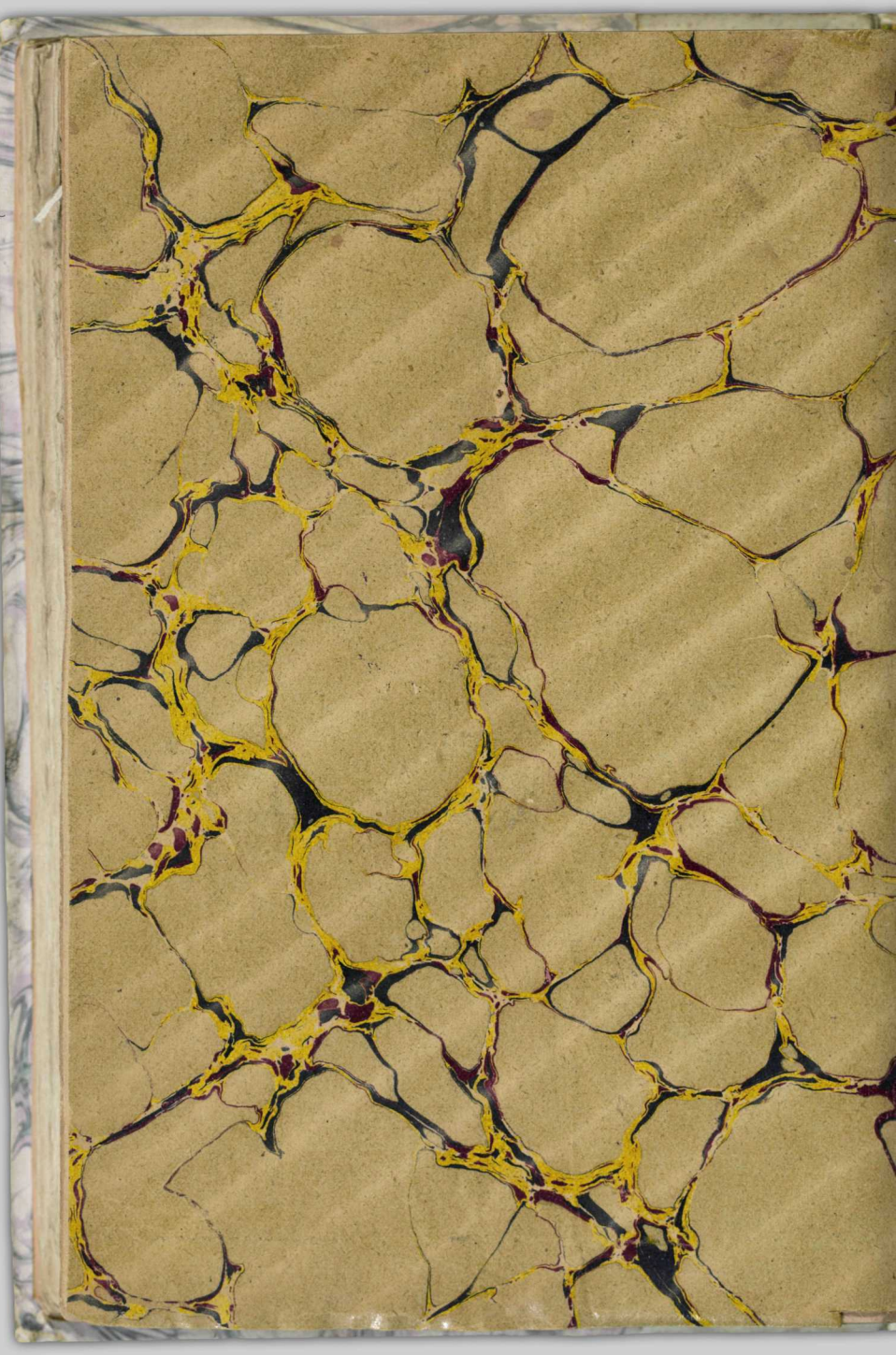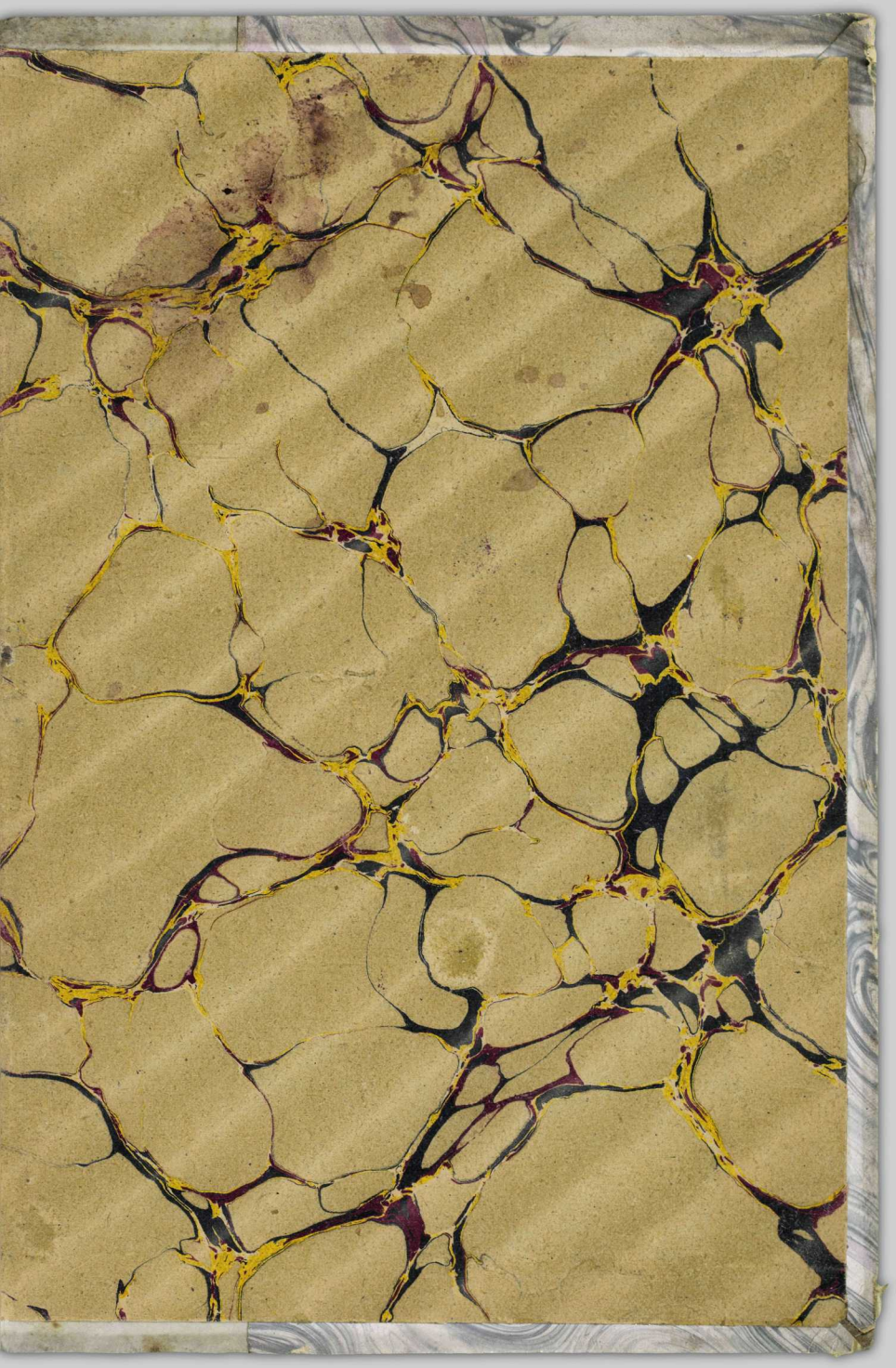
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