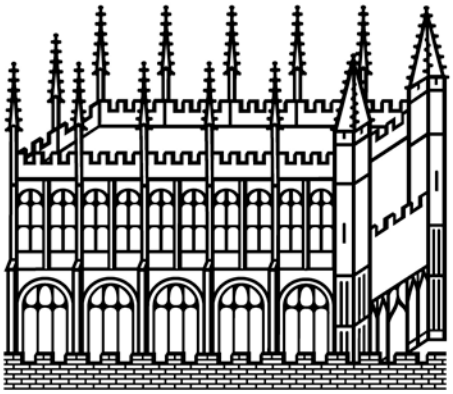
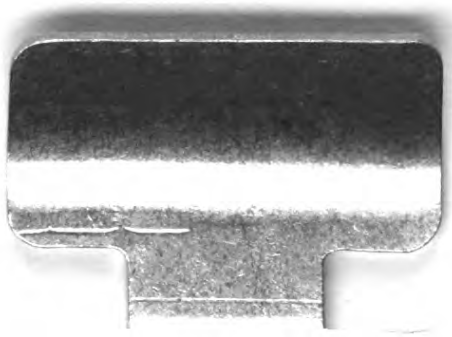


MARGUERITE, COUNT MORIN DEPUTY, ETC.

ANATOLE FRANCE




MAISTRE ANATOLE FRANCE

MARGUERITE
COUNT MORIN
ALFRED DE VIGNY
AND
THE PATH OF GLORY

MARGUERITE *and* COUNT MORIN DEPUTY *together with* ALFRED DE VIGNY *and* THE PATH OF GLORY

BY ANATOLE FRANCE

TRANSLATIONS BY
J. LEWIS MAY AND
ALFRED ALLINSON

LONDON
JOHN LANE THE BODLEY HEAD LIMITED

"Marguerite" and "Count Morin, Deputy," were first published in English separately in illustrated Demy 8vo editions in 1921. "Alfred de Vigny" is here translated into English for the first time. "The Path of Glory" was first published in English in a Demy 8vo edition in 1915.

This edition first published in 1927.

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

THE two short stories included in this volume are among the earlier work of Anatole France. "Marguerite," apart from the delicate beauty of its style, is of interest because it deals with the theme which was afterwards so successfully expanded in *The Crime of Sylvestre Bonnard*, namely, the solicitude of a scholarly old bachelor for the child of a woman whom he had loved in his youth, but who had wedded another suitor.

The principal incident in "Count Morin" relates to the dealings of a young would-be journalist with the editor of a provincial newspaper called Planchonnet, and tells how the young man laid siege to the heart of Madame Planchonnet. The episode reappears, with some more or less important modifications, in the volume entitled *Pierre Nozière*, published in 1899.

The essay on Alfred de Vigny first saw the light in 1868, when Anatole France was twenty-four years of age. It is a plain, workmanlike study of

a poet for whose serene and austere genius Anatole France always entertained a marked respect. Those who are interested in the *Juvenilia* of great writers will note that, though this conscientious little work is not without considerable merit, it betrays but a faint promise of those supreme qualities of humour and irony and of the incomparable music of style that were destined to win for Anatole France a conspicuous and an enduring place among the greatest writers of his country and, indeed, of the world. In marked contrast with Macaulay, for example, who wrote his essay on Milton with all its wonderful maturity of style, when he was hardly out of his 'teens; or with Bryce, who produced his *Holy Roman Empire*, which still retains its pre-eminence as a standard work, when he was but twenty-four, Anatole France displayed little precocity of literary talent. His Minerva was not born in panoply.

A second edition of the essay on Alfred de Vigny was published in 1923 by Monsieur Claude Aveline, and Anatole France then took occasion to add some notes of highly piquant interest. These notes are here reproduced by the courtesy of Messrs. Calmann-Levy of Paris.

"The Path of Glory," with which this volume

concludes, consists of a series of papers all bearing more or less directly upon the Great War, and was published by Edouard Champion in 1915.

The translation of "The Path of Glory" is by Mr. Alfred Allinson; for the remainder I myself am responsible.

J. Lewis May.

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MARGUERITE

PREFATORY LETTER TO THE FRENCH ILLUSTRATED EDITION

Publish *Marguerite*, dear Monsieur André Coq, if you so desire, but pray relieve me from all responsibility in the matter.

It would argue too much literary conceit on my part were I anxious to restore it to the light of day. It would argue, perhaps, still more did I endeavour to keep it in obscurity. You will not succeed in wresting it for long from the eternal oblivion whereunto it is destined. Ay me, how old it is! I had lost all recollection of it. I have just read it over, without fear or favour, as I should a work unknown to me, and it does not seem to me that I have lighted upon a masterpiece. It would ill beseem me to say more about it than that. My only pleasure as I read it was derived from the proof it afforded that, even in those far-off days, when I was writing this little trifle, I was no great lover of the Third Republic with its pinchbeck virtues, its militarist imperialism, its ideas of conquest, its love of money, its contempt for the handicrafts, its unswerving

predilection for the unlovely. Its leaders caused me terrible misgivings. And the event has surpassed my apprehensions.

But it was not in my calculations to make myself a laughing-stock, by taking *Marguerite* as a text for generalizations on French politics of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The specimens of type and the woodcuts you have shown me promise a very comely little book.

Believe me, dear Monsieur Coq,

Yours sincerely,

ANATOLE FRANCE.

La Béchellerie, 16th April, 1920.

5th July.

AS I left the Palais-Bourbon at five o'clock that afternoon, it rejoiced my heart to breathe-in the sunny air. The sky was bland, the river gleamed, the foliage was fresh and green. Everything seemed to whisper an invitation to idleness. Along the Pont de la Concorde, in the direction of the Champs-Elysées, victorias and landaus kept rolling by. In the shadow of the lowered carriage-hoods, women's faces gleamed clear and radiant and I felt a thrill of pleasure as I watched them flash by like hopes vanishing and reappearing in endless succession. Every woman as she passed by left me with an impression of light and perfume. I think a man, if he is wise, will not ask much more than that of a beautiful woman. A gleam and a perfume! Many a love-affair leaves even less behind it. Moreover, that day, if Fortune herself had run with her wheel a-spinning before my very nose along the pavement of the Pont de la Concorde, I should not have so much as stretched forth an arm to pluck her by her golden hair. I

lacked nothing that day; all was mine. It was five o'clock and I was free till dinner-time. Yes, free! Free to saunter at will, to breathe at my ease for two hours, to look on at things and not have to talk, to let my thoughts wander as I listed. All was mine, I say again. My happiness was making me a selfish man. I gazed at everything about me as though it were all a picture, a splendid moving pageant, arranged for my own particular delectation. It seemed to me as though the sun were shining for me alone, as though it were pouring down its torrents of flame upon the river for my special gratification. I somehow thought that all this motley throng was swarming gaily around me for the sole purpose of animating, without destroying, my solitude. And so I almost got the notion that the people about me were quite small, that their apparent size was only an illusion, that they were but puppets; the sort of thoughts a man has when he has nothing to think about. But you must not be angry on that score with a poor man who has had his head crammed chock-full for ten years on end with politics and law making and is wearing away his life with those trivial preoccupations men call affairs of state.

In the popular imagination, a law is something abstract, without form or colour. For me a law is a green baize table, sealing-wax, paper, pens, ink-

stains, green-shaded candles, books bound in calf, papers yet damp from the printer's and all smelling of printer's ink, conversations in green papered offices, files, bundles of documents, a stuffy smell, speeches, newspapers; a law, in short, is all the hundred and one things, the hundred and one tasks you have to fulfil at all hours, the grey and gentle hours of the morning, the white hours of middle day, the purple hours of evening, the silent, meditative hours of night; tasks which leave you no soul to call your own and rob you of the consciousness of your own identity.

Yes, it is so. I have left my own *ego* behind me there. It is scattered up and down among all sorts of memoranda and reports. Industrious junior clerks have put away a parcel of it in each one of their beautiful green filing cases. And so I have had to go on living without my *ego*, which, moreover, is how all politicians have to live. But an *ego* is a strangely subtle thing. And wonder of wonders! mine came back to me just now on the Pont de la Concorde. 'Twas he without a doubt and, would you believe it? he had not suffered so very much from his sojourn among those musty papers. The very moment he arrived I found myself again, I recognized my own existence, whereof I had not been conscious these ten years. "Ha ha!" said I

to myself, "since I exist, I am just as well pleased to know it. Behold I will set forth here and now to improve this new acquaintance by strolling, with a lover's thoughts in my heart, down the Champs-Élysées."

And this is why I am here, at this hour, beneath the sculptured steeds of Marly, more high-spirited than those aristocratic quadrupeds themselves; this is why I am setting foot in the avenue whose entrance is marked by their hoofs of stone perpetually poised in air. The carriages flow past endlessly, like a sombre scintillating stream of lava or molten asphalt, whereon the hats of the women seem borne along like so many flowers, and like everything else one sees in Paris, at once extravagant and pretty. I light up a cigar and, looking at nothing, behold everything. So intense is my joy that it scares me. It is the first cigar I have smoked for ten years. Oh yes, I grant I have begun as many as ten a day in my room; but those I scorched, bit, chewed and threw away; I never smoked them. This one I am really and truly smoking and the smoke it exhales is a cloud of poesy spreading grace and charm about it. What an interest I take in all I see. These little shops, which display at regular intervals their motley assortment of wares, fill me with delight. Here especially is one which I cannot forbear stop-

ping to look at. What I chiefly delight to contemplate there is a decanter with lemonade in it. The decanter reflects in miniature on its polished sides the trees around it and the women that pass by and the skies. It has a lemon on the top of it which gives it a sort of Oriental air. However, it is not its shape nor its colour that is the attraction in my eyes; I cannot keep my gaze from it, because it reminds me of my childhood. At the sight of it innumerable delightful scenes come thronging into my memory. Once again do I behold those shining hours, those hours divine of early childhood. Ah, what would I not give to be again the little boy of those days and to drink once more a glass of that precious liquid!

In that little shop, I find once more, besides the lemonade and the gooseberry syrup, all those divers things wherein my childhood took delight. Here be whips, trumpets, swords, guns, cartridge-pouches, belts, scabbards, sabretaches, all those magic toys which, from five to nine years old, made me feel that I was fulfilling the destiny of a Napoleon. I played that mighty rôle, in my tenpenny sodiers' kit, I played it from start to finish, bating only Waterloo and the years of exile. For, mark you, I was always the victor. Here, too, are coloured prints from Épinal. It was on them that I began to spell out those signs which to the learned reveal

a few faint traces of the Mighty Riddle. Yes, the sorriest little coloured daub that ever came out of a village in the Vosges consists of print and pictures, and what is the sum and substance of Science after all but just pictures and print.

From those Épinal prints I learned things far finer and more useful than anything I ever got from the little grammar and history books my schoolmasters gave me to pore over. Épinal prints, you see, are stories, and stories are mirrors of destiny. Blessed is the child that is brought up on fairy-tales. His riper years should prove rich in wisdom and imagination. And see! here is my own favourite story, *The Blue Bird*. I know him by his outspread tail. 'Tis he right enough. It is as much as I can do to prevent myself flinging my arms round the old shop-woman's neck and kissing her flabby cheeks. The Blue Bird, ah me, what a debt I owe him! If I have ever wrought any good in my life, it is all due to him. Whenever we were drafting a Bill with our Chief, the memory of the Blue Bird would steal into my mind amid the heaps of legal and parliamentary documents by which I was hemmed in. I used to reflect then that the human soul contained infinite desires, unimaginable metamorphoses and hallowed sorrows, and if, under the spell of such thoughts, I gave to the clause I chanced

to be engaged upon an ampler, a humaner sense, an added respect for the soul and its rights, and for the universal order of things, that clause would never fail to encounter vigorous opposition in the Chamber. The counsels of the Blue Bird seldom prevailed in the Committee stage. Howbeit some did manage to get through Parliament.

I now perceive that I am not the only one inspecting the little stall: a little girl has come to a halt in front of the brilliant display. I am looking at her from behind. Her long, bright hair comes tumbling in cascades from under her red velvet hood and spreads out on her broad lace collar and on her dress, which is the same colour as her hood. Impossible to say what is the colour of her hair (there is no colour so beautiful) but one can describe the lights in it; they are bright and pure and changing, fair as the sun's rays, pale as a beam of starlight. Nay, more than that, they shine, yes; but they flow also. They possess the splendour of light, and the charm of pleasant waters. Methinks that, were I a poet, I should write as many sonnets on those tresses as M. José Maria de Heredia composed concerning the Conquerors of Castille d'Or. They would not be so fine, but they would be sweeter. The child, so far as I can judge, is between four and five years old. All I can see of her face is the tip of her ear, daintier

than the daintiest jewel, and the innocent curve of her cheek. She does not stir; she is holding her hoop in her left hand; her right is at her lips as though she were biting her nails in her eager contemplation. What is it she is gazing at so longingly? The shop contains other things besides the arms and the gear of fighting men. Balls and skipping ropes are suspended from the awning. On the stall are baby dolls with bodies made of grey carboard, smiling after the manner of idols, monstrous and serene as they. Little sixpenny dolls, dressed like servant girls, stretch out their arms, little stumpy arms so flimsy that the least breath of air sets them a-tremble. But the little maid whose hair is made of liquid light has no eyes for these dolls and puppets. Her whole soul hangs upon the lips of a beautiful baby doll that seems to be calling her his mummy. He is hitched on to one of the poles of the booth all by himself. He dominates, he effaces everything else. Once you have beheld him, you see naught else save him.

Bolt upright in his warm wraps, a little swansdown tucker under his chim, he is stretching out his little chubby arms for some one to take him. He speaks straight to the little maid's heart. He appeals to her by every maternal instinct she possesses. He is enchanting. His face has three little dots, two

black ones for the eyes, and one red one for the mouth. But his eyes speak, his mouth invites you. He is alive.

Philosophers are a heedless race. They pass by dolls with never a thought. Nevertheless the doll is more than the statue, more than the idol. It finds its way to the heart of woman, long ere she be a woman. It gives her the first thrill of maternity. The doll is a thing august. Wherefore cannot one of our great sculptors be so very kind as to take the trouble to model dolls whose lineaments, coming to life beneath his fingers, would tell of wisdom and of beauty ?

At last the little girl awakens from her silent day-dream. She turns round and shows her violet eyes made bigger still with wonder, her nose which makes you smile to look at it, her tiny nose, quite white, that reminds you of a little pug dog's black one, her solemn mouth, her shapely but too delicate chin, her cheeks a shade too pale. I recognize her. Oh yes ! I recognise her with that instinctive certainty that is stronger than all convictions supported by all the proofs imaginable. Oh yes, 'tis she, 'tis indeed she and all that remains of the most charming of women. I try to hasten away but I cannot leave her. That hair of living gold, it is her mother's hair ; those violet eyes, they are her mother's own. Oh,

child of my dreams, child of my despair! I long to gather you to my arms, to steal you, to bear you away.

But a governess draws near, calls the child and leads her away! "Come, Marguerite, come along, it's time to go home."

And Marguerite, casting a look of sad farewell at the baby with its outstretched arms, reluctantly follows in the footsteps of a tall woman clad in black with ostrich feathers in her hat.

10th July.

 EAN, bring me file 117. . . . Now then, M. Boscheron, let's get this circular done. Take this down: *I draw your special attention, M. le Préfet, to the following point. An end must be put at the earliest possible moment to an abuse which, if suffered to continue, would tend to—tend to—I draw your special attention to the following point, M. le Préfet. An end must be put as soon as possible to an abuse.* Take that down, M. Boscheron."

But M. Boscheron, my secretary, respectfully remarks that I keep on dictating the same sentence. Jean deferentially places a file on my table.

"What's that, Jean?"

"File number 117. You asked me to fetch it, sir."

"I asked you for file number 117?"

"Yes, sir."

Jean gives me an anxious glance and retires.

"Where were we, M. Boscheron?"

"An end must be put as soon as possible to an abuse. . . ."

"That's right . . . *an abuse which would tend to diminish popular respect for Government servants and to transform* . . . transform, what a wealth of hidden things that word conceals. I cannot so much as pronounce it but a world of ideas and sentiments comes thronging pell-mell to invade the secret recesses of my being."

"I beg pardon, monsieur?"

"What did you say, M. Boscheron?"

Please repeat, monsieur; I didn't quite follow you."

"Really, Monsieur Boscheron? Possibly I was not very clear. Well, well! we will stop there if you like. Give me what I have dictated, I will finish it myself."

M. Boscheron gives me his notes, gathers up his papers, bows and retires. Left alone in my office, I fall to examining the wall-paper with a sort of idiotic minuteness. It has the appearance of green felt with here and there a yellow stain; I begin to draw little men on my paper; I make an effort to write; for the fact is my Chief has asked for the circular three times and has promised the Government Deputies that it shall go to the prefects forthwith. I am bound to let him have it. I begin reading it through: *to diminish popular respect for Government servants and to transform them.* I make a blot; then

with my pen I adorn it with hair. I transform it into a comet. I dream of Marguerite's tresses. The other day, in the Champs-Élysées, little filaments of gold, little delicate spirals stood out from the rest of her graceful tresses, with a singular brightness. You can see their like in fifteenth-century miniatures, also in some of an earlier date. Dante says in his *Vita Nuova :* " One day when I was busy drawing angels' heads . . ." And now here am I trying to draw angels' heads on a government circular. Come now, we must get on with it: *Government servants and to transform them—transform them* . . . How is it I simply cannot write a single word after that? How is it I am here dreaming still, as I have been ever since I rediscovered my *ego* on the Pont de la Concorde that evening of the lovely sunset? Transform, did I say? O God of mystery, nature, truth, if she whose name even now after four years I dare not utter, if she died in giving life to Marguerite, I should believe, I should know with the certainty of instinct, that the soul of the mother had passed into the daughter and that they are one and the same being.

1st November.

ALL'S well. I have lost my *ego* again. It has gone back into the green filing cases. Number 117 contains a good part of it. I have finished my circular. It is drawn up in good official style. We have a fine piece of legislation to get off before the holidays. My Chief speaks every day in the House. Every night I correct the proofs of his speeches. If the Blue Bird comes to see me now and again in the small hall of the Palais Bourbon, it is merely to advise me to tone down some rather too forcible expression and he never addresses himself to my imagination. I don't know whether I am living happily or unhappily since I don't know that I am living at all. I do not even recognize my own clothes. I picked up the hat of the Comte de Mérodac a little while ago and wore it for three days without knowing it, yet it is a romantic sombrero-like sort of thing worn nowadays by no one save this elderly nobleman. I cut an astounding figure, they told me, but I never noticed myself, and, if by

chance I had, I should not have heeded what I saw since it had nothing to do with politics. I am no longer a person ; I am a piece of the official machine. To-night I have neither proofs to correct nor official reception to attend. I have put on my slippers. There is always a tiny bit of my *ego* hidden away in these slippers. I am in my room seated by the fire and I am conscious of being there. By heaven, I wonder whether I should know myself in the glass. Let's have a look. Hum ! not so very . . . I didn't think I was so grave and respectable looking. I quite see that I shall have to take myself seriously. I have been a long time about it, but then it wasn't for me to begin.

I am a man of weight and I account myself such. But, alas, I do not know myself. And I am not anxious to acquire the knowledge ; it would be a tedious business. No, I haven't the smallest desire to hold converse with the grave and frigid gentleman who mimics all my movements. On the other hand, did I but dare, what a happy time I should have with that little fellow whose miniature I see there in that locket hanging against the frame of the mirror. He is building a house with dominoes. What a nice little chap. I feel like calling him and saying " Let's go and have a game together, shall we ? " But, alas, he is far away, very far away.

That little boy is myself as I was forty years ago. He is dead, just as dead as if I were lying beneath the sod, sealed up in a leaden coffin. For what have we in common, he and I? In what respect does he survive in me to-day? In what do my castles of cards resemble his tower of dominoes?

We say that we live, we miserable beings, because we keep dying over and over again.

I remember, it is true, how I used to play my games of an evening what time my mother sat sewing at the table and gazed at me, now and again, with a look full of that beautiful and simple tenderness that makes one adore life, bless God and gives one courage enough to fight a score of battles. Ah yes, hallowed memories, I shall treasure you in my heart like a precious balm which, till my days are done, will have power to soothe all bitterness and soften the very agony of death. But does the child that I then was survive in me to-day? No. He is a stranger to me; I feel that I can love him without selfishness and weep for him without unmanliness. He is dead and gone, and has taken away with him my innocent simplicities and my boundless hopes. We all of us die in swaddling clothes. Little Marguerite, that delightful image of unfolding life, how many times has she not died and what profound depths of irrevocable memories, what a grave of

dead thoughts and emotions have not already been delved within her, though she is but five years old. I, a stranger, a passer-by, know more of her life than she does and, in consequence, I am more truly she than she herself. After that let him who will prate of the feeling of identity and the consciousness of self.

Oh, gracious Heaven, what things we mortals be and into what an abyss of terrors we should be for ever plunging if we had but time to think, instead of making laws or planting cabbages. I feel like pulling my slippers off my feet and pitching them out of the window, since they have called me back to the consciousness of my existence. Our lives are only bearable provided we do not think about them.

5th July.

IT is a year ago to-day since I fell in with that little girl in front of a toyshop in the Champs-Élysées, the child of her who first awakened in me the sense of beauty.

I was happy before I saw her; but the poetry of the wide world was unknown to me, nor had I had experience of the dolorous joys of love. The first time I saw Marie was one Good Friday at a classical concert to which her father, an old diplomat with a passion for music, who had heard the finest orchestras of every Court in Europe, had conducted her attired in stately weeds of solemn black. Her mourning garb only served to accentuate her radiant beauty. The sight of her aroused in me feelings which bore, I think, a close resemblance to religious exaltation. I was no longer very young. The uncertainty of my worldly position, dependent as it then was upon the vicissitudes of a political party, combined with my natural timidity to deprive me of all hope of figuring as a successful suitor. I often saw her at her father's and she treated me with an air of open

friendliness that did not encourage me to foster higher ambitions. It was clear I did not impress her as the sort of man with whom she could fall in love. As for me, the sight of her and the sound of her voice produced in me such a state of delicious agitation that the mere memory of it, mingled though it be with grief, still avails to make me in love with life.

Nevertheless, shall I avow it? I longed to hear her and to see her always; I would have died in rapture at her side, but I was never fain to wed her. No, some instinct of harmony held desire remote from my heart. "It was not love, then," someone will say. I know not what it was, but I know that it filled my soul.

Clearly, however, the feelings I experienced cannot have been strange to the heart of man, since I have found them expressed with power and sweetness in the works of the poets, in Virgil, in Racine and Lamartine. They have given utterance to the emotions which I but felt. I could not break silence. The miracles wrought in my soul by this young girl will remain for ever unrevealed. For two years I lived an enchanted life; then, one day, she told me she was going to be married. My feelings, as I have said, bear a strong resemblance to religious emotion. They are sad, but in their

sadness they still preserve their charm. Grief corrupts them not. From suffering they derive a wholesome bitterness that lends them strength. I listened to her with that gentle courage which comes with renunciation. She was marrying a man senior to myself, a widower, almost an old man, whose birth and fortune had marked him out for the public career in which he had displayed a haughtiness of disposition and much misplaced courage. Although I moved in a lower sphere, I came in contact with him on several important occasions. I belonged to a political group with views very similar to his own, but we had never been able to meet without considerable friction and, although the newspapers treated us with the same approval or, as was more often the case, with the same hostility, we were not friends, far from it, and we avoided each other with sedulous care.

I was present at the wedding. I saw, and I shall ever see, Marie wearing her white dress and lace veil. She was a little pale and very lovely. I was struck, without apparent reason, by the impression of fragility with which this girl who was animated by so poetic a soul seemed to give one. This impression, which I think occurred to no one but myself, was only too well founded. I never saw Marie again.

She died after three years of married life, leaving a little girl ten months old. An indescribable feeling of tender affection has always drawn me to this child, to Marie's Marguerite. An unconquerable desire to see her took possession of me.

She was being brought up at —— near Melun, where her father had a château standing in the midst of a magnificent park. One day I went to —— and wandered for hours, like a thief, about the park boundaries. At last, through a gap in the trees, I caught sight of Marguerite in the arms of her nurse, who was dressed in black. She was wearing a hat with white plumes and an embroidered pelisse. I cannot say in what respect she differed from any other child, but I thought she was the fairest in the world. It was autumn. The wind that was sighing in the trees was whirling the dead leaves about in little eddies as they floated to earth. Dead leaves covered all the long avenue in which the little white-robed child was being carried up and down. An immense sadness took possession of me. At the edge of a bed of flowers as white as the raiment of Marguerite, an old gardener who was gathering up the fallen leaves saluted his little mistress with a smile and, with his hand on his rake and hat in hand, spoke to her with the gentle gaiety of old men who are not overburdened with their thoughts. But she paid no

heed to him. With her little hand like to a star she sought her nurse's breast. As I hurried away with grief in my heart, the nurse resumed her walk and I heard the sound of the dead leaves sighing sorrowfully beneath her steps.

10th July.

THE President of the Chamber rises and says: "The motion proposed by Messrs. ——— and ——— is now put."

The Prime Minister, without quitting his seat, says: "The Government does not assent to the motion."

The President rings his bell and says: "A ballot has been demanded. A ballot will therefore be taken. Those in favour of Messrs. ——— and ———'s motion must place a white paper in the urn; those who are against it, a blue paper."

There was a great movement in the hall. The Deputies poured out in a disorderly mob into the corridors, while the ushers passed the white metal urn along the tiers of seats. The corridors were full of the sound of shuffling feet, and of shouting and gesticulating people. Grave looking young men and excited old ones went passing by. The air was pierced with the sound of voices calling out figures:

"Eleven votes."

"No, nine."

"They are being checked."

"Eight against."

"No, not at all; eight for."

"What, the amendment is carried?"

"Yes."

"The Government is beaten?"

"Yes."

"Ah!"

The President's bell is heard in the corridors.

Slowly the hall fills again.

The President standing up with a paper in his hand rings his bell for the last time and says:

"The following is the result of the ballot on the motion proposed by Messrs. ——— and ———. Number of votes 470; for the motion 239; against 231. The motion is carried."

There is an immense sensation. The Ministers get up and leave their seats. Two or three friends shake them timidly by the hand. It's all over, they are beaten. They go under and I with them. I no longer count. I make up my mind to it. To say that I am happy would be to go too far. But it spells the end of my worries and bothers and toils. I have regained my freedom, but not voluntarily. Repose and liberty, I've got them back again, but it is to my defeat that I owe them. An honourable defeat it is true, but painful all the same because our

ideas suffer with ourselves. How many things are involved in our fall, alas. Economy, public security, tranquillity of conscience and that spirit of prudence, that continuity of policy, which gives a nation its strength. I hurried away to shake hands with the Chief of my department, proud of having rendered faithful service to so upright a leader. Then, pushing my way through the crowd that had gathered about the precincts of the Palais Bourbon, I crossed the Seine and made my way slowly towards the Madeleine. At the top of the boulevard there was a barrow of flowers drawn up alongside the kerb. Between the two shafts was a young girl making up bunches of violets. I went up to her and asked her for a bunch. I then saw a little girl of four sitting on the barrow amid the flowers. With her baby fingers she was trying to make bunches like her mother. She raised her head at my approach and, with a smile, held out all the flowers she had in her hands. When she had given them all to me, she blew kisses.

I was extremely flattered. "I must have a kindly look about me," I said to myself, "for a child to smile a welcome at me like that. What is your name?" I asked her.

"Marguerite," replied her mother.

It was half-past six. There was a newsvendor's

hard by. I bought a paper. As soon as I glanced at it I saw that I was in for a wigging. The political editor, having referred to my Chief as an individual of ill omen, spoke of me too, on the first page, as a sinister creature. But, after Marguerite's kisses, I could not believe it. I felt at once a lightness and a sort of emptiness at heart; both glad and sorrowful.

A week later found me on my way to —— near Melun, where I had taken a little house hard by the château of Marguerite's upbringing. In my eyes it was the fairest region in the world.

As we approached the station I looked out of the carriage window. The silver river flowed in graceful curves between willows, until it vanished from the sight. But long after it was lost to view one could divine its course by the rows of poplars which lined its banks. A weathercock and two towers visible amid the trees marked the site of the town. Then I exclaimed, " Here is the resting place for me, here I will lay my head."

25th July.

THE walk I love best is the walk to Saint-Jean, for there, about a hundred yards from the town, is a little wood, or rather a little half-wild cluster of hornbeams, maples, limes and lilac bushes, a bouquet that murmurs in the breeze. The very first day I discovered it, I felt its charm. I determined to make love to it; I made up my mind to know it tree by tree, to search out its humblest plants, its vetches, its saxifrages, and to see whether there was no Solomon's seal to be found growing beneath the shade of the big trees. I kept my word and now I am beginning to make acquaintance with the flora and fauna of my little wood. I had been reclining on the grass to-day for the space of an hour, book in hand, when I heard some one crying in a faint voice. I looked up and beheld a little girl standing beside an elderly man and weeping. The man was undeniably old. His face was long and pallid. There was an expression of sadness in his eyes and his mouth drooped

mournfully. He had a skipping-rope in his hand and was looking fixedly at the child. Then he turned aside to brush away a tear from his cheek. It was then that I beheld him full face and saw that he was Marguerite's father. I was shocked at the great change that illness and sorrow had wrought in his haughty mien. Despair was graven on his countenance and he seemed to be calling for help.

I went up to him and, in response to my offer to assist him in any way possible, he explained with some embarrassment that a ball with which his little girl had been playing had got caught in a tree and that his stick, which he had thrown up in order to dislodge it, had become entangled in the branches. He was at his wits' end.

Only a few years before, this same man had circumvented the policy of England and imparted a vigorous stimulus to French diplomacy in Europe. Then he fell with honour, and was followed in his retirement by a profound but honourable unpopularity. And now, behold his powers are unequal to the task of dislodging a ball from a tree. Such is the frailty of man. As for his daughter, Marie's daughter, a sort of presentiment forbade me to look in her face. And then when at length I did look at her, I could not tear myself away from such a

sorrowful object of contemplation. She was no longer the little pink and white child I had seen in the Champs-Élysées; she had grown taller and thinner, and her face was wan as a waxen taper. Her languid eyes were encircled with blue rings. And her temples . . . what invisible hand had laid those two sad violets upon her temples?

"There! there! there!" cried the old man as he stretched forth a trembling arm which pointed aimlessly in all directions.

The first thing to be done was to help him. By means of a stone which I threw up into the tree, I soon managed to bring the ball down. X . . . witnessed its fall with childish delight. He had not recognized me. I hurriedly escaped to spare him the trouble of thanking me and myself the agony of seeing the change that had taken place in Marie's daughter.

10th August.

I SELDOM go out. I am no longer moved by the beauty of things. Or to speak more truly, the more pleasurable and splendid aspects of nature give me pain. All day long I sully sheet after sheet of paper and beguile the tedious hours with the half-faded recollections of my childhood. What I am writing will be burned. I should be ashamed that pages, tear-stained and dream-haunted, should fall beneath the eyes of grave, sober-minded folk. What would they see in them? Naught but childish faces.

20th August.

TO-DAY I went for a stroll by the river in whose blue waters are mirrored the willows and the houses that befringe its banks. There is a seductive charm about running waters. They bear along with them as they flow all those idlers who love to dream their time away.

The river lured me as far as the Château de —— which had witnessed the betrothal and the death of Marie, and the birth of Marguerite. My heart tolled a knell within me when I saw once more that peaceful abode, which, despite the scenes of sorrow enacted within its halls, speaks, with its white pillared façade, of naught save elegant opulence and luxurious repose. I was so overcome that, to save myself from falling, I clung to the bars of the park gate and gazed at the wide lawns which stretched away as far as the flight of steps which the hem of Marie's robe had kissed so often. I had been there some minutes when the gate was opened and X . . . came out.

On this occasion, also, he was accompanied by his child: but this time she was not walking. She was lying in a perambulator which was being pushed by a governess. With her head resting on an embroidered pillow in the shadow of the lowered hood, she resembled one of those little waxen images of saint or martyr, embellished with silver filigree, on whose wounds and gems the nuns of Spain are wont to pore in the solitude of their cells.

Her father, elegantly dressed, presented a faded, tear-stained countenance. He advanced towards me with little faltering steps, took me by the hand and led me to his little girl.

"Tell me," he said in the tone of a child asking a favour, "you don't think she has changed since you last saw her, do you? It was the day she threw her ball up into the tree."

The perambulator which we were following in silence came to a halt in the Bois Saint-Jean. The governess lowered the hood. Marguerite lay with her head thrown back, her eyes big with terror, and she was stretching out her arms to push aside something that we could not see. Oh, I guessed well enough what invisible hand it was. The same hand that had touched the mother was now laid upon the child. I fell on my knees. But the phantom departed and Marguerite, raising her head, lay

resting peacefully. I gathered some flowers and laid them reverently beside her. She smiled. Seeing her come back to life I gave her more flowers and sang to her, endeavouring to beguile her. The air and the feeling of happiness she now experienced brought back to her that desire to live which had forsaken her. At the end of an hour her cheeks were almost rosy. When it grew cool and we had to take the little suffering child back to the château again, her father took my hand as we parted and, pressing it, said in suppliant tones :

" Come again to-morrow."

21st August.

I RETURNED next day. On the steps of the Empire château I encountered the family doctor. He is a spare, elderly man whom you meet wherever there is good music to be heard. He seems like a man perpetually listening to the harmonies of some inward concert. He is for ever under the spell of sounds and lives by his ear alone. He is specially noted for his treatment of nervous complaints. Some say he is a genius; others that he is mad. Certainly there is something peculiar about him. When I saw him he was coming down the steps, his feet, his finger and his lips moving in time to some intricate measure.

"Well, doctor," I said with an involuntary quaver in my voice, "and how is your little patient?"

"She means to live," he answered.

"You will pull her through for us, won't you?" I said eagerly.

"I tell you she means to live."

"And you think, doctor, that people live just as

long as they really want to and that we do not die save with our own consent ? "

" Certainly."

I walked with him along the gravel path. He stopped for a moment at the gate, his head bowed as if in thought.

" Certainly," he said again, " but they must really want to and not merely think they want to. Conscious will is an illusion that can deceive none save the vulgar. People who believe they will a thing because they say they will it, are fools. The only genuine act of volition is that in which all the obscure forces of our nature take part. That will is unconscious, it is divine. It moulds the world. By it we exist, and when it fails we cease to be. The world *wills*, otherwise it would not exist."

We walked on a few steps farther.

" Look here," he exclaimed, tapping his stick against the bark of an oak tree that spread out its broad canopy of grey branches above our heads, " if that fellow there had not *willed* to grow, I should like to know what power could have made him do so."

But I had ceased to listen.

" So you have hopes," I said at length, " that Marguerite . . ."

But he was a stubborn little old fellow. He

murmured as he walked away: "The Will's crowning Victory is Love."

And I stood and watched him as he departed with little quick steps, beating time to a tune that was running in his head.

I went quickly back to the château and found little Marguerite. The moment I saw her, I realized that she had the will to live. She was still very pale and very thin, but her eyes had more colour in them and were not so big, and her lips, lately so dead-looking and so silent, were gay with prattling talk.

"You are late," she said. "Come here, see! I have a theatre and actors. Play me a beautiful piece. They say that 'Hop o' my Thumb' is nice. Play 'Hop o' my Thumb' for me."

You may be sure I did not refuse. However, I encountered great difficulties at the very outset of my undertaking. I pointed out to Marguerite that the only actors she had were princes and princesses, and that we wanted woodmen, cooks and a certain number of folks of all sorts.

She thought for a moment and then said:

"A prince dressed like a cook; that one there looks like a cook, don't you think?"

"Yes, I think so too."

"Well, then, we'll make woodmen and cooks out of all the princes we have over."

And that's what we did. O Wisdom, what a day we spent together!

Many others like it followed in its train. I watched Marguerite taking an ever firmer hold on life. Now she is quite well again. I had a share in this miracle. I discovered a tiny portion of that gift wherein the apostles so richly abounded when they healed the sick by the laying on of hands.

Editor's Note.—I found this manuscript in a train on the Northern Railway. I give it to the public without alteration of any sort, save that, as the names were those of well-known persons, I have thought it well to suppress them.

ANATOLE FRANCE.

COUNT MORIN, DEPUTY

COUNT MORIN, DEPUTY

IT WAS still but a sort of overgrown schoolboy when Fontanet suddenly emerged into consequence by reason of his law degree, his precocious beard and his advanced opinions. It was in 1868. He lectured to members of the Junior Bar and even contributed satirical articles to the little Reviews of the Latin Quarter. While he was making himself known, his father was becoming a celebrity. That was an advantage of which my friend availed himself with the delightful alacrity that never forsook him. Though he saw me less often than formerly, his friendliness towards me suffered no abatement. For this I was greatly beholden to him. One morning we had the pleasure of walking through the Jardin du Luxembourg together. It was springtime, the sky was clear. The light that shone through the tender green of the fresh foliage was soft and pleasant to the eye. There was a sense of gladness in the air and I would fain have taken

Love for my theme. But, while the sparrows were twittering among the leaves and a pigeon rested with folded wing upon the shoulder of a statue, Fontanet held forth to me as follows:

"I have got a piece of good news for you: M. Veulet is about to enter on an active political career. We have at length prevailed on him to take this step. At the next election he will stand as an independent candidate for one of the districts in the department of the Seine-et-Marne. He is looking out for some one to act as his private secretary during the electoral campaign. It occurred to me that the position might suit you."

"I don't know," I answered, "whether I should be equal to the work."

"Oh," replied Fontanet, with that alluring grace which constitutes his great attraction, "if the position were one that required decision, initiative, energy, I should never have thought of suggesting you. I know you through and through and I realize that, though at bottom you are intelligent enough, you've no dash, no spontaneity about you."

"No," said I, "I have not."

"You lack quick-wittedness," he added.

"Quite right," I answered, "I do."

"You are a little heavy," he went on, "a little sleepy. And it would be wrong to judge you by

appearances as people usually do. But don't be afraid. When you are with M. Veulet, your work will be all cut and dried. You will only have to stick at it a bit."

Observing that, despite his efforts to reassure me, I was still rather inclined to hesitate, he added:

"Laisse-toi faire—Do as they ask you. It would smarten you up tremendously."

I have never experienced the smallest desire to be smartened up, but "laisser faire"—*that* always had an attractive sound about it. So "laisser faire" carried the day and it was arranged that I should go to the theatre that very night; that, on my arrival there, I should proceed straight up to Madame Fontanet's box, where, in addition to that estimable lady, I should find M. Fontanet, senior, a president of the Bar, who would himself introduce me to M. Veulet.

"So," said I to Fontanet in order to get as much information as I could on the subject that was uppermost in my mind, "M. Veulet is really a man of note?"

"Oh," answered Fontanet, in a tone of conviction, "he's great!"

"I can quite believe it," I replied, for I had heard the same thing said about a number of people. "But what is he specially great at?"

With a shrug of his shoulders Fontanet told me I was asking ridiculous questions. That, too, I readily believed. My adverse critics have always commanded my respect.

Nevertheless he was good enough to add that M. Veulet had devoted his youth to the abolition of slavery.

"He has served," he said, "as a volunteer in both hemispheres. He fought in Peru under General Pezet against the Spaniards. He was at Pittsburg and the Siege of Corinth. He fought against the slave party under General Sherman in Liberia and under Stephen Allen Benson against the niggers in Palm Island He fought at Warsaw under Langiewicz beside Mlle. Pustowoitoff; in the Caucasus under Schamyl against the Russians, and single-handed against all comers on board a slave ship."

"Nothing could be finer," I exclaimed.

"Nothing save the gift of oratory," answered Fontanet.

In the evening I duly attended at the Théâtre Français. There I found M. Fontanet, senior, who, between the acts, introduced me to M. Veulet in front of Voltaire's statue. M. Veulet was standing amidst a group of friends. On hearing my name he vouchsafed me a nod. He thought to display

his benevolence: I was conscious only of his superiority. I was so overcome that I went and hid myself behind his auditors. From there I contemplated him. He somehow suggested a river, and I took him to be rather more than fifty years of age.

He was tallish and held his head erect. His beard conveyed the idea of genius and virtue, though it was really rather difficult at first to decide which of these impressions was the stronger. His skull was remarkable, but not on account of its size. It was, on the contrary, rather small, and pointed; but it looked so bare, so yellow and so shiny that, at the sight of it, one fell to thinking of the attrition it had so generously undergone in all the wars, expeditions and hardships which its owner had been through in the distant lands. It reflected the light so powerfully that it seemed all aglow, and one might be forgiven for doubting whether it was the gas jets which illumined it or whether there still played about it a few glorious rays from the scorching sun that had beaten down on this soldier-explorer in climes beyond the seas. The lines that wrinkled his forehead, though less becoming than one might have wished, were merged in the dazzling radiance of the cranium. The eyes were small and grey; but what imparted an extraordinary grandeur to

the whole countenance was the nose. By its astounding length it gave rise to all manner of vast and vague ideas. It was a nose that descended straight down between a pair of hollow cheeks till it reached a long white beard which adorned the whole physiognomy with that aspect of majestic repose which characterizes the Kings of antique legends and the bisons of the Missouri.

You may readily suppose that such a man presented a venerable appearance. His tall frame, spare yet robust, rested on two feet which, in another, might possibly have seemed flat, but which were encased in a pair of splendid warrior-like boots; truly heroic foot-gear.

As I listened, I heard him saying:

"Not a day passes but I receive newspapers from every country in the world, Albania, Herzegovina, Croatia, Bosnia, Transylvania, Barbary, Labrador, Maharashtra, and when I happen to notice among the general news that a miller belonging to Marburg has been drowned in the Drave or that a poor Sudra of Catmandou has been eaten by a tiger, my eyes fill with tears and I feel as though I were father, mother, wife and children all in one to these unhappy creatures."

At this point the bell went and interrupted his discourse.

"How splendid!" I murmured to myself as I returned to my seat.

Next day I was M. Veulet's secretary.

Shortly afterwards I was copying some addresses out of the directory when my worthy chief summoned me to his room. Hardly had I got inside the door when he began to give vent to raucous groans accompanied by a hideous contraction of all the muscles of his face. I was horribly scared.

"It's all right," he said kindly, seeing my alarm. "It's only rheumatics, the result of spending fourteen hours in a marsh in the Ukraine. It's complicated at the present moment with neuralgic pains caused by a bullet that hit me in the head when riding alone through a forest in Texas. But please don't worry about it. I don't."

And indeed he seemed not to suffer the least inconvenience from pains which a moment before had made him cry out as if he were on the rack.

"My young friend," said he, "you will soon be able to be of service to me. I have not yet said anything to you on the question of salary. It is both equitable and necessary that all work should have its reward. You've only got to say the word, just one word, and I will give you any amount you care to name. But if you take my advice you will

leave the whole thing to me. I promise you, you'll have no cause to regret it."

At those words I realized beyond any shadow of doubt that, unless I was a fool to myself, the most short-sighted and thick-headed creature that ever was, in short a colossal dunderhead, I had just got to put aside all idea of remuneration. I did so with a wave of the hand.

I had immediate occasion to congratulate myself on taking this course, for M. Veulet rewarded me with a smile full of promise which assured me that my fortune was made. Then he slowly unbuttoned his frock-coat, laid his hand on his heart, drew forth a cigar which was reposing upon it and offered it to me. It was a little cigar of quite an ordinary brand. But how true it is that the value of every gift depends upon the manner in which it is bestowed. M. Veulet proffered me this cigar with a gesture of such sweeping magnificence that I recognized at once that he was awarding me a cigar of honour.

From that day onwards we devoted all our time and energies to our electoral area in the department of the Seine-et-Marne. To be quite frank, we hardly knew anything about it. M. Veulet, who had drunk of the waters of nearly every river in the world, had never stayed his steps by the

banks of the Marne. He deputed to me the task of studying the needs of the people whose votes we were about to canvass. I looked up the gazetteers and discovered that their occupations were manufacturing and agricultural. From this I inferred that they had need of sun and rain and that they required peace. My employer did not have it in his power to control the winds which bring the clouds together and scatter them again, but he was one of those fortunate beings who know how to hold out the symbolical olive branch to a grateful proletariat. He often alluded to the Brotherhood of Nations; "Take a flute," he said, "and go and play upon it in the woods; all creatures will draw near to you to listen; in the same way there is a harmony that draws the nations together; 'tis to this harmony that we must give ear." And I looked with admiration on this old warrior covered with scars, who longed for the peace of the world. He inscribed as watchwords on his election address:

"No more conscription; no more standing armies!"

Captious critics might perhaps have inquired by what process M. Veulet proposed to disarm our neighbours simultaneously with ourselves. But I was not a captious critic and my spirit was fulfilled of enthusiasm and hope.

While I was engaged in studying the needs of our constituents, M. Veulet was conferring with several advocates who formed a sort of Committee, his General Staff, as it were. There were a dozen or fourteen of them who used to come and enlighten M. Veulet on certain matters appertaining to administrative jurisprudence. We had indeed a redoubtable official candidate against us; a man whose mandate, which had been several times renewed, and whose personal position rendered him a powerful opponent, to wit Comte Morin.

I had the pleasure of seeing among them M. Fontanet, senior, who looked somewhat like a Roman with his bushy eyebrows, heavy cheeks and square chin. As he passed by he waved me a friendly greeting with his finger-tips, an act of condescension that flattered me the more because he was closely surrounded by a throng of confrères whose attention he was monopolizing. He certainly did not abuse the interest which attached to his pronouncements, for he never uttered more than four or five sentences at any one meeting; and of those he was accustomed to devote one to lauding the vanished glories of the Comédie-Française and expatiating on the talents and charms of the delicious Madame Allan.

"You never knew her, you fellows," he was wont to say to his young confrères.

And they would go away declaring " Fontanet is an artist to his finger-tips."

That caused me to look at his nails. They were square and embedded in his fingers, which were short and fat. His son frequently accompanied him. On each occasion he would ask me whether I was smartening up. That rather got on my nerves but he had a pleasant way of calling me " my lad " which made me quite happy. Then he would proceed to impart information.

" Well, that Comte Morin of yours has been up to some nice games. He has presented a banner to the Horticultural Association. What a cynical old humbug ! "

I found it necessary to ask Fontanet to explain, and I did not give rein to my indignation until after I understood that this gift of a banner constituted a singularly unprincipled electioneering manœuvre.

However, our affairs were going on very satisfactorily. A group of electors requested M. Veulet in flattering terms to stand as their candidate.

M. Veulet replied as follows :

" It was my fondest hope to spend the remainder of my days in studious retirement. You have decided otherwise. I hasten to respond to the appeal of the good folk who honour me with their

confidence. There are grave moments in the political life of a country when to stand aside would be to desert her in her hour of need. You may count upon me."

The battle was joined. We had to carry on the fight. M. Veulet sent me to the chief town of the constituency as sub-editor of the *Independent*, the editor-in-chief of which was M. Saint-Florentin.

I murmured as I stepped into the railway carriage: "May I render good service to my dear, dear master and may I learn the needs of the inhabitants of the ——th electoral division of the department of the Seine-et-Marne."

As the train drew near my destination, I looked out of the carriage window. The silver waters of the river were gliding on between the willows, winding in gracious curves till they vanished from sight; but, long after the stream had been lost to view, you could divine its meanderings by the line of poplars which bordered it. A steeple and two towers, rising amid the trees, indicated the site of the town. Soon I perceived the boulevards and the beginning of the houses. The place seemed invested with an atmosphere of tranquil happiness. There it lay, small and gem-like beneath an azure sky in which light, fleecy clouds floated motionless. The sight of it suggested repose and homely de-

lights. Nevertheless I was going there to introduce political discord.

I inquired my way to the *Independent*. It was close to the station, in a little, low house covered with wistaria. I found M. Saint-Florentin in his office. He had taken off his coat and waistcoat and he was writing. He was a giant, and a giant of the most hirsute description I had ever encountered. He was as swarthy as a nigger. Every time he moved there was a sound as of rustling horsehair, and he had a sort of wild-beast scent about him. He did not cease writing; puffing and blowing, his chest bared to the air, he went on till he had finished his article. Not until then did he inquire of me what my business was. When I told him that M. Veulet had appointed me his sub-editor, he answered: "Quite so," and mopped his forehead. I asked him what my duties would be.

"Always the same old thing," was his reply.

I had to make a frank avowal of my complete ignorance of everything pertaining to journalism. So far from this telling against me, the confession called forth a sudden manifestation of generosity. He smiled upon me, extended his hand and asked me to dine with him and his family.

He gave me his address and added:

"When you get there, ask for M. Planchonnte.

That is my real name. Away from the office here we drop Saint-Florentin. It's Planchonnet out of business hours."

I made several attempts to lead the conversation round to the subject of M. Veulet's candidature, in which I was so greatly interested. He seemed, however, to regard the matter with marked coldness.

Nevertheless there was no coldness about his article. I read it that evening. What fiery eloquence! The banner presented to the Horticultural Association was the text of his fulminations. How forcibly did my editor-in-chief denounce such corrupt practices. He passed alternately from wrath to irony, from irony to wrath. Comte Morin was directly aimed at. The article pictured him as a redoubtable, resourceful and unprincipled antagonist, having recourse to subterranean manœuvres and exhibiting tireless energy, underhand activity, an ambition and a fanaticism that attained the proportions of genius.

"Well, anyhow," I said as I folded up the paper, "it's well to know something of the adversary."

As I had an hour to spend before going to my editor's house in response to his invitation, I went for a stroll in a little wood a few hundred yards out of the town. It was a semi-wild cluster of hornbeams, maples, ash, limes and lilacs, a little bouquet

that sang in the breeze. I thought it charming. I fell in love with it and I made up my mind to get to know every tree in it, to seek out its lowliest plants, its coronillas and saxifrages, and to see whether there was not some Solomon's seal to be found growing in the shade of the big trees. I had already wandered through it in two or three different directions, when my eye lighted on an old man sitting on a seat on which he had deposited his hat, his handkerchief and two or three bottles of medicine.

His face was long and pallid, a few wisps of grey hair hung over his forehead, his eyes were sad and his mouth drooped mournfully. He had a skipping rope in his hand and was looking fixedly at a little girl of five who was sticking twigs into the sandy bed of a dried-up rivulet. The child's dress was of lace. Every now and then she would gaze up at the old man with her big dark-rimmed eyes. When she had finished arranging her little garden she smiled with her pale lips. Then I saw the old man brush aside a tear as he turned his face away. I concealed myself in order to observe him the more closely, and I perceived that he was afflicted with illness rather than with age. He was elegantly dressed, but his movements were strained and painful. Clearly paralysis had affected his limbs and

laid to sleep in his brain everything save his love for this little sick child who was playing in the sand beside him.

Though there was nothing extraordinary about this encounter, it made a deep and painful impression upon me. What I thought I read in the expression of this sad and suffering countenance seemed to teach me how vain and futile are our quarrels and our ambitions in the face of Destiny. "That man," said I to myself, "has no part in our disputes. Electors have no interest for him and suffering which exalts him far above us vouchsafes him a terrible exemption from our petty trials and vexations."

Pondering these things in my mind, I found myself at the abode of my editor. I discovered him in his drawing-room with two or three children on his knees and some more on his shoulders; he even had some in his pockets. They were shouting "Papa" at him and tugging at his beard. He was a different man. He had on a new frock-coat and a white shirt, and he smelt of lavender. But what altered the man beyond recognition was his air of kindliness and contentment. The room was full of flowers and as gay as he.

A woman now entered. She was pale and delicate looking, but, though her figure was ruined, her

pale gold hair and eyes of watchet blue gave her a not unprepossessing appearance.

"Let me introduce you to Madame Planchonnet," he said.

He seemed proud of his wife and, really, she was very good to look upon; I should never have thought that a man made after the fashion of my editor-in-chief would have been able to present so charming a spouse.

Her style of dress delighted me. It was light in colour and texture, but that is all I can tell you about it. In those days I was quite unable to analyse a woman's dress or clearly to distinguish her raiment from her person. I can do so now and I derive no pleasure from the skill. Madame Planchonnet shed her charm around her and I perceived that the house reflected the orderliness of her mind and the graciousness of her thoughts. Not that it had any attractiveness in itself with its ungainly woodwork and the great, clumsy beams that stretched across the ceilings. Nor was it expensively furnished, for, naturally, luxurious and abundant furniture was hardly to be expected in the household of a wandering journalist like my editor-in-chief. But draperies daintily disposed, some artistic pottery and a few flowers and leaf sprays made a pleasant ensemble for the eye to rest

upon. The children (of whom I now perceived there were but five) were big and rough and florid, though fine enough specimens of their kind. Their bare arms and legs formed about their sire a sort of lavish framework of flesh, softened by a golden down, and they all fell to staring at me in silence like so many little wild things. Madame Planchonnet apologized for their rudeness.

" We never stop long in one place and they don't have time to become acquainted with anyone. They are little savages; they know nothing. How can they be expected to learn, when we move into fresh rooms every six months? Henri, the eldest, is over eleven. He doesn't know a word of his catechism yet, and how in the world we are to get him to make his first communion I don't know. Your arm, monsieur."

The dinner was abundant. A young country wench, acting under the vigilant control of Madame Planchonnet, kept bringing in dish after dish of game and poultry which my host, a napkin tucked under his chin, a three-pronged fork in one hand and a carving-knife with a stag-horn handle in the other, ordered to be placed before him, displaying all his white teeth and rolling terrifying eyes in the midst of his hairy visage. His nostrils dilated at the savoury odour of the viands. Sticking out his

elbows, he carved away at his poultry and game, giving thumping platefuls to his children, his wife and his guest, and displaying a prodigious love of eating. His aspect was terrible, contented and kind. He delivered himself of perfectly harmless observations accompanied with gusts of frightful laughter. But it was when pouring out the wine that he manifested, in all their luxuriant magnificence, the characteristics of the good-humoured ogre. Reaching down with his huge arms and without bending his body, he would pull up by the neck one after another of the many bottles that stood ranged at his feet and poured out bumpers for his wife, who protested in vain, for his children, who had already fallen asleep with one cheek in their plate, and for me, hapless one! who gulped down, without giving myself time to taste it, red wine, pink wine, white wine, amber wine and golden wine whose age and vintage he proclaimed in ringing, jovial tones. We thus emptied a number of bottles of divers brands; how many I haven't a notion. After that I expressed to my hostess sentiments at once exalted and tender. All that was heroic and amorous in my heart came thronging to my lips. I raised the conversation to the region of the sublime; but I experienced a very real difficulty in maintaining it at that level, because, although Monsieur Plan-

chonnet nodded approval of my most transcendent flights, he did not follow them up, but kept firing off observations concerning the gathering and preparation of edible fungi or some other culinary topic. He carried a complete cookery book in his head and a quite useful gastronomical survey of France. Now and then he told stories illustrating the precocity of his offspring.

With the dessert came the consciousness that I loved Madame Planchonnet. So pure and so generous was this passion that, far from smothering it in my bosom, I gave it overt expression in lingering looks and philosophic disquisitions. I unfolded my views on Life and Death. I had still much to say to Madame Planchonnet when she left us to put the children to bed. They had all fallen sound asleep in their chairs with their legs up in the air. Her departure left me grave and thoughtful, seated opposite Planchonnet, who went on everlastingly pouring out liqueurs. I prayed that he might have a noble soul, and I one nobler still, in order that Madame Planchonnet might be loved by two men worthy of her. Therefore I resolved to sound the heart of Planchonnet.

"Monsieur Planchonnet," I said, "that was a powerful article you wrote showing up Comte Morin's manœuvres."

"Oh, you mean the bit of flap-doodle in this morning's issue!"

"Flap-doodle," said I to myself. "H'm, that must be a technical or professional expression."

"Monsieur Planchonnet," I continued, "what sort of a man is this Comte Morin?"

"Don't know him; never saw him. They say he's a pretty good-natured old dodderer."

Observing a look of surprise on my face, he added:

"I don't know anyone here. Three months ago I was still at Gap. It was Veulet's committee who asked me if I would like to come here and give Morin a fall. And here I am. What about a drop of anisette, eh?"

An immense desire to love filled my bosom. I began to feel a great affection for Planchonnet. I was familiar, interested and confidential; above all confidential.

At length, seeing that he was dropping off into a doze, I got up, wished him good night and expressed a desire to pay my respects to Madame Planchonnet.

That, he gave me to understand, I could not do because she was in bed. I said how sorry I was and looked about for my hat, which I had much ado to find. Planchonnet came with me to the top of

the stairs and imparted, concerning the manner of holding on to the balusters and negotiating the stairs, advice not commonly bestowed on departing guests. But the staircase was apparently a difficult one, for I sat down on it at least twice. Planchonnet asked me whether I could get back to my hotel. I considered the question offensive. I told him I was certain I should find it all right; wherein I spoke rashly, for I spent half the night looking for it, although it was in the same street as my host's house. During my search I noted how difficult it occasionally is not to put both feet in the gutter at once. The most fantastic ideas were crowding pell-mell into my head and, though I had made up my mind to perform forthwith some striking deed before the very eyes of Madame Planchonnet, I could not decide in my own mind what form and nature that deed was to take.

When I awoke next day, the sun was high in the heavens. My tongue was parched, my skin burning hot. These symptoms made it quite clear to me that I had been abominably drunk the night before. But what worried me most was that I could not remember what I had said to Madame Planchonnet during dinner. As I had good grounds for thinking it was a lot of nonsense, I had not the courage to put in another appearance at the *Independent*.

With my heart filled with shame and despondency, I went and lay me down in my little wood and there, all alone, lying flat on the grass, my eyes gazing heavenwards and watching the silvery leaves of a young poplar a-sparkle in the breeze, I received the mute consolations of nature and forgave myself for my shortcomings.

I conceived the hope that Madame Planchonnet would make allowance for my youth and that I had not irrevocably forfeited the sympathetic regard of the delicate soul which I had discerned in her deep blue eyes. This hope was the greatest comfort to me and I should have inclined to unqualified optimism if Madame Planchonnet's figure had been as pretty as her eyes.

I was thus endeavouring to adjust my relations with life, when I heard a child crying. I went in the direction of the sound and saw the little invalid girl I had encountered the day before. While she wept, the same old man who was with her on the former occasion was gazing up in despair at the topmost branches of a tall elm. Blank dismay was depicted on his countenance. His poor old arms were beating the air and his knees were trembling. He was certainly the victim of a dilemma with which it was beyond his power to cope.

"There . . . there . . . there . . ." he kept saying.

On my offering to do what I could to assist him, he explained in hesitating and embarrassed tones that the ball with which his little girl had been playing had lodged in a tree and that the walking stick he had thrown up to bring it down had also got entangled in the branches. He was at his wits' end.

The little girl, ceasing to cry, turned towards me. I looked at them both and saw that they resembled each other. Their features were large and finely chiselled and, beneath the imprint of suffering, retained a hint of something at once attractive and rare.

The first thing to be done was to help them. I looked about to see if I could discover the branches on which the stick and the ball had caught.

"There . . . there . . . there . . ." the old man kept repeating, stretching forth a palsied arm which, refusing obedience to its owner, pointed tremulously in all directions. The effort put him in a bath of perspiration.

I discovered by myself what I was looking for, and, by throwing a stone up into the tree, I soon managed to bring down the ball. The old man saw it fall with childish glee.

The walking stick, which was hardly visible from below, was not to be got at by means of a stone, so I decided to climb the tree. With wandering words and wandering wits the old man begged and prayed that I would do nothing of the sort. It was enough, he said, that the little girl had recovered her ball and had ceased to cry. But I was conscious of a feeling of indomitable energy. It was the first effect of my love for Madame Planchonnet. I swung up from branch to branch with an agility of which I never dreamt myself the possessor and seized hold of the stick. I then observed that it was adorned with a gold knob and a ring of turquoise. I handed it to the old man and then hurried away in order to spare him the trouble of thanking me a second time. My ideas had changed colour. I went back with a stout heart to the office of the *Independent.*

There I found Planchonnet half stripped, sweating, puffing and blowing, his eyes starting from his head, his tongue out and his beard dripping with foaming beer. Three empty tankards were ranged about him. His pen grasped firmly in his clenched fist, he was writing a fresh article on the doings of Comte Morin and it was obvious from the way he addressed himself to the task that he had a big

thing on hand. I myself carried the sheets to the composing room as he completed them.

It was in truth a big thing. This time it had to do with umbrellas presented by Comte Morin to the market dames. This act alone roused Planchonnet's indignation to such a pitch that his previous article, which I had thought so violent, seemed weak and timid in comparison. I complimented him on the production. He seemed flattered and replied:

"I'll tell you about it. As I was going through the market this morning to buy a melon—for when it's a case of choosing a melon or a pheasant women are absolutely useless: only a man is any good at buying fruit and game—in passing along the stalls, I observed that the women had all got brand-new red umbrellas. I remarked on the fact to a butter-woman, who told me that, from time immemorial, the 'Big House' had always presented the market women at this time of the year, with new umbrellas. Well the 'Big House' means Comte Morin. Comte Morin, you know, has a family estate here. So I said, 'My good woman, without knowing it you have done my article for me.'"

Then he plucked me by the sleeve:

"Come home with me and have a bit of dinner; we'll eat up the scraps."

I refused, not wishing to become too intimate with my editor-in-chief. I paid but one more visit to Madame Planchonnet, who, seated with a bunch of wild flowers beside her, was sewing a patch on the seat of her eldest boy's knickerbockers. Our conversation was characterized by extreme reserve and if since then I continued to love Madame Planchonnet, it was a sentiment that only came to me by moonlight, the pale beams of which she closely resembled.

I soon learned my job and I worked at it conscientiously. I spent the whole day in cutting paragraphs out of the newspapers, correcting proofs and writing up M. Veulet.

As for Comte Morin, I gave him no quarter, him or his opinions.

I seldom went out. One day, however, I took a stroll along the river, which mirrors in its blue waters the willows and the white houses on its banks. That day I went farther into the country than I had been before and I found myself at length in front of some park gates.

Half-way up the hill which rose gently from the road stood a big country-house built in Empire style with a columned portico. At that moment the gates opened and there, before me, was my unknown friend, the paralytic whom I had encoun-

tered in the little wood. Again he was accompanied by his little girl, but this time she was not walking. She was lying full length in a perambulator which was wheeled by a governess. It was painful to see her poor little white face lying there on an embroidered pillow in the shadow of the lowered hood. She looked like one of those little waxen martyrs adorned with silver filigree, on whose wounds and jewels the nuns of Spain love to gaze and meditate in the solitude of their cells.

The old man was elegantly dressed. His face which had been "made up" was all smeared with tears. He came towards me with little jerky steps, took me by the hand and led me towards his little girl.

"You don't think she's changed since you last saw her? You don't think so, now, do you?" he asked in a sort of wheedling, childish tone. "It was the day she threw her—er—her ball into a, into a—er—into a tree. She is my daughter. Don't you think she looks better?"

We walked along together.

I did my best to comfort the poor man; but I was feeling anything but cheerful myself. As we relapsed into silence the little sufferer called out:

"Mamma! Mamma! I want to see Mamma!"

Her father shuddered in every limb and said nothing.

"I want to see Mamma," the child repeated, weeping.

Then the father, raising his eyes, stretched forth both his arms as if to call Heaven to witness how unmerited were his sufferings.

The perambulator which we were following in silence came to a halt in a little pine wood. The governess lowered the hood and we looked at the child. She seemed to be afraid of something that was invisible to us. I endeavoured to amuse her with flowers and songs. I succeeded. A little air and a little distraction almost put new life into her. She lifted her head and, when an hour had gone by, her cheeks were almost rosy.

When it grew chilly and she had to be taken back to the house, her father pressed my hand and stammered out:

"I thank you, monsieur. I wish I could be of some service to you. I am Comte Morin."

Comte Morin! I was thunderstruck.

It was now my turn to stammer.

"Comte Morin," I said, "the Parliamentary candidate?"

"Hush, hush," said he, "the—er—the—er—the prefect makes a great deal of my candidature. He

—er—says—er—er that I am the—er—only candidate agreeable to the Government—er—that—er—has any chance of success. But I absolutely refuse . . . to stand. I cannot and I will not leave this child. The—er—er—the Emperor will understand that I cannot. This child has no one . . . you . . . understand . . . she has no one. Her—er—er—mother . . .

I would have made a clean breast then and there of all the wrongs I had done him, but I did not deem him strong enough to listen to such a confession.

M. Veulet was elected. He beat Comte Morin by three hundred and sixty-two votes. When the election was over, I returned to Paris. I had been there about three weeks when I had a visit from Fontanet.

"Well, my lad," he said, "so you've been putting your foot in it again, have you? There are some nice stories going round about you. As for me, I don't know how much is true and how much lies. I know you. We were old chums, and I know perfectly well that you don't mean any harm. But, between ourselves, you've made a mistake, a big mistake. That's not the way to make a start in life."

I begged him to explain himself. He shrugged his shoulders with an assurance that quite frightened me.

"You know quite well what I mean. A man can't be such a duffer as that. Fancy! Sent to back up M. Veulet, you go and start intriguing with his opponent."

I strongly protested.

"Oh!" said Fontanet. "But Veulet has told me all about it. You *have* made a mess of it. I can understand that a case might arise when a man might leave his own party and join another (he had an understanding soul had my friend Fontanet) but, even so, there are limits to observe and one ought to have some sort of object. You are a duffer. You do not see that the Empire is over and done with; you never do see anything. You didn't see that this Comte Morin of yours is merely an old schemer (my friend Fontanet, let me tell you, always saw everything). The best part about Morin, my boy, is his wife. When I say *his* wife perhaps that's hardly correct. She leaves him at home while she goes off gallivanting about at all the spas and fashionable watering-places. I got some one to give me an introduction to her at Trouville. I danced with her at a Charity Ball. I don't want

to say anything against her; it wouldn't be right that I should, but between ourselves she's more than a little bit flighty."

As he said this he stroked his whiskers, put a soft wooing look into his eyes and strutted about with a dandified air. He was a charming fellow, I assure you, my friend Fontanet.

What do you suppose I did as I listened to him. Why, I began to laugh, an attitude that called forth further remonstrances.

"Ah, you're fooling," said Fontanet.

Fooling, was I! Ah, no doubt my head was full of merry subjects for reflection. Merry they were with a vengeance! I was thinking about the poor little dying child whom, by the river-side, I had heard calling for her "little mummy" in accents of despair and desolation, for her "little mummy" who was at that very moment dancing with my friend Fontanet in some casino. It was because I was thinking of all this that I appeared to be fooling. But Fontanet restored me to a better frame of mind.

"In your own interests," he said, "you ought to be more careful in your behaviour towards M. Veulet. You have failed to appreciate him. He is a man of great worth, of a piece with his works. Fancy at forty he was still keeping a boarding-house

in Montmartre when, plunging into business, he went bankrupt three times, till now, at fifty-two, he is a public man and a candidate for Parliament. The man has no end of energy and it is foolish to treat him as you have done."

"What!" I cried, "M. Veulet kept a boarding-house in Montmartre when he was forty?"

"Didn't you know that?" answered Fontanet simply.

What I knew was that he had served as a volunteer in the Old World and the New. That he had fought against the Spaniards in Peru under General Pezet; at Pittsburg and at the Siege of Corinth; in Liberia under General Sherman against the slave party; under Stephen Allen Benson against the blacks in the Palm Islands; at Warsaw under Langiewicz side by side with Mademoiselle Pustowoitoff; in the Caucasus under Schamyl against the Russians; and alone against all comers on board a slave ship. That's what I knew.

"Who told you all those yarns?" asked Fontanet disdainfully.

I replied that he himself had, one spring morning in the Jardin du Luxembourg. But he said—and his voice had the ring of truth in it—that I was dreaming and that he was incapable of telling such a lot of taradiddles. I didn't argue with him.

Fontanet and I had not the same idea of certitude. Philosophic doubt, which has so tormented my spirit, never so much as entered into his.

As he left me, he held out his hand. He was the best of chums.

A few months rolled by. One spring morning, as I was at work at my table, I heard the floor creaking in the most alarming fashion. I turned round expecting to find myself face to face with a bear. Planchonnet stood there before me. He amazed me. I really never imagined him so immense and so uncouth. Nevertheless he had added some new attractions to his get up. His hat was tilted rakishly over one ear, he had a cigar in his mouth and his fingers—what fingers!—were toying with a slender cane.

We had lunch together.

"Madame Planchonnet," he informed me, "has just presented me with my sixth. I have come to ask you to stand godfather. The christening celebrations will take place at Rheims and will last a week."

"At Rheims?"

"Yes, I am editing a Government rag there." Then he began telling me about my "godson." Born with one tooth in his head, he was an immense and magnificent infant.

We went and took a stroll in the Avenue des Champs-Élysées, where the trees were already beginning to bud and summer dresses to appear. Among the long line of carriages that were making their way towards the Arc de Triomphe, I noticed a handsome victoria in which M. Veulet was reclining like a lion couchant. From afar one could not help seeing and admiring his remarkable nose and his august beard.

Protector of the strong, he waved his hand as he passed the tilburys and landaus of the fashionable financiers and smiled some of those gracious and condescending smiles of his.

I was ill advised enough to point him out to Planchonnet, who suddenly let go my arm and rushed after the victoria brandishing his stick and shouting out:

"Thief, liar, humbug. I worked your election and you have not paid me. I'll break my stick over your head."

Happily the victoria rolled swiftly away.

ALFRED DE VIGNY

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1868

THIS little book has not been written to pander to the curiosity of the idle or inquisitive. The name of Alfred de Vigny is not calculated to prompt pre-occupations of this nature, nor does his life afford the material to satisfy them.

We have tried to recount the simple story of a great poet who was an upright man, because it seems to us instructive to study the conditions in which noble works are produced and to discover the soil on which the austere flowers of the mind unfold their petals to the air.

Poetry, in our view of it, is not a sort of game in which success is won by skilful arrangement of the material or mere sleight of hand. True poetry, we hold, is not found save in conjunction with nobility of character and loftiness of ideas.

It has been our aim to portray the exemplar of a beautiful life which was the parent of works as beautiful as itself.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE EDITION OF 1923

If I had been able to make away with this book, I should have done so. But how was I to manage it? And when all is said and done, it did not merit treatment quite so drastic. It was written by a schoolboy who did not know either how to think or how to write, but who certainly meant no harm. This young man was wrong to attempt to pass judgment on a great poet when both taste and knowledge were lacking from his equipment. But he performed his task with respect. He was pedantic and involved in style, and yet he gave indications here and there of the possession of some degree of the literary sense. Though it would have been useless to waste any time correcting, for the purposes of a second edition, a book which really needed to be entirely rewritten, I have removed some of the more ludicrous mistakes, partly by reason of some remains of vanity that still linger on in my disposition, and partly out of

regard for the beautiful Garamond type which the amiable Claude Aveline might have put to a worthier use. But let the reader of this reprint be assured. He will still find plenty of stupidities to give him the laugh of me.

ALFRED DE VIGNY

I

The heart is shaped like an urn; it is a sacred vessel fulfilled of secrets.

ALFRED DE VIGNY.

NOW that we are about to draw aside the veil which shrouds the more intimate life of Count Alfred de Vigny, we are filled with a sort of religious awe. The retreat into which we propose to pass is holy and quiet as a sanctuary. There, in all his grave serenity, we find the man who, of all his fellows, was most deeply imbued with a belief in the dignity of the human race, and there, in the solitude which surrounds him, we find him scarcely less impenetrable than he was to the world at large, whose contact, it must be confessed, he shunned, as far as he was able. The Gaulish warrior who, when Rome fell, lightly plucked the beard of an aged senator who was sitting motionless on his seat, would, perhaps, have lacked the courage to lay so rude a hand on this grave and impassive countenance,

whose expression, reserved almost to the point of *hauteur*, veiled from the world the image of an enigmatic soul.

Nevertheless, for all his impassivity, this man was by no means lacking in sensibility. He had suffered, but he never laid aside that proud reserve which led him to conceal his sufferings from the world, or at least only to display so much of them as might cloak him like a garment. He was the poet of decorous passion. His verse, like his soul, was imbued with the calm that broods over all great and beautiful things, for it was not the least of Alfred de Vigny's attributes that, on the very crest and forefront of his passion, he wore the calm radiance of an unalterable serenity. Perhaps at first we may not quite know how to estimate a life so lived, a work so performed; they may even fail to move us. We, children of the age, are accustomed to see, in the inmost chamber of the heart, the lamp shattered by the fierceness of the flame; we know how the excessive violence of the feelings may mar the harmony of line or sound. We have seen with what swoonings, what writhings and agonies the Muse of Byron was afflicted, though her beauty still remained; and with what wildness, and we must add with what charm, she gave utterance to her exaltations and her sorrows. The

poetry of to-day, for all its flexibility, all its truth to nature, errs nevertheless by violence and excess. Its force is manifested in explosive effort, and not in that repose and serenity which was the Greek ideal. The tranquil beauty of the ancient Hellenes was familiar to Alfred de Vigny, and he loved it: it came home to the poet in his hours of solitary meditation.

Only minds of coarser texture, minds that cannot recognize passion save in the contortions and grimaces it wrests from the weak, minds that the poet so disdained as to become oblivious of their very existence, could mistake his calmness for insensibility. The purest streams are not necessarily the coldest. In his meditative retirement, the poet, all through his life, looked long and steadily upon Fate, on that power to which men have given so many different names, but which drags them, rebellious or docile, in her train. His contemplation of this power was not unaccompanied by tears, and of those tears were born, like Éloa the Sister of the Angels, the works of the poet.

A deep and abiding faith could alone impart that beautiful peace which shone upon his face, as it shines still in all he wrote. Such was the faith of Alfred de Vigny in his religion, the only religion he ever knew, the religion whose obligations he

never failed to observe, the religion of self-respect, of honour. He learnt it as a soldier, he became its priest and evangelist, and in his life he never fell below that lofty watchword which once fell from his lips and which has appropriately been quoted as the keynote of his intimate reflections, "Honour is the poetry of Duty."

II

We are fain that none shall ever forget that our fathers' recompense was Glory.

VICTOR HUGO.

THE Vignys came of a family of gentlefolks, settled in Beauce, who, as long ago as the second half of the sixteenth century, had won for themselves a high rank in the kingdom, for it was in the year 1570 that Charles IX bestowed a title upon:

"Our dear and well-beloved François de Vigny, in recognition of the worthy and laudable services rendered both to us and to our royal predecessors in the discharge of divers honourable and important offices in which he was employed for the good of our service and the welfare of the whole Kingdom, even before the recent troubles, to hold and to enjoy all the liberties and prerogatives thereof, as well as the estates and lordships thereunto pertaining."

The diary of the Duc de Luynes, under date

Friday, 8th April, 1740, contains the following entry:

"The King has just granted a pension of 1200 livres to Monsieur de Vigny, esquire, son of Monsieur de Vigny, Lieutenant of Bombardiers, to whom we owe the invention of the 'Carcasse.'* Monsieur de Vigny has been equerry to the King about thirty years. It was he who accompanied Madame as far as the Spanish frontier."

Jean René de Vigny, an ex-musketeer and an officer in one of the companies of the Royal Guards, being without money and detained for debt in London, wrote on the 5th September, 1766, to Garrick, the actor, "well known for his kindly feeling and his talents," to implore assistance, of which he stood in most urgent need.

François de Vigny, the recipient of the Letters Patent of 1570, had a son, Étienne de Vigny, who was the father of Jean de Vigny, whose son was Guy Victor de Vigny, Lord of Fronchet, Moncharville, the two Emervilles, Isy, le Frêne, Joinville, Folleville, Gravelle and other places. He, in turn, had a son, Léon de Vigny, the father of Alfred de Vigny, the subject of this essay.

Almost all these gentlemen ordered their lives on a moderate scale and dwelt at peace with their

* A kind of bomb, oblong in shape and loaded with shrapnel.

neighbours, "remaining in the army till they attained the rank of captain, when they retired into private life adorned with the Cross of Saint Louis." *

The arms of the Vigny family are: four lions gules quartered on a field argent shield in centre, band or on a field azure, above a gold bird, ditto below, between two shells argent.

Such then were the lives lived by these honest gentlemen. They served in the King's armies and hunted the wolf on their own estates. They were men of action first and last, and had few intellectual interests. The last of the race, Count Alfred de Vigny, was by far the greatest of them all. Intellectually he was head and shoulders above all his predecessors, and well might he say, as he proudly surveyed the long array of his soldier ancestors whose portraits hung along the wall—

"J'ai mis sur le cimier doré du gentilhomme une plume de fer qui n'est pas sans beauté." †

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* Alfred de Vigny.

† On the golden crest of the gentleman I have placed a pen of steel which is not without a beauty of its own. (From *Destinées* by Alfred de Vigny.)

III

My father was an old soldier; my mother a Vendéenne.

VICTOR HUGO.

ALFRED DE VIGNY was born on the 27th March, 1797, that is to say, in the year V of the French Republic, at Loches, in a little sequestered abode which his father, M. Léon de Vigny, had purchased in order to live a quiet life, remote from the turmoil of the Revolution.

If there is any period which exerts an influence on a man's destiny, it is assuredly that in which his own being is still merged and enveloped in the existence of his mother. In this mysterious and hidden life the child thrills in sympathy with all the tremulous vibrations which stir his mother's bosom, and inevitably undergoes the irrevocable influence of the pains, the passions, the slightest longings of the tender being within whose sheltering womb he is feeling his way to individual life. Therein perhaps lies the key to many things in the

lives of men that would otherwise remain inexplicable. Therein lies the soul's secret, a secret deep and sacred. Without prying into the inner sanctuary of her heart, we may readily divine the nature of the impressions that dominated Madame de Vigny at that critical period when a woman is apprehensive of being shaken by any powerful emotion. Madame de Vigny had seen her fortune and her privileges shattered and dispersed by the revolutionary tempest; her father, an ex-naval officer, wounded and broken in health, she had followed to prison at Loches; she was still arrayed in the sombre weeds of mourning for her brother, who had been shot at Quiberon, and for her aged father, whom the shock of his son's fate soon brought in sorrow to the grave.

Madame de Vigny's haughty spirit was full of that pride of ancestry which she had been compelled to repress, full of mortal sadness for the misfortunes of her family and of a very excusable hatred for the populace which she saw, as it were, personified as a murderous ruffian with naked arms reeking with the blood of his victims. There was not, and there could not have been, any room in her heart for any other feelings. These characteristics of the mother's mind we shall find repeated somewhat less emphatically in the son.

Meanwhile the Republic, but lately so vigorous, was growing feebler day by day; it was relapsing into second childhood and had been put into the leading-strings of a Regency-Council, the *Directoire*. The *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire was already in the air; the aristocrats were lifting up their heads. It was at this juncture that Monsieur de Vigny came to Paris with his wife and their son Alfred, who was then eighteen months old. It was in the great city that the child, as it were, opened his eyes upon the world; it was there that he received those early and profound impressions of all we associate with the idea of patriotism, of pride in the land of our birth.

The gloom of great cities weighs heavily upon children's hearts, as every mother can testify, even as did Elizabeth in Shakespeare's *Richard III.*

> Pity you ancient stones, those tender babes . . .
> Rough cradle for such little pretty ones!

Alfred's blue eyes only bade adieu to the sadness of the great city to make acquaintance with the melancholy of the country. Sometimes, in the autumn of the year, his father would take the child to see his aunt, Madame de Vigny, who was bringing up her six children near Étampes, in a sombre old manor, gloomy as a ruin and rendered still gloomier by the sadness of the dying year. The

child would gaze spellbound at the great billiard-room where the family portraits hung along the wall, " and where the ancient tapestries were stirred by the great winds that came sweeping in from the plain."

Alfred was then a beautiful but somewhat effeminate-looking child. From his father he inherited the family love of the army, but his mother had given him his beautiful fair hair and a certain almost feminine grace which remained with him throughout his life.

Monsieur de Vigny, who had been almost ruined by the Revolution, devoted the remnant of his fortune to his son's education. Until he was old enough to go to school his mother chose his teachers and directed the lines their instruction was to follow. The mother treated her son with all the grave severity of a father, and it was Monsieur de Vigny, the veteran campaigner, bowed down by wounds and sorrow, that showered upon him the tender attentions of a mother. He would often tell the child old tales of the Seven Years' War, and tell them so graphically that the little boy seemed actually to behold Frederick in his habit as he lived, with his walking-stick and his three-cornered hat. Monsieur de Vigny had seen the Philosopher King at close quarters on the field of

battle, where one of his uncles had been carried away by a cannon ball. And little Alfred often listened to the story of the Chevalier d'Assas, who had been a friend of his father's and with whom he had been encamped the night before his death.

Like all intelligent children, Alfred was highly inquisitive. He used to besiege his father so incessantly with questions that the latter used to say he was like Voltaire's inquisitive Bailiff.

One day—it was at the Élysée Bourbon where the de Vigny family were then living—Alfred saw his father come home with his furrowed cheeks all wet with tears. They told the child that the Duc d'Enghien had just been shot.

That was his first acquaintance with tragedy. The impression lasted a long while.

It was about the same time that young Alfred de Vigny was sent to board with Monsieur Hix, whose house was in the Faubourg Saint Honoré and whose boarders attended the classes at the Lycée Bonaparte.

The boy was endowed with the chief, perhaps the only, quality which gives a pupil a reputation for cleverness at school, namely, a good memory. He reached the top of his class and carried off the

highest prizes. But he always looked like a little fair-haired, delicate girl. The other boys bullied him because he was not strong. The reason was excellent, and juvenile logic is relentless. Play-time became unbearable to the poor child. They stole the bread out of his basket and he was compelled to do the robber's home-work in order to redeem a portion of his lunch.

The child began to lose heart.

It is the pupils, and not the masters, who create public opinion in the little schoolboy world, and that opinion is based far less upon work in class than on the strength and skill of the competitors in the playground. The masters administer punishments, and they can be got through; the pupils brand their victims and send them to Coventry for good. The pariah grows timid, mistrustful, and abandons himself, according to his nature, either to the gloomy ferocity of his pride or to the listless conviction of his own ineffectiveness. He becomes either melancholic or stupid. Alfred de Vigny grew sombre and was driven in upon himself.

Fortunately this tyranny of force and brute strength diminishes and relaxes in the upper forms. Moreover, Alfred de Vigny concluded his school career amid exceptional circumstances that com-

pletely transformed the ordinary schoolboy notions and ideals.

France, as Alfred de Vigny himself expressed it, was then completely *Vivandière* in spirit, and all her children were "sons of the regiment."

The Army had but to be mentioned and the boys would spring to their feet upon their ink-stained forms. The roll of the drums drowned the masters' voices. Boys of fifteen would cast a disdainful glance on Ciceronian orations and eagerly devoured the Bulletins of the Grand Army. When a classmate who had left school but a few months before reappeared "in hussar uniform, with his arm in a sling," the other boys would blush with shame and fling their books at their masters' heads.

Alfred de Vigny conceived "an inordinate love of military glory," and glory, according to the prevailing idea, meant following Napoleon. The young people of those days were not, like the volunteers of 1793, led to enlist out of enthusiasm for a Principle; rather did they hasten to yield their allegiance to a Man. But Monsieur de Vigny, who had preferred to break his sword rather than to break his oath of fidelity to the King, did not deem it fitting that the sword of an aristocrat should be unsheathed from its scabbard at the

bidding of an imperial usurper. He hastened to remove his son from the contagion of these youthful warriors, all afire with enthusiasm for Napoleon, and threw him at once into the world of society, hoping that the murmur of the Salons would render his juvenile ears deaf to the premonitory thunders of the coming battle of Leipzic.

And it seems indeed a fact that, thanks to this change in his environment, the dreamer got the better of the soldier in the mind of this young man whose destiny had seemed to mark him out for intellectual and philosophical speculations.

Alfred de Vigny, free at last to study and learn as he listed, flung himself eagerly into the various intellectual activities to which his imagination prompted him. He read and wrote with a kind of *furore* under the direction of an aged preceptor whose name he has bequeathed to us, the Abbé Gaillard. He translated Homer into English. He also composed tragedies on the classical model, and had the good sense to tear them up as fast as he wrote them. He tried his hand at romances and comedies. He was consumed with restlessness, conscious of ideas stirring within him, but ideas so vague and elusive that he could neither capture them nor give them shape. He was morti-

fied at his inability to set down on those implacable sheets of blank paper nothing but feeble imitations of other writers. These are invariably the first painful symptoms of a talent that is coming to birth. The brain surges along, but the hand is chilled. When genius has come into being it is, as a great French poet has observed, the head that is cool and the hand that flashes fire. The young poet's growing mind was conscious of all the thrills of conception. Thenceforward the presage of a glorious birth was not to be gainsaid.

This sacred moment in a lad's spiritual development is marked by the wild enthusiasm of youth obscured by ignorance. The young man, weary of meditation which, in his impatience, he accused of leading to nothing, fell to cursing his seeming indolence and longed to be up and doing. Once more he clamoured for the sword. In the course of the inward duel between the man of thought and the man of action, it was the latter who once more won the day, but he emerged from the struggle soothed and rendered more grave by a year of reflection.

Alfred de Vigny, who had made up his mind to become an officer, decided to enter that department of the Army which was at once the most highly skilled and the most exclusive, namely, the Artillery.

To gain his end he had addressed himself with ardour to the study of mathematics and he had qualified himself to enter the École Polytechnique, when the battle of Paris, by bringing back the Bourbons, forthwith restored the Army to its place as a career for gentlemen.

IV

Egregium forma juvenem et fulgentibus armis
Sed frons laeta parum.

VIRGIL.

"WE have brought up this child for the King," wrote Madame de Vigny in 1814, in a letter addressed to the Minister for War, requesting him to grant her son a sub-lieutenant's commission in the Maison-Rouge.*

Alfred de Vigny joined that regiment on the 1st June, 1814; he was then seventeen years of age. In the same month of the same year, and with the same rank, Alphonse de Lamartine entered the Royal Guard.

The four companies of the Maison-Rouge were composed of impoverished gentlemen. Admission to their ranks, as in the case of the Musketeers and the Royal Guard, carried with it the rank and pay of a sub-lieutenancy in the Army.

On the 20th March, 1815, when he had as yet hardly recovered from a broken leg caused by a fall

* A part of the Household Brigade.

from his horse, Sub-lieutenant de Vigny rode in the train of the King and the Princes as far as Béthune; he made his entry into this "ugly little fortified town" just as the inhabitants were beginning to remove the white flags from their windows and sew together the red, white and blue in their houses.

The four companies of the Maison-Rouge—the *rouges* as they were called for short—were hated by the whole Army; Napoleon's veterans murmured loudly against them, scornfully twirling their grizzled moustachios, and smiled bitterly as they contemplated the rank and luxury of these beardless officers, mere children whose lips were still moist with the milk on which they had been suckled in peace, safely sheltered in the ancestral manor or enjoying, as exiles, ignoble safety in some enemy land. When Louis XVIII saw his throne restored for the second time, he deemed it expedient to sacrifice all these officers' brigades to the army of Napoleon, and so the "gendarmes" (as they were called) of the Maison-Rouge were disbanded on the 31st December, 1815.

In this same year, 1815, Alfred de Vigny composed two delightful poems: *La Dryade* and *Symétha*.*

* We have accepted as correct the date 1815 which Alfred de Vigny himself has assigned to these two poems. The only

The young officer had often thought of another young man, a poet and a soldier like himself, who was then only known to the public through some delightful fragments quoted among the notes to Chateaubriand's *Génie du Christianisme*, and appended to Millevoye's poems. Alfred de Vigny imparted to his Lesbian *Symétha* a pale and reflected radiance from the Neaeras and Myrthos of André Chénier's muse.

> Car la vierge enfantine auprès des matelots
> Admirait et la rame et l'écume des flots ;
> Puis, sur la haute poupe accourue et couchée,
> Saluait, dans la mer, son image penchée,
> Et lui jetait des fleurs et des rameaux flottants,
> Et riait de leur chute et les suivait longtemps ;
> Ou, tout à coup rêveuse, écoutait le zephyre
> Qui d'une aile invisible avait ému sa lyre.

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question as to the accuracy of this date arises from the fact that in these two poems the influence of André Chénier is apparent, whereas the works of that poet were not published in their entirety until 1819. However, the fragments given by Millevoye and Chateaubriand, which were already engaging much attention in 1815, would have revealed the genius and manner of Chénier with sufficient clearness to enable another poet to capture his secret. It should be added that, so far as workmanship is concerned, the lines of *La Dryade* and *Symétha* in no way recall the marvellous versification of André Chénier. In these two pieces the influence of the poet of antiquity is not discernible save in the selection and appreciation of the subjects (1868). To-day I am very much inclined to doubt whether these two poems date from 1815 (1923).

Are not these strains born of André Chénier's ivory plectrum, albeit touched by fingers as yet still timid and still faltering? Genius at first is imitative, its originality establishes itself by slow degrees. Instead of painfully striving to assemble the scattered members, its lawful booty, and from them to compose, as he did at first, a complete figure in which the original constituents betray their source and their alien destination, genius creates, out of those same members, gathered where it lists, a living, harmonious whole endowed with an existence of its own. That is essentially the whole originality of genius. And ere long we shall recognise it in the creations of our poet.

At this period, let us not forget, he was still quite young; hesitating between a taste for soldiering and a taste for poetry, he was something like the children of the poet Prudence; he disported himself with the palms and the chaplets.

In March, 1816, the ex-gendarme of the Maison-Rouge joined the Foot-Guards as a sub-lieutenant.

He was still a child "rosy and fair haired," * more like a girl masquerading as a youth. He carried no razor in his kit, for the simple reason that he had no beard to shave. He held himself

* Alfred de Vigny.

very erect and did not conceal how proud he was of his epaulettes.

One day, when he was marching with his regiment along the Rouen road, he experienced a sensation of unusual delight as he passed by the four great towers of the Château de Vigny. Not that his father had ever possessed the place, for it had ceased to belong to the Vignys as far back as 1554. But the officers of the battalion in which young Vigny was a lieutenant hinted to him that they would be charmed to be entertained by him in the village opposite the château, called Bordeaux de Vigny. So the young soldier gave his colleagues, "grey-moustachioed veterans," an indifferent luncheon in the sorry hostelry of the poor village.* But he treated them with such a mixture of pride and gaiety, and felt such a satisfaction in the experience, that he would not have exchanged his repast for the princely banquets of his ancestors, the smoke whereof had blackened the ancient chimneys of the château.

The spirit of action and the spirit of reverie were striving, like two rival fairies, for the possession of this gracious youth of twenty summers. But the young officer's slender and delicate physique was more adapted to the patient labours of the lamp-lit

* Alfred de Vigny.

study than to the marches and vigils of a soldier's life. Once, as far back as 1819, Alfred de Vigny found himself spitting blood while marching with his men, but he did not give in. No one ever entertained a profounder respect for duty than he did. "Endure to the death!" that was his watch-word. Nevertheless he said, "In the Army they don't believe a man is ill until he is dead."

It must, however, be borne in mind that the period with which we are dealing was one of peace, and that a soldier enjoyed long rests and abundant leisure. The young officer, who was nearly always in garrison at Courbevoie or Vincennes, read his Bible, indulged in meditation, or, perched up on a Louis XIV cannon, narrated, at his ease, tales of the wars, and he often came to Paris, where the first *cénacle* of the poetic renaissance had just been formed.

One evening in 1815, at a ball, Alfred de Vigny rediscovered young Émile Deschamps, the son of a friend of Monsieur Léon de Vigny, and himself a companion of Alfred's childhood. He had thus a bond of union with Émile Deschamps, who was then attempting the impossible task of translating Schiller's *Bell*, as well as with his brother Antoni, who was studying his Dante and perfecting the grave and vigorous style that adorns his *Dernières*

Paroles. Alongside these three poets sat the worthy Pichold, the author of *William Tell;* Soumet, the chanter of the *Épopée Divine*, the breadth and poetic inspiration of which Alfred de Vigny freely recognized, though he deplored its over-ambitious title, Guiraud, Jules Lefebvre and a host of others who were opening the stormy era of French poetry with serene and peaceful song. The hymn of the priest preluded the battle-cry of the warrior.*

It was the influence of his friends that made de Vigny a prose writer. In the *Muse Française*, a review which represented the literary opinions of his comrades, he wrote a few critical essays, very sound in substance, but painfully halting and embarrassed in style. Prose was certainly not his natural mode of expression: he learnt it slowly, like a foreign language. After writing his big novel *Cinq-Mars* indifferently well, he discovered in *Stello* a form somewhat artificial but of great beauty, and at last, in *Chatterton*, gave us the best piece of prose composition in all our modern dramatic literature.

At the period at which we have now arrived the

* How could I have written that? What meaning did I attach to those words? What significance did I lend them? I was not a madman, nor a complete imbecile. No doubt I thought them beautiful (1923).

poet was clearly manifest, but the prose-writer did not exist save for his friends.

The worthy Antoni Deschamps has recalled these days for us in lines in which his poetic gift is manifested. Let it charm our ears awhile:

C'était là mon bon temps, c'était mon âge d'or,
Où, pour se faire aimer, Pichold vivait encor.
Cygne du Paradis, qui traversa le monde,
Sans s'abattre un moment sur cette fange immonde.
Soumet, Alfred, Victor, Parseval, vous enfin
Qui dans ces jours heureux vous teniez par la main,
Rappelez-vous comment au fauteuil de mon père
Vous veniez le matin, sur les pas de mon frère,
Du feu de poésie échauffer ses vieux ans
Et sous les fleurs de mai cacher ses cheveux blancs.
Les plus jeunes vantaient Byron et Lamartine,
Et frémissaient d'amour à leur muse divine;
Les autres, avant eux amis de la maison,
Calmaient cette chaleur par leur froide raison,
Et savaient, chaque jour, tirer de leur mémoire,
Sur Voltaire et Lekain, quelque nouvelle histoire.

The poet therefore did not find his garrison life a period of exile and intellectual solitude. But the purely literary gatherings were rare and the participants did not take themselves very seriously; the *cénacle* had little influence on the poet's genius; he had his own vision of things. He always made his mode of expression subservient to that vision, and never had any preconceived formula to which he made his ideas conform. All that the conversa-

tion of his friends could do was to help him to develop his art along his own lines. He himself, in a revealing page, tells us the secret of his mode of production.

" I suddenly conceive a plan," he says, " then I spend a long time perfecting the mould of the statue, and then I dismiss it from my mind. When, after a long interval of repose, I set my hand to the task anew, I do not allow the lava a moment to grow cool. It is at long intervals that I do my writing, and for several months in succession I make Life my sole concern, reading and writing nothing."

In this year, 1822, Alfred de Vigny published a volume of poems. They appeared in an octavo volume under Pelissier's imprint, simply entitled *Poems*.

Héléna, a poem in three cantos, takes up half the volume. Its theme is the modern Greeks, for Greece was then casting off her fetters and awakening the enthusiasm

De tous les cœurs amis de la forme et des Dieux.*

The poem was, moreover, only a love-story. Héléna, having been outraged by some Turkish soldiers, deems herself unworthy of Mora, her lover. Beholding in a vision the soul of Héléna,

* Barbier.

who, having cast off her profaned flesh, has recovered her virginity, Mora himself reflects that their love would have been without honour, and says :

Va, j'aime mieux ta cendre encore qu'un tel bonheur.

In this poem, rather puerile in conception yet, despite many instances of immaturity, gracious in execution, we can foresee the advent of the poet of chaste soul and unsullied brows, the poet of Éloa and Kitty Bell.

Monsieur de Vigny's mother, with that kindly severity she always displayed towards her son, drew attention, in the copy he gave her, to the defective passage of the poem. Underneath these annotations the poet subsequently added notes of his own which, with engaging submissiveness, acknowledge the justice of his mother's criticisms :

" Mother, you are perfectly right. It's very bad, and I have suppressed the whole poem."

And, indeed, *Héléna* was never reprinted in any edition of Alfred de Vigny's poems.

The rest of the volume contains, in addition to the two charming classical pieces we have mentioned, *La Fille de Jephté*, *La Prison*, *La Femme adultère*, the last-mentioned poem being finer and more complete than ever ; for, with Sainte-Beuve, we deplore the severity with which Monsieur de

Vigny afterwards employed the pruning knife on this poetical composition. The collection concludes with an *Ode au Malheur* which did not reappear among the poet's works until 1842, when it was reprinted on the recommendation of Sainte-Beuve.

These early flights are worthy of notice, particularly if we bear in mind the period at which they were essayed, for Victor Hugo himself was then still at the imitative, classical stage of his development and had given as yet little promise of originality.

But this volume of poetry, striking a spontaneous modern note full of hope and promise, nevertheless met with the fate that always attends the poetic débutant. It was admired by the poet's brother-craftsmen, those among them, that is to say, who were amicably disposed towards him; they knew the poems by heart already; they were not read by the general French public, who do not care and never have greatly cared for poetry.

This unjust but inevitable neglect caused little surprise to Monsieur de Vigny, and did not discourage him from publishing, a few months afterwards in this same year 1822, a poem entitled *Le Trappiste*, which appeared in pamphlet form with Guiraudet.

In July 1822 Alfred de Vigny was promoted Lieutenant. He was still subject to an inter-

mittent desire to distinguish himself as a man of action. The fact that he had been a boy of fifteen during the Hundred Days was bound to have its inevitable effect. At length an opportunity to cover itself with glory presented itself to the French Army, which, since the fall of Napoleon, had been getting terribly bored with doing nothing. There was to be some fighting in Spain. Alfred de Vigny exchanged regiments in order to see some active service and, in March, 1823, joined the 55th Regiment of the line with the rank of Captain. His hopes were disappointed. The 55th never crossed the Pyrenees.

The Captain of the 55th Regiment of the line was not made for war; the Muse had marked him for her own. He was now a handsome, gentle-mannered young man of twenty-five. Some friends who knew him in those days have sketched his portrait for us.

His fine glossy hair, "tresses rippling with inspiration," he wore thrown back to exhibit a pale smooth brow, slightly suffused with pink, with a graceful slope towards the temples.

He had sea-blue eyes which disdained to try and read another's thoughts, a straight nose and lips which, seldom closed, gave him the expression of one smiling in a dream; his firm chin was of the

kind which seems to call for the hand to give it rest, the chin of a dreamer or a thinker, such as a great poet would wish to have. The countenance of Monsieur de Vigny, with its blend of softest pink and white, displayed a purity of aspect so transparent that the purity of the soul within seemed to reveal itself through its veil.

His voice was even, and grave in tone.

He was of medium build and looked well-set-up in his uniform.

Such, in the year 1832, was this young Captain of twenty-five who went out into the world with nothing but his honoured name, his sword and his poetry to call his own,

Fier et même un peu farouche,

the object of a mother's solicitude.

He had encountered in the literary salons a lady whom people used to call the Young Muse, the beautiful Delphine Gay, then a mere child with a complexion like a Dresden china shepherdess.

Now hear what Madame Sophie Gay, Delphine's mother, wrote, in August 1823, to her friend Madame Desbordes-Valmore, who was then at Bordeaux, where Monsieur de Vigny had just gone to take up garrison duty.

"I presume that M. D. . . . will have already brought the poet-warrior to see you. I will just

whisper it softly in your ear; he is the most amiable of them all, and unfortunately a young heart who loves you tenderly, and whom you protect so kindly, has been impressed by these perfectly amiable qualities. So much talent and elegance joined to a generous allowance of gallantry have cast a spell upon her pure heart, and poetry has come to cast its divine halo over all. Never did the poor child imagine that so sweet a dream would cost her many tears; and the dream was taking a hold upon her life. I saw and trembled, and when I had assured myself that the dream could never come true, I hastened to bring about the awakening—why? you will ask. Alas, it had to be. Very little money on either side: on the one hand, a certain amount of ambition, a mother ultra-vain of her title and of her son, whom she had promised already to a wealthy relation, and you have more than enough to get the better of an admiration more keen than it was tender; on the other hand, an affection so modest that it never betrayed itself save now and then, in a sudden change of colour and in a few lines of poetry in which the same image, the same idea, recurred again and again.

"How, thought I to myself, could anyone fail to be delighted at being able to animate, to disturb the calm of such a girl? How could one help

divining and sharing such feelings? Despite myself, I began to feel a sort of bitterness for a man who could remain indifferent to such a treasure. No doubt he is ignorant of the extent of her regard, but he knows enough to make him one day regret having sacrificed the most divine sentiment it is possible to inspire, to the contemptible interests of the world of fashion."

Was it indeed possible that the young man divined nothing? Did not his mind revert to her twenty-six years later when, as a sort of amends, he addressed the following lines to Delphine, who had since become Madame de Girardin and had lost her pink complexion?

Lorsque sur ton beau front riait l'adolescence,
Lorsqu'elle rougissait sur tes lèvres de feu,
Lorsque ta joue en fleur célébrait ta croissance,
Quand la vie et l'amour ne te semblaient qu'un jeu;

Lorsqu'on voyait encor grandir ta svelte taille,
Et la muse germer dans tes regards d'azur;
Quand tes deux beaux bras nus pressaient la blonde écaille
Dans la blonde forêt de tes cheveux d'or pur;

Quand des rires d'enfant vibraient dans ta poitrine
Et soulevaient ton sein sans agiter ton cœur,
Tu n'étais pas si belle en ce temps-là, Delphine,
Que depuis ton air triste et depuis ta pâleur!

During the four ensuing years, Captain de Vigny remained without promotion, cut off from Paris,

far away in Southern France. It was an era of profound peace. He had married a wife. The duel between thought and deed had been fought and won. The poet had killed the soldier. The soldier still stood his ground, kept on his feet " by that sort of magnetism which exists in the blade of a sword." But the man had grown weary. He was weak and ill and little able to bear the long marches which he performed, spitting blood as he went, and giving his comrades the slip in order to go and drink milk at a farmhouse or a cottage whenever they came to a halt.

On the 22nd April, 1827, Captain de Vigny asked to be placed on the retired list, for reasons of health. Thus ended a military career of fourteen obscure years; but those years were not lived in vain, for they culminated in one of the finest books that have ever been written about the Army: *Servitude et Grandeur Militaires.*

V

Incipe, Mopse, prior. . . .
VIRGIL.

ELOA appeared in 1824 under Boulland's imprint, and the *Poèmes antiques et modernes* were published in 1826 by Urbain Canel, the famous romanticists' publisher. Finally, in 1829, Gosselin published a collected edition of all the poetical works of Alfred de Vigny under the title *Poems*.*

* We are indebted to the *Petite Revue*, published by Monsieur Pincebourde, for the bibliographical details here given. In order to complete them we quote below a portion of the excellent article upon which we have so freely drawn:

"Since this edition (Gosselin, 1829) the versions have not varied; except that for the reprint of his complete works, published by Delloye and Lecou, in which his compositions were given the definitive title of *Poèmes antiques et modernes*, Alfred de Vigny added in 1837 two new pieces: *Paris Elévation* (which he had previously (1831) published with Gosselin in the form of an octavo brochure) and *Les Amants de Montmorency*.

"The edition of 1829, preceded by a preface (not the preface of 1822), exhibits this peculiarity, namely, that in the same year, three months after the book was first put on sale, a reprint was made for which Alfred de Vigny wrote a special preface; this

At last the *élite* of the intellectual public awoke to the fact that a poet had been born. And indeed the poetic revival of 1830 had produced nothing so sweet; it left behind it nothing so pure.

In all the compositions which make up this collection, a philosophic idea is presented to us in an epic or in a dramatic guise.

Moïse is the lament of the genius who is forced to dwell in loneliness because he had no peer. He sees love die out before his eyes, and the wells of friendship run dry. Sad and solitary he fares onward, encompassed by the sombre column. All this is the harp of the Bible vibrating to those maladies of the soul which are the heritage of modern man. Nothing in the whole range of French poetry surpasses the grave solemnity of this song.

After Moïse, the victim of Genius, the poet sings of Éloa the victim of Pity.

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new preface appeared after that of the previous edition above mentioned, yet it is this first preface of 1829 which has figured almost without alteration in all the subsequent collected editions of his poems.

"The *Ode au Malheur*, which had appeared only in the 1822 edition, was not re-installed among the author's works until 1842, when it reappeared in the first edition of *Poésies complètes*, a duodecimo, published by Charpentier. It was, as we have said, restored to its place in deference to the observations of Sainte-Beuve, and it has appeared in every subsequent reprint since that date."

Byron had sung of Heaven and Earth in a work of vast proportions. He, the poet-rebel, had stretched forth his hand across the abyss to the arch-rebel, to Lucifer, the sombre and splendid hero of the drama *Caïn*. Thomas Moore in softer accents had sung of the love of the angels. Chateaubriand, by way of inebriating himself with incense, had flung wide the portals of a poetic paradise above the heads of his *Martyrs ;* and Monsieur de Lamartine was beating out within his brain the music of his immortal work, *La Chute d'un ange*. Every poet in those days, knowing that the gods had given him an erect posture so that he might direct his gaze heavenward, looked thither for the token of his origin, nor did he withhold from those angels that had fallen, even as he had fallen, a thought of brotherly sympathy. Before ever it issued from inspired lips, this line had murmured in many a heart :

L'homme est un dieu tombé qui se souvient des cieux.

It was in such an atmosphere, full of " breaths from heaven and blasts from hell," that Monsieur de Vigny inhaled the idea of the Daughter of the Angels, and exhaled it in a long, pure sigh of poesy.

She shines in splendour in the deep recesses of our memory, this beautiful Éloa, who, born of a

tear of Jesus, falls in love with Lucifer because he suffers, resolves to save him and perishes with him. In this poem, whose theme is the most splendid of crimes, we behold the woman beneath the wings and vesture of the Archangel. In her the cold brightness of the angel is warmed by the rich pure blood of the woman. Yet Éloa is an angel. The poet's muse is chaste, but never cold. As has been said, " 'Tis warm beneath her ermine fleece." *

On a lower scale then Eloa, beautiful with a less exalted beauty, are ranged the woman taken in adultery, the daughter of Jephtha, Madame de Soubise, Emma of the Little Feet, the Princess of Saul and Dolorida, whose Spanish blood does not belie the proverb:

Yo amo mas a tu amor que a tu vida.†

All these women are depicted with a comely grace, a purity, which often reminds one of Raphael's pictures. The poet's types are pure as those of the divine Sanzio, but they are not bathed like them in joyous radiance. " If I were a painter I would be a sombre Raphael," said the poet, meaning that a shade of sadness and melancholy becomes the creations of the modern poet and thinker. Alfred

* Barbey d'Aurevilly. † I love thy love better than thy life.

de Vigny lacks the radiant joy of an André Chénier; he is profounder and more sombre, there is something in him of a Byron resigned to suffering and sorrow.

The *Poèmes antiques et modernes* delighted the dilettantes and the poets; they had hardly a wider influence; de Vigny's muse moved onward into that twilight so beloved of melancholy souls.

Occasionally Alfred de Vigny would issue from his " tower of ivory " to saunter through the ranks of Parisian society, and he took pleasure in mingling with the foremost among the poets and men of letters. He was a friend of Lamartine's and he knew Victor Hugo and Alexandre Dumas. No great literary function was ever complete without him. After the first performance of Alexandre Dumas' *Christine*, in which Marie Dorval played a part, Alfred de Vigny undertook what was a unique task in his literary career, and, withal, one which betrays hardly a trace of his handiwork.

The interminable drama *Christine*, in which Dumas' terrible and mighty strength flags and collapses, clogged and enmeshed in the soft and colourless folds of indifferent verse, had been greeted with hisses of unanimous disapproval. Some of the tirades in it had nearly submerged the work altogether and they had to be jettisoned in order to ensure a

calmer passage for the ensuing day. The task of cutting away and bridging the gaps was as delicate as it was painful, and the whole business had to be got through by next morning. Alexandre Dumas had as usual a host of people to entertain that night. He had more than his work cut out to amend his play and regale his guests at one and the same time. Alfred de Vigny and Victor Hugo took charge of the manuscript. They shut themselves up in a little room, where they worked like niggers for four hours on end, never letting the clinking of glasses and the singing of songs that was going on in the next room interfere with the progress of their labours. They came forth at daybreak, stepped gravely over the prostrate figures of the sleeping guests, deposited the manuscript on the mantelpiece and departed without waking a soul.

VI

ON Monday, the 6th November, 1826, at eleven o'clock, Count Alfred de Vigny was presented by Colonel Hamilton Bunbury to Sir Walter Scott, who was staying at the Hôtel Windsor.

The author of *Ivanhoe*, on being handed a copy of *Cinq-Mars*, said: "I know the story; it was a fine period in your country's history. . . . Don't expect a criticism from me; but I feel it all, I feel it!"

It was an appropriate mark of respect that Alfred de Vigny paid to Walter Scott in thus offering him a copy of his *Cinq-Mars*, for it was most undoubtedly under the influence of the historical novels of the venerable Scottish author that Monsieur de Vigny had written his work.

The works of Walter Scott, accessible to French readers in the translations of Monsieur Dufaucon-pret, were widely read and greatly admired. Historical studies were then coming into fashion. Augustine Thierry was reconstructing the past

with a creative power that was almost like poetry. Before him, Chateaubriand, in his *Études*, had given evidence of an intelligent love of history. Artists were turning their gaze backward, towards the past. They tried to reproduce it faithfully, in form and colour. Victor Hugo, with his distorting vision, addressed his questions to the gnomes and demons of Nôtre Dame, but Victor Hugo did not always understand the responses of these symbolical representatives of the Middle Ages. The blood seethes too loudly in his head for his ear to catch, above the uproar going on within him, the murmur of "the passéd world." Nevertheless Victor Hugo was none the less eager to pursue the quest. Alexandre Dumas, in his *Henri III*, had put a certain semblance of history on the stage. History was the common stock on which everyone drew. Genius went to it for ideas, talent for form and colour.

Alfred de Vigny, in his boyhood, had been an ardent reader of memoirs and historic tales and had never ceased to breathe-in the dust of the past that was being ceaselessly stirred up around him, and, for once at least, he compelled his ideas to adapt themselves to a historic framework.

One night in the year 1824, at Oloron in the Pyrenees, he mapped out the plan of his romance,

Cinq-Mars. For two years he allowed the work to develop in his brain, and in 1826 he began to write, "having read by lamplight three hundred ill-printed and ill-written books and manuscripts of every description."

The task was meritorious, particularly for Monsieur de Vigny, who, it must be confessed, had not the smallest intention of giving an historical idea of the period and its characters, but aimed rather at creating certain types of a purely imaginary order. He studied the seventeenth century not in order to give a picture of the seventeenth century, but to bring on the stage, under historic names, figures evolved by his own imagination and designed to exemplify his own particular ideals. History, so far as his work is concerned, is merely the background of the stage, a more or less arbitrary means of indicating that the characters have their being somewhere on earth.

A strange paradox indeed! Monsieur de Vigny, with all the documents to his hand, composes an historical novel and yet shuns the very notion of giving historic truth a foothold therein.

"Of what avail," he says in the preface to his book, "of what avail are the arts if they do but reproduce and mirror our own ordinary existence? Suffer us rather to dream that occasionally there

have appeared men stronger and greater than ourselves, greater for good and greater for evil. It is well for us to think such things. If your colourless truth is to follow us into the realms of art, we shall all be shutting up our theatres and our books, so as not to have to look upon it twice."

According to this theory, imagination is not the interpreter of truth but a substitute for it.

Monsieur de Vigny took a strange view of the historical novel. He used it in order to bring before us, not real men and women, but typical and almost abstract characters who adopted the names, and appeared in the garb, of real persons. Under the name of Richelieu, the author brings Richelieu on the stage without troubling himself to probe the reasons which inspired the actions of the statesman-ecclesiastic. Friendship takes the name of Thou, a totally symbolical personage. The defects of the system are glaringly apparent in the work itself. The characters, planted in a strange land, dressed in borrowed clothes, move uneasily and speak unnaturally. The novel does not hang together, and it is only in certain details that we can recognise Alfred de Vigny, his distinction of style, his wonderful descriptive charm and his poetry.

This book, the only second-rate one Alfred de

Vigny ever published, was, of course, the one which was the most warmly received by the public, whose judgment can always be foretold by those who have the key. The women wept and said to the author:

"Ah, give us more books like *Cinq-Mars*. That is your real forte!"

The book went through four editions in less than two years, and translations in Italian, English and even in Russian charmed tears from the eyes of all the fair ones in Europe.

The poet had foreseen this success. "I gave them *Cinq-Mars* in order to get people to read my poetry."

VII

She tended the home. . . .
Greek Epitaph.

ONE day, at Pace, Alfred de Vigny encountered a young Englishwoman named Lydia Bunbury, whom he married in 1829. The girl's father, an old man and a millionaire three or four times over, had not thought it in his power to oppose a match on which his daughter had set her heart. English parents, who in this respect differ greatly from the French, are singularly and characteristically unwilling to oppose their own views to their children's when the latter take it into their heads to marry. They advance, as a reason for this somewhat perilous acquiescence, that young people marry to please themselves and not to please their parents. Mr. Bunbury had therefore consented to Monsieur de Vigny's becoming his son-in-law; but he could not find it in his heart to respect a son-in-law who manufactured verses. What manner of man the suitor was in

himself mattered not at all. He could see nothing in him but that hideous monstrosity, a poet. The idea that a poet had found his way into his family turned his blood to vinegar. He seemed in imagination to behold some terrible animal seated at his hearth. Mr. Bunbury was an Englishman: he took to travelling to banish this odious obsession from his head; he ceased to be a father and became a tourist. The skies of Italy poured down the balm of repose upon his troubled spirit and, with it, forgetfulness of his poetical son-in-law. To such an extent was this the case that, finding himself one night seated at a banquet in Florence beside Monsieur de Lamartine, who was then French Ambassador, he addressed himself as follows to his illustrious fellow guest:

"Monsieur, being a poet, you are doubtless acquainted with the poets of your country."

Monsieur M. Lamartine replied that he could, in fact, claim to know a great many of them, and Mr. Bunbury explained his reason for asking. It was that his daughter had married one of them.

When, however, he was invited to mention his name, the father-in-law, after cudgelling his memory in vain, had to confess that he could not recall a syllable of it. The poet named a few of his most eminent *confrères*, and naturally Alfred de Vigny soon came to his lips.

"Vigny! That's right! That's the fellow who married my daughter!" broke in Mr. Bunbury.

He had remembered his son-in-law. Later on he remembered him again, that time to cut him out of his will.

Madame de Vigny, weak and ailing, was a continual drain on her husband's time and thoughts. He tended her assiduously, and acted unremittingly as her nurse. He did not relinquish these sorrowful duties until his wife's death, he himself being fated to follow her at once to the grave.

Madame de Vigny had this to her credit: she never caused herself to be talked about.

VIII

History is the true epic of the modern peoples, and we see that it has already produced the larger part of the great works of poetry.

LOUIS XAVIER DE RICARD.

IN 1829 the French stage was still in the hands of men like Brifaut and Arnault, who poured the soft and colourless paste of their conceptions into the mould that had been of such excellent service to Corneille and Racine, but which two centuries of mediocrity had grievously worn away. Nepumocène Lemercier certainly made a prolonged effort to shatter this Procrustean mould and to give to each of his dramatic works a form of its own. Before him, one of the foremost minds of the eighteenth century, Diderot, had endeavoured to leave the way open for the unimpeded development of dramatic invention.

But Diderot was forgotten and Lemercier was received with hisses: therefore they were both wrong. It was not so very long since that Charles Brifaut, having constructed a Spanish tragedy, found it held up by the censor on account of the

war with Spain. So what did he do? He replaced Alvarez by Arsace, transposed the scene from Madrid to Babylon, and produced a *Ninus II* which achieved a popular success.*

Victor Hugo had already got, in his portfolio or on the files of the theatrical managers, two revolutionary plays well calculated to facilitate the emancipation of the dramatic art. But, however mighty a genius a man may be, he cannot, at a blow, bring about a complete revolution. The work of liberation which the play *Hernani* was destined to inaugurate did not go much beyond the scenic arrangements. It was merely the classic envelope that Hugo was for rending asunder. The compound of dramatic elements which inevitably went into this envelope he preserved and made use of with scarcely any addition of his own. It has not been sufficiently

* All that is badly thought out and badly expressed. The subject was beyond my powers. It is impossible for me to correct myself. I will merely content myself with one remark. This Charles Brifaut of whom I spoke with such easy nonchalance was a mediocre poet of the conventional classical school, there is no doubt about that. Shakespeare was a genius and one of the greatest. But, to speak quite plainly, if he had suddenly taken it into his head to call his Cleopatra, Elvira; and his Anthony, Antonio, and if he had placed the scene of their amours on the banks of the Tagus, what fault should we have had to find? There is no more local colour in Shakespeare's plays than there is in Brifaut's. In saying that I am not finding fault with the romantics for their admiration of Shakespeare (1923).

emphasized that *Hernani* is almost classical in structure.

A long time before *Hernani* was enacted on the stage, Alfred de Vigny had entertained the idea of bringing about a profounder and, consequently, a more vital revolution in the structure of the drama. It had been his object to proclaim freedom of conception as well as freedom of treatment.

"Would the French stage, or would it not, welcome a modern tragedy that should present in its conception a broad comprehensive picture of life instead of a picture focussed upon the catastrophic *dénouement* of a single plot; in its composition: genuine characters, not rôles for actors, quiet scenes without dramatic movement, intermingled with scenes of a comic or tragic significance; in its execution: a style admitting of a familiar, comic, tragic and occasionally an epic, treatment?"

To solve the problem it was necessary to be able to fall back upon the authority of a masterpiece, to cite the example of a play which, considered as a play, should be beyond all criticism. Alfred de Vigny, therefore, translated *Othello* for the stage. Rhythm was an important factor in the problem. It was necessary that the translator should produce a metrical version. An enterprise of this nature carried out with an understanding of and respect

for the original is assuredly the most exacting and thankless task a man of talent can undertake.

In every well-organized mind the birth of the idea takes place simultaneously with that of the form in which it is to be clothed. It springs forth in panoply, like Minerva from the head of Zeus; but to fit on a fresh suit of armour to someone else's Divinity without galling the delicate limbs of the Immortal One is a task to baffle the skill of the greatest artists. At the period when Alfred de Vigny translated the Moor of Venice, translators, and they existed in plenty, were very far from being equal to surmounting the difficulties of such a task, they did not even perceive them. They planted the rigid monotonous cuirass of their alexandrines on to the ideas of the original authors; they smothered, crushed, mutilated and disfigured them in ruthless fashion, and then, when they had completed their fell task, did not hesitate to call their odious betrayal a triumph of the Gallic genius. Alfred de Vigny's translation was as literal as a verse translation could be; since then he has had rivals in his difficult task, but his is the honour that attaches to the pioneer, and he brought to its execution the insight of a poet and the patience of a lover.

At length, at a time when political preoccupations

seemed to have been lulled to sleep under the influence of a moderate government, the enterprise was launched. On the 24th October, 1829, *Le More de Venise* was enacted on the stage of the Théâtre-Français. Othello appeared with the lineaments of Joanny, and the pale Desdemona took on the triumphant beauty of Mademoiselle Mars.

Le More de Venise won the respect, if it did not win the admiration, of the public. Desdemona's kerchief, the bugbear and terror of the worthy Ducis, was at length deemed worthy of the pit. The highway of the Drama, if it was not thrown completely open, was at all events made easier for the modern conception of dramatic art. We know the famous works that were afterwards represented on the French stage. *Othello*, *Henri III*, *Hernani* certainly ushered in a new epoch for the theatre in France; but the era begun by the intelligent daring of Alfred de Vigny, the impetuous force of Alexandre Dumas, and the lyrical power of Victor Hugo, inspiring though it be, does not put our stage on a level with the Indian, the Greek, the English, the Spanish or the German. We cannot, here, inquire into the various causes of this inferiority, but a consideration of the work of Monsieur de Vigny, which is our immediate concern, will per-

haps, incidentally, make us acquainted with at least one of them.

In 1829, Alfred de Vigny had as yet no intention of essaying the theatre on his own account. He had attempted to compose some tragedies while he was still a child, at an age when most of us have not yet begun to think for ourselves; but none of his own individual ideas had presented itself to his mind in the dramatic form. He was not conscious within himself of the germs of any conception of this kind, or, at least, he did not foresee the time when it would come to maturity. "It is possible," he wrote, "that after having touched, essayed and explored with a Shakespearean prelude that organ with a hundred voices which we call the theatre, I shall decide never to choose it as the medium for giving utterance to my ideas."

Nevertheless, three years later, on the 25th June, 1831, we find Alfred de Vigny presenting for the first time, at the Odéon, a prose drama in five acts called *La Maréchale d'Ancre*.

Thus we see the author of *Cinq-Mars* confronting for the second time that austere Muse to whom he had hitherto paid but scant attention.

The hidden springs of a play, as revealed to us by the author, are certainly not lacking either in grandeur or in depth, and seem calculated to impress

on the new work something of the terrible majesty of the ancient Greek tragedies.

"At the centre of the circle described by this composition, a keen eye could catch a glimpse of Destiny, Destiny against which we wage eternal war, but which always proves the victor, so soon as our moral character weakens or changes, and which, with unerring footsteps, leads us along with it to its mysterious goal, and often to the expiation of our misdeeds by ways that it is given to no one to foresee. Round this idea the sovereign power wielded by a woman, the incapacity of a Court faction to handle public affairs, the urbane heartlessness of the favourite courtiers, the needs and the sufferings of the common people crushed beneath their sway. Next the torments of political remorse, and of the adulterer, condemned, in the midst of his pleasures, to pay the very penalties he had inflicted without scruple upon others, and finally the compassion which all merit." *

But, alas, our author, who after long research had successfully discovered in History the constituent elements of a profound and imposing drama, and who held these elements enveloped and confined within the limits of a dramatic idea, must needs, by an inconceivable irony of fate, discard

* Alfred de Vigny.

them all in favour of the arbitrary inventions of some philosophic fable of his own imagining; discard the convincing train of events with which History supplied him, and, with them, a philosophic theory, less symmetrical no doubt, but surely not a whit less real than that which he evolved from his own imagination.

The triumphant flight of the drama is debased from the lofty peaks of History to the low-lying region of story-weaving. The characters instead of exhibiting the inevitability of truth appear far-fetched and unreal. Such is the reward meted out to those who tamper with History. Imagination cannot do as it will with her without paying the penalty. Imagination cannot breathe new fire into the ashes, or, if it gives life to the clay which itself has moulded, it cannot project its creatures into a real world, into a definite *milieu*, for they would find no points of contact there, they would have no bond of communion, they would be out of harmony with their environment. Like the statue of Pygmalion, they would have no mother to remember.

To sum up: *La Maréchale d'Ancre*, in thus sinning against History, sins likewise against the Truth. The poet, however, finds his feet again in certain individual passages, some of which are ingenious and a few profound. The duel in Act V ranks

among the finest things in the whole range of French dramatic literature.

We are, of course, aware how easy it would be to ascribe the defects of *La Maréchale d'Ancre* to the conditions generally prevailing at the period in which it was written, and how readily one might extenuate the shortcomings of Alfred de Vigny by pleading the influence of his *milieu*.

IX

I love the majesty of human suffering.

ALFRED DE VIGNY.

LFRED DE VIGNY published *Stello* in 1824, *Servitude et Grandeur Militaires* in 1835.

Himself a poet and a soldier, he took for his theme the modern soldier and the modern poet.

The book *Servitude et Grandeur Militaires* is made up of three simple tales, and they are perhaps the most powerful and the most beautiful thing that has ever been written about the soldier. Alfred de Vigny, during the fourteen years he had been in the Army, had been able to take a long survey of the grandeur of the military character as well as of its undoubted limitations. He considered that the professional soldier, cut off from civilian life as he is in France, tends to become miserable and unsociable when he realizes how unsatisfactory and absurd is his position. However, even while he looked upon countenances set with grim resignation to endure a life of passive obedience, he saw the

beauty that lay hidden in the stoic impassivity with which they performed their thankless and unwelcome duties. He realized that they were slaves, but noble slaves. In honour of these obscure heroes, the poet wrought as it were three bronze medallions, three rugged, impassive and sorrowful portraits, three effigies: the Captain of the *Marat*, torn by the inward conflict between duty and conscience; the Adjutant of Artillery at Vincennes, martyr of responsibility irrationally fettered to passive obedience; and Captain Renaud, the obscure hero who laid down his life at the call of duty. Vigny has graven an imperishable portrait of these rugged characters, these simple-hearted, fearless men with their faces furrowed with sabre cuts and the ridges dug by time; he excelled in causing a furtive tear to fall upon their cheeks of bronze, for those old campaigners were dear to his heart.

During his garrison life he had always cared less for the younger officers with their array of formulas and theories, "great authorities on the cut of their coats, eloquent orators of the café and billiard saloon, empty-headed chatterers," than for the stern, silent yet kindly veterans whose bowed shoulders were eloquent of the hardships they had endured as they marched along beneath the burden

of knapsacks heavy with their accoutrements and fighting kit. It was the society of these grizzled warriors that Lieutenant de Vigny always loved the best. He listened to their yarns, and noted down their opinions and their recollections in the tablets of his memory. He sought to discover the Man beneath the Soldier and to make their war-wearied eyes, that ever seemed to gaze doggedly in front of them, sparkle with a gleam of human tenderness. And then, later on, in solitude and silence, he wrote down the sacred message of these magnificent veterans and called it *Servitude et Grandeur Militaires*.

And now we will leave the soldier and pass on to the poet. Poetry is most widespread and most popular among primitive peoples. It enters into their very being, it penetrates them and circulates throughout the social body as the blood circulates in the veins. In these primitive conditions, poetry is beloved of the people because it is they who make it. Made by all, it is understood by all. Issuing from the mouth of the people, it speaks the language of the people, the inevitable and fateful language in which the laws of God and the laws of Man find their necessary expression. The poet is a priest, a lawgiver or a warrior. But when these functions become more clearly defined, and by growing more numerous and complex are neces-

sarily divided one from another, the poet finds himself confined within the brazen ramparts of a caste, his songs cease to be the complete expression of the race, of the people as a whole, and become merely the expression of a religious or philosophical idea. Soon, too, the very message of this caste is forgotten; the sacred brotherhood is dispersed by violence. Then the poet becomes no more than an individual, and his poetry a thing altogether personal. He forges his own language for his own particular use, a language necessarily esoteric and imperfectly understood of the many, giving utterance merely to the joys or the sorrows of a lonely soul.

Such is the position of the poet under modern social conditions. This declension, this solitude, fill him with sadness, and his muse, to whom the citizens refuse admission within their gates, grows weak and languid like a dweller beneath an alien sky. And so this exiled muse puts on the robes of sorrow or else goes forth to seek, in memories of the past, the joy and serenity denied her by the present.

This sense of grief, shadowy or clearly defined, exists in every poetic heart. It is the malady of genius; Byron and Lamartine were conscious of it; the great Goethe escaped from it by the paths of

contemplation and remembrance. It was analysed by Alfred de Vigny in his beautiful *Stello*.

The sad-hearted Stello is the poet of an outworn age. He dwells in loneliness, sick in mind and body, amid the manifold noises of the street, and the implacable Doctor Noir proves to him, with pitiless logic, that every kind of modern society repels the poet and has no place for him. Absolute monarchies fear him, constitutional governments disdain him, republics detest him.

The nameless multitude is the foe of names.*

The book appears to us to be profound and true from the point of view which we adopt, looking at it, that is to say, as a whole and only beholding therein the poet brought face to face with modern social conditions.

It was Alfred de Vigny's intention to seek a second interview with the relentless Doctor Noir and to hearken to his pronouncements on the Destiny of Man; to hear him declare that "all crimes arising from weakness only merit our compassion," to establish the axiom that Hope is the greatest of human follies, and to subject to an exhaustive analysis the various kinds of suicide. A third consultation was to have reference to

* Alfred de Vigny.

politicians, a fourth to the idea of love, "which exhausts itself in the quest for an eternity of pleasure."

But, stricken with dismay, Alfred de Vigny could go no farther. He held his peace and took his stand upon his three works, *Cinq-Mars*, *Stello*, *Servitude*, the great trilogy which, as the author himself declared, makes up the Epic of Disillusion.

Alfred de Vigny, in his life no less than in his writings, was impressed with a profound sense of the universality of evil. The poet's concern for the fate and fortunes of other poets was unremitting and sincere; he learned with grief, in 1829, that Lassailly had just succumbed to a fever brought on by the strain of too much excitement on an over-active and over-sensitive brain. He spoke of this unhappy event to Monsieur de Lamartine, who had a collection made during a sitting of the Chamber, and Monsieur de Vigny had the extreme pleasure of conveying the proceeds to the poet's sister.

A preoccupation of a similar nature, and one equally generous, prompted him on the 15th January, 1841, to write to the deputies concerning Mademoiselle Sedaine and the question of literary rights. It was only a character so unselfish as his that could have lamented the misfortunes of others

without ever having a thought for his own or even so much as recognizing them. As for moral suffering, he owed the special intensity with which he divined it to the delicate and sensitive insight with which nature had endowed him.

X

Stabat Mater.

ONE day in the year 1817, Monsieur Léon de Vigny, now an old man of seventy-four, crippled and infirm, as a result of his wounds, sat up in bed and hastily gripped his son's hand. "My boy," he said, "I am not going to beat about the bush, I feel that I am going. The old machine is breaking up. Take care of your mother, and never part with this." And he died.

He had given the child a likeness of Madame Léon de Vigny.

We have seen her portrait bending over her child's cradle. Her expression was sad almost to the point of severity; and to her son she had bequeathed her grave disposition and her beautiful fair hair. Madame Léon de Vigny, the daughter of Admiral de Baraudin, a cousin of Bougainville's and a great-niece of the poet Regnard, was a true offshoot of that strong and sturdy stock. Between Alfred and his mother there existed a deep bond of

affection. Of her four sons, Alfred was the latest born and the only one that survived; the others had all died before he was born, and his mother used to impress on him that he had three Guardian Angels in heaven: Léon, Adolphe and Emmanuel, whose names he was to remember in his prayers.

Alfred de Vigny, after he had left the Army and had married, took his mother to live with him; she was in ill-health and he made himself her nurse; he read aloud to her, grave and serious books; he had his luncheon brought to her room, and he saw to it that she was able to listen to the music she loved. Sometimes he would stay up all night beside the sufferer's bed, and she would reward him in the morning with some such speech as this:

"You do me more good than all the doctors put together."

Alfred de Vigny had but a modest fortune, and long nights of toil paid the expenses of the invalid. *Cinq-Mars* with its several editions materially helped him to prolong his mother's life.

In the spring of 1833, Madame Léon de Vigny had a stroke of paralysis; but it was four years before she died.

One evening in December, 1837, as she was sitting in her easy-chair with her feet resting on her

stool, she began to hum, to some old tune, the following words:

Une humble chaumière isolée
Cachait l'innocence et la paix.
Là vivait, c'est en Angleterre,
Une mère dont le désir
Était de laisser sur la terre
Sa fille heureuse, et puis mourir.

"Whom is that by, mother?" inquired her son.

"Jean-Jacques," said she, "'Sa fille heureuse, et puis mourir,' do you understand?"

"It would be very selfish of me," she said on another occasion, "not to give you my books; I shall never read them again."

"It goes to my heart to hear her talk like that!' sighed her son, who strove with filial piety to save his adored mother from death that was coming to wrest her from him.

Madame de Vigny died in her son's arms on the 21st December, 1837.

Having long bewept her loss, Alfred de Vigny wrote these words:

"29*th December*. Her face, as she lay in death, looked like an angel's. I have wept on my knees before her, wept bitterly, and yet I felt that her sinless soul had been set free and that, apparelled

in virginal splendour, it was soaring high above me and above her own beautiful countenance. Her eyes were but half closed, as you see in happy people when they are asleep. Why, then, did I weep so bitterly? Ah! because she can hear me no more, and I must needs keep locked in my heart all that I would fain have said to her."

The memory of his mother never left him. Kneeling beside the tomb which he had erected to her memory, he seemed to behold her living yet asleep. One night as he was reading the *Stabat Mater*, he seemed to see her prostrate at his feet, and again he "wept bitterly."

XI

A tranquil despair is the essence of wisdom.

ALFRED DE VIGNY.

ALFRED DE VIGNY'S nature was profoundly religious, and somewhat inclined to mysticism. The poet had it in mind to bring out a new volume under the title of *Élévation*, a word which, by the mysterious power of association, suggested to the mind the idea of the Divine Office. There was something of the priest in his nature. He had a full measure of that hieratic quality that is only to be found in a modern soul, the consciousness of the priestly functions of the intellect.

And is not such a poet as de Vigny in very truth a poet of the New Dispensation, an initiator? His faith was limited to a few slowly accumulated negative convictions upon which he based his philosophy of tranquil resignation. Having looked for God in Nature and found Him not, he held that man should stand alone, erect and independent, worshipping the God present within him, the name of whom was "Honour."

He held that it did not become the wise man to continue ceaselessly appealing to a God who kept Himself for ever hidden and apart.

He once wrote down these words in his diary:

"The Earth has rebelled against the injustices of the Creation. It dissembles because of its fear of Eternity, but in secret it is wroth with God because He created Evil and Death. When one who contemns the gods appears on the scene, such as Ajax, son of Oileus, the world takes him to its arms and loves him. Such an one is Satan, and such were Orestes and Don Juan. All those who have revolted against the injustice of Heaven have been secretly admired and loved of men."

The man that penned those lines flung down, in one of his most powerful poems, the challenge of the creature to his Creator. Everything is sincere, everything is connected and linked together in the life and work of Alfred de Vigny. Never, not even in his hours of deepest lassitude, did he endeavour to find solace in another religion, however cold and stern his own might be. But he realized well enough that the religion of self-respect cannot be the sole religion of all, and that, if faith were to die out, the nations could not look to such a substitute to save them from despair.

"O heavenly illusion of Faith!" he cried, "never

leave those regions of the earth which have cultivated thee like a sacred flower, for when thou shalt have departed from the world, what shall man do without thee? Is it not marvellous that when we tell a child he must one day die, he does not lie down until death comes to take him?"

His soul was the soul of a Stoic, and, incongruous as it may sound, a little feminine. Soaring in unfaltering flight above the weak, it yet leaned down toward them with a sympathy both native and profound. It passed through the portals of the Gehenna where such men as Chatterton and Gilbert lay dying, somewhat as the daughter of the angels, of whom his imagination had dreamed, came down to the suffering Satan. Without being himself affected with their malady, he felt the impression of it with the exquisite delicacy of a woman's intuition. The poet saw with sadness how, one after another, men were swallowed up in this abyss of Death, in those shadowy realms of Hades which seemed to him terrible and unfathomable, even as they had appeared to Byron.

He knew not whither the nations of the earth were tending, nor how to lead them, nor how they should guide themselves.

Concerning the government of countries he had ideas and he had sentiments, and his sentiments

by no means squared with his ideas. The last of the Vignys had, in his blood, an instinctive attachment to the monarchy. It was not for nothing that he had a long line of aristocrats for his ancestors, an uncle killed at Quiberon, a father who fought for the King, and a mother a devoted Royalist. Count Alfred de Vigny loved the monarchical régime; it was a question of taste, of sentiment, of impression. But the author of *Stello* and *Chatterton* did not find the régime of the Restoration at all consonant with his maxims as a philosopher. He who had not wished to see the revolution in being, was by the force of his intelligence compelled to reinstate it in the domain of ideas. In 1835 the man of ideas wrote these lines which the man of birth could not but avow with reluctance:

"The only government of which the idea is not intolerable is a Republic, similar in constitution to the United States of America."

However, this conflict between two men in one body was wholly intellectual; it never found expression in an overt act of any kind.

On the 29th July, 1830, in the midst of the fighting he wrote as follows:

"Ever since this morning fighting has been going on. The workers are as brave as Vendeans; the soldiers as staunch as the Imperial Guard: all

of them true Frenchmen. Ardour and intelligence on the one side, Honour on the other!—What ought I to do? Protect my mother and my wife. What am I? A retired captain. I have been out of the Army five years. The Court never gave me anything during my period of service. My books did not please them: they considered them seditious. Louis XIII was portrayed in such a way that people in talking to me would often say: *You who are a liberal.* . . . Under the Bourbons I received promotion, by seniority, to the 5th Regiment of the Guards, and that was my only advancement, for I had entered as Lieutenant. And yet if the King comes to the Tuileries and if the Dauphin puts himself at the head of his troops, I shall go and get killed with them. The tocsin!—I have seen the fire from the top windows—and now fire will bring confusion in its train. Poor people, great people, fighters to a man!

"I've got out my old uniform. If the King calls up all the officers, I shall go. And his cause is a bad one; he's in his infancy, like all the rest of his family; a mere child in his attitude to our times, which he doesn't understand at all. How came I to feel that I ought to die like this? It's absurd. He will know neither my name nor how I died. But my father, when I was still a little

boy in the days of an Empire, made me kiss the Cross of Saint Louis: superstition, political superstition, a plant without roots, a childish thing, an old-fashioned notion of fealty, of family attachment, of vassalage, of the ties of a bondsman to his overlord. But how can I help going to-morrow if we are all called up? I served the King for thirteen years. This word 'King.' What is it after all? And to leave my old mother and my young wife who depend on me. Still, I *shall* leave them: it's very unjust, but it must be.

"The night is almost over. The guns are still firing." And next day he added:

"They are not coming to Paris, and people are dying for them. A parcel of Stuarts! Oh, I shall protect my family!"

Alfred de Vigny, as he said himself, ended by deciding with his head about a question which, only the night before, he had decided with his heart.

A few days later he organized the 2nd Company, 4th Battalion of the 1st Legion of the National Guard.

A little incident, but one which Alfred de Vigny loved to recall and which he often narrated to his friends, relates to the days when he was in command of the National Guard. The story runs as follows:

On one occasion, he, as Colonel, encountered in the guard-room another officer of the same corps. He was an old man, half paralysed, and grim of feature, who looked on him with a forbidding air. This sombre-looking old man was Nepumocène Lemercier, a poet of genius and the finest character among all the writers under the Empire. Hisses from the pit, bullets from anonymous pistols, the contempt of the Young Romantics, all of them more or less Catholic or Royalist, ill-health, old age —none of those things had availed to break the old fellow's iron spirit which had been forged and tempered in the furnace of the Revolution. Like Cato, the tumbling ruins struck him and appalled him not; but loneliness had rendered him grim and unsociable. In every man that he met he prepared to encounter an enemy. Confronting the poetic aristocrat, the old lion stood haughty and silent, waiting for the customary insult.

But the Comte de Vigny knew the respect that was due to a lofty character and a great poet. He had a profound regard for Nepumocène Lemercier; and he gave expression, in warm and vigorous words, to the admiration he felt for him. He spoke, as a poet, of the works of a poet, of the novel and daring character of his plays, of the satiric genius of his

Panhypocrisiade. He quoted, " Et sent se dépouiller l'or de sa chevelure."

Alfred de Vigny was richly rewarded for his loyal admiration. With his eyes wet with tears, for the old man could not control his emotion, Nepumocène Lemercier exclaimed:

" So, then, I am not quite forgotten ! "

This fine old man died in 1840. Alfred de Vigny praised the epitaph which Lemercier himself had composed for his grave.

" He was an upright man and a true lover of letters."

On the 29th August, at a review in the Champ de Mars, Count Alfred de Vigny commanded the 4th Battalion of the 1st Legion. King Louis Philippe raised his hat to the commander and said:

" I am very glad to see you, and to see you there. Your battalion is a very fine one."

Alfred de Vigny says he thought the King very handsome and very much like Louis XIV, and he added:

" Very much as Madame de Sévigné thought Louis XIV the greatest king in the world—after she had danced with him."

Irony is the last phase of disillusion.

Thenceforward Alfred de Vigny remained gently ironical in his attitude towards all the great changes in the constitution which went on under his eyes. Preferences he might still have, but enthusiasms no more; he had broken the covenant of his ancestors and renounced their heritage of political attachments and political animosities. He lived on, proud and free, aloof from intrigues, aloof from restless and ambitious political schemers; he proved himself worthy in all respects of the beautiful eulogy contained in the verses addressed to him by his friend Antoni Deschamps:

> Alfred, ce n'est pas toi qui voudrais, à ce prix,
> T'asseoir à leurs côtés, sous leurs vastes lambris;
> Comme un cygne tombé dans un marais immonde
> Souiller ta plume blanche en la fange du monde,
> Et mêler, pour la perdre en ce bruyant séjour,
> Ta parole immortelle à leur fracas d'un jour!
> Non, non, ce n'est pas là, le poste du poète:
> La Muse chante au temple, ailleurs elle est muette!
> Comme on fait aujourd'hui, toi, tu ne voudrais pas
> Prostituer ta lyre aux choses d'ici-bas;
> Tu l'estime trop sainte et méprisant la ruse,
> Tu n'attachais jamais de cocarde à ta muse.
> Les Dieux lares sont tout, et le Forum n'est rien.

The profound yet gentle scepticism which he had always had in his heart increased with age. In 1848, Alfred de Vigny was possessed by a calm resignation which inclined him to solitude and

repose. He was attached to Monsieur de Lamartine, but he never shared his opinions. He looked for nothing that would bring him satisfaction, whether from him or from another. Monsieur de Vigny possessed a virtue which is the distinguishing characteristic of men of wisdom and character in ages of decadence and corruption, a solitary strength which looks for no support save in itself, repels every worldly sanction and centres all its faith on the divinity within him. It is itself its own genius and its own light. Such were the last of the righteous citizens of Rome, and the soul of our poet somewhat resembles the gentlest and tenderest of those spirits who, beneath the mantle of the Stoic, passed unstained through the sensual stye of the later Empire. Like the Stoics, he ever had an eye on the dagger; he dwelt familiarly with the idea of voluntary death, an idea which he at last personified in his presentation of the character of Chatterton.

To hold aloof, to abstain from interference, was the first principle of his conduct. He had a horror of noisy and sterile activity. The days were long past when the ardour of action had brought a glow to his brow. He beheld with calmness, but not without bitterness, the initial acts of the Provisional Government and soon withdrew to his native Beauce

and to his own château of Maine-Giraud, about which there clung so many memories of his dead mother.

It was a little turreted fortress girt about with elms and beeches and old oaks, immemorial trees that the last of the de Vignys would never allow to be cut down, because, he said, old trees are like old members of the family. Le Maine-Giraud, with its numberless windows and its spreading park-lands, was taxed at an enormous figure and brought in no revenue. It carried with it a seat in the Chamber. "That's just what I don't want," said Monsieur de Vigny. "My spirit and my destiny will always remain at variance. It is my fate."

XII

When they are all assembled and seated, I will tell them. . . .

LESAGE.

ALFRED DE VIGNY was not born to be a dramatist. His contemplative and wholly introspective cast of mind seemed ill-adapted to the expansions of the drama. But the emotions of the stage are impossible to forgo to such as have once experienced them. The author of that qualified success, *La Maréchale d'Ancre*, was unwilling to abandon a mode of expression which was not his by nature, but which his artistic talents enabled him to acquire. He persevered, and it was well he did. To this patience of his we owe two masterpieces which, though a little artificial, are very charming. One day the Princesse de Béthune told Monsieur de Vigny a story which made a great impression on him.

It was the story of a husband who, as all the world was aware, had not set foot in his wife's house for five whole years. He knew perfectly well that she had a lover, but the whole thing had been managed without any sort of public scandal.

One night the husband entered his wife's abode. She was astonished and, indeed, alarmed.

"Stop in your bed," he said. "I will spend the night in this armchair, reading. I know you are *enceinte*, and I've come here so that the people about you may not talk."

She said nothing, and burst into tears. The story was a true one.

This was a dramatic situation for him. It would be impossible to clothe this incident in any other garb save that of comedy; and it was in this guise that, several years later, he presented it in a play.

Quitte pour la peur, a little one-act play in prose, was played for the first time at the Opéra on the 30th May, 1833, by Bocage and the charming Madame Dorval.

In spite of what the author has said in his preface, we may set aside the problem of marriage with which he burdens his play, and which seems to us a little over heavy for so slight and charming a work. In obedience to a conviction that did him honour, Monsieur de Vigny resolved that everything he wrote should be based on an idea, and when the work was finished this quite proper preoccupation showed itself in a grave concern that marked all his prefaces, and especially the few lines of explanation which precede *Quitte pour la peur*. Monsieur de

Vigny's excellent little play does not turn on action sufficiently general in character nor on developments of sufficient range and completeness to enable us fully to see the interplay of marriage and adultery. It is a very talented and highly moral piece of work, but it cannot be regarded as a document in social ethics. The charm of the comedy resides in the exquisite delicacy with which a somewhat material subject is treated. Monsieur de Vigny, for a great writer, displays remarkable address.

The play was greeted with applause, and its author immediately began to think about bringing out into the publicity of the stage the great theme with which we have seen him so constantly preoccupied. It was his aim to display upon the stage the soul, the utterly naked soul, of a modern poet.

With this aim in view he returned again to the Chatterton episode in his *Stello*, which he found it necessary to recast from beginning to end. His first idea took shape in a manner as little adapted to the theatre as it possibly could have been. It was, in the book, a delightful and poetic analysis devoid of embellishments, without any indication or, at all events, without any development, of stage machinery. The poet was obliged to pour his ideas into a new mould, which differed completely from the first. This recasting is a

difficult and exacting task, for the ore runs a great risk of suffering contamination. The work took him fourteen nights. The result was the play *Chatterton*.

Such is the name of the hero. He has nothing in common with the ne'er-do-well who committed suicide in England at the age of nineteen after perpetrating some rather singular poetry and some very reprehensible deeds. Monsieur de Vigny's Chatterton is a purely imaginary creation. He represents the poet in conflict with a selfish and materialistic world. In this unequal struggle the poet is necessarily the weaker. He kills himself, or, if you prefer it, the world kills him. That is the whole of the drama.

The dagger is invested with sacred rights. There are, we know, duties and interests that are to be valued higher than life; but the Stoics, who were by no means opposed to suicide, were not given to opening their veins at nineteen years of age on the grounds that they were poor and that some coarse-grained magistrate had, with his clumsy and mistaken benevolence, offended their dignity. We cannot discern a guilty character in Monsieur de Vigny's Chatterton, but neither do we recognize in him a being normally healthy and robust.

The Chatterton episode interpolated in *Stello*

expresses an idea which is just in that it merges in, and blends with, the general idea of the book, which is itself just and true. But Chatterton, isolated and magnified on the stage, presents a false and dangerous example. No matter; the play was applauded.

Its success was great, but its immediate effect was not salutary. Despairing adolescents sprang up like mushrooms, during the night that followed the first performance. The Minister of the Interior for days afterwards received letters from all the budding Chattertons in the country.

"Help me or I shall kill myself!" was their tenor.

"I ought to send all this on to Monsieur de Vigny," Monsieur Thiers exclaimed.

Chatterton is nevertheless a well-constructed play and written in the finest prose we have ever heard on the contemporary stage.

The play contains one of the most marvellous women characters created since the days of Racine. Kitty Bell is worthy to be set beside Monime. I know not which of the two is more exquisitely pure or the more deliciously modest.

XIII

Hamlet. Is this a prologue or the posy of a ring?
Ophelia. 'Tis brief, my Lord.
Hamlet. As woman's love!

KITTY BELL was Madame Dorval. With what poetic grace, with what an air of gentle chastity she invested the poet's adorable creation! Those who saw her were amazed and delighted and bethought them of Raphael's Madonnas and of the loveliest representations of Charity.

Nevertheless Madame Dorval's genius did not come as a revelation either to de Vigny or to the public. Madame Dorval had already delighted the world with a brilliant series of creations, and Kitty Bell was one of the last and one of the most touching incarnations of the radiant spirit who created "The woman of the New Drama, the romantic heroine on the stage."* Two years before, she had invested with her girlish modesty the young duchess whose lineaments the poet had

* Madame Sand.

so skilfully portrayed in *Quitte pour la peur*. And earlier still, in 1824, Alfred de Vigny had sent her, with a copy of the *More de Venise* (Othello), the following verses eloquent of the admiration he secretly entertained for her.

Quel fut jadis Shakespeare ?—On ne répondra pas.
Ce livre est à mes yeux l'ombre d'un de ses pas,
Rien de plus—Je le fis en cherchant sur sa trace
Quel fantôme il suivait de ceux que l'homme embrasse,
Gloire,—fortune,—amour,—pouvoir ou volupté ?
Rien ne trahit son cœur, hormis une beauté
Qui toujours passe en pleurs parmi d'autres figures
Comme un pâle rayon dans les forêts obscures,
Triste, simple et terrible, ainsi que vous passez,
Le dédain sur la bouche et vos grands yeux baissés.

It must be a profound and intoxicating delight to see one's own idea, the cherished creation of one's mind, take on life and shape in a woman of genius, throb in her bosom, glow with the splendours of her rich and generous blood, tread the stage, weep, laugh, be made flesh. When his dream passes thus before his eyes, surely the poet must sometimes feel as Pygmalion felt when he beheld descending, all warm and blushing, from the cold pedestal, the beloved form, the creation of his genius and his chisel, that had so long remained inanimate. Shall he not blend, in a single idea of union and possession, the conception which is his own with

the intelligence, the obedient instrument which animates it and gives it being? Some such union of thought and feeling is wrought, all unconsciously, by the majority of those who watch a play, and it may be averred that an actress may number more lovers than critics in the auditorium.

The charm of an actress of genius does not vanish when she is off the stage; it changes, it becomes more intimate, though not more powerful, in actual life. Behind the word art, you may discover the artist, the complete artist, the mobile, multiple nature, the exquisite sensibility of a being now ready to spread her wings and soar, now to fold them and fall to earth, eternally a prey to sorrows and delights, to torments and to exaltations. The smallest details captivate us, because they appeal simultaneously to our hearts, to our artistic sense and to our understanding. Alfred de Vigny, after leaving the dressing-room of an actress whom he does not name, and whom he has no need to name for us to recognize her, calls her to mind as he had seen her at her toilet and pens this intimate little effusion.

"A really gifted actress is a delicious sight to see as she sits at her mirror, before going on the stage. She speaks of everything with the most charming exaggeration; she flares up at trifles, shouts, moans, laughs, sighs, storms and cajoles—

all in the space of a moment or two; she tells us she is ill, out of sorts, cured, very well, weak, strong, gay, depressed, angry when, all the while, she is none of these things, but only impatient as a young racehorse awaiting the signal to bound forth. She preens herself and looks in the glass, puts on some rouge and takes it off again; she adopts all manner of different expressions; she tests her voice by speaking loud, she tests her temperament by going through the whole range of emotional tones. She loses herself in her art, she grows dizzy with emotion."

It was thus at this time that the poem *Sylvia* came into being.

Sylvia. The Knight of Malta had small love for her. She had begun by displeasing him. "She is a coquette!" he said, as long as she withheld herself from him. He trampled on her.

Frère Hospitalier: religious, dreamy, despising alike both death and pleasure—fearing neither power nor poverty—a soldier-priest.

All at once he wins her, possesses her. He attaches himself to her and enters into her life.

Theatrical life. Agonies of the spirit experienced by this high-born youth.

His love for the perils of the woman, love of her

misfortune, of her humiliations, ay, even of her faults.

The actress's ingenuousness; her engaging fits of despair, her wild merriment, her childish folly and her childish tears.

He wanted to be merely a friend to her, and to hold himself aloof from love in order that her faithlessness, when it came, should not compel him to abandon her.*

Since fate has brought Sylvia across our poet's path, we cannot yet turn aside our gaze from the swiftly changing, elusive countenance, which an illustrious woman has portrayed as ailing yet strong, pretty yet faded, sportive as a child, sorrowful and compassionate as an angel.

It was a violent contrast that united the melancholy Chevalier de Malte to the light-hearted *comédienne*, the kind-hearted, careless girl whose habit it was to call our celebrated dramatic author "Gros Chien" (Big Dog), and who was certainly not conspicuously well prepared for the grave and saintly rôle which the poet hoped she would fulfil.

She who used to talk about the "Grandes dames" with a sort of childlike amazement had more dramatic

* Outline of a poem by Alfred de Vigny. (Vide *Journal d'un poète.*)

genius in her soul than " bon ton " in her manners; and, inspiration ceasing to animate her fragile and almost worn-out body, it was the pathetic spectacle of her sufferings rather than the grace and dignity of her bearing that continued to exercise their spell. Vigny must sometimes have found the lady a little too boisterous and have reflected that the slang of the green-room, which she spoke in all its picturesque perfection, was hardly suitable to express the hallowed secrets of the heart.

It must have been borne in upon him too, but more gradually, that his unchangeable solemnity weighed heavily on her spontaneous feminine nature. Said Vigny one day:

" I wonder whether the preliminaries which it demands is not one of the germs of love's decline."

Perhaps Vigny thought too much about preliminaries; perhaps he multiplied them till they became a burden.

" I have never really seen him eat," Madame Dorval would say, with a little touch of impatience.*

* And yet he loved her; he loved her with an eagerness, an ardour, a frenzy which are not immediately discernible because their origin lies hidden deep down in the springs of human nature. About twelve years ago, shortly after Monsieur Cheramy's death, I was shown, among the papers of that very astute collector, a letter from Vigny to Marie Dorval written at the time of their love-affair. The letter consisted of no more than three or four

We find the following note in Alfred de Vigny's diary:

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lines, the purport of which I no longer remember, and it was abundantly stained. In it the poet makes confession, and sends the shameful evidence of his misdeed, that, yielding to the tortures of desire, he had robbed his mistress of that which was her due.

It is said that Monsieur Arthur Meyer purchased this letter in order to destroy it.

Know then, by the light of this example, that our poet, like the Cyclops of Theocritus, loved, not with roses and apples, but with veritable fury.

This wonderful love-affair came to an end. Everything that begins is fated to come to an end, and, if you would go a little more deeply into the matter it died when Alfred ceased to suffice for Marie, and that was pretty soon.

The poet was filled with horror when his mistress became united in a passionate and tender relationship with a woman whose fame and beauty permitted her to indulge in every sort of licence with impunity. Such occasions of jealousy are not, were not, and never will be rare at any time. At the period when Vigny became acquainted with them, they were not calculated to cause any great astonishment, especially in the theatrical world, where, not so very long before, Maillard and Raucourt had publicly flaunted their far from platonic passions with much greater freedom than ever the touching Dorval had done.

But Vigny was poet first and lover afterwards: *vates*, *divinator*, *sacerdos* et *propheta*. In the amorous pastimes of the two women he discerned the end of all things, and he wrote *La Colère de Samson*.

I will quote, by way of contrast, a few lines of Bayle's on love-affairs *à la mode de Mitylène*, and not Mitylene only, but all countries where women are to be found. Bayle, who was neither a lover nor a poet, was not so concerned at it as Vigny. He is doubtful whether a husband could consider himself deceived in such circumstances, and refers the matter to the judgment of the casuists.

" O, love that comes from the soul, O, passionate love, never, never canst thou forgive ! "

The poet's sorrow was outpoured in a sublime

" I will leave it for some new Père Sanchez to decide whether a married woman who had given way to the passion of Sappho should be considered to have committed adultery and to have enrolled her husband in the Great Confraternity properly so called."

The poet had yet further reasons for hating the woman he had loved so dearly, and they are set forth in a poetic indictment in which he appeals to the judgment of posterity. He charges her with treachery; he accuses her of glorying in the undoing of the strongest and greatest of those who had put their trust in her. All this invective had no definite aim, but it was necessary, in order that she should be Delilah and he Samson. He also complained of a more real wrong, which he did not forgive her. He believed, and possibly he had reason to believe, that Marie Dorval published it abroad that her paramour was an unskilful performer in the lists of love, and took pleasure without giving any in return, and that, owing to his shortcomings, she was as cold as ice while he was as hot as fire. She opened her heart on the subject to the fair friend of hers, who sent him packing. Here, without a shadow of doubt, was, of all Marie Dorval's offences, the one which he was the least able to forgive. Why did he not remind himself, in this connection, of a certain passage in Diderot, which would have taught him that it is the most common of all laments among women, and that it is too often their mournful fate, to see pleasure slip away from them when they think to clasp it to their bosom? Perhaps Alfred thought, as many other men have thought, that Diderot, in speaking of love, was inclined to lay too much stress on this misfortune so prevalent among lovers. Be that as it may, all the meditations in the world would have made no difference. No one ever forgives the sort of complaint that Marie Dorval made concerning her melancholy lover, and no lover ever believes that he deserves them (1923).

lament which, by a generalization characteristic of genius, becomes not merely the complaint of an individual soul, but a complaint of all men that ever lived and loved.

Une lutte éternelle, en tout temps, en tout lieu,
Se livre sur la terre, en présence de Dieu,
Entre la bonté d'Homme et la ruse de Femme.
Car la femme est un être impur de corps et d'âme.
. . . . . .
Elle rit et triomphe; en sa froideur savante,
Au milieu de ses sœurs, elle attend et se vante
De ne rien éprouver des atteintes du feu.
À sa plus belle amie elle en a fait l'aveu.
. . . . . .
Donc, ce que j'ai voulu, Seigneur, n'existe pas!
Celle à qui va l'amour et de qui vient la vie,
Celle-là, par orgueil, se fait notre ennemie.
La Femme est, à présent, pire que dans ces temps
Où voyant les humains, Dieu dit: "Je me repens!"
Bientôt, se retirant dans un hideux royaume,
La Femme aura Gomorrhe et l'Homme aura Sodome;
Et, se jetant, de loin, un regard irrité,
Les deux sexes mourront chacun de son côté.

The man who wrote that had felt "the earth failing beneath his feet." His soul, so infinitely tender, was plunged into the profoundest depths. On one of the pages of a diary written for himself alone we read these two lines:

"O the mysterious resemblance that there is in words. Yes, love, thou art indeed a passion, but

the passion of a martyr, a passion like to Christ's! A passion crowned with thorns, wherein no single barb is lacking."

Samson, betrayed by Delilah, had borne the agony of his long and cruel passion. Yet, if he had re-read the same diary wherein he was recording his present sufferings, he would have found this sage reflection, written there a few years before:

"When a man finds that he is falling in love with a woman, he should ask himself, before he plights his word, 'What are her surroundings, what is her mode of life?' All one's happiness in life depends on that." He had told himself that "every failing that comes of weakness deserves our pity," and that the brazen feet of Destiny, as he himself once sang,

Press heavily on every head and every deed.

Vigny gave utterance to his sorrow in some admirable poetry; he murmured it in prose not destined for the world; but nowhere has he told us of its cause. What reason had he for reproaching Madame Dorval so bitterly? There were certain whisperings among his contemporaries, but I do not think the time has yet come for the full story to be laid bare.*

* See the note on p. 173.

XIV

Bene, bene, dignus es intrare in nostro docto corpore.

MOLIÈRE.

FROM the year 1842 onwards, Alfred de Vigny concerned himself seriously with the idea of securing a seat among the members of the Académie Française. It was, you may be assured, a very becoming ambition in a man of aristocratic birth who had wielded the sword with honour and the pen with distinction; in the lettered, well-bred and polished gentleman who charmed, though niggard of his presence there, the most brilliant salons in Paris. Such, it seems to us, were Alfred de Vigny's real titles to admission to the Académie Française. He had, it is true, written *Moïse*, *Éloa*, *Stello*, *Servitude* and *Chatterton*, but those are works of genius, and genius has no necessary connection with literary societies. It is not the sort of thing to be shaken up in an urn what time the rolling of thirty balls or so shall decide the fate of the aspiring candidate. For genius to appear and to endure, there is no need of "reports

of proceedings" and no need to score a record number of attendances.

Genius often lives remote, unguessed at by the world. Occasionally it stands up defiantly in opposition to constituted authority. In such a case it could hardly seek admission to the Academy; but genius may also be the birthright of a man of tranquil spirit, a man of polished culture living on terms of courteous intercourse with the most distinguished persons in the social world, and in that case genius may find in the Academy an appropriate and legitimate home.

It is only too easy to condemn the Academy by pointing to people covered with the dust of oblivion to whom it once promised a glorious immortality, or by arraying all the names of brilliant achievements which it has not deigned to illumine with the pale gleam of its classic torch. People would be less disposed to jeer at this highly respectable corporation if they were better acquainted with its nature and its aims. The Academy has never aspired to draw up a final and unalterable list of names that should live for ever in the tables of memory for remotest posterity to admire: the Academy is merely an assembly of forty honourable, well-educated gentlemen whose works or whose lives imply that they entertain a common concern

for things of the mind and who, in their social relations, mutually enjoy and deserve the respect of their peers.

It is this way of looking at things which generally directs the Academy in the choice of its members, and it is solely from this point of view that its selections should be judged. And from this point of view it seems to us that the candidature of Alfred de Vigny was not inappropriate.

Moreover, academic rivalries in those days presented a literary interest that they ceased to possess when all the schools became reconciled in a peace born of weariness and indifference. In 1842, the great battle of the Romanticists had long been fought and won, but the Academy made the conquerors pay dearly for their victory and only at very long intervals vouchsafed them admission to their citadel. Victor Hugo, in 1841, made his entry more like a warrior armed to the teeth than a conqueror in the hour of victory. But then, again, it was wholly a question of the candidate's literary code; not at all of his genius.

Monsieur de Vigny was obliged to make the usual round of visits. His applications met with highly varying fortunes. Sometimes the candidate was accorded quite a friendly reception. He was very well received by Monsieur Guizot, Monsieur

Casimir Delavigne, and poor old Baour-Lormian, who, buried alive, with his eyes already closed, in his mean little lodgings in the Batignolles, still smiled with pride when the memory of *Omasis*, his tragic masterpiece, stole into his mind.

Monsieur Thiers, in a study adorned with pictures and bronzes,* complimented the candidate on the grounds that his election was to be desired because it would preserve the Academy "from nonentities and mediocrities."

Monsieur de Barante reproached the canvasser with having been praised by the *Journal des Débats*, and taxed him with being responsible for a eulogistic article signed by Monsieur Cuvillier-Fleury whom Monsieur de Vigny had never seen in his life. Furthermore, he looked upon *Chatterton* as an anti-social play and talked a great deal about that literary impartiality which he himself in his historical works alternately embraced with calm fidelity and rejected with a fervour that amounted to blundering injustice.

Monsieur de Chateaubriand, perched up on an ordinary-sized desk chair, with his feet dangling in the air four inches off the ground, assured Monsieur de Vigny that he was the "strongest candidate so

* These bad pictures and bad bronzes now dishonour the Louvre (1923).

far," and yet at the same time extolled the claims of Monsieur Pasquier. "He has nothing to do with literature, but he often saw Madame de Chateaubriand and he was very kind."

"You can't forget services like that," added the old man with a smile.

All these interviews were conducted with great courtesy. They are choice specimens of High Comedy. The story of the visit to M. Royer-Collard approaches nearer to the farcical.

The grim old philosopher received Monsieur de Vigny in a lobby, standing up, swathed in a dressing-gown like Géronte with a towel round his neck that looked as if it were the property of the Universal Legatee. And then followed, word for word, the following memorable dialogue:

Royer-Collard.

(Standing up, leaning with one shoulder against the wall.)

Monsieur, I humbly crave your pardon, but I have business to attend to, and I cannot do myself the honour of receiving you. I have my doctor here.

Alfred de Vigny.

Monsieur, tell me on what day I shall find you alone, and I will call again.

Royer-Collard.

Monsieur, if it is merely the official visit you are paying me, I will regard that formality as duly fulfilled.

Alfred de Vigny.

And I, too, Monsieur, if you so desire; but I should have greatly liked to know your opinion upon my candidature.

Royer-Collard.

My opinion is that you have not a chance . . . (adding in a tone that he endeavours to make ironical and insolent) *Chance!* that's how they talk nowadays, is it not?

Alfred de Vigny.

I am unaware how "they" talk nowadays; I only know how I talk myself, and how you are talking at this moment.

Royer-Collard.

Moreover, I should have to find out from you what works you have written.

Alfred de Vigny.

You will never learn that from me, if you have not already learned it from the Press. Have you never, by any chance, read the newspapers?

Royer-Collard.

Never.

Alfred de Vigny.

And as you never go to the theatre, plays performed one or two years in succession and books that have gone into seven or eight editions are alike unknown to you?

Royer-Collard.

Yes, Monsieur, I have read nothing that has been written during the last thirty years. I have already made that observation to another candidate. (He meant Victor Hugo.)

Alfred de Vigny.

(Picking up his cloak as if to depart, and throwing it negligently over his shoulder.)

Then, Monsieur, how can you give your vote, unless indeed you base it on someone else's opinion?

Royer-Collard.

(Nonplussed and wrapping his *malade imaginaire's* dressing-gown more closely about him.)

Well, anyhow I give it, I give it. I go to the elections; I cannot exactly tell you how I give it, but anyhow I *do* give it.

Alfred de Vigny.

The Academy would surely deem it strange that

anyone should give his vote concerning works he has never read.

Royer-Collard.

Oh! The Academy—the Academy's very good-natured, very good, very good. I have already told other people I have reached an age when one doesn't read new books, but re-reads old ones.

Alfred de Vigny.

Since you do not read, you doubtless write a great deal.

Royer-Collard.

No, I do not write now. I re-read.

Alfred de Vigny.

I am sorry; I could read to you.

Royer-Collard.

I re-read, I re-read.

Alfred de Vigny.

But you cannot tell whether or not there are modern works worth re-reading, since you have made up your mind not to read at all.

Royer-Collard.

(Feeling decidedly uncomfortable.)

Oh! quite possibly, Monsieur, quite possibly.

Alfred de Vigny.

(Striding towards the door and putting on his cloak.)

Monsieur, it's rather too cold in your lobby here for me to wish to detain you any longer. I am not used to this kind of entertainment.

Royer-Collard.

Monsieur, I beg you to forgive me for receiving you here.

Alfred de Vigny.

Never mind, monsieur, it will not occur again. You will not, I imagine, wait for me to acquaint you with my works. You will find them in your neighbourhood, or in Russia, in Russian or German translations, without my saying to you " my children are charming " like la Fontaine's Owl. (Here Alfred de Vigny opens the door, Royer-Collard still at his heels.)

Royer-Collard.

(Wishing to take back what he had said.)

Well, now I come to think of it, there are two seats to be filled.

Alfred de Vigny.

Monsieur, I know nothing about that.

Royer-Collard.

If you do not know, why should I ?

Alfred de Vigny.

Because you belong to the Academy and I do not. I only know that I am presenting myself as a candidate for Monsieur Freyssinou's seat.

Royer-Collard.

And what other candidates are there?

Alfred de Vigny.

I know nothing about it, monsieur, and it is not my business to know.

(At this point he turns his back on him, puts on his hat and goes out without taking his leave, while Royer-Collard stands holding the door and saying, "Monsieur, I have the honour to wish you good-day.")

"An old man mortified at finding himself forgotten after having been a celebrity in his day," commented the poet to himself as he departed from this *tête-à-tête*.

For two years longer he treated himself to these little comedies, and then, at last, on the 8th May, 1845, Count Alfred de Vigny was elected a member of the Académie Française in the place of Monsieur Étienne. The new member had to compose the usual oration, and, in accordance with custom, read it, in the presence of a commission, to Monsieur

Molé, who was then Director of the Academy and who, in his official capacity, would reply to Monsieur de Vigny.

Up to that point the Director's speech had been carefully concealed from Monsieur de Vigny. Before the commission it was filched by some friends of Monsieur Molé, who entered into the conspiracy by interrupting the one whom the speech interested most, smothering his voice and hastening the reporting of the conclusions to the Academy, who were waiting.*

On the 29th January, 1846, Monsieur de Vigny took his seat at the formal session arrayed in academic costume but wearing a black cravate, "a remnant of his soldiering days."†

He read in a slow and dignified manner a speech

* I recounted all this on Vigny's authority, but I am now very much disposed to think that they only existed in his poetic imagination. In this very meagre production of mine I drew liberally on the posthumous Diary. I might have taken credit to myself for that, if I had but quoted with discernment. But I had no critical sense. Not everything that Vigny said is worthy of note. He was lofty and upright in his ideas, but not very sure of his aim, not very clear-sighted. The reader, however, will be grateful to me for having quoted freely from my author when he finds my page illumined by passages of engaging gravity, of charming candour, which had all too quickly fallen into oblivion (1923).

† Vigny himself said this with an affectation which is perhaps a trifle ridiculous. Great men occasionally betray such failings (1923).

which, if it is the slightest thing he ever gave to the public, counts none the less among the best academic harangues delivered since the Empire. Only, the oration was of unusual length and, being made still longer by the deliberation with which it was uttered, it wearied an assembly which, unlike the Athenian crowds, was not composed of great listeners.

As soon as Monsieur de Vigny had taken his seat, Monsieur Molé "in clear ringing tones" * delivered a speech which the audience found more to their taste.† Monsieur Molé was not a poet.

* Sainte-Beuve.

† I had nothing for it but to correct this unfortunate passage in the *opusculum* with which I made my *début* in the literary world, although no one knows better than I do how vain a task it is. But I had here been guilty of a piece of unpardonable carelessness, of a dereliction too grave to be perpetuated, with respect to this portion of my work. I am going to make a complete confession. I do so with shame; and I throw myself upon the mercy of my readers. This, then, is the truth of the matter. At that unhappy time when I was engaged upon my study of Alfred de Vigny, I discovered, in a review published in the year 1846, the name of which I cannot recall, a critical essay containing a quotation from the speech delivered by Count Molé on the occasion of Alfred de Vigny's reception at the Academy. I saw no reason to suspect its accuracy and thought it unnecessary to look up the full official report. This was bad; but worse remains behind. For having armed myself with my long scissors and cut out, without reading it, the passage which I intended to use, I accidentally turned the cutting, which was printed on both sides, upside down, and when I came to compose my chapter on "Vigny at the Academy," I stupidly took one side of the cutting for the other,

He cared little for poetry, and he thought that the Romantics were people who suffered from indifferent health.

He praised the new-comer with studied moderation, and his perfect courtesy only served to bring out into stronger relief the strictness of a critic who clearly brought no love to his task. He had served both the Emperor and the Bourbons and he was an accomplished man of affairs. It did not escape him that Monsieur de Vigny had a chimerical mind, and he told him so in a manner that was far from chimerical.

The new member took the Director's animadversions all the more deeply to heart because it seemed to him that the speech delivered by Monsieur Molé in public was not in all respects identical with the speech he had rehearsed before the Commission. That is a notion which those who are acquainted with the association will not readily accept. They

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and believing that I was reading the words of Count Molé, really read the very acid comments which the editor of the review had made in reply to them. And being an honest person with a profound respect for poetry, I put myself into a towering passion. I dealt a valiant blow for the Muse and told Count Molé frankly what I thought of him.

And now, in this beautiful edition which Claude Aveline so cruelly inflicts upon me, it was impossible to leave this little piece of invective which, for all the glowing splendour of its indignation, covered me with ridicule.

will rather be inclined to think that an utterance which appeared innocent enough when delivered to an audience composed of a few Academicians, took on an offensive significance in a vast assembly eager to pounce on something to gossip about. This is the view of Sainte-Beuve and he has expressed it admirably. Vigny remained aloof. As a public manifestation of his resentment, he refused to pay the customary visit to the Tuileries in order to be presented by the Director. He did not begin to participate in the private sittings of the Academy until the day on which Monsieur Molé relinquished his functions as Director, that is to say, the 1st July, 1846.*

Six weeks later he was presented to King Louis Philippe by the new Director, Monsieur de Salvandy. This, in Monsieur de Vigny's own words, is the story of the visit:

Monday night, 14th June. When we were announced, the King, who was dressed in brown, was standing, holding his hat in his hand. He came over to me at once and said:

"It is sixteen years, Monsieur de Vigny, since we saw each other. You were commanding a

* As stated in the note to the preceding page, this passage has been recast in this the second, and last, edition (1923).

battalion of the National Guard and the troops that were guarding the Palais-Royal. You give me great pleasure in coming back again, and I thank you."

" It is for me, Sire, to thank you for having given your consent to my becoming a member of the Academy."

" It was at least as much my desire as yours, Monsieur de Vigny, and I am much gratified at the position you have taken in it."

" I have heard of the favourable terms in which Your Majesty signified your approval of my election, and I was profoundly moved."

" I thank you, Monsieur de Vigny. Would you like to go and see the Queen? Monsieur de Salvandy will conduct you to her."

The Queen was sitting at a circular table, round which all the princesses were seated too.

She was busy with her tapestry frame. On her right was seated Madame Adélaide, the King's sister.

" I beg to present to you Monsieur de Vigny," said Salvandy.

" Present him to me!" said the Queen, " why, I've known him these twenty years. Monsieur de Vigny, I am delighted to see you again. . . . You like travelling, I know. Where are you going this summer?"

" Perhaps to England, Madame, and then on to my own place in the South of France."

" Whereabouts in the South ? " asked the King.

" Between Angoulême and Bordeaux, Sire."

" Ah, a lovely part of the country."

" Yes, Sire, and just now it is like an English garden. It is the last remnant of my ancestral estates ; for the châteaux that I have ceased to own are many. It came to me from my grandfather, the Marquis de Baraudin, who was an admiral in Louis XVI's navy."

" Oh, I remember his name perfectly. He was in command of a squadron at the battle of Ushant under my father."

" Yes, Sire, under the Duc d'Orléans and Monsieur d'Orvilliers. I still have a number of his letters."

When he said *my father*, the King's manner took on a wistful sadness. His expression grew thoughtful and melancholy, yet he looked at me askance as though he expected to find a look of horror on my face.

" Yes, Sire," I said, in the same calm, unemotional tone, " under Monsieur le Duc d'Orléans. I have yet to learn how it was those two great fleets failed to destroy one another. They were veritable Armadas."

"I cannot tell either, but what is a far better thing than all that is peace."

"I heard your Majesty say the same thing sixteen years ago. To-day your great work is accomplished."

"I hope it is so," said the King with an air of kindly satisfaction. "You retired as soon as all risk of rioting was over. Everybody did not do as you did. But you have written a great deal. You have done well."

After that the Duc de Nemours chatted to me a good while, standing in the middle of the salon. He talked softly, in a rather shy and embarrassed voice, of when I had known him in the old days.

"You had not then taken Constantine," I remarked.

"Oh, I saw it taken," he answered very simply and modestly.

The Duchesse de Nemours is very good-looking and kept me some time talking about England. The Duchesse d'Aumale is like those young Spanish princesses of the House of Austria painted by Murillo.

I like her prominent lips and her pale fair hair.

She talked about Venice, to which, to her great regret, you go by train.

The sight of the Bourbons always makes me feel melancholy. The whole history of France seems to come before one again. One beholds its great scenes taking place before one's eyes and sees in imagination that long line of princes who, while wearing the costume of their successive generations, have always displayed the same features. Their race never loses its half-Spanish look. The King looks like Louis XIV at sixty.

He came up to me again towards the end of the evening and said:

"You will read in the papers to-morrow that it is I who am responsible for Portugal's disasters. My English friends do not spare me. What do you think of this Portuguese affair?"

"It is," I replied, "something like the Fronde."

"It is indeed," he said, "judging by the paucity of its results."

"And also because it is a war of the Grands Seigneurs."

"Yes, there is certainly something aristocratic about it, and that is an unusual thing in Europe to-day."

And he smiled a sort of meaning smile.

"No," I replied, "that is hardly our defect at the moment."

He laughed again with much good-humour.

Thus, until half-past ten, the royal family continued to entertain me.

From that day onwards Count de Vigny attended the sittings of the Academy with that unwearying assiduity which he brought to bear on everything he regarded as a duty.

His influence made itself felt when, in the *Poèmes antiques* of Leconte de Lisle, the Academy crowned one of the greatest works of modern poetry.

XV

Monsieur de Vigny looked gently upon death.
ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE.

FROM 1855 onwards, Count Alfred de Vigny's lips were sealed. He withdrew into his "Tower of Ivory," and there, on the loftiest stage, his eyes bathed in heavenly radiance, he continued his task; he wrote his *Destinées*, philosophical poems which perhaps struck a still graver, a still austerer note, than his *Poèmes antiques et modernes*. The thinker had matured, he was in the full force of his stoical virility, nor had the poet withered or grown cold, only he had arrayed himself in the sombre vesture of the battle-field. Over his tunic of gold he had put on a brazen breastplate for the mighty combat against the Fates and against the gods. It was in the tranquil accomplishment of this, his crowning labour, that the poet completed his life's work and his life.

To display humanity struggling against Fate, such had ever been the aim which his stainless but melancholy genius had set itself to perform. His

poem *Destinées* was a fitting crown to his life's work.

We are familiar with *Le Mort des Oliviers*, *La Mort du Loup*, *La Maison du Berger* and that marvellous *Colère de Samson*, than which he probably gave nothing finer to the world. Never did Alfred de Vigny's poetic genius reveal itself with greater force and more striking originality.

The author was unwilling that his poem *Les Destinées* should appear during his lifetime. He was not one to hanker after a facile and instantaneous success; he could afford to wait. Moreover, he wanted to be himself a spectator of his own posterity; and, "last infirmity of noble mind," he wanted to see in advance whether his lyre would be gilded or tarnished by the dust of time.

Alfred de Vigny was patient. He would carry an idea in his head for a long time without endeavouring to hurry on its birth, nor would he bring it forth into the light of day until he had invested it with a form of consummate workmanship. Such a form he did indeed most happily bestow in his conceptions, but not without much pains. He wrought slowly and laboriously, not indeed because he had any puerile and unintelligent reverence for form as such, but because he entertained a profound respect for ideas and thought they should

be clad in honest raiment and comely withal. Monsieur de Vigny did not suffer from that drawback which Monsieur Tame considers so prejudicial to artists; he did not know his job too well. The poet, as luck would have it, was not "clever." He did not become absorbed in the minutiæ of his craft; the inspiration, the structural idea, these were his preoccupations; he remained a poet. He did not forget, when kneading the clay with an eager thumb, to breathe a soul into the figure.

An idea dwelt long in his head before it assumed a bodily shape and sprang forth a goddess. And so it came about that the poet left behind him, set down on paper, many an idea to which he never gave form in a poem, a kind of vague and formless shadow which, though destined for life, will never behold the regions of light. Among them we dimly discern, like the spirits destined for life on earth which we see wandering amid the shadows of the Virgilian underworld, a second Éloa, at first triumphant and glorious beside the Satan whom she has saved, a second Éloa, but one that would not, we think, have rivalled the first in glory; and next a Daphne, the mistress, or rather the soul, of the great Emperor Julian, the philosopher of the camps and the Cæsar innocent of crime. The study of these conceptions unfulfilled, but indicated

on scattered notes or set down in the *Journal intime* of his life, reveal an inner Vigny more restless and more spontaneous than the Vigny known to the public, but always in harmony with him.

As he was to the outward view, so he was in the privacy of his home. The last few years of his life were passed in loneliness. Ailing himself, he spent them beside his ailing wife in his home in the rue des Écuries d'Artois. Alfred de Vigny had been bred and educated in the Faubourg Saint-Honoré. It was there that his mother had died, and it was there he wished to die himself. This region, so full of noise, but from which nevertheless one can catch a sight of green trees, these aristocratic streets with their rows of lordly houses, were very pleasing in his eyes. Here were grey stones on which the poet could not look without emotion, here was some corner of an old wall which it moved him to tears to see demolished.

Monsieur de Vigny's suite of rooms on the second floor overlooking the street were spacious and austere. The most noticeable picture in the room—it was mirrored in a glass at the other end—was a fine portrait of Regnard the poet, painted by Largillière. It was a family portrait. Alfred de Vigny was descended from Regnard through his mother, and he had long cherished the idea of

writing a sort of comedy-romance on the life of his comic ancestor. The visitor would also observe, on a bracket, a terra-cotta statue representing a virgin with great wings, a beautiful angel, seated and lost in reverie. It was the poet's dream-daughter Éloa, whose image had been modelled by an unknown hand. It had come to Monsieur de Vigny from Italy and he never knew to whom he owed it. It was a sensitive and delicate piece of work, exquisite in feeling, and on it the poet bestowed a crowning eulogy by recognizing in it the embodiment of his own idea. Lastly, in a dim corner, close to a bronze candelabrum, were a pair of bronze heads, the heads of Thou and Cinq-Mars. In this austere and aristocratic interior the poet, wrapped in his soldier's cloak and reclining on a folding chair, tranquilly saw his life ebbing slowly away.

Increasing age and infirmity had not laid a heavy hand upon his features, nor had they added weight or given a stoop to his elegant figure. His hair was still almost fair. Alfred de Vigny did not look an old man; his beautiful presence had kept the same age as his genius, and genius is changeless and eternal.

The Homer of the *Iliad* is a tall, white-polled old man; the Virgil of the *Æneid* is a young man

with flowing hair. Who would recognize the author of *Moïse* and of the *Jugement dernier* in the portrait of a Michael-Angelo of twenty? No one; for the genius of Michael-Angelo never was twenty years old! We like not a portrait of Victor Hugo as a young man or of Lamartine as an old one, and we are right, because the real Victor Hugo, the Hugo of our ideal, has the wisdom and the solemnity of old age, and the real, the eternal Lamartine, the poetic and spontaneous efflorescence of youth.

The Alfred de Vigny of the *Poèmes*, of *Stello* and *Chatterton*, appears to our mind's eye as handsome, young and clear-complexioned; and, idealization apart, such the real Vigny was in fact. This conformity of impression between the man and his poetry is not uncommon. Racine, as we see him in the light of his tragedies and in contemporary portraits, is one of the most striking examples. For the rest, Alfred de Vigny had bonds of a less fortuitous nature with the author of *Mithridate*, of whom he had no very high opinion and whom he cared for but little. It was the fashion of the day.

Alfred de Vigny, in his private life, retained the somewhat artificial dignity with which he did not dispense even towards himself.

He wrote his last poems in that tall, royal hand which we are accustomed to see so proudly traced by aristocratic hands in the days of Louis XIV.

He used to receive a company of select friends who, without exception, retained affectionate memories of their intercourse with him. First of all there was the comrade of his youth, his good and faithful friend, Antoni Deschamps, a true poet and a lofty soul who, by his courageous indignation and his frank enthusiasm, sometimes struck the sceptical aristocrats with amazement; then there was Monsieur Louis de Ronchaud, the author of *Phidias*, a spirit as serene as he was profound, austerely immured within the ramparts of his artistic and civic conscience; next came Monsieur Guillaume Panthies, the orientalist, the faithful admirer of China and the Chinese and the indefatigable companion of Marco Polo; after him, Monsieur Jules Lacroix, the conscientious and patient translator of Sophocles and Shakespeare, and the author of *Valeria*; Monsieur Louis Ratisbonne, a distinguished littérateur who nevertheless did not think it amiss to attempt a new poetical version of Dante based on the fine translations, part in verse and part in prose, for which Littré, Lammenais and Antoni Deschamps were responsible. Charles Baudelaire called upon Alfred de Vigny

about this time and requested the master to help him in his candidature for the Academy, as he had similarly petitioned Sainte-Beuve. Letters are extant from the author of *Les Fleurs de Mal* to the author of *Les Destinées*;* they are exquisitely polite and soothingly agreeable in tone. Only he is too fond of praising the virtues of delicious dishes to a man who was unable to eat.

Such were, with a few others, the poet's regular friends. He conversed with them in those grave

* In *Alfred de Vigny et Charles Baudelaire, candidats à l'Académie Française*, an essay by Etienne Charavay, we find the following letter from Baudelaire to Vigny:

MONSIEUR,

I have seen your suffering and I have often thought about it. A friend of mine, whose stomach is in a very bad way, told me that Guene, the English pastrycook, whose shop is at the corner of the rue Castiglione and the rue de Rivoli, makes a jelly combined with very warming wine, doubtless Madeira or Sherris, which the most impaired stomachs are able to digest with ease and pleasure. It is a kind of preserve made with wine, and is at once more substantial and more nourishing than a composite meal. I thought you might like to know of this.

Yours sincerely,

CHARLES BAUDELAIRE.

Monsieur Charavay adds this comment: It touches us to see the charitable Baudelaire singing to his elder in the poetic craft the praises of jellies combined with very warming wine; but when we remember that Vigny was then suffering from cancer of the stomach, his recommendation of this therapeutic luxury may strike us as a little beside the mark.

and somewhat leisurely tones which he nearly always affected; and he never laughed.

Laughter is absent from his writings as it is absent from his lips. Never did the Aristophanic *rictus*, or the Rabelaisian guffaw, or the half-comic, half-sad grimace of Molière's jesting visage furrow the unruffled serenity of his countenance. Joy is a kindly thing, but sorrow is holy. There is no laughter in Alfred de Vigny.

He liked to recall his Army days. He liked to talk, as a soldier, to his friend General de Ricard, an old officer of the First Empire, who smiled just the faintest little smile to hear himself thus addressed as a brother-in-arms.

Monsieur de Vigny would become the poet once more when he talked to Monsieur Louis Xavier de Ricard, who had then published a volume of verse and was Editor of the *Revue des Progrès*. He looked forward to a brilliant future for this young man, and thought so highly of him that he criticized with minuteness—and severity—all his productions.

And so, in the enjoyment of these intellectual exchanges with a few chosen friends, the life of the most gallant gentleman of his age drew to its close. His wife died at his side, preceding him by half a year. For his lofty spirit this event was a sad but profound relief. It was now permitted him to die.

From now onwards he looked on unmoved at the progress of the vulture, of the cancer which was gnawing at his vitals. He ascribed his malady to his long vigils and endless nights of toil; for he wrote by night, and the noises of returning day would scarcely avail to interrupt the slow and stately progress of his ideas. Until the very last, Alfred de Vigny busied himself with the things of the mind; the last books that he read were the *Elective Affinities* of Goethe and a volume of Shakespeare's historical plays. He died on the 17th December in his sixty-sixth year.

He bequeathed his literary rights to Monsieur Louis Ratisbonne, *homme de lettres*, and his sword to Monsieur Guillaume Panthier, who had served under his command in the 55th Regiment of the line.

Alfred de Vigny was buried in the cemetery of Montmartre. No funeral oration was pronounced over his grave, for he had expressly forbidden that any speech should be made.

His tomb is simple and austere; the keepers and gardeners know it not, and no one ever asks them to point it out.

Now the name of Alfred de Vigny shines with a soft and steady glow in the hearts of the chosen few. That was all he asked of Fame, and that

guerdon he awaited with calm confidence. He detested popular applause profoundly, as he would have detested the profanation of a sanctuary. All he asked was that his memory should, like an altar flame, be tended by a few pious hands, but not spread far and wide like a fire set blazing by the mob, that ultimately dies down upon the ruin it has wrought.

THE PATH OF GLORY

KING ALBERT

ALL his acts were inspired by a spirit of wisdom and benevolence, and the world had come to recognize in him one of the gentlest shepherds of nations.

But in an instant, when the Germans burst in impious onset athwart his realm, his sword flashed from its scabbard and, deaf to the invaders' promises, as he had been deaf to their threats, he gave battle, heeding not the number of his foes, determined never to lay down arms till the right was vindicated. His great heart was not content merely to command his armies; to share the toils and dangers of his soldiers he took his place with the rank and file.

Hail, Sire! The sons of the Republic salute in you a valiant and an upright man.

Le roi Albert.

Tous ses actes s'inspiraient d'un esprit de sagesse et de bienveillance, et l'on s'accordait à reconnaître en lui un des plus doux pasteurs des peuples. Soudain, quand les allemands s'ouvrirent un passage impie à travers son royaume, il tira l'épée, et, sourd aux promesses des envahisseurs comme il l'avait été à leurs menaces, il combattit sans regarder au nombre, résolu à ne déposer les armes que lorsque le droit serait vengé. Il ne suffit pas à son grand cœur de commander ses armées : pour partager les fatigues et les dangers de ses soldats, il se fit simple soldat.

Roi, les républicains saluent en vous un héros et un juste.

Anatole France

FOR CHRISTMAS 1914

HE feast of Christmas, one of the greatest, most ancient, and most glorious of Christendom, was observed of old in all the land of France with a pomp and joyousness worthy the mystery it commemorates in the eyes of the faithful. To-day it still remains a popular holiday, and each time it comes round fills our cities and our countryside with joy and gladness.

It seems like to endure as long as the world lasts. Pious souls that cling to tradition and hearts that love nature may vie in keeping it holy, for at one and the same time men adore therein the Child-God born in the stable at Bethlehem, as is told in the Gospel, and hail the re-birth of that God whose beneficent splendour we behold, year by year, wax and wane above our heads; who dies and rises from the dead like his old-time symbols, Adonis and Mithra. 'Tis in these last days of December that the Sun, flagging and

unfertile, begins to regain that prolific vigour which gives promise to Earth of fruits and flowers.

But perhaps there was no need for so much fine talk to say that in our old motherland, beloved of heaven, Christmas is a welcome season for all, especially for the poor and lowly, and that in humble homes Christmas Eve dispels the gloom of the dark wintertide. Then it is the household gathers round the board, and sausages galore and chitterlings, black puddings and white, are eaten, and songs sung in rustic dialect. What could folk do better? Alas! this year how many greybeards and women will sit, alone with the little ones, at a table that is all too big, eating their bread bedewed with tears? And meantime, how many young men, under the cold moon, amid the din of bursting shells, will be thinking, out there in the trenches, of those left at home, who, in their turn, are thinking of them, and who to-night will kindle the Yule-log even as usual, and as usual grill the hissing puddings—for must not time-honoured usages be observed?

Each province has its own Christmas customs and traditions. Alsace, our Alsace, is faithful to the sapling fir, sparkling with hoar-frost, every branch carrying lighted tapers and sweetmeats, playthings and oranges for the children. In

Brittany that night they leave on the board the share that is for the dead. Ah, what a multitude of beloved shades will throng this year about the empty tables, like the dead folk in the land of the Cimmerians!

In Provence, where earth and sky are of a classic beauty and imbue the spirit with an artless grace, there still linger usages and sentiments that have an antique, pagan air. Thus, on the shores of the blue Mediterranean, the villager lays on the hearth an old olive trunk, heedfully dried, and wreathes it with sprays of laurel. The wood smokes and sputters, the flame jets forth, and the master of the house bids the youngest of the children utter an invocation to the fire. All unknowing, he is repeating the rites wherewith in India his faraway ancestors adored Agni, who in his car drawn by flaming horses carries to the gods the offerings of mortals. He says over to the child the consecrated words:

"O fire! warm in wintertide the feet of the old man and the orphan, dart a comfortable gleam into the lowliest cot; be heedful and devour not the poor husbandman's roof nor the ship that bears to distant lands the ill-starred emigrant."

And to propitiate the sacred element, the master of the house pours over it a libation of mulled wine.

The fire crackles and an aromatic savour is diffused through the smoky chamber.

This invocation to the sacred fire, let us utter it this night in all France, in all France that shudders with grief and glory. Let us say:

O fire! sacred fire, go through the cold, dark night, bear to our soldiers in the trenches thy comfortable warmth, and sparkle joyously in their hearts.

They marched away with a charming blithesomeness. We saw how they smothered their guns and limbers in foliage and flowers and pranked their horses' necks with roses and carnations. Smiling they faced the foeman's shot and shell.

And, after four long months of peril and fatigue, in wind and snow and mud, they still retain their courage and their gaiety. War has taken on a new aspect. Marches and manœuvres, pitched battles and stricken fields have been superseded by a war of trenches, a war stationary and subterranean, a war of interminable artillery duels between invisible opponents.

And our men are yet cheerful and alert as on the first day. Little bits of handiwork, games, talk and song, beguile the tedium of their underground life where only the bursting shells afford distraction. Dauntless and undismayed, they show a pious care for the dead and strew with flags and green branches

the earth beneath which their comrades sleep their last sleep hard by.

Young soldiers, over whom but yesterday their mothers watched as over little children, old campaigners of the Reserve, who wipe away a tear as they remember the wife and babes left at home, both unite the elasticity of youth with the staunchness of maturity.

The wounded brought back to our hospitals have no thought but to return to the front. Their convalescence, so pleasant a time to most, weighs irksomely upon them. One of them I saw who never wearied in his importunities to be sent back to the firing-line, though he could not walk without a limp. I heard a young non-commissioned officer, barely recovered from a wound in the lungs, urging the staff-surgeon to give him his discharge. "Now I can rejoin," he said with a merry wit; "for what have I to fear? I have been vaccinated."

In this army of ours officers and privates are one at heart. The officers trust their men, the men their officers. Here is an instance, entirely authentic (I can vouch for it), of the sentiment that unites the two:

It was on the Eastern frontier, early in the campaign, when too reckless a courage exposed our troops to cruel losses. Commandant D——,

an officer greatly loved by his men, who had learned to appreciate his ability, energy, and kindliness, though suffering from a cruel stomach disorder and a painful carbuncle, had himself borne into the firing-line on a stretcher at the head of his battalion. On reaching the ground he was to occupy, which was none of the safest, he ordered his men to lie flat and saw that each one placed his knapsack before him by way of cover. Then he lay down himself in advance of all his men. And raised on his elbows, with his field-glass to his eyes, he proceeded to watch the enemy's movements under a well-sustained fire.

He had kept this posture for some minutes when an opaque body obscured his field of vision, and before he could make out what was happening, he heard a voice whisper in his ear:

"I am bringing you my knapsack, sir. Keep it in front of you. Should *I* be killed, 'twould be only one man the less; but if *you* were killed, the whole battalion would feel the loss."

A friend of mine, visiting a battlefield on the banks of the Marne, saw lying in the forefront of our dead a young drummer pierced with bullets but still grasping his drumsticks in his ice-cold hands. And the sight called to mind the drummer-

boy of Marengo who, after he was shot through the arm, still went on sounding the charge and received for guerdon a pair of presentation drumsticks.

We have seen our ancient heritage of valour blossom anew. The dauntless cry of the Chevalier d'Assas has been repeated more than a score of times. One day a sergeant of Reserves of the 30th Infantry ran across a body of troops he had taken for Englishmen. When he saw they were Germans he shouted back:

"Fire, they're *Boches!*"

Then again, a young lieutenant, posted in advance of the infantry lines in a church steeple a few hundred yards from the German trenches, was telephoning the enemy's positions to our artillery. For half an hour they received his messages, then suddenly he said in a calm voice: "I can hear the Germans coming up the stairs. I have my revolver with me. Don't believe another word you are told."

That young officer was never seen again.

Our military doctors recall Desgenettes and Larrey by their gallantry and unselfishness—witness the major who, in the bombardment of Ypres, was in charge of fifty-four German wounded. When urged to quit his hospital he refused, for he was determined to give the enemy a lesson in humanity.

Thus he met his death at the bedside of a wounded German, slain by a German shell.

They are all dear to our hearts, all our soldiers, from the Commander-in-Chief, a just man and a wise, scornful of outward display, stern with the great, gentle with the lowly, solicitous for his men ; down to the humblest private in the Reserves, who gives his life without haggling to his country, whereof he never knew but one village and whose only heritage was a straw pallet in a cattle shed.

O fire ! sacred fire, go through the cold, dark night, bear to our soldiers in the trenches thy comfortable warmth, and sparkle joyously in their hearts.

Soldiers of France, champions of a righteous cause, preserve your dashing courage and arm yourselves with steadfastness. You have a foe to face, numerous and skilfully organized. 'Twould diminish *your* glory to deny *his* strength. He has disgraced his valiance by atrocities to glut his savage instincts or committed deliberately in order to sow terror round about him. The only fruits of his barbarities have been horror and indignation. Far from rendering him invincible, they have but multiplied his perils by adding fuel to our wrath. Already you have dealt him blows he will not recover from. You have beaten him on the Marne,

you have held him on the Aisne and the Yser, in the Argonne and in the Vosges. His onset is broken; his mighty war-machine has suffered irreparable injuries; but it is still formidable, and we must prepare for its last convulsive efforts. We shall have to make a vast provision of men, arms, munitions, food supplies. We are grateful to our Allies for their precious help. But we must rely upon ourselves.

One great superiority you have over the enemy. Citizens of a Free Nation, you derive your military virtues from your own free spirit, and it is not by order that you are brave.

That is an advantage that will assure you the victory, provided you fulfil the conditions of this new warfare, which demands a mightier organization than the wars of other days and a mass of material that must be commensurate with the whole capacity of our modern industries. This organization we are perfecting every day, this material we are creating with feverish haste. Molten iron and steel run in rivers from the furnaces of our foundries.

Victory is sure. But we must go far for it, we must pursue it to the very heart of the Germanic Empire. This necessity is proclaimed not only by the daring spirits amongst us; it is felt by the most

peace-abiding minds, the gentlest souls. For my own part, I can boast that from the first day of the war I have said: there must be no stopping halfway.

Friends, to the end that you may not have fought and suffered to no avail, that the blood of sons and the tears of mothers may not have flowed in vain, we must destroy from base to summit the military power of Germany and strip this barbarian nation of every possibility of pursuing its hope of a world-wide empire, the monstrous dream that at this hour is plunging Europe in fire and slaughter.

'Tis a great task. But what deathless praises, what blessings will be heaped on your heads for having accomplished it! You will have guaranteed the security and greatness of your country, you will have delivered Europe from an insolent menace and a perpetual danger. You will have made it possible for the rulers and the masses of this vast portion of the world to draw nigh to justice, justice so hard of access, or at the least to walk in her ways; you will have overthrown oppression, restored Alsace and Lorraine to France, Schleswig to Denmark, Trent and Trieste to Italy, you will have resuscitated Poland, re-established the freedom and the rights of nations, founded a harmonious Europe, made possible the conclusion of a stable peace based on Right and Reason, a true peace, a peaceful

peace. And you will be dear to your kinsfolk and bulk large in History.

Oh! may the sacred fire of our hearths go through the cold, dark night to bear to you in the trenches its comfortable warmth and sparkle joyously in your hearts.

LETTER FROM DR. MARIAVÉ

If the intelligence is material, the heart is a real reflection of the incarnate Light

RENINGHELST, 15*th January*, 1915.

DEAR SIR AND DEAR MASTER,

DID not die in the hospital of Ypres, "slain at the bedside of a wounded German by a German shell."

The communication you comment on in your "Noël," published in the *Petit Parisien* and reproduced by the London Press Bureau, was penned, without my knowledge, by Mr. Charles Staniforth, English interpreter with the 3rd Cavalry Division—a fact you will find it easy to verify. But I only escaped death by an extraordinary chance.

I had been making out my report at the precise spot where the shell struck, and had left my writing-table a few seconds before it fell. It was an enormous "coal box" which demolished a whole wing

of the hospital and reduced Léonie and her old dog to pulp.* A little worsted scarf with some bleeding shreds of flesh sticking to it was all that was left of the old cook of the Ypres hospital. At the sight Mr. C. Staniforth burst into tears. "Look you!" I exclaimed, "I was at Léonie's elbow writing to General Vidal." The Englishman gave me a queer look. Perhaps he thought I was a ghost—I see now why he killed me before my time. The false news was a calamity for my friends, who telegraphed their alarms to all the agencies and even to England.

Dear, good Léonie! Simple soul, she had a peasant's heart, a heart for sacrifice! To allay her fears and safeguard her from hurt, she had installed

* Léonie had an old, fat dog, not a trace of which could be found save its black hide, collapsed, like an empty wine-skin. The same shell buried M. Gaymant under the ruins of his dispensary, and blew to pieces, in the Rue de Mesnia, an English commissariat train. Eight men were fearfully mangled, their clothes in tatters, their faces black, swollen, scorched; the bodies had been tossed in all directions several yards from the explosion. Three dead horses and a shattered baggage-wagon cumbered the ground.

Of all these victims, only the heroic M. Gaymant survived. He remained for some weeks in the hospital at Poperinghe. While we were dressing his numerous wounds and removing, by means of oxygenated water, the brickdust with which they were encrusted, he said to us with a smile: "Now doctor, I run no more risk; I am like a fortress, built of brick and mortar."

Belgian humour is irrepressible.

betwixt two slender tapers an image of Our Lady of Thuynes, the patron saint of Ypres, who in older times had saved the city. Every day the icon changed its place, standing now on a sideboard, now on a chair, or even on the floor, always framed between its two tapers. Our Lady of Thuynes took this pure soul and rejected as unworthy that of your humble servant, predestined to convey to you, under the fair light of Love, the true meaning of Government.

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FOR THE NEW YEAR

1st January, 1915.

My dear Gustave Hervé,

I AM sending through the pages of the *Guerre Sociale* my good wishes for the New Year to our friends. And our friends at this moment are all our fellow-countrymen and all our allies. For I am like you, Hervé; I have no enemies save my country's foes.

My greetings, first and foremost, to our soldiers exposed to the enemy's artillery and the long-drawn tedium of the trenches, more cruel to them than shot and shell. From the Commander-in-Chief to the humblest private, I salute them all and embrace them all in the same affection and gratitude. Let us watch for, let us seize every opportunity to help them; let us use every means to spare them fatigues, privations, sufferings. Let us honour them as heroes, love them as sons. Thanks to them, our country is no longer in danger.

Nevertheless their task is not yet fully accom-

plished. They have inflicted blows on Germany that will prove mortal; but the foe, though wounded to the death, is still formidable. All is not ended. Let brave hearts rejoice! There will yet be risks to run, victories to win. Remember, though the German colossus is tottering, we have to bring it to the ground; we have to demolish the redoubtable military engine constructed by the Barbarians during forty years of a treacherous peace.

To win so great and so necessary a result, France must lavish all her resources, military, financial, industrial—material resources as well as moral. This war is not merely a war of armies, it is a war of Nations. Our nation must throw herself into it heart and soul!

On our courage and our steadfastness depend our fate and the fate of the world. Let all Frenchmen vie with one another in zeal, let all do their duty; and duty in these conditions knows no bounds. Let all practise self-sacrifice and self-devotion—of themselves and of their property; all, administrators, officials of every grade, private citizens, children, old men! I say nothing of women; they have already made every sacrifice, accomplished every form of self-devotion.

The times demand it. We, unhappy civilians, let us be fighters in our own way, let us serve with

the same zeal and the same discipline as the soldiers at the front.

Victory is sure. Let us aim at it with one heart and one purpose, let us fight for it each with his own weapons, that it may be the victory of the whole, united country.

Yours patriotically,

A. F.

SOISSONS

I HAD just been reading in a newspaper how the Germans, who have been bombarding Soissons for four months, have thrown eighty shells on the Cathedral. A moment later chance brought under my eyes a book by M. André Hallays, in which I lighted on the following lines, which I find a pleasure in transcribing:

"Soissons is a white city of a peaceful, smiling aspect, that rears its tower and pointed steeples on the banks of a sluggish river, amid a circle of green hills. Town and countryside recall those miniature pictures the illuminators of our old manuscripts used to paint so lovingly. . . . Priceless monuments display the whole history of the French Monarchy, from the Merovingian crypts of the Abbey of St. Médard to the fine mansion erected on the eve of the Great Revolution for the Intendants of the Province. Hemmed in by narrow streets and little gardens, a superb Cathedral extends the two arms of its noble transept; to the

north, a plain wall and an immense window; to the south, that wondrous apse where the pointed arch and the round arch are combined together in so delicate a fashion."

(*Autour de Paris*, p. 207.)

This charming page from a writer who dearly loves the towns and monuments of France touched me to tears. It has charmed away my melancholy; I would publicly thank my fellow-craftsman for the boon.

The brutal and senseless destruction of buildings consecrated by art and antiquity is a crime which War does not excuse; may it be an eternal infamy for the German name! A poet of fine feeling, Saint-Georges de Bouhélier, has indited a protest that might well be entitled *Rheims avenged*. The civilized world is unanimous in branding these outrages on beauty that should be sacred to all Peoples, because it is the noblest heritage of all humanity. For myself, I shall never cease to lift up my feeble voice against the Barbarians who rend the beauteous robe of stone wherewith France has been adorned by our forefathers.

(*Journal des Débats*, 17th January, 1915.)

AT THE FRONT

I PUBLISH this letter as an example of the spirt that prevails among our soldiers at the front. Gaiety is a fine thing allied to gallantry, and one is touched to read beautiful verse composed under shot and shell.

TO MONSIEUR ANATOLE FRANCE

24th March.

DEAR MASTER,

We the Editorial Staff of the *Rigolboche* beg leave to send you a number of a paper written in the trenches of the Argonne and printed on rest days with the rudimentary means at our disposal. It has no other object but to afford the poor *poilus* a few moments' forgetfulness of their fatigues, and for this reason you must please excuse the poetical licences which occur in it. They are often caused by the explosion of a "coal box."

But we should wish to have men of more authority than ourselves speak to our poor fellows, and it is

our intention to reserve in each number the place of honour for a few verses or a few lines written for our soldiers by those who love them best.

That is why, dear Master, we ask you to be pleased to think of our poor lads, who, when they read what you send them, will see by this alone that the thoughts of all are with them in their trenches.

We thank you very warmly in advance, and send you, dear Master, the expression of our most cordial sentiments.

LOUIS LANTZ.

LA BÉCHELLERIE,

22nd April, 1915.

DEAR CONFRÈRE, and editors all of the *Rigolboche*, . . . alas! why cannot I say "brothers in arms"?

I thank you for sending me your paper, the "most influential organ on the whole front"—a paper which, for my own part, I consider far superior to all the journals of Paris, Tours, and other towns where, thanks to your valour, they have nothing to fear from the Boches. It breathes a heroic gaiety—and gaiety goes well with gallantry. Your lightheartedness is a presage of triumph. If I had not already had a certainty of victory, the *Rigolboche* would have given it me.

You are heroes, and fascinating heroes. You do not appear to suspect the fact yourselves, and this is the most exquisite trait in your character. I feel sure the praises I lavish on you will vex you. Forgive me, for they are sincere.

Do you know, you are poets, not only in action, but literally. Vincent Hispa's song is delightful, and the sonnet on "Vauquois" will count, flattery apart, among the finest verses inspired by this great war. And it is no common achievement, a sonnet with a lyrical lilt like this one.

You do me the honour to ask me for an article for the *Rigolboche*; here is the only one I can write in a sheet produced under shell fire:

Editors of the *Rigolboche*, my comrades, I love you, I envy you, I embrace you.

ANATOLE FRANCE.

The following is the sonnet referred to in the preceding letter:

VAUQUOIS

TRANSLATION BY E. B. OSBORN

Vauquois, that darkly view'st the vale below,
Deep didst thou drink of blood when, stone by stone,
Our heroes took thee back, while woodlands lone
Shook to the thunder of thy overthrow.

Puny in peace, the War hath watched thee grow
Strange and stupendous. Height with secrets sown,
High place of terror!—thus thy power I own
And pay to thy Dead the oblation of my woe.
" The day of glory dawns " *—their glorious song
Roared skyward, as the lion-hearted throng,
Youth led by age, stormed up the fiery steep.
Rest, heroes exultant, in your exalted tomb!
Your undying day of glory without gloom
Sees France returned, to bless you and to weep.

MAURICE BOIGEY.

* Le jour de gloire est arrivé.—*Marseillaise.*

A LITTLE TOWN OF FRANCE

ROM a hill-top we looked down on a little town. No matter for its name; it was a town of France, lying there peacefully in the hollow of a valley. It was a charming sight, with its peaked roofs, its tortuous streets, and the timbered spire of its pretty church. I gazed at it as if entranced. Indeed, the bird's-eye view of one of our towns is a pleasing and moving spectacle in which the soul delights. Humanizing thoughts rise with the smoke from its chimneys. Some sad, some merry, they mingle in our memory to inspire all of them together a smiling melancholy, sweeter than any merriment.

You think: "These houses, so tiny, in the sunshine, that I can block them all out by merely extending my hand, have nevertheless sheltered centuries of love and hate, of pleasure and pain. They keep secrets terrible and mournful. They are well versed in the ways of life and death. They would tell us tales for laughter and for tears, if stones could speak."

But stones do speak to those who have ears to hear them.

The little town says to the Frenchman who gazes down at it from the hill:

"See, I am old, but I am comely; my pious sons have broidered my robe with towers and steeples, fretted gables and belfries. I am a good mother; I teach honest work and all the arts of peace, I exhort the citizens to that scorn of danger which makes them invincible. I nurse my children in my arms. Then, their task done, they go, one after another, to sleep at my feet, under the grass where the sheep browse. They pass, but I remain to guard their memory. I am their consciousness. That is why they owe everything to me, for man is only man inasmuch as he has conscious memory. My mantle has been torn and my bosom pierced in the wars. I have received wounds men said were mortal. But I have lived because I have hoped. Learn of me the blessed hope that is the salvation of our country."

AFTER HERODOTUS

THE following little piece is not for scholars who have studied Herodotus. These would find in it nothing they do not know already—and in an order that would disturb their habits, without, in their case, any counterbalancing advantage. On the other hand, I believe that minds less familiar with Antiquity will read it with satisfaction. I may think well of it without vanity, inasmuch as virtually I have neither act nor part in it. My whole task—a highly agreeable task it was—has been to bring together in a single dialogue a number of apophthegms and conversations scattered up and down the pages of the old Historian, who, for sure, is one of the most genial talkers a man can listen to. This rearrangement possesses at least the merit of showing in a very vivid light the Greek spirit on the morrow of the Persian wars—that radiant hour when Greece, victorious in battle and in wisdom, realized in poetry and art a sovereign beauty.

Very certainly I have made no attempt to liken the Greeks to ourselves. I have, on the contrary, been at

pains to impart into my style the mode and manner, the form and colour of ancient times. In history, I have no liking whatever for allusive writing. To search for the present in the past is a frivolous pastime, to take pleasure in which implies, I am afraid, a certain obliquity of mind.

It is no fitting amusement for a philosopher to travesty the Ancients in order to recognize ourselves in them. On the other hand, to rediscover, in all ages and in all lands, man, man unchanged and unchangeable, to note in the far vista of the centuries traits we deemed peculiar to our own day, but which in very truth go back to that underlying basis of humanity which never alters, to feel a sudden conviction that the species, which varies so slowly, has not varied one whit since the epochs whereof we have preserved a memory—here we have something that stirs and stimulates, something that appeals strongly to the imagination.

Unless I am mistaken, this human basis, these characteristics peculiar to our species, are brought out into strong relief in our extracts from the good Herodotus. That is why I think that, as they read, my fellow-countrymen will not infrequently carry on their thoughts from the 75th Olympiad to the present hour, one of such grave import, replete for us with glory and with grief, and pregnant with a future that fills us with high and far-reaching hopes.

XERXES AND DEMARATUS

A DIALOGUE

Go tell the Spartans, thou that passest by,
That here obedient to their laws we lie.
SIMONIDES.

The men of Athens by destroying the army of the Persians preserved their fatherland from the shameful yoke of slavery. PLATO.

MASTER of Western Asia and of Egypt, Darius, son of Hystaspes, King of the Persians, had subdued Thrace and Macedonia, and bequeathed at his death the greatest empire on earth to his son Xerxes, who immediately conceived a vehement desire to increase it yet further. Under pretext of avenging the old-time wrongs done by the Athenians, but in real truth to conquer Europe, he gathered together and dispatched against Greece, by land and by sea, an army made up of Persians, Medes, Sacians, Pæonians, of Arabs on camels, and of Libyans in war-chariots—a host that reached the number of two million men without counting servants and sailors. It was commanded by Mardonius, cousin of the King and husband of Darius' daughter Artazostra. The Barbarians forced the peoples whom they encountered on their march,

up to the borders of Thessaly, to fall in behind them.

To win the gods to their side, they made sacrifice to them of white horses, and on their arrival at the bridges of the Strymon, buried alive nine striplings and nine maidens of the country.

The Greeks, who had at the first resolved to await the Persians on the banks of Peneus, abandoned the design of defending the Vale of Tempé and withdrew the fleet to the entrance of the Euripus. Yet were they by no means content to surrender to the invaders without a struggle the rich plain of Bœotia and the well-peopled land of Attica. They sent forth all the men they could muster to guard the Pass of Thermopylæ betwixt Mount Œta and the sea, which was the only road whereby an army could penetrate by way of Thessaly into Greece. This body of men was composed of Thebans, Thespians, Bœotians, and sundry other peoples, to the number of about five thousand, together with three hundred Spartans, heavily armed. Leonidas, King of Sparta, had the command over all.

Meantime the Barbarians lay encamped in a plain of Thessaly, made famous by the death of Hercules. And the Great King's tent was set aloft in the midst of the camp. Now Xerxes had brought with him Demaratus, son of Ariston, erst-

while King of Sparta, who, being declared illegitimate, stripped of his rank and honours, and driven from his native land, had taken refuge among the Persians. As Mardonius was making ready to force the defile of Thermopylæ, Xerxes, who was used to consult Demaratus on the best fashion of fighting the Greeks, summoned him to his tent and addressed him thus:

"I desire, Demaratus, to question you on a matter I am fain to understand. You know how the Greeks, mustered to defend yonder defile, are under command of Leonidas, King of Sparta. A spy whom I sent out hath noted such of them as were posted this side of the wall which they had built to block the passage. These men were Spartans. Stacking their weapons against the wall, they busied themselves in contending naked in athletic games or in carefully combing their long hair. Now I cannot believe this to be their way of making them ready to die in battle. Nay, to me they seem to be acting after a ridiculous fashion, and I opine that ere four days be over they will have retired. What think *you*, Demaratus?

DEMARATUS

Tell me, O King, is it a pleasant answer you would have or a true answer?

XERXES

Say the truth, and I pledge you my troth you shall have no cause to repent you of your words.

DEMARATUS

O King, fear no feigned speech from my lips. I told you heretofore what manner of men the Greeks were. They cherish no overweening ambitions and are content with what they have. They dread the divine Nemesis that brings low such as are overmuch exalted, and in all things they observe the due mean; wise moderation is their trusty comrade, which safeguards them against suffering tyranny within their borders or practising it without. But when I instructed you, O King, of the way they would behave toward you, you made mock of me. Grant me this time a more favourable hearing. These men have come to hold yonder pass against you, and their doings are to this end. Indeed, such is their habit; before making sacrifice of their lives, they wreathe their heads with fillets and garlands.

XERXES

What you tell me, Demaratus, is scarce credible. How should these Spartans, so scanty in numbers, resist my innumerable host?

DEMARATUS

O King, I have no cause to love the Spartans, who have robbed me of my hereditary honours, have outlawed me, have made me an exile without hearth or home or country. But your father King Darius welcomed me, gave me a dwelling-place and riches. Now a wise man turns from them that have treated him contumeliously, and accords his friendship in guerdon for the benefits done him. 'Tis therefore for the affection I bear you and for no goodwill toward the Spartans that I say what I say. Well, Sire, brand me for an impostor, if these men act not as I have instructed you they will.

XERXES

I cannot credit it. But tell me this, Demaratus, are the inhabitants of Lacedæmon numerous, and amongst them are there to be found many men practised in war?

DEMARATUS

O King, the Lacedæmonians are many in number, and they possess many towns. The city of Sparta contains at the least eight thousand men the like of those that are here. The other citizens of Lacedæmon, though not their equals, are brave men too.

Son of Darius, know this, that, can you vanquish these men, no nation will dare rise up against you, forasmuch as the Lacedæmonians are the most courageous of all peoples. I would tell you no lies; never will they suffer you to enslave the peoples of Greece, and they would still resist you even were all the other Greeks ranged on your side.

XERXES

How should they dare to resist me single-handed, being far inferior in numbers to the Medes and Persians?

DEMARATUS

O King, it boots not what their numbers be, they will give never a thought to this in making their resolve. Had they but a thousand men to set against you, they would send these forth to battle, and no matter how sorely minished, they would still fight you to the end!

XERXES

What say you? A thousand men contend against a host as countless as the stars! You are a Spartan, Demaratus; would *you* fight one against ten? Doubtless, if each one of your countrymen is what you say, he may, as your way is, deem himself

a match for a couple of adversaries. Among my own guards, too, there are picked men who would not fear to fight the Greeks one against three. But a man must needs be a fool who should claim to measure himself with ten of my warriors. If you Greeks be all of the same bulk as yourself, Demaratus, and the rest of your nation whom I have seen, you are but jesting. On the contrary, I will show you how that man for man a Persian is a better fighter than a Greek. The fact is, the Persians, being ruled by a single man, supplement their own native valour by all the puissant worth that is set over them and which doth inspire them to deeds they would of themselves never have dreamed of accomplishing. With the feebler sort discipline takes the place of courage, and fear of the master is stronger than fear of the foe. Whipped on to the attack, they hurl themselves on the enemy's spears and javelins. Of such sort are the Persian soldiers. Yours, freemen and equals, do not obey one single leader, wage the fight as seems them good and draw inspiration only from their own heart, which more often than not is a sorry thing—for in all lands great hearts are rare. I hold therefore that with equal numbers the Greeks would not easily withstand the Persians.

DEMARATUS

The Greeks are free, O King; but they are not free from all restraints; slaves of law, they fear it much more than your soldiers dread you. They yield a blind obedience to its behests and it commands them never to give ground in the fight, to stand firm in their ranks, to conquer or to die. For Sparta, it is not to die, it is to fly that is death. O King, this is the truth I say.

XERXES

I will tell you of yet another advantage the Persians have over the Greeks—to wit, that the Persians are straitly united under my authority, while the Greeks are for ever at wrangle one with another. They are to be seen every day fighting city against city. Nay, in the self-same city, the citizens are broken up into a number of irreconcilable factions. I have been advised that the Athenians are divided betwixt two rival parties that tear one another to pieces, and that they have expelled the chief of the richest and best citizens to give the power into the hands of the lowest of the people. How should fools always busied in mutual destruction be in a condition to do much hurt to a foreign army?

DEMARATUS

'Tis true, O King, that, acting according to their several judgments of what is good and what is evil, the Greeks are often at wrangle and contend city against city, citizens against fellow-citizens. 'Tis true that the people of Athens are not unanimous as to the manner in which their city should be governed. Amongst her citizens, the one sort regrets the Tyrants and would fain restrict the power to men of birth and breeding; the other, led by orators of brilliant parts and reckless boldness, strains every nerve to maintain government by the people; and it is true, moreover, that the latter faction having carried the day, men have been exiled who were reputed just. But these dissensions ceased at your approach, O King. The champions of the aristocracy have been recalled to their country, and to-day they govern it in concert with the friends of the people.

XERXES

What care I! Heaven is on my side. Alone of mankind the Persians know the true gods. I have given the immortal gods the surest tokens of my piety. I have sacrificed white horses and young men, that they may give me the victory. The Greeks adore neither the sun nor the heavenly

bodies, and they are grossly ignorant in matters divine. The Athenians do nothing pleasing to the celestial powers and refuse to shed the blood of human victims. They have joined the Lydians in defiling themselves with hideous impieties. At Sardis they fired the temples and the sacred groves. Heaven will punish them for their crimes and their ruin is assured.

I will wage war against them to win in the eyes of men a high renown and to teach all nations what it costs to violate a country that belongs to me. My purpose is to conquer not Greece only, but all Europe. Europe is a fair land, its climate is propitious, its soil fertile, meet for the cultivation of all kinds of fruit trees. Of all mortals, I, and I alone, am worthy to possess it.

DEMARATUS

O King, take not in ill part what is left me to say. Hearken, for I speak as to my host, whom I must hold sacred. Wreak not over-cruel a vengeance, Sire, on the Athenians. The vengeance of men is odious to the gods.

Son of Darius, if you deem yourself a god, if you think to command an army of immortals, you have no need of my advice. But if you acknowledge yourself a man and a ruler of men, remember how

fortune is like a wheel that turns ceaselessly and throws down them she had erst lifted up. It hath never been and it never will be that any mortal, from the hour of his birth to his death, can enjoy unbroken happiness. The highest heads are reserved for the direst calamities. I have spoken because you constrained me to speak. Now may it come to pass as you desire, O King!

At the words Xerxes dismissed Demaratus without anger. He was not wroth with him, because he believed him out of his wits.

Nevertheless he soon perceived that the Spartan had been in the right. The Greeks, standing firm and resolute, would have barred his passage, had not a Malian, by name Ephialtes, discovered to Mardonius a little-known path that was unguarded and by which the Barbarians penetrated into Greece. Seeing their position turned, the Greeks retired to fight elsewhere, with the exception of four hundred Thebans, the seven hundred Thespians, and the three hundred Spartans, who held it a joy to make sacrifice of their lives for their country. The Persians seized Athens, left bare of fighting men, massacred the old men, pillaged the temple, and fired the citadel. But the Athenians, meanwhile, withdrawing aboard three hundred and eighty

galleys, destroyed in the narrows of Salamis twelve hundred Persian ships.

Xerxes recrossed alone into Asia in a fisherman's boat, leaving Mardonius behind in Greece with three hundred thousand men. The Barbarians ravaged Attica, burned what was left of Athens, and passed on into Bœotia. A year after the flight of the Great King, Mardonius was defeated and slain at Platæa, at the foot of Cithæron. And on the same day the Athenians and the Spartans in alliance sank at the promontory of Mycalé the Persian vessels that had escaped the disaster of Salamis.

So were fulfilled to the end the words of Demaratus. Neither abundance of gold nor number of ships nor multitude of men prevailed against the courage and wisdom of the Greeks.

Europe ceased to hear an insolent menace, and no more feared lest they should undergo the yoke of the Barbarians.

THREE LETTERS

A REPLY TO THE EDITOR OF THE LONDON "CLARION"

15th April, 1915.

DEAR CONFRÈRE,

I SAID it emphatically from the very beginning of the War; I can only repeat it now:

The Allies owe it to all Europe, and they owe it to themselves, to pursue this War of Liberation till it ends in the utter extinction of the pan-German aspirations that have vexed Europe for forty years.

They must, at the cost of the most cruel sacrifices, destroy root and branch the military power of Germany and German-Austria.

The disarmament of the German States is essential for the Peace of Europe, so dear to our hearts. We are bound to bequeath to our children a Europe delivered from the Teutonic menace.

No Peace, no truce, until this enemy of the human race is felled to the earth!

I grasp your hand with the cordial fellow-feeling of a true ally.

TO THE READERS OF THE "NOVOSTI"

("THE NEWS")

A Russian Journal Published in Paris

Liberté, liberté chérie,
Combats avec tes défenseurs !

26th April, 1915.

Friends, this War was none of our seeking, but we shall fight it out to a finish; we shall prosecute our task, at once terrible and beneficent, to its complete accomplishment, to the total destruction of the military power of Germany.

We love Peace too well to tolerate anything dubious, insincere, or unstable in its condition. We demand a Peace that is great and strong, assured of a long and lofty destiny.

I have said it from the first beginning of the War; I shall never weary of repeating it. Peace, Peace we love so well, it is criminal to call for it, criminal to wish for it, before we have annihilated the forces of oppression that have weighed on Europe for half a century, before we have assured the august reign of the Right.

Till then we should speak only by the mouth

of our cannon. We must see to it that so many brave men shall not have perished in vain.

Our hour, the hour of Justice is at hand. Liberty fights on our side. The victory is certain.

TO MR. ENGLISH WALLING
(New York)

Dear Confrère,

As your just judgment and acute intelligence have led you to realize, it would be a great and perilous mistake to suppose that Peace is possible or desirable at the present moment.

The idea that is being disseminated at this time in America of hastening the end of the War by prohibiting the export of arms and munitions does not take its origin, I swear to you, in any French aspiration. I say, further, that it does not take its origin in any aspiration of genuine humanity. For neither France and her Allies nor the world at large will gain anything by a Peace that would leave still in existence that chronic cause of war we name German Militarism.

No, in very truth humanity would gain nothing and it would lose security, liberty, and even hope.

These are considerations of a sort, I think, to stir to its depths the American Nation, so energetic,

so much mistress of itself, and so jealous of its independence as it is.

All parties in France, Socialists, Nationalists, Radicals, are united in one and the same thought, one feeling, one purpose: to free Europe by shattering the formidable instrument of oppression which Germany has forged, and which for forty years has weighed, an iniquitous burden, on our Old World.

Such is our duty to France, to our Allies, to ourselves. The obligation is at least as imperiously binding on our Socialists as on any other of the political or social parties, now united and indistinguishably mingled together.

This duty which we would prosecute to the end, through the most dreadful trials, at the cost of the most cruel sacrifices, this sacred duty, how should you dream of diverting us from it, just when, to fulfil it, all we have to do is to make an effort, severe no doubt, perhaps terrible, but fortunate and decisive; just when the reward of our daring is assured, when we see the day-star of our triumph rising above the horizon?

We cannot suffer the blood of our brothers and our sons, shed in the cause of Justice and Liberty, to cry out against us. We owe it to their memory to complete our task. We owe to the heroes and good men who have fallen before the foe a peaceful

grave, where the laurel and the olive shall bloom eternally.

We love Peace too well to give her a cheap and ignominious cradle; we love her too well not to desire her great and pure and radiant, assured of a long destiny.

We have nothing to fear from time; time is on the side of France and her Allies. Our army is stronger than ever. Russia is inexhaustible in men and corn. England, whose steadfastness is proverbial, is ceaselessly developing her resources and her activities. Germany, against whom the sea, dispenser of riches, is barred, is bound to perish miserably. And shall we, on the eve of certain victory, betray, by a shameful pusillanimity or a morbid sensibility, the cause of Right which Destiny has entrusted to our hands?

No, no! we Frenchmen are unanimous in our resolve to fight on to the hour of final victory.

For me, were I told that Frenchmen were suffering themselves to be seduced by the veiled phantasm of a villainous Peace, I would petition our Parliament to brand as traitor to our country any man who should propose to treat with the enemy so long as the foe still occupies a portion of our territory and that of Belgium.

INVOCATION

O UNION OF AMERICA,
BORN GLORIOUSLY MID STORM AND TEMPEST,
WHO FROM INFANCY
WERT NOURISHED BY FREEDOM
ON THE MILK OF THE STRONG,
THOU WHO DIDST CONSECRATE THY STALWART
YOUTH
TO SUPERHUMAN TOILS,
O PEOPLE, JUST AND MAGNANIMOUS,
HAIL!

A. F.


MAISTRE ANATOLE FRANCE